

“A PEOPLE PREPARED FOR THE LORD”

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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“To make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”
Luke 1:17.***

JOHN was the herald of Christ—he was to prepare the way for the coming King—but from this text it appears that he was to do more than that. He was not only to make the road ready for the Lord, but he was also “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” That was a great work, a task in which he would require strength and wisdom greater than his own. He would need that the Spirit of God, who was to be given without measure to the coming One, should also be, in a measure, within himself, if he should really “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

This is not at all a usual expression. At first sight, it hardly looks to us like a Gospel expression. We sang just now—

***“Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To You, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.”***

We sang over and over again those words, “Just as I am,” “Just as I am,” and we are prone to protest against the idea of being *prepared* for Christ. We constantly preach that no preparation is needed, but that men are to come to Jesus just as they are. Yet here is John the Baptist set apart, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

The fact is, dear Friends, that to get men to come to Jesus just as they are is not an easy thing. To get them to give up the idea of preparing, to get them prepared to come without preparing, to get them ready to come just as they are—this is the hardest part of our work—this is our greatest difficulty. If we came and preached to men the necessity of preparation through so many weeks of fasting during a long Lent, or through so many days of scourging and penitence, they would attend to us at once, for they would be willing enough to make any preparation of that kind! But, when we say to them, “Come just as you are, with nothing in your hands to buy the mercy of God, with nothing wherewith to demand or to deserve it,” men want a great deal of preparing before they will come to that point! Only the Grace of God, working mightily through the Word, by the Spirit, will prepare men to come to Christ—prepared by being unprepared so far as any fitness of their own is concerned. The only fit state in which they can come is that of sinking themselves, abandoning all idea of helping Christ, coming in all their natural impotence and guilt and taking Christ to be their All in All.

Beloved Friends, this is the true preparedness of heart for coming to Christ—the preparedness of coming to Him just as you are! And it was John’s business, thus, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” That is also my business at this time. May the good Spirit, who dwelt in John the Baptist, work through us, also, that some here may be made ready for Christ—“a people prepared for the Lord”! Let us see how John carried out his commission. We shall then be better able to understand the text.

I. First, John made ready “a people prepared for the Lord” BY AWAKENING THEIR ATTENTION.

The people were asleep—they had fallen into a condition of religious lethargy, when suddenly there stood in their midst a man clothed in camel’s hair and with a leather girdle about his loins—a Prophet, manifestly, by the boldness and truthfulness of his utterances. He spoke in such a way that the people in general heard of his speaking and they advertised him by saying, the one to the other, “That is a strange man who has begun to preach by the River Jordan and whose meat is locusts and wild honey.”

The whole style of the man set the people wondering and talking. And when they came to listen to him, he did not flatter them! He did not utter mere commonplace truths to them, but with burning earnestness he drove straight at their hearts and spoke like Elijah, the great Prophet of fire, had done in the ages gone by. *So he set them thinking.* That is a great preparation for coming to Christ just as you are, to be set a-thinking! We have always hope of men when they once begin to think about religion and the things of God. See how the bulk of them hurry on with their eyes tightly shut, rushing fast and yet faster, still, down to destruction! You cannot make them stop and think. There are thousands of men who would almost sooner be whipped than be made to think. The last thing to which they will ever come, of themselves, is thoughtfulness!

Let me appeal to some here who are still unconverted. Did you ever give the affairs of your soul the benefit of an hour’s serious consideration? You have your regular time for stocktaking, those of you who are in business—do you ever take stock of your *spiritual* estate? I know that you are not such fools as to neglect your ledgers, you cast up your accounts to see where you are, financially, but do you cast up the account between God and your own soul, and look the matter fairly and squarely in the face? Oh, if we could but bring you to do this, we would feel that you were being prepared for coming to Christ just as you are, for no man will come to Christ while he is utterly careless and thoughtless! Faith is a matter of thought—it requires a mind awakened from slumber, a mind that has taken wing—and John the Baptist did good service for his Master when he startled men into that condition and so made them consider their ways.

He did more than that, for, having first made them think, *he preached to them a Savior.* He told them that One was coming with power to baptize them after a higher sort than his baptism. He cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world,” and this message

infused into the people a measure of hope. The poor people said, “What shall we do?” for they had a hope that there was something to be gained. Even the tax-gatherers, despised as they were, began to look up and think that there might be something, even, for them, so they said to John, “Master, what shall we do?” And the rough Roman soldiers thought, “There may be something for us,” so they, also, asked, “And what shall *we* do?” John inspired the multitudes with hope.

It is a very blessed state of mind for a man to get in when he begins to hope that he may be saved. Then he will be prepared to come to Jesus, just as he is, when he feels that he is not shut up to despair. “Oh,” says the poor man, “I need not, after all, be lost! I need not abide forever under the wrath of God! There is an open door set before me, there is a way of mercy, even for me!” I wish it were possible that everybody whom I am now addressing had that feeling—it would be part of the making ready of “a people prepared for the Lord” when thought had blossomed into hope.

But John led his hearers on further than that, for *they began to expect something as well as to hope for it*. They expected that the Christ would speedily come and they expected some great blessings through the coming of the Messiah. And oh, when men, after hearing the Gospel, have great expectations concerning God and His salvation, surely their expectations will not be long disappointed! I remember a man coming, one day, to see me. He said that he wished to take a sitting in the Tabernacle. He had been hearing me for some time and he wanted to take a seat—but he desired to be very honest with me and not to take a seat except upon a right understanding. I asked, “What is the difficulty, my Friend?” “Well,” he replied, “the person who sat next to me on Sunday told me that if I became a regular hearer here, you would expect me to be converted.” “Well,” I answered, “that is true, I shall expect it.” “But,” he said, “you do not mean that you will *require* it of me.” “Oh, dear no!” I replied, “nothing of the sort. I do not expect you to convert *yourself*, but I hope and trust that you will be converted—that is what I mean. I shall expect that God, in His Grace, will meet with you and save you.”

“Oh,” he said, “I hope that, too! Only I mean that I could not guarantee it.” “Ah,” I said, “I see that you have taken the word, ‘expect,’ in the wrong sense, but I think, dear Friend, that if you come *expecting* to be converted, and I preach expecting that *you will be converted*, it is highly probable that it will soon take place.” “Oh,” he exclaimed, “God grant it!” The good Brother has long since gone to Heaven. A very few weeks after our conversation, he came and told me that the expectation in which we had united had been fulfilled and he trusted that he had found the Savior. When people come really *expecting* a blessing, they will be sure to get it! I believe that some folk go to hear ministers with the idea that there will be something to find fault with and, of course, they find that it is so. And when people come to hear another preacher, with the hope and expectation that God will bless them, of course God *does* bless them. Their expectation is Divinely fulfilled! I always have a bright hope that a man will lay hold on Christ when he begins to expect to be saved, for he feels, then, that the time has come for him to find eternal life. John made

ready “a people prepared for the Lord” because, first, he led them to *thought*. Next, he led them to *hope*, and then he led them to *expectation*—and this is a high measure of preparation!

John did more than this, for he cried, “Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,” that is to say, *he put a pressure of urgency upon the people*. A Brother, who is an eminent preacher, but who uses rather long words, was explaining to me the benefit of the preaching of Mr. Fullerton and Mr. Smith in his place of worship. He said, “I do not know exactly why these Brothers were the means of the conversion of many in my place whom I had never reached, but I perceived that they had the power to precipitate decision.” It sounded rather strange, but when I thought it over a little while, I rather liked the expression, “the power to precipitate decision.” That is the power that leads men to make up their minds and say, “Yes,” or, “No”—to feel that the decision has to be made at once and that the putting of it off is impossible because it would be a kind of insanity! Now that is the meaning of what John said, “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand! Repent you! He is coming who wields the axe of Divine Justice—bear fruit, or else be cut down! He is coming who uses the great winnowing fan—be the true wheat, or else be blown away.” He put the Truth of God so pointedly and so earnestly, that he did, by that means, make ready “a people prepared for the Lord.”

II. Now, secondly, John made the people ready for CHRIST BY AWAKENING THEIR CONSCIENCES.

His very first utterance, as I have reminded you, was, “Repent you, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” “Repent! Repent! Repent!” was John’s continual cry. This awakened the consciences of his hearers concerning *their sin*. Preaching repentance meant, “You have sinned! Change your mind in reference to that sin you have sinned—quit the sin, mourn over it, ask forgiveness for it. Repent!” Whenever a man brings to the minds of others their sins—when he does it so that they begin to feel that they *have sinned*—then they are being prepared for the Lord, for no man will come to the Savior unless he knows that he *needs a Savior*. And no man will feel that he needs a Savior until he feels that he is a sinner. Hence it is a real preparation of men for Christ to convince them of sin.

This John did. He brought their sin before them and then *he showed them their need of cleansing*, for he stood by the River Jordan, not with a scallop shell, as some depict him, but he stood by the flowing stream ready to immerse all those who repented! This was practically saying to them, “You need to be washed, you need to be cleansed, and I show you this Truth of God as I baptize you with water unto repentance. Be this a token to you that there is no entering Heaven in your filthiness, but you must first be washed! As your bodies are washed with pure water, so must your souls be washed and made clean before you can enter Heaven.” This was John’s plain teaching by his action as well as by his words.

Then he went very straight to his point of awakening their consciences by telling them *of their need of a change of life*. He said that it was no use for them to pretend to grieve over the past and then continue to sin in

the same fashion. “Bring forth fruits,” he said, “meet for repentance,” or, “answerable to amendment of life,” as the margin has it. And he took pains to point out what the fruits must be. If they were men of greed, they must become generous and give to their needy neighbors. If they had been unrighteous and exacting, they must become honest. If they had been domineering and brutal, and murmuring, they must become contented and quiet, and gentle.

He not only preached to the multitudes about repentance of sin in general, *but he pointed out the precise sin of each class of persons* that came to him and urged them to perform the special duties which they had neglected. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I believe, as I have often said, that there is no sewing with silk thread, alone—you must have a *needle* as well! You need a sharp needle to, first, draw the thread through the material. And so you must preach the Law. You must denounce sin and you must individualize and condemn special sins. And you must be personal and pointed, or else men will not feel in their *consciences* what you say to them. Conscience is very apt to get seared as with a hot iron—to lose sensitiveness—so as to be no use at all as a conscience. Some say that conscience is a spark of deity, a divine monitor—it is nothing of the sort! In many a man it is almost extinct, for it does not act at all! The preacher who would “make ready a people prepared for the Lord” must come out with his axe and lay it to the root of the trees! He must be definite and distinct in indicating this sin and that sin, and crying to all men, “Repent of these sins! Give them up! Get clear from them! Be washed from them or else, as God lives, when the Christ, Himself, comes, it will *not* be to *save* you, but to blow you away with His winnowing fan as the chaff is blown into the fire!”

This is “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord”—by their being convinced of sin and led to repentance. That, I think, is a second meaning clearly illustrated in the ministry of John the Baptist.

III. But thirdly, John had “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” BY POINTING OUT THE NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION.

He showed that *it did not depend upon external privileges*. As soon as John began to preach, the men of Jewish race, proud of their pedigree, pressed near, and John, with all the courage that a servant of the Lord could have, said, “Begin not to say within yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” You see the drift of his preaching, do you not? He says, practically, “Men and women, there is no virtue in your boasted privileges. There is no merit in your religious descent. As for supposing yourselves to be the peculiar people of God, you are not to be saved that way. Say not, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’” Oh, how many hug that idea, “My father was a Christian.” Others say, “Well, I live in a Christian country.” They suppose that there is something in the very race from which they have sprung! Away with all such notions, for whatever external privileges you may have had, they are not sufficient to secure salvation for you!

Then came the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They were the religious people of the time, the great observers of all outward propriety, but John taught them that *true religion is not the same as official pretension*. He called them a “generation of vipers.” This was very disrespectful and very shocking, indeed, on his part! All the newspapers of the period, if there had been any, would have cried him down for his lack of charity, but he wanted those who came to him to understand that true religion was not the same as professing to be religious! It was not making broad the borders of their garments. It was not wearing a text of Scripture as a phylactery between their eyes. It was not making long prayers at the corners of the streets that would save them—there must be a thorough change of heart! So John spoke right straight out and this, I believe, is a great way of preparing men for coming to Christ, when you tell them, “It is not your early training, it is not your going to Church or Chapel, it is not your infant sprinkling and your confirmation! It is not even your *adult* Baptism, nor your saying prayers and reading the Bible that will save you—‘you must be born again.’ There must be an inward spiritual change worked by the Holy Spirit! You must believe in Jesus Christ, whom God has sent, and you must so believe in Him as to be made new creatures in Him or else you cannot be saved.” Now, when men realize that all this is true, it startles them out of their false refuges and makes them ready to flee to the only true Refuge, so that it is really the way of making ready “a people prepared for the Lord.”

While John set forth this matter negatively, putting down all the wrong hopes of his hearers, he was exceedingly plain in telling them that the way of salvation would involve them in *the necessity of being right before God*. “There,” he said, “the proof of a tree’s life is its fruit and the evidence of your new life will be your good works. ‘Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees and, therefore, every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.’ Unless our religion makes us holy, it has not done anything for us that is really worth doing! Unless we hate sin and love righteousness, our religion is a sham and a lie! John stated that Truth of God very plainly—and that is the way to drive men to Christ.

He also told them that the trial of a life would be by its weight as well as by its fruit. “Look,” he said, “at the heap that lies on the threshing floor. He that has the fan in his hand begins to winnow it. That which is light and chaffy is blown away. That which has wheat in it remains on the floor. So,” he said, “there must be weight about your religion—stability, reality, sincerity. There must be heart-work in it. It must be no pretense. It must be true from beginning to end or else it shall be no more use to you than a heap of chaff would avail the farmer when it is blown into the fire.”

Then John taught his hearers that Christ, Himself, would be the great Trier of human hearts—not ministers or fellow professors, but Christ, Himself. When men feel this to be true, then they begin to say to themselves, “There is more required than we, at present, possess. There is more demanded than we can ever manufacture of ourselves. Let us go to

Him that has it and ask Him for it. Let us go to Christ, who has Grace to bestow upon the poor and needy.” This, then, is the way to make ready “a people prepared for the Lord,” by pointing out to them the nature of true religion. That is what I have tried to do, dear Hearer. When you know that you cannot save yourself, you sing—

**“Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Your Law’s demands.
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone.”**

And then you are ready to finish the verse by singing—

“You must save, and You, alone.”

IV. Now. I shall close my discourse by noticing a fourth way in which John made ready “a people prepared for the Lord.” He did it BY DECLARING THE GRACE AND POWER OF JESUS CHRIST.

My Brothers and Sisters, if I were to preach to you merely to awaken your attention, to awaken your consciences to a sense of sin, or simply to show you the nature of true religion, yet you would not be prepared for Christ unless you also knew something about Him, something about His suitableness and His power to save you. So, *John preached Jesus Christ as a mighty and glorious Savior on whom the Spirit rested.* He said, when he baptized our Lord, as Jesus came up out of the water, “I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not, but He that sent me to baptize with water, the Same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” John boldly preached and told the people that the Spirit of God rested upon Jesus Christ, yes, abode upon Him!

Now, this would lead them to Him, and this should lead *you* to Him. Whatever there is, poor Souls, that you need to make you holy and perfect, Christ has it, for the Spirit of God rests on Him and abides in Him without measure! If you need the Grace of penitence, Christ has it to give to you. If you need the Grace of supplication, He has it to give to you. If you need the Grace of faith, He has it! If you need the Grace of holiness, He has it. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” “And of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace.” John taught this to his hearers and I teach it to you. There is nothing needed between Hell and Heaven but what is in Christ! Nothing needed for the biggest sinner out of Hell to make him the biggest saint in Heaven but what Christ has! Nothing needed in any hour of temptation, in any time of depression—nothing needed in any moment of sickness, or in the article of death, itself—but what it is in Christ and, there for you, if you trust Him! If you are willing to have it, it is freely presented to you. He who makes you willing to receive, is certainly willing to give! If He has emptied you and prepared you to receive of His fullness, do not think that He will refuse you when you come to Him for it! He has said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

Last Sunday morning, I blew the great trumpet in the hope of startling some to Christ [Sermon #1951, Volume 33—*The Pleading of the Last*

Messenger—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] On this occasion, I would ring the little silver bell with a gentle noise in the hope that some may, by that means, be made willing to come to Christ! My Hearer, you can need nothing which Christ does not possess—all your requirements are fully met in Him. The Spirit of God dwells in Him as a fullness—as an abiding fullness—therefore, do but believe in Him! And even that faith He will give you! Do but trust Him and you are saved, and fully supplied in Him who can meet all the necessities of your case.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, John taught the people this that they might be ready for Christ—“a people prepared for the Lord”—for, when men begin to see what a Christ, Christ is, what a Savior the Savior is, then they are ready to come to Him! And I pray that many of you may so come to Him even now.

John also told his hearers that *the Christ whom he preached was able to baptize them with the Holy Spirit*. “See,” he says, “I only plunge you in the flowing stream. I can do nothing more for you than dip you in this River Jordan, on profession of your repentance of sin. But this Savior, this Christ of God, can immerse you into the Spirit of God! He can give you of His power to fill you—you can be baptized into the Holy Spirit by Him.” Do you hear this, Sinner? Jesus Christ can come and give you the Holy Spirit in such measure that you shall be baptized into Him—

**“Plunged in the Godhead’s deepest sea,
And lost in His immensity.”**

This will make you to be really His and make you truly to live unto Him. The very fullness of Grace, then, is with Christ, and He is prepared to give it—and this should make men prepared to receive it! Did not the poor prodigal son say of the provision in his father’s house, “There is bread enough and to spare”? It was partly *that* which made him go to his father’s house and we may say of the Spirit who is in Christ, “There is enough and to spare for every poor sinner who comes to Him”—therefore, come along with you—be prepared at once to come and receive the Savior!

Lastly, John said in his preaching, “Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.” *He pointed out Christ as the Sin-Bearer*, bearing human guilt in His own Person. That is the master key which lets men into the Kingdom of Heaven. Oh, how I delight to preach Christ as the Substitute, Christ as the atoning Sacrifice! And when you have heard Christ preached in that way, it makes you ready—“a people prepared for the Lord.” How can men come to Christ if they do not know what Christ has done for them? If you do not understand that He suffered in your place, the Just for the unjust, to bring you to God, how can you come to Christ? But when you have learned that holy and blessed doctrine of Christ’s Propitiation for human sin, why, then, I think you will leap at the very sound of it and say, “Yes, I will take this Propitiation to be a Sacrifice for me! Blessed Lamb of God—

**‘My faith would lay her hands
On that dear head of Yours
While like a penitent I stand
And there confess my sin.’”**

John’s preaching Christ was the best way of making ready “a people prepared for the Lord,” and there is no better way of preparing you to come to Jesus. Oh, that God would grant to some of you that “precipitation of decision” of which my learned friend spoke! Oh, that in some lives the turning point might be reached *tonight*—the happy moment when they should decide for Christ! Lord, decide them! My Friend, you have come to the crossroads—perhaps, tonight—if you reject the Savior, it will be your last rejection of Him and it will finally seal your doom! And I am sure, with no perhaps whatever, that if this night you look to Jesus and trust to His finished work, you shall be saved and saved forever!

Here is a text for you—“Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Is not that a wonderful “whoever”? “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord” in believing prayer, asking mercy, trusting Christ for mercy, “shall be saved.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Most of you know these texts by heart—grip them as with hooks of steel! If you say that you are hungry and I put a loaf of bread in front of you, will you sit and look at it all night? If I meet you in a week’s time, will you still complain that you are hungry while there is the bread, in front of you, still untouched? You deserve to be hungry if that is the case! You deserve to be famished to death if the bread, being there, you do not take it. Take it and eat it. “May I have it?” asks one. Well, you are *commanded* to have it—this is not a matter that is left to your option! “The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” Our Lord, Himself, said, “Repent, you, and believe the Gospel.” It is, therefore, a Gospel *command* that you should repent and believe—and truly you may obey a command given by the Lord, Himself! There is no question about your permission to obey it—obey it at once and take Christ to yourself!

“You do not know me,” says a sorrowing one over there in the corner, “you do not know me, Sir. Otherwise you would not talk so.” I do not need to know you, but if you were the devil’s own, if you would but come to Christ, you would be, at once and forever, Christ’s own! Though you were sunk almost into Hell by a life of horrible crime, yet if you will *now come and repent of your sin and lay hold on Christ*, you shall be saved! I do not know how to use language that shall be stronger than that, but do not think that I will withdraw it, or qualify it. If I did know how to speak in broader terms, even, than those I have used, I would so speak! You guiltiest of the guilty, you most condemned of all the condemned, for whom the hottest Hell would be your due place, yet come and look to Christ, and you shall live, for *none* are too vile for Him to cleanse, *none* are too guilty for Him to pardon! Oh, that you would believe in Jesus while yet the Gospel bell rings out, “mercy, mercy, mercy!” God help you to do so, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 1:5-17, 3:1-18.**

Luke 1:5, 6. *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.* You have, here, a very interesting couple, Zacharias and Elizabeth—a priest with a wife. I have often marveled why the Church of Rome thinks it wrong that priests should be married when it is evident that the priests under the Law were so. The priests had grown so numerous that there was not room for them all to work at the Temple at one time. They were divided into 24 divisions and Zacharias would, therefore, come up to Jerusalem for a fortnight to take his share of the service. Zacharias and Elizabeth were notable for excellence of character—“They were both righteous before God.” Not only did they stand high in the esteem of men, but the great God who reads the hearts of all and sees how they live in secret, reckoned them to be righteous—“They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments”—that is, in the moral precepts of the Law—“and ordinances”—that is in the ceremonial rites—“of the Lord, blameless.”

7-9. *And they had no child because Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well advanced in years. And it came to pass that while he executed the priest’s office before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priest’s office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the Temple of the Lord.* Certain offices of the priest were considered to be more honorable than others and so, to prevent any jealousy, they cast lots as to which they should take in turn. It fell to the lot of Zacharias to burn incense—this did not happen by chance. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord,” and there was a special reason why this good man should stand at the altar at this particular time.

10. *And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the time of incense.* While he, in the inner shrine, was burning incense, the multitudes in the outer courts were engaging in prayer. I think that is a very beautiful symbol—the priest unseen, like the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy of Holies above—and the mass of the people engaged in prayer while the unseen priest is offering the sacred perfume before the altar of Jehovah.

11, 12. *And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.* He was a good man, yet he was troubled at the sight of an angel. Consciousness of sin, even in an outwardly blameless man, makes us all tremble in the presence of anything heavenly. This bright spirit had come fresh from the courts of God. He was a courtier of the heavenly Temple and he had come down, all of a sudden, with a sweet and cheering message for the earthly priest. But the priest “was troubled, and fear fell upon him.” Brothers and Sisters, we cannot know much of Heaven, here below, because it would cause us to tremble. We are as yet unfit for all the glories of that upper state. Good John Berridge wrote—

“And now they range the heavenly plains

***And sing their hymns in melting strains.
And now their souls begin to prove
The heights and depths of Jesus' love.
Ah, Lord, with tardy steps I creep
And sometimes sing, and sometimes weep!
Yet strip me of this house of clay
And I will sing as loud as they.”***

Yes, and so will we—we will be as much at home as the happy saints who dwell in light—when once we are delivered from this hampering flesh and blood!

13. *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard.* The best quietus to fear is answered prayer! If God has heard you, be not you, again, afraid.

13. *And your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name, John.* “The Grace” or, “the gift of God,” so the name, “John,” signifies. And it is a sweet name for anyone to bear. “You shall call his name, John.” I do not think the prayer alluded to here was so much a prayer for a son. If so, I think that Zacharias had long ago left off praying it, and now his old prayers are heard, after he had discontinued them. I think that it alludes, rather, to his prayer for the coming of the Christ, the appearance of the Messiah—that prayer was heard, as we shall see further on.

14, 15. *And you shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.* I do not say that it is the duty of every man to drink neither wine nor strong drink, but I beg every man to notice that if anyone was to be peculiarly consecrated to a holy calling, it was always to be so. “He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.” If there is nothing defiling about wine or strong drink, there is certainly nothing sanctifying about it—and the tendency seems to lie the other way, else it is a strange thing that men dedicated to God were so continually bid to drink neither wine nor strong drink.

15-17. *And he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord, their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.* In the third chapter of this Gospel you will find the record of John beginning to fulfill this prophecy concerning himself.

Luke 3:1-7. *Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the Book of the words of Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.*

Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Does not John the Baptist speak like Elijah? Here are no honeyed phrases to delight the popular ear! The Prophet of the wilderness talks like one who is all on fire with zeal for God and indignation against evil.

8-11. *Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do, then? He answered and said to them, He that has two coats, let him impart to him that has none; and he that has meat, let him do likewise. John was wonderfully practical in his advocacy of a holy charity and benevolence. His words cut against all greed, all hoarding, all hardening of the heart towards our fellow men.*

12, 13. *Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. They were accustomed to gather the taxes unfairly and to increase the rates by oppressing the people, getting, perhaps, twice or even ten times more out of them than they could legally claim! John speaks to the point, does he not?*

14. *And the soldiers, likewise, demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man. Those rough Roman soldiers, as they had conquered the country, were very apt to treat the people as though they were their slaves, so John says to them, “Do violence to no man”—*

14. *Neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. “With your rations, your allowances,” so it runs. They were very apt to be contending for an increase in their pay and to drag civilians before the courts with false accusations unless they chose to give them bribes to let them go. John does not mince matters with any of his hearers—he speaks with wonderful plainness and courage—and therein proves himself to be a true herald of his Master.*

15-18. *And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not, John answered, saying unto them all, I, indeed, baptize you with water; but One mightier than I comes, the laces of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloosen. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.*

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
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***“And Zacharias said unto the angel, How shall I know this?”
Luke 1:18.***

***“Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be?”
Luke 1:34.***

ZACHARIAS and the Virgin Mary were both very dear to God and, therefore, highly honored and greatly favored. The points of likeness between them are many. They were both persons of eminent character, for Zacharias walked blameless in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord and Mary was equally gracious and devout. They were both visited by an angel and were both favored with the prediction of a marvelous birth. Their answers to the angel are our two texts and, at first sight, they seem to be alike. One does not see much less of faith or of unbelief in the one than in the other at first reading them and, yet, Zacharias was blamed and chastened by being made dumb for a season. On the other hand, the Virgin was indulged with an explanation and was afterwards praised by the Holy Spirit who spoke through her cousin Elizabeth and said, “Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

It appears very clear, then, that God can see differences where we see none. Though two persons may act very much alike and from their lips may fall similar expressions, yet their temper and spirit may be widely different. Where you and I would put them together and say, “They are alike,” God sees a difference. While we judge sights and sounds, the Lord weighs the spirits. You must have noticed this in other parts of God’s Word. I will give you two instances in the life of Abraham. Lot was commanded not to look towards Sodom, but his wife, after looking to Sodom, was turned into a pillar of salt. And yet that morning Abraham got up early to the place where he was known to meet with the Lord and it is recorded that he looked toward Sodom.

The very thing which Lot must not do, Abraham may do. It is the same action but, if you think a moment, you can clearly see that the looking back of Lot would mean a lingering desire to return, but the look of Abraham had nothing of that kind in it and could have no evil significance. He was simply looking to the burning cities and admiring with solemn awe the justice of the Most High as he saw the heavens ruddy with flame and afterwards dark with dense clouds, while the smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace. The action was the same *externally*, but widely different in reality. The Lord God does not so much regard our outward acts as the *motives* which direct them and the spirit in which they are performed.

Perhaps a more remarkable instance is that of Abraham and his wife Sarah. When they each received a distinct promise of the birth of Isaac, it is said that Abraham fell upon his face and laughed. And then we read a little farther on, "Sarah laughed within herself." We never find that Abraham was censured for laughing. He laughed rightly. It was the natural expression of a wondering and amazed delight. It was *holy* laughter and he was not censured nor called to account for it. But the Lord said unto him, "Why did Sarah laugh?" Sarah was censured for doing the very thing which in Abraham was quite right and did not need to be corrected!

They both laughed—the one was right, but the other was wrong. Why? Because there was a vital difference between them. Sarah's was the laugh of *unbelief*—she thought it could not be that at her age she should bear a child, her lord also being old. She laughed at the very idea! It seemed altogether too absurd. The mere notion struck her as being perfectly ridiculous and, though a devout woman, she somewhat forgot the reverence due to Him who gave the promise and she laughed, though in a subdued and quiet way, "within herself."

Abraham believed that the Divine promise would be performed and his was the laugh of joy to think that he should see a son born to his beloved Sarah who should be his heir and the inheritor of the Covenant. His soul danced within him with delight because he believed what the Lord had spoken. Yet the two actions outwardly are so exactly similar that if you condemn one, you think you must condemn the other! But God does not, since He sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. We may apply this great Truth of God to ourselves. We all sang the same hymn just now to the same tune—and yet from one it may have been to God's ear music and from another mockery. We closed our eyes just now and bowed our heads in prayer—anyone looking upon us might have supposed us to be all equally accepted—but the Lord knows in whose case the heart was wandering upon the mountains of vanity and in whose case the soul, with all its powers, was crying out unto the living God.

Judge yourselves, Beloved, but never judge yourselves according to the sight of the eyes! And never be satisfied with yourselves because externally everything is correct—because you have passed through the routine of religion and attended to the machinery of the outward form. Do not be content with postures, sounds and looks—the *soul* is the soul of the matter! Look at the heart and cry to God, also, that He would search you and make you clean in the secret parts—and in the hidden parts make you to know wisdom. Otherwise you may stand as God's people do and go in and out of the House of Prayer even as the brightest of the saints do and never be separated from them until the trumpet rings out the Great Tremendous Day and you are sent to the left with the goats to be withered by a curse—while His people on His right hand shall receive the blessing forever!

Let us all remember that there may be an external similarity in apparent right or wrong and yet there may be an inward and a real dissimilarity. It is the *inward* that is the real, not the outward—and the great Judge

will search and try and separate between the precious and the vile—though the vile may seem to be more beautiful than the precious genuine diamond. But now, leaving the general principle, I invite you, dear Friends, to come back to my texts and accompany me in looking at these two persons to see whether there is not a difference perceptible by ourselves. And I think we shall find a great deal more diversity than we had expected. I cannot work out the whole matter in one sermon, but some prominent points will, I hope, interest and profit you.

I. First let us take the case of ZACHARIAS who said, “HOW SHALL I KNOW THIS?” And notice, to begin with, that supposing the two expressions of Zacharias and Mary had been identical, and supposing that they had conveyed the same thoughts, yet if they had *both* been wrong, Zacharias would have been the more faulty of the two, for he was a *priest*—a man set apart by office to study the Word of God and to draw peculiarly near to God on his own account and for the people. Mary was simply a humble village maid. Mary, it is true, was of royal descent, but her family had fallen into obscurity. She was a person of superior mind, but she held no office that could distinguish her from others.

Zacharias, being a priest, was bound to act with a higher degree of faith than Mary, the lowly maiden. The priest’s lips should keep knowledge and teach many. Were not the priests set apart to be instructors of the people, helpers of those that are weak and guides of those who are ignorant and out of the way? They should, therefore, in all things set an example. If Mary had been unbelieving and Zacharias unbelieving—and both unbelieving to the same extent—yet in Zacharias it would have been much worse because his *very* office called upon him to display greater Grace than the humble maiden.

Brothers and Sisters, may I not apply this to myself and to you? Brother ministers, if we are unbelieving, we, in our unbelief, do not sin so cheaply as our people! We have more time to study the Word of God and, therefore, we have, or ought to have, more acquaintance with it. We are more familiar with Divine things and ought to be more richly filled with their faith-creating spirit. If the Lord has been pleased to make us under-shepherds over His people, we are bound to be examples to the flock. Our high position demands of us the exhibition of a greater degree of Divine Grace than we can expect from common Believers, who are God’s dear people, but are not set apart to be leaders.

The same line of argument will apply in due proportion to each servant of our Lord Jesus. According to their measure of Grace, more is expected of some than of others. You, dear Sisters, who teach young people should remember that they watch you and they expect to see in you a bright example. And, what is more, God, who has placed you in the position of teachers, or of mothers, intends that there should be in you, by His Grace, something that others may look up to, that the young beginners may learn from you. Take heed that they never learn unbelief from your doubting! Let them never see in you that worry, that anxiety, that fretful-

ness which denotes the absence of a calm reliance upon God, but let them, whatever they gather from you, learn that which is worth knowing.

And what can be a better lesson than that of faith in God? You who are in the Church, dear Friends, preachers, elders, deacons and instructors of others, see to it that your lives and words do not breed unbelief! Especially do I speak to myself upon this point, for, being much exercised in spirit, I tremble lest I should suggest to any of you doubts and fears, or encourage you in them. Let those of us who are guides of others see to it that we do not dishonor God by mistrust and questioning, for unbelief in us is a glaring fault and God will surely visit it upon us, even if He winks at it in the weak ones of the flock.

Again, in Zacharias' case it was not merely his *office* that distinguished him, but he was a man of years. We read that both he and his wife were "well stricken in years." Now, a man who has had a long experience of the things of God—a man of prayer who has had many answers—a man of trouble who has had many deliverances. A man who has seen the hand of God with him in a long journey through the wilderness of life is expected, by God, to exhibit a far stronger faith than the young people who have but lately learned His name. I speak to many here who are by far my seniors, of whom I may say that they were in Christ before me and they must pardon my saying that they should have more faith than I by reason of their years of constant experience of the Lord's faithfulness.

And I, too, who have known the Lord, now, for a considerable number of years, must never put myself down with those who were converted during the last few months and say that I am to have no more faith than they. Shame upon every one of us if every day does not bring us fresh motives for believing in our Lord! Every hour, indeed, should be filled with arguments for a more complete childlike trust in Him. What? Dear Sister, did the Lord help you in such-and-such a strait? And do you not remember that you said, "I shall never doubt Him again"? And yet you have done so! Ah, how grievous must those doubts be to your gracious Lord!

I know at one time you thought you would never be delivered, but you were mercifully lifted up from the depths—out of six troubles you have been rescued and in seven no evil has touched you! And now that a fresh trial is come, will you not believe your God? Well, if you do not, you will certainly incur very grievous sin and vex the Holy Spirit of God much more than your poor little sister, Mary, would do, if, having only lately known the Savior, she should distrust Him in her first conflicts. Babies in Grace should not doubt, but if they do, their unbelief is not so willful as that of fathers in Israel. If standard bearers faint, it is a sad calamity, and the faintness of poor wounded common soldiers is far less to be deplored.

When aged Zacharias errs in this matter he is more to be blamed than youthful Mary. Those two points are pretty clear, are they not? Furthermore, let us observe that Zacharias had made the birth of a child a subject of prayer, which, I suppose, had not so much as been *thought* of by Mary. Beyond the fact that it was the usual desire of all Hebrew women that they might be the mother of the Messiah, the Virgin had probably

never cast a single thought in the direction in which the angel's salutation conducted her. Assuredly she had never made it a subject of *prayer*, but Zacharias had rightly done so. Read the 13th verse, "The angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son." And yet, though the promise came as a distinct and manifest *answer* to his prayers, Zacharias asked, "How shall I know this?"

Now, this was wrong! It was very wrong. He had been praying for it and when it came, he did not believe it! Ah, Zacharias, you are verily guilty here. If it had come as a surprise altogether, as it did to Mary, there would be some excuse for your doubt. But when it is a reply to your own entreaties—a gracious yielding to intense requests—your unbelieving question is a grievous fault! If, when taken by surprise, Mary had doubted, it would have appeared natural, but for you, Zacharias—for you to whom the angel said, "Your prayer is *heard*"—how do you doubt it? Astonishment at answered prayers is amazement at Divine truthfulness! And what is that but a low idea of the Lord unintentionally discovering itself?

Yet I have sometimes thought that if the Lord wished to surprise His own servants, all He would have to do would be to answer their prayers! He does answer them continually and in consequence you hear one and another say, "Is it not surprising? You see, we met and had a prayer meeting for a certain blessing and the Lord has answered our supplications. How marvelous!" And yet if you sit down in a friend's house, do his children try to astonish you by mentioning cases in which their father kept *his* word? Do they dwell with amazement upon his having spoken the truth? I could wish that the Lord's children would even get as far as that! Alas, they even overlook the majority of the facts which prove His veracity, and slight His faithfulness!

When His people are in a better frame than usual they admit His faithfulness and mention as a great wonder that He heard prayer and fulfilled His Word! Should this be so? Has it come to pass that it is a wonder for God to hear prayer? Have we fallen into such a low state of heart that we think His truthfulness to be a surprising thing? It were far better if we were of the same mind as a good old lady who, when someone said, "Is it not wonderful?" replied, "Well, it is in one way, but it is not in another, for it is just like Him—just like Him." We may well be surprised at the tenderness of His great mercy, but not as though it were a novelty for God to do good and to keep His promise by regarding His people's cries!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we ought to be surprised if the Lord did *not* hear us, seeing that He is the true and faithful, prayer-hearing God. When you and I have had a matter heavily laid upon our hearts and have been before God with it again and again, as doubtless Zacharias had, we should be looking for our Lord's gracious reply. Do we not expect answers to letters which we write to our friends? Why do we not, in like fashion, expect replies to prayer? If God answers us, are we to be so doubtful in mind as even to question the truthfulness of the blessing? If so, we shall be manifestly guilty. If the Lord sends us a mercy in reply to our requests

and we do not believe it, but say, “How shall I know this?” then our unbelief has a peculiar degree of provocation in it and we may expect to be chastened for it. This was the case with Zacharias.

The next point about Zacharias is that he doubted the fact which was announced by the angel in the name of the Lord. He said, “How shall I know this?” Mary did not doubt the fact—she wished to know how *it could be*, but she believed it would be. She believed, for it was said of her, “Blessed is she that believed.” But this good man did *not* believe, for the angel said to Him, “You believe not my words which shall be fulfilled in their season.” Now, Beloved, when it comes to this, that we dare to doubt the promise of God, is it not a very grievous crime? If your child—your own child whom you have loved so long and treated so tenderly—if he should fall into a state of mind in which he did not believe you, his own father—would you not feel it to be peculiarly grievous?

If you were conscious of nothing but love for him. If you were sure that throughout his life you had never broken a promise to him, but had always been as good as your word. If you had repeated your promise again and again and he still said, “Father, I wish I could believe you,” would you not be cut to the heart by such a declaration? The more earnestly he expressed regret at his inability to believe you, the more intense would be your pain. What an awful speech for a son to address to a father—“I wish I could believe you”!

You would grieve in spirit and say inwardly, “What does my boy think of me? What has come over my child that he cannot believe me? It was not an enemy, then I could have borne it—but it is my *child* whom I love who says not only that he does not believe me, but that he would do so if he *could* and finds himself unable to think me true. He speaks in deep earnest and thus I see how thoroughly the cruel feeling possesses him and how desperate is the evil which leads him to mistrust my love.”

Ah, Beloved, I leave your own thoughts, as I must just now leave mine, to peer into the depths of sin which must lie in what we sometimes talk of so flippantly, namely, doubts and fears! They are not the trifles which some men dream them to be—they are hideous profanities of the sacred Truth of God! They are revolting libels upon immaculate goodness! They are horrid blasphemies of infinite love! Shall the good God be thus assailed? Shall His own children thus abuse Him? Your child might doubt you and it might be a trifle to him, but it would be death to you, his father or mother. You would feel it keenly and so you may think that doubts and fears are trifles, but your heavenly Father does not think so—unbelief wounds Him and grieves His Spirit!

Hear what the Lord says—“How long will it be before they believe Me?” Forget not the Apostle’s warning in the third chapter of the Hebrews. “With whom was He grieved 40 years? And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?” Zacharias did not believe and he had to smart for it, as you and I shall if we, when we see a promise written clearly in God’s Word and evidently quite adapted to our case, nevertheless say, “How shall I know this?”

Yet further. The good man Zacharias—for, remember, I am not doubting his Grace, but, on the contrary, I began by saying that he was a very gracious and eminently godly man. He was probably much better than any of us and possibly, in some respects, even more gracious than Mary herself, having a deeper experience, a fuller knowledge, greater courage and many other superior gifts and Graces—although in this point he failed—he doubted his Lord and showed his unbelief by asking for a *sign*, “How shall I know this?” He needed a sign or a token that what the angel spoke was true.

This was not the case with Mary, who sought an *explanation* but not a token. Is it wrong, then, to ask for a token? Assuredly not in all cases, for it may even be sinful *not* to ask for one, as in the case of Ahaz, of whom we read, “Moreover the Lord spoke again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask for a sign of the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And He said, Hear you now, O house of David. Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary God, also?” In the case of Ahaz it was sinful to refuse and in that of Zacharias sinful to request.

Here again I must come back to the remark I started with and remind you that the same thing may be right in one man and wrong in another, according to the *motive*. It is very curious that Abraham used almost identical words with Zacharias, when he said, “How shall I know that I shall inherit this land?” He distinctly asked the Lord for a sign, nor was the request at all grievous to the Lord, for He knew that His servant Abraham asked that sign in all humility and childlike faith. Let me show you at once the difference between Abraham and Zacharias. Zacharias will not believe without a sign—Abraham has *already believed* and waited long for the fulfillment of the promise—and feels that a sign would be comforting to him.

It could in no sense have been said to the great father of the faithful, “Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe,” but some such rebuke might have been directed towards Zacharias. There was conspicuous faith in Abraham and the desire for a token was natural rather than sinful. So was it with Gideon who asked for *many* signs. You see at the very first that Gideon believes and he acts upon his faith. But he trembles because his faith is weak and he asks for signs to strengthen his confidence. Indeed, he did not distrust the Lord at all, but only questioned whether it was the Lord who spoke. Gideon said, “If now I have found grace in Your sight, then show me a sign that You talk with me.”

The question, you see, was not the truthfulness of God, but whether, indeed, if the Lord had spoken! Zacharias, however, asks an altogether unbelieving question, “How shall I know this?” He wants a sign as the condition of his believing. You may very rightly pray, “Lord, show me a token for good,” but you must believe *before* you get the token and you must not let your believing *depend* upon that token. There is a difference—a wide difference between believing first and then asking for some

cheering evidence—and that unbelieving obstinacy which demands signs and wonders and declares, “I will not believe unless I see a token.”

Thomas is an instance of this error when he says, “Except I see in His hand the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe.” His Master bent to his weakness, but He said, and very significant are the words, “Thomas, because you have seen Me you have believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” The chief blessing belongs to you who, whether you have evidences or not, are content to believe your God, taking this Word of God as quite sufficient ground for your confidence without any delights of heart or ecstasies of spiritual visitations! Our God is true even if no wonder is worked and no sign is given. Let us settle this in our hearts and never allow a doubt to intervene. O Holy Spirit, help us in this!

All this together shows that the error of Zacharias was unbelief and his chastisement which he received for it is worthy of our earnest attention. He was chastened for his unbelief because the Lord loved him. His affliction was sent not so much in anger as in love. He had asked for a sign and by a sign was he *chastened*. God often makes us gather the twigs from which He makes the rod with which He scourges us. Our own sins are the thorns which cause us to smart. Zacharias asked for a sign and he gets this sign—“You shall be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because you believe not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.”

For months he shall not be able to speak a single word! But while his mouth is closed to others, it shall be open to himself—that dumb mouth of his shall be preaching to him and saying, “You did not believe what was spoken to you of the Lord, and now you are unable to repeat it to others, for the Lord will not employ an unbelieving messenger. If you will not believe when God’s angel speaks, you shall not speak, yourself.” Many a dumb Christian, I am afraid, has had his mouth sealed through unbelief. The Lord saves him and gives him much enjoyment, but He denies him utterance because he has such slender faith.

I have no doubt Zacharias was very happy in the prospect of the birth of his child and looked earnestly onward to the day when John, the Prophet of the Highest, should be born, and he should recover speech. But still, it must have been very painful to remain for so long a time in utter silence. How he must have longed to speak or sing! But I have no doubt that many a man is put aside from bearing his testimony through unbelief which he calls diffidence and delicacy. The Lord says, “I shall never use you as a preacher. I shall not make use of you in addressing your fellow men. I shall not help you to bring men to Christ in private conversation because you have so little faith. You have doubted Me and now you must be dumb for a season.” I hope that, if this is the case with any, your silence will soon end. Lord, open their lips and their mouths shall show forth Your praise!

Dear Friend, I hope the Lord will unloose your tongue by-and-by, for if you are in a right state of heart it will be a very painful thing to you not to

be able to declare what the Lord has done for your soul. But it is so with some—they are dumb because they believe not. Moreover, Zacharias had the further affliction of being deaf at the same time. How do I know that he was deaf? That is pretty clear, because when his child was born, it is recorded in the 62nd verse that “they made signs to his father how he would have him called.” And, of course, if he had been able to hear there would have been no need to use signs. But he could not hear any more than he could speak—he suffered the double affliction of being deaf and dumb—no small cross to one who had such gifts of utterance as he showed in his song of praise!

It is remarkable that he could not hear anything, but it is also instructive. I have known Christians who, when they would not believe the promise, have become very deaf, spiritually. You say, “What do you mean? How are they deaf?” Listen and you will hear them say, “I cannot hear Mr. So-and-So.” It is the same minister whom they *used* to hear with pleasure—the same man—and God blesses him to others as much as before. How is this? Others are drinking in the Word, but these poor deaf people say, “We do not know how it is, but we cannot hear our pastor.” No, you did not believe and, therefore, you cannot hear. You did not receive his message. You did not rejoice in it and now you cannot hear it.

That is a dreadful sort of deafness! If you suffer from a physical deafness you can buy a horn, or you can go to some skillful aorist who, perhaps, may help you. Moreover, you can read if you cannot hear. But if you get a *spiritual* deafness, I do not know a worse chastisement that can come upon you, nor one that will make you more mischievous to others. O Beloved, believe the good Word of the Lord! With meekness receive the engrafted Word and do not question it and provoke the Lord, lest, haply, because you did not accept the Word as the Word of God, the time shall come when you will not be able to hear it and your profiting will utterly depart! And the very voice that once was music to you will have no charms at all and the blessed Truth of God which once made your heart leap for joy will cease to have the slightest influence upon you.

Mary was not sentenced either to be silent or to be deaf, for she believed the Word of the Lord which was spoken to her by the angel. O that we, also, by a full obedience of faith may escape the penalties which surely attach themselves to unbelief! We must sorrow, but there can be no reason for increasing it by our own fault—and we may readily do so. While on the other hand, faith brings rest and peace. So much concerning Zacharias.

II. Now let us turn our eyes to MARY. Mary used much the same language and yet she spoke not after the same fashion. She asked of the angel, “HOW SHALL THIS BE?” In looking at her, first, it is to be noticed that she believed what the angel said. It was not “How shall I know this?” but, in effect, her language was, “I believe it. How shall it be?” There is no unbelief in the question. Of that we are sure, because not long after she is praised by her intelligent cousin, Elizabeth, who declares that, “blessed is

she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

She notably believed. She asked for no sign. She sought no token whatever. The angel’s voice sufficed her. The still small voice of Divine love within her soul was enough. She believed and only asked to be instructed in the matter—she needed no sign and seal. She was willing, also, to accept all hazards. I would speak with great delicacy, but to the Virgin, remember, it was a very serious thing to be the mother of our Lord. To this very day the base tongues of infidels have dared to insinuate gross criminality against her who was blessed among women! And she must have known that it was not likely that all would believe what she should and many a hard speech would be uttered concerning her.

Indeed, she might have had fear concerning her espoused husband, himself, who would have put her away had not the Lord shielded her. Joseph behaved nobly, like a believer of the first order, and he deserves to be ranked among the truest of the saints as does the Virgin, herself, who well deserves to be exceedingly commended by all who can appreciate pure, delicate and yet heroic faith. Whatever there might be of hazard, so great was the honor that was put upon the Virgin that she does not appear to have felt the slightest hesitation, but said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to your word.”

I think her question may be attributed, in part, to surprise—to inevitable amazement! And what we say to the Lord when we are naturally surprised under the greatness of His mercy will not be weighed by Him letter by letter, nor shall we be judged for it, though if very closely examined it might appear like unbelief. The Lord knows His children’s frame and remembers that we are dust. I hope that many a word which drops from the child of God when he is in pain, when he is distressed as Job was on the dunghill, is allowed to blow away with the breath which utters it. How very little did the Lord say to Job about the naughty words which, in his petulance, he had allowed to escape, for, after all, he was grandly patient.

And so, even if there had been something of unbelief in these words of Mary, which there was not, yet they would have been viewed by the Lord as the fruit of surprise at the marvelous and unexpected mercy for which she had not even prayed. There was no unbelief in her language, but there was great wonder, surprise and admiration at so great a gift. How should this come to her? How should she be so highly favored? Her soul seemed to say, “Why this to *me*? That I, so humble and obscure—a maiden whose rank and race have been altogether forgotten—should be the mother of the Savior after the flesh, the mother of His humanity by whom humanity is to be redeemed?” She was full of wonder and *then* she began to enquire.

There is the point. She wanted to know how it would be. There was no wrong in that desire. There was no unbelief worthy of rebuke. She believed the surpassing promise and only wished to know how it could be performed. There might readily enough be unbelief in such an enquiry, but not necessarily so. You and I may say, as the Israelites did in the wilderness when God had promised to give them flesh to eat, “Shall the

flocks and herds be slain?” That was unbelievably asking how it should be. But yet you may ask how a promise shall be fulfilled without any mistrust at all. No, your very faith may raise the enquiry! I know my soul asks again and again many questions of my Lord which He answers to my soul. He would not have answered had they been sinful questions.

We ought to enquire about a great many things—we should be sacredly inquisitive. We should say, How is it He has chosen us? For our Lord replies, “Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” But, still, why me? Why me? You may ask that question, for holy gratitude dictates it. And how is it that He could redeem us with the blood of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord? And how is it that He renews us? And how will it be that He will perfect us? And how can it be that we shall have a mansion in Heaven and shall become like our Lord? And how is it that we shall be raised up? With what body shall we come? Many a question we may ask, which if not asked in unbelief, will have an answer, or will serve to increase our reverent gratitude.

But now notice, concerning Mary, that while Zacharias was the doubter and was treated as such, Mary was the enquirer and was so dealt with of the Lord. See the difference in the treatment of the two. For first, Mary did not ask for a sign but she got one—and it was one of the most pleasant that could possibly come to her, for it was her cousin Elizabeth! She was to be her sign. Behold, she that had been barren shall come to meet her and comfort her. Brothers and Sisters, the Lord knows how to give you signs if you do not wish for them! And I believe that those have the most tokens for good who do *not* ask for them but are content to take their Father’s Word without any confirmatory sign.

And then, there was another thing with regard to her. She was graciously instructed. Zacharias asked for a sign and he had it. She asked for instruction and she had it. The angel paused awhile and said to her, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you. Therefore, also, that holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.” If you will meekly and believingly ask of your Lord to be taught concerning Divine things, He will give you His Spirit who shall lead you into all Truth and instruct you and make you wise unto salvation.

Now, the conclusion is this—first of all, let us not do as Zacharias did. Dear Friend, are you, at this moment, questioning any promise? Are you saying, “How shall I know this?” Cease from doubting the Infallible Word and rest in the Lord, His Holy Spirit enabling you to believe! On the other hand, are you a seeking sinner and does Christ declare that whoever looks to Him shall be saved, and that whoever believes in Him is not condemned? Do not ask for any sign, but believe Him! He, Himself, is sign enough! He is God and yet Man—the bleeding Lamb, the Sacrifice for sin. Believe Him! Believe Him! Believe Him and you shall have the blessing!

And you, dear child of God, if you have a text of Scripture, a promise which evidently suits your case—which meets your trouble—do not say, “How shall I know this?” When the Spirit says it, it is enough that it is in

the Word. Whatever the Scripture states, be sure of it, for if all the wise men in the world were to prove it, it would not be proven one bit more! And if they were all to *disprove* it, it would be none the less sure! If I were to see a thing to be true which God had declared in His Word, I would not believe my eyes so well as I would believe His Word—at least, I ought not to do so. This is where we ought to stand—all the world may deceive, but God cannot! Let God be true and every man a liar.

If you will come and trust Him in this way you shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Your leaf shall not wither and you shall not know when drought comes. If your walk through life is the walk of faith, as Abraham's and Enoch's were, you shall have a grand life—grandly full, eternal and Christly—but if you doubt Him you shall not be established. The unbeliever shall be as the rolling thing before the whirlwind, as the sear leaf that falls from the tree and as the heath of the desert that knows not when good comes. May the Holy Spirit save us, Brothers and Sisters, from unbelief, and give us rest in the promise of God!

And now, secondly, let us with all our hearts imitate Mary in being enquirers—often asking, desiring to know and looking deep and searching—for into the promises of God we cannot look too closely, since “these things the angels desire to look into.” You ought to realize the promise as to be sure that it means what it says and then you will naturally begin to ask how it will come to pass. Only strive to keep out all unbelief from your enquiry and say, “I know in my heart how it can be, for nothing is impossible with God.”

There is our answer to all questions—“With God all things are possible.” If I enquire, “How can He deliver me?” Nothing is impossible with God. “How can He keep me to the end?” Nothing is impossible with God. “How can He preserve me amid persecution? How can He keep me from temptation and preserve me from the world, the flesh and the devil?” Nothing is impossible with God! Fling yourself upon Omnipotence and you shall be strong! May the Holy Spirit help you to do this for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE JUDGMENT UPON ZACHARIAS

NO. 3495

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

“You shall be dumb and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because you believe not My words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.”
Luke 1:20.

UNBELIEF is everywhere a great sin and a grievous mistake. Unbelief has proved the ruin of those countless multitudes who, having heard the Gospel, rejected it, died in their sins and have been consigned to the place of torment—and await the fiercer judgment of The Last Day. I might ask the question concerning this innumerable host, “Who slew all these?” The answer would be, “Unbelief.” And when unbelief comes into the Christian’s heart, as it does at times—for the truest Believer has his times of doubt—even Abraham, the father of the faithful, sometimes had his misgivings! That unbelief does not assail his thoughts without withering his joys and impairing his energies. There is nothing in the world that costs a saint so dearly as doubt. If he disbelieve his God, he most assuredly robs himself of comfort, deprives himself of strength, and does himself a real injury. The case of Zacharias may be a lesson to the Lord’s people. It is to them I am going to speak. Zacharias is a striking example of the ills a good man may have to suffer as the result of his unbelief. In reviewing these, we mark—

I. THE CHARACTER AND POSITION OF ZACHARIAS.

Here we cannot fail to discover some profitable lesson. He was undoubtedly *a Believer*. He is said, in the sixth verse, to have been righteous before God. No man ever obtained such a reputation except by faith. “The just shall live by faith.” No other righteousness than that which is faith is of any esteem in God’s account. Such was the righteousness of Abraham and such was the righteousness of all the saints before the advent of our Redeemer. Such, too, has been the standard ever since. Zacharias evidently was a real Believer. Yet for all that, when the angel appeared to him, and God gave him the promise of a son, he was amazed, bewildered, incredulous and could not credit, but only question the announcement. “How shall I know that these things shall be?”

Nor was he merely a genuine Believer. He *was well instructed and greatly enlightened*, for he was a priest, and, as a priest, he was consi-

dered righteous before God, and blameless, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. That he was well instructed in the Word of God is undeniable. He could not otherwise have discharged his duty, for the priest's lips must keep knowledge and he must teach men. Being proficient in the one, and competent for the other, ignorance offered him no excuse. Moreover, as a man of years, he was probably to be classed among the experienced saints of his time. He had borne the burden and heat of the day and received proof upon proof of the abundant mercy of God. Now mark this. For any of us to doubt, who have been justified by faith is a shameful delinquency. For those to doubt who have, in addition to their first convictions, a thousand confirmations of the Truths of God they have embraced, who are acquainted with the Covenant and its rich inventory of promises, who are deeply taught in the things of God—for such to doubt involves a higher degree of guilt! I do not think that had Zacharias been a mere babe in Grace, or an inexperienced stripling, his unbelief would have met with so stern a rebuke. It was because he was a venerable priest, one thoroughly schooled in sacred Truth, a man who for many years instructed the people of Israel in the oracles of God, that it became a crying evil for him to say, "How shall I know this?" when the angel told him of his prayer being heard, and of the manner of answer the Lord would vouchsafe him.

The high office that Zacharias held as a priest caused him to be *looked up to*. Hence his conduct was more narrowly watched and his example had a wider influence. On a similar account we have need, all of us in our several spheres, to consider the effect of our actions upon others. The higher a man's position, the greater his responsibility—and in the event of any delinquency, the graver his offense. For you to disbelieve, my dear Brother, who is at the head of a household, is worse than a personal infirmity—it is a violation of duty to your family. And you, dear Friend, who preach the Gospel, for you to disbelieve, who are looked upon by many as an advanced Christian, as a mature saint whose example may be safely followed by those who listen to your counsels—this is a great and a crying evil, whereby you dishonor the Lord. I pray God that your conscience may be tenderly sensitive and that you may be awakened to a sense of the dishonor you bring to Him by your faithlessness.

How *peculiarly favored* Zacharias was! An angel of the Lord appeared unto him. Not to any of the other priests, when they were offering incense, did such a heavenly visitor come. And what welcome tidings he brought! It was a wonderful message that he was to be the father of a child great in the sight of the Lord, one who should minister in the spirit and power of Elijah, and become the forerunner of the Messiah! This surely was a signal instance of Divine Favor. And mark this, Beloved, our God is very jealous of those whom He highly favors. You cannot have privileged communications from the Lord, or be admitted into close com-

munion with Him, without finding that He is a jealous God. The nearer we draw to Him, the more hallowed our sense of His Presence will be. But to doubt His Word, or question the fulfillment of His promise when He speaks kindly to us, must incur His censure. I speak after the manner of men—we do not expect from a stranger the esteem which we ought to merit from our servants. But our friends, who know us better than servants, ought to trust us more implicitly. And yet beyond common friendship in the near relation and tender attachment of a wife to her husband, the most unqualified confidence should be reposed. Even so, my Brothers and Sisters, if you and I have ever been permitted to lean our heads on Jesus' bosom, if we have sat down at His banquets and His banner over us has been love, if we have been separated from the world by peculiar fellowship with Christ and have had choice promises given us, we cannot, like Zacharias, ask, "How shall I know," without grieving the Holy Spirit of God and bringing upon ourselves some sad chastisement as the result!

What *soothing comfort had just been administered* to Zacharias by the angel of the Lord! Was not the manner of the salutation fitted to allay terror and inspire him with trust? The troubled thoughts that perplexed him and the fear that fell upon him when the angel appeared standing at the right hand of the altar, met with no rebuke. If it was natural that so unknown a vision should startle him, there was a gentle sympathizing tenderness in the angel's address that might well have stilled the throbbing of his heart! "Fear not, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard." And so is it with us when the consolations of God have been neither few nor small, and when His good will towards us has been pointedly expressed—does it not make doubt and questioning more inexcusable? Do we not thereby aggravate the sin? Some of us have lived in the very bosom of comfort. Precious promises have been brought home to our souls. We have eaten of the marrow and the fatness, we have drunk the wines on the lees well refined. We are no strangers to the blessing of His eternal and unchanging love, or to the light of His Countenance, which they prove who find Grace in His eyes. Oh, if we begin to doubt after these discriminating love tokens, what apology can we offer? How can we hope to escape from the chastening rod?

Moreover, *the misgivings that Zacharias betrayed relate to the very subject on which his supplications were offered*. It was in response to his own petition that the angel said to him, "Your prayer is heard." I marvel at his faith that he should persevere in prayer for a blessing which seemed, at his own and his wife's age, to have been out of the course of nature and beyond the domain of hope! But I marvel a great deal more that when the answer came to *that very prayer*, Zacharias could not believe it! So full often is it with us—nothing would surprise some of us more than to receive an answer to some of our prayers! Though we believe in the efficacy of prayer, at times we believe so feebly that when the answer comes, as

come it does, we are astounded and filled with amazement! We can scarcely think of it as a purpose of God—it seems rather to us like a happy coincidence. Surely this adds greatly to the sin of unbelief! If we have been asking for mercy without expecting it, and pleading promises while harboring mistrust, every prayer we have offered has been only a repetition of our secret unbelief—and it is only God’s faithfulness that brings our inconsistency to light!

One other reflection is suggested by the narrative. *Zacharias appears to have staggered at a promise which others, whom we might well imagine to have been weaker in faith than himself, implicitly believed.* The veteran falters where a babe in Grace might have taken courage! And is it not always a scandal if any of us who have been conspicuously favored of God are ready to halt, while our feeble Brothers and Sisters are animated and encouraged? No dubious thought seems to have crossed the mind of Elizabeth, no incredulous expression fell from her lips. She said, “Thus has the Lord dealt with me.”

This case was the very opposite of that of Abraham and Sarah. There Abraham believed, but Sarah doubted—here the wife believes in the face of her husband’s scruples. In like manner, Mary, that humble village maiden, accepts with simple faith the high and holy salutation with which she was greeted. She just asks a natural question, and that being answered, she replies, “Be it unto me according to your Word.” Her surprise was soon exchanged for joy and, by-and-by, she begins to sing with a loud voice, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” Not a little remarkable is this opening Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke! Woman, who had been in the background through long preceding generations, seems suddenly to take a foremost place! Zacharias and Joseph stand in doubt, while Elizabeth and Mary exultingly believe. And who knows but I may be addressing some poor woman here who, in the depth of affliction, bodily suffering and poverty, nevertheless rejoices in God with all her heart? But without a doubt, I am now speaking to many a man who is vexed with trifling cares, murmurs bitterly because of petty annoyances and distrusts his God when clouds come over the sky so that he sees not his way. Shame on our unbelief! Think shame of yourselves because of it, I pray you. Never does it disgrace us more than when the weaklings of the Lord’s family put us to the blush by the simplicity and sincerity of their faith. The character and position of Zacharias may furnish a striking moral, but I do urgently entreat each Christian to point the keen edge of criticism at himself and consider how much he is personally to blame for his own unbelief. Let us now proceed to investigate—

II. THE FAULT OF ZACHARIAS.

Why this perilous wavering at that privileged hour? His fault was that *he looked at the difficulty.* “I am an old man,” he said, “and my wife is well stricken in years.” And while he looked at the difficulty, he would

gladly suggest a remedy—he wanted a sign! “How shall I know this?” It was not enough for him that God had said so—he needed some collateral evidence to guarantee the truth of the Word of the Lord! This is a very common fault among really good people. They look for a sign. I have often trembled in my own soul when I have felt an inclination thus to tempt the Lord by looking for some minute circumstance to verify a magnificent promise. When I have thought, “Hereby shall I know whether He does hear prayer or not,” a cold shiver has passed over me—the shudder has gone through my soul that ever I should think of challenging the truth of God’s Word—when the fact is so certain! To us who have full often cried unto the Lord in our distresses and been delivered out of our troubles, to raise such a question is indeed ungrateful. For a child of God who habitually prays to his Father in Heaven, to look upon His faithfulness as a matter of uncertainty is to degrade himself and to dishonor his Lord! Yet there is no denying the tendency and disposition among us to want a sign. As we read a prophecy of the future, we crave a token in the present. If the Lord were pleased to give us a sign, or if He told us to ask for a sign, we would be quite right in attaching a high importance thereto, but for us to doubt a plain promise and, therefore, ask for a sign, is to sin against the Lord! Sometimes we have wanted signs in spiritual things. Meet and proper is it for us to rejoice in the true delights of fellowship with Christ, but it ill becomes us to make our feelings a kind of test of our acceptance, or to say, “I will not believe God if He does not indulge me with certain manifestations of Grace—unless He gives me the sweetmeats I crave, I will be sulky and sullen, and refuse to eat the children’s bread.” Why, such conduct is willful and wicked! It is weak and utterly inexcusable! Yet how many of us have been guilty of this folly? Now, as Zacharias stood upon the threshold of the Gospel dispensation, and he was the first among those who heard the glad tidings to express unbelief, it was necessary that he should be made an example of.

God would show at the very outset, even before John the Baptist was born, that unbelief could not be tolerated nor should it go unchastened. Therefore, His servant Zacharias, must, as soon as he had asked for a sign, have such a sign as would make him suffer for months to come—constrain him to be sorry that he had ever dared to proffer the request! Oh, Beloved, is our faith still so weak, and our experience still so contracted, that we cannot yet trust our God? Twenty years have we known Him. Has He been a wilderness to us? Have His mercy and truth ever failed us in time of need? Shall all His tender dealings with us count for nothing? Do you think so lightly of the gift of His Son, the gift of the Holy Spirit, of the dally Providence which has guarded you, and of the hourly benediction which has been vouchsafed to you, that you would gladly put aside these unfailing benefits from your grateful remembrance while you indulge in some paltry whim and tempt the Lord your God by your mistrust? That be far from any of us! We would rather take up the position

of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who, when arraigned before Nebuchadnezzar, and adjudged to be thrown into the furnace of fire, said, "Our God is able to deliver us. But," they added, "if not (though He should do nothing of the kind), nevertheless be it known unto you, O King, we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." That is the spirit in which we ought to walk before God—"Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him."

What if He does not spare my mother's precious life? What if He does not preserve my child from the ravages of the fatal epidemic? What if He takes away the desire of my eyes with a stroke? What if my business should cease to thrive? What if my health fails and my strength decays? What if I am dishonored by the scandal of my neighbors? Shall I, therefore, cast off my allegiance to God, or betray my trust in Him? Am I to engage in rebellion like this? Not flood nor flame could quench or extinguish His love to me! Shall anxiety or tribulation, disappointment or disaster sever my heart from devotion to Him? No, God give me Grace to see my cattle destroyed, and my goods swept away, and my children cut off in their prime, and to hear cruel taunts from the wife of my bosom—to be covered with sore boils and to sit on a dunghill and scrape myself with a potsherd and find my best friends miserable comforters—and yet, in the midst of accumulated distresses, to be able to say, "I know that my Redeemer lives! He has not failed to deliver me up to now, and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God! Though the fig tree should not blossom, though the flocks and herds are cut off, yet will I trust in the Lord and glory in the God of my salvation." If true to our high profession, the Christian's faith should not borrow its hue from the circumstances by which he is surrounded. To hanker after signs that a promise shall be fulfilled is obviously to show distrust of the Promiser. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit." So shall you be restrained from asking for a petty sign to justify you in relying on His princely bounty. The Lord keep you from this great transgression! We pass on to observe—

III. THE PENALTY ZACHARIAS INCURRED.

His morbid propensity was followed by *a mortifying punishment*. He had doubted and he became dumb—and as the narrative clearly shows us, he was likewise deaf. Such was his chastisement, but it was not sent in anger—but in God's own Covenant Love. What a salutary medicine! Although bitter to the taste, how effective it was! Read his song and you will see the evidence. He had been silent for months—quiet, shut out from all sound, and unable to make any. But well he had occupied his months of seclusion. He had searched the Prophets—do you see that? He had been musing much upon the Coming One—do you see that? Deep humility had taken the place of arrogant presumption. He was bowed down before the Majesty of God, yet at the same time full of peace and

blissful hope! Thus he looked into the glorious future. Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are prone to doubt, this sickness of the mind will require a strong corrective! Very likely God will give you some sharp medicine, but it shall work for your good. As His child, He will not chasten you so as to injure you, but He will chasten you so as to benefit you. I do not think children generally court the rod, however beneficial it may be, and yet I am quite sure there is no wise child of God who would not shrink from the graver ills which render such discipline essential to his soul's health.

See how judgment *was tempered with mercy*. The punishment sent to Zacharias was not so severe as it might have been. Instead of being struck deaf and dumb, he might have been struck dead! As I read this passage, I wondered that God has not struck me deaf and dumb when I have spoken unbelieving words—when I have been depressed in spirit and spoken unadvisedly with my lips. Oh, had the Lord been angry with me, and said, “If that is your witness about Me, you shall never speak again.” That would have been most just and I might have been a mournful instance of His indignation against His unbelieving servants! He has not dealt so with me—glory be to His name!

And this chastisement *did not invalidate the promise*. The Lord did not say, “Well, Zacharias, as you don't believe it, your wife, Elizabeth, shall not have a son. There shall be a John born, but he shall not come to your house.” Oh, no, that is a grand passage—“If we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” The promise still stands. God does not take advantage of our unbelief to cry off and say, “I will give you no blessings because you doubt Me”—no, but having said it, He does it and His Word does not return unto Him void! Even the trembling, doubting children, though they get the rod, get the blessing, too—and the promise is fulfilled, though the father is dumb when the blessing comes. Very painful, indeed, was his chastisement. One would not like to be deaf and dumb for a day—but to be deaf and dumb for the space of nine months must have been a very painful trial to this man. Moreover, he could not bless the people! He could not speak a word. He could not instruct the people—he was useless for that part of the priest's work—and when the song went up within the hallowed walls of the Temple, he could not hear it. He might know by signs that they were singing a hallelujah, yet his ears could not catch its grateful strains! That poor tongue of his was silent. He could not add a note to the volume of praise that went up to the God he loved! It must have been mournful to him to have no prayer in the family which he could hear, and in which he could join—and to be as good as dead for all practical purposes. Now I am afraid there are many Believers who have had to suffer something like this, for many days, on account of their unbelief. I think I can point out some who are unable to hear the Gospel as they once did many years ago. A friend said that he could not hear me preach. I said to him, “Buy a horn.”

“No,” he said, “it is not your voice—I can hear that, but I don’t enjoy it.” My reply was, “Perhaps that is my fault, but I am far from sure that it is not your own.” I fear, in such cases, it is quite as often the hearer’s fault as the preacher’s fault. At any rate, when others profit and our judgment approves, though our hearts find no refreshment, there is reason to suspect that in the dullness of our senses we are compelled to bear chastisement for our unbelief. You go where others go and find no solace. You hear what edifies and comforts them, but there is no cheer for you. You are deaf—your ears are closed to what the Lord says. Very often it has happened, I fear, to some here, that, for lack of faith, they have lost their speech. Time was when they could tell of the Lord’s goodness, but they seem silent now. They could sing once, but now their harps are hung on the willows. As they get with their companions, they seem as if they have lost all their pleasant conversation. If they try the old accustomed strings of the time-worn harp, the ancient skill is gone. They cannot praise God as once they did—and all because on one occasion, when the promise was clear before their eyes, they challenged and mistrusted it! They could not rely upon their God! Little do we know how many Fatherly chastisements come upon us as the result of our unbelief.

The lessons I gather, and with which I conclude, are these—First, if any of you, Beloved, are weak in faith, do not be satisfied about it. Cry to God! Our God deserves better homage of us than a weak, small faith can render Him. He deserves to be trusted with such confidence as a child gives his parent. Ask Him to increase your faith. And you who have faith, oh, keep it jealously, exercise it habitually—pray to the Lord to preserve it! Never begin to walk according to the sight of the eyes. Confer not with flesh and blood. Don’t come down from that blessed height of simple confidence in God, but ask that you may live there and no longer doubt. The Church needs Believers to believe for her, and to pray for her. “He that wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” Are you strong in faith? Be you stronger still! Are you weak in faith? Be you strong!

But let the unbeliever, the utter unbeliever, tremble! If a good man, a saved man, a noble and a blameless man was, nevertheless, for months struck dumb for unbelief, what will become of you who have no faith at all? He who believes not is condemned already because he has not believed on the Son of God! To you, unbeliever, no angel Gabriel will appear, but the Destroying Angel awaits you! What shall be your fearful chastisement? You will be silent—it will be eternal. Oh, you shall stand silent at the Judgment Seat of Christ, unable to offer any excuse for your rebellion and unbelief! Unbelief will destroy the best of us—faith will save the worst of us! He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has eternal life—he that believes not (whatever else his apparent excellences) will assuredly perish! Faith, faith! This is the priceless saving thing to everyone

of us. The gift is yours to believe. The Grace is yours to inherit the righteousness of faith. The joy is yours to believe in Jesus Christ with all your hearts. The triumph is yours to believe now to the saving of your souls! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 3; 4:1-9.**

HEBREWS 3.

Verse 1. *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.* Would God we considered Him more! He is supremely worthy of our perpetual consideration from all points of view. And the more you consider Him, the more you may, for there is a depth and breadth about His wondrous Personality, His work and His offices well worthy of our deepest thought and admiring worship! Holy Brothers and Sisters, partakers of a heavenly calling—we may well consider Him.

2-4. *Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house. For this Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who has built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by some man; but He that built all things is God.* The translators were obliged to supply the word, *Man*, and yet it is not correct. It is only half the matter—for behold, Christ is God and Man in one ever blessed Person and, therefore, was He counted worthy of more glory than Moses.

5, 6. *And Moses verily was faithful in all His house, as a servant, for testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ, as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.* We are the house in which He dwells with delight—in which He finds comfort and rest! We are the household over which He rules and in which He is the delight and the joy of us all. Oh, may our Church always be such a house, so well ordered, that when the Lord comes into it—no, whenever He dwells in it—He may not be grieved in His own house! Whatever trouble a man has, he hopes to find solace at home. And so let the House of God be the House of Jesus—the place where there is peace, obedience, love, holiness!

7-9. *Therefore (as the Holy Spirit says, today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted Me, tried Me and saw My works forty years.* That was a house in which it was hard to dwell. It had been Moses' prayer, "if Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up from here." And the curtains had been spread for God's abode and there was the Holy Place. But, oh, their provocations made it an uneasy house for the Lord of the house, which ultimately He left, tearing its veil from

the top to the bottom as He left it, for it was finished and He had done with it!

10. *Therefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways.* They do err—they did always err in their heart. God is very tender to errors of judgment—errors of the head. But to err in the *heart*—this is the heart of erring and very provoking to the Most High. And for it always to be so after having tasted the bitter fruit of erring—after having known God’s anger on account of previous errors—oh, this was sad! “They do always err in their heart.” The foundation of sin often lies, however, in ignorance—“They have not known My ways.” Ignorance can never be of any benefit to us. “That the soul be without knowledge is not good.” But ignorance of God is the constant course of the errors of the heart! “All your children shall be taught of the Lord,” is a very gracious promise, and where it is carried out, the errors are rectified by the Grace of God!

11. *So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into my rest).* What a dreadful warning this is to us! If God has had 40 years’ patience with you, take heed, Sinner, take heed, lest He swear in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest, for your entrance into that rest depends upon His good will and pleasure—He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion! If, then, you provoke Him to swear that you shall not enter into His rest, into that rest you never can enter, for then the gates of Hell are opened for you and the gates of Heaven fast locked against you! Beware, then, lest you provoke Him.

12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* That is the thing that provokes God—unbelief—not so much the unbelief of the head, as the unbelief of the heart, when the heart will not yield to the plan of salvation, when men want to be saved by their own works, or else are indifferent altogether about whether they are saved or not! It is heart-unbelief that damns men! It is heart-faith that is the means of salvation! With the heart man believes unto righteousness, but heart-unbelief leads to and seals his ruin!

13. *But exhort one another daily.* In opposition to your always erring, always be exhorting—and you cannot do that with any face unless you are always watching that you do not err, yourselves! But when walking near to God, you exhort one another, it is well. “Exhort one another daily.”

13. *While it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* If sin were to come to us labeled as sin, I trust we would reject it. But there is a deceitfulness of sin. It sometimes comes as a necessary action. We think that wisdom demands that we should sin a little, sometimes, to avoid some great evil—and in this way the soul gets hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Oh, if the devil would come in

the shape of a devil, he would do little mischief, but he assumes the fashion of an angel of light—and there it is that he causes us so much sin and sorrow.

14. *For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.* It is not true that one act of faith is all that is required—unless you will consider that one act to be continuous throughout life. If a man were once a Believer, and if it were possible to cease to be so, then, of course, he is ruined. But the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints speaks not on that wise, but it says that he who is a Believer shall continue so—that he who is right with God shall abide so even to the end—and unless it is so, we are not partakers of Christ at all! We are made partakers of Christ if we “hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”

15, 16. *While it is said, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke.* There are many such and there are no sinners who provoke God so much as those who hear the Gospel! A man who never hears the Gospel at all may provoke God, but the man that sins after he has heard it again and again, and again—and has the sound of it ringing in his ears—provokes God with a sevenfold degree of provocation!

16. *Indeed was it not all that came out of Egypt with Moses?* No, only two. Yes, but the Lord will not forget two. There were only a few—a mere handful—in Sodom, but the Lord would not consume them with the wicked. They were brought out of it. And so here, if there are only two, the Holy Spirit takes care to be very accurate in the counting of God’s elect ones and He says, “Indeed, was it not all that came out of Egypt with Moses?” If you are one of a family, and two of a city, He will take you and bring you into Zion. You may be in so great a minority that in all your acquaintances there may not be one godly person—yet the Holy Spirit will not take the matter in the lump, but He will choose you out—and mark you out and distinguish you. Do you not notice how careful He was when He spoke about Judas—the good Judas? He says, “Not Iscariot.” No, no! He will not have him mistaken for that traitor! He guards the names of His people, each one of them, if there is but one—or two, if there are but two. “Indeed was it not all that came out of Egypt with Moses?” God has an election according to Grace. Doubtless there are some here now who will no longer provoke God, but who, constrained by Sovereign Love, will throw down all the weapons of their rebellion and yield themselves up to Him! May it be your case. May it be your case, Sinner, even at this moment!

17. *But with whom was He grieved forty years; was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?* How He speaks of them and calls them “carcasses”! He never speaks of His children so! And you remember that in the Old Testament the unredeemed man is comparable to the ass. “You shall not redeem him; you shall break his

neck.” But the redeemed man is comparable to the sheep. Valuable property is in him, and God esteems him. “Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness.”

18, 19. *And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.* It is those who believe not who have God’s curse! If you do not rest upon Christ as Your salvation, you, too, shall hear God swear that you shall not enter into His rest!

HEBREWS 4.

1. *Let us therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* If you avoid the very seeming of it, you will avoid the thing, itself. Oh, that we were careful about this—that there was nothing that should give any reasonable fear to those who observed us, or to ourselves when we search our hearts, lest we should not enter into this rest!

2. *For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* It must be mixed with faith. There are many drugs that are of no value till they are mixed with something else—and the Word of God preached becomes of no value to a soul until it is mixed with faith in them that hear it.

3. *For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*

I leave out the intermediate words for the time being. “There is a rest.”

9. *There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.*

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

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

“HE SHALL BE GREAT”

NO. 1760

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 2, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

Being his last sermon before his journey to the South of France.

**“He shall be great.”
Luke 1:32.**

Strictly speaking, I suppose these words refer to the human Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is as to His humanity that Christ was born of Mary. The context runs thus—“Behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” The angel of the Lord thus spoke concerning the Manhood of “that Holy Thing” that should be born of the favored virgin by the overshadowing of the power of the Highest.

As to His Divinity, we must speak concerning Him in another style than this. But, as a Man, He was born of the virgin and it was said to her before His birth, “He shall be great.” The Man, Christ Jesus, stooped very low. In His first estate He was not great; He was very little when He was upon His mother’s breast. In His later estate He was not great, but despised, rejected and crucified! Indeed, He was so poor that He had nowhere to lay His head and He was so cast out by the tongues of men that they called Him a “fellow,” mentioned Him among drunken men and wine-bibbers—and even accused Him of having a devil and being mad! In the esteem of the great ones of the earth, He was an ignorant Galilean of whom they said, “We know not where He is.”

His life binds up more fitly with the lowly annals of the poor than with the aristocracy or whatever stood for that in Caesar’s day. In His own time His enemies could not find a word base enough to express their contempt of Him. He was brought very low in His trial, condemnation and suffering. Who thought Him great when He was covered with bloody sweat, or when He was sold at the price of a slave, or when a guard came out against Him with swords, lanterns and torches, as if He had been a thief? Who thought Him great when they bound Him and led Him to the judgment seat as a malefactor? Or when the cowards smote Him, blindfolded Him and spat in His face? Or when He was scourged, led through the streets bearing His Cross and afterwards hung up between two thieves to die?

Truly He was brought very low and a sword pierced through His mother’s heart as she saw the sufferings of her holy Son. When she knew that He was dead and buried in a borrowed tomb, she must have painfully pondered in her heart the words from Heaven concerning Him and thought within herself, “The angel said He would be great, but who is

made so vile as He? He said that He should be called the 'Son of the Highest,' but, lo, He is brought into the dust of death and men seal His sepulcher and cast out His name as evil."

Still, while I think that our text most fitly applies to the manhood of Christ in the first place, I rejoice to think that—

***"He who on earth as Man was known,
And bore our sins and pains,
Now, seated on the eternal throne,
The God of Glory reigns."***

The very Man who was despised and spat upon, now sits glorious on His Father's Throne! As Man, He is anointed, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." As man, He has been lifted up from the lowest depths and set in the greatest heights to reign forever and ever! Peter and the Apostles testified, "This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses, He being by the right hand of God exalted." Stephen also said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." While we believe that and rejoice in it, we shall be wise never to dissociate the Deity of Christ from His Humanity, for they make up one Person.

I cannot help remarking that in the New Testament you find a disregard of all rigid distinction of the two Natures in the Person of our Lord when the Spirit speaks concerning Him. The two Natures are so thoroughly united in the Person of Christ that the Holy Spirit does not speak of the Lord Jesus with theological exactness, like one who writes a creed, but He speaks as to men of understanding who know and rejoice in the Truth of the one indivisible Person of the Mediator. For instance, we read in Scripture of "the blood of God"—Paul says in Acts 20:28, "Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood."

Now, strictly speaking, there can be no blood of *God*, and the expression looks like a confusion of the two Natures. But this is intentional that we may clearly see that the two Natures are so joined together that the Holy Spirit does not stop to dissect and set out differences. He says of the united Person of our blessed Lord that which is strictly true either of His Humanity or of His Deity. He is called both, "God, our Savior," and, "the Man, Christ Jesus." The combined Natures of the Man, the God, Christ Jesus our Lord, are one Person—and all the acts of either Nature may be ascribed to that one Person. Therefore I, for one, do not hesitate to sing such verses as these—

***"He that distributes crowns and thrones,
Hangs on a tree and bleeds and groans!
The Prince of Life resigns His breath;
The King of Glory bows to death.
Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man, the creature's sin!
See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face."***

We shall not labor, therefore, to preserve the niceties of theology, but we shall, at this time, freely speak of our Lord as He is in His Godhead and in

His Manhood—and apply our text to the *whole* Christ—declaring the Divine promise that "He shall be great."

While my Brother was praying for me, I was wishing that I had the tongues of men and of angels with which to set forth my theme tonight, and yet I shall retract my wish, for the subject is such that if my words were the most common that could be found—yes, if they were ungrammatical and if they were put together in a most uncouth manner, it would little matter—for failure awaits me in any case! The subject far transcends all utterance! Jesus is such a One that no oratory can ever reach the height of His Glory and the simplest words are best suited to a Subject so sublime. Fine words would be but tawdry things to hang beside the unspeakably glorious Lord! I can say no more than that He *is* great! If I could tell forth His greatness with choral symphonies of cherubim, yet would I fail to reach the height of this great argument!

I will be content if I can touch the hem of the garment of His greatness. If the Lord will but set us in a cleft of the rock and only make us see the back parts of His Character, we shall be overcome by the vision! As yet, even of Jesus, the face of His full Glory cannot be seen, or if seen, it cannot be described. Were we caught up to the third Heaven, we should have little to say on coming back, for we would have seen things which were not lawful for us to utter. I shall not, therefore, fail with loss of honor if I tell you that my utmost success at this time will but touch the fringe of the splendor of the Son of Man. This is not the time of His clearest revealing. The day is coming for the manifestation of the Lord—as yet He shines not forth among men in His noontide!

His Second Advent shall more fully reveal Him. Then shall His people "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" because He, also, shall rise in the clear face of Heaven as the Sun of Righteousness, greatly blessing the sons of men.

I. Let me touch my theme as best I can by, first of all, saying of our adorable Lord Jesus that HE IS GREAT FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW. I might have said from *every* point of view, but that is too large a Truth of God to be surveyed at one sitting. Mind would fail us; life would fail us; time would fail us—only eternity and perfection will suffice for that boundless meditation! But from the points of view to which I would conduct you for a moment, the Lord Jesus Christ is emphatically great!

First, *in the perfection of His Nature*. Think, my Brothers and Sisters. There was never such a Being as our Well-Beloved! He is peerless and incomparable. He is Divine and, therefore, unique. He is "Light of light, very God of very God." Jesus is truly equal with God, One with the Father! Oh, the greatness of the Godhead! Jehovah is an Infinite Being—immeasurable, incomprehensible, inconceivable! He fills all things and yet is not contained by all things. He is, indeed, great beyond any idea of greatness that has ever dawned upon us. All this is true of the Only-Begotten. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning which were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made."

"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." "He is before all things, and by Him all things con-

sist." But our Lord Jesus is also Man and this makes the singularity of His Person, that He should be perfectly and purely God, and as truly and really Man! He is not humanity Deified. He is not Godhead humanized. I have admitted latitude of expression, but there is, in fact, no confusion of the substance. He is God. He is Man. He is all that God is and all that man is as God created him. He is as truly God as if He were not man, and yet as completely and perfectly Man as if He were not God! Think of this wondrous combination! A perfect Manhood without spot or stain of original or actual sin—and then the glorious Godhead combined with it! Said I not truly that Jesus stands alone?

He is not greatest of the great, but great where all else are little! He is not something among all, but all where all else are nothing! Who shall be compared with Him? He counts it not robbery to be equal with God. And among men He is the Firstborn of every creature. Among the risen ones He is the Firstborn by His Resurrection from the dead. Among the glorified He is the Source and Object of glory! I cannot compass His Nature—who shall declare His generation? He is one with us and yet inconceivably beyond us. Our nature is limited, sinful, fallen. His Nature is unbounded, holy, Divine. When Jehovah looks on us, we ask, "What is man, that you are mindful of him? And the son of man, that you visit him?" But, "when He brings in the First-Begotten into the world, He says, And let all the angels of God worship Him." Shall it not truly be said as to His Nature, "He is great"?

He is great, also, *in the grandeur of His offices*. Remember that He has, for our sakes, undertaken to be our Redeemer. You see your bondage, Brothers and Sisters. You know it, for some of you have worn the fetters till they have entered into your soul—from such slavery He came to redeem us! Behold His Zion in ruins, heaps on heaps, smoking, consumed! He comes to rebuild and to restore! This is His office—to build up the old wastes and to restore the Temple of the living God which had been cast down by the foe. To accomplish this, He came to be our Priest, our Prophet and our King. In each office He is glorious beyond compare! He came to be our Savior, our Sacrifice, our Substitute, our Surety, our Head, our Friend, our Lord, our Life, our All!

Pile up the offices and remember that each one is worthy of God. Mention them as you may, and truly you shall never remember them all, for He, the express image of His Father's Glory, has undertaken every kind of office that He might perfectly redeem His people and make them to be His own forever! In each office He has gained the summit of Glory and therein He is and shall be great! Have you ever stood in Westminster Abbey when some great warrior was being buried and when the herald pronounced his various titles? He has been greatly honored by his queen and his nation, for which he has fought so valiantly. He is prince of this and duke of that, and count of the other, and earl of something else—the titles are many and brilliant. What a parade it is! "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!" What matters it, to the senseless clay, that it is buried with pomp of heraldry?

But I stand at the tomb of Christ and I say of *His offices* that they are superlatively grand! And, moreover, that they are not buried and neither is He among the dead! He lives and still bears His honors in the fullness of

their splendor! He is still all to His people—every office He still carries on and will carry on till He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father—and God shall be All in All. Oh, the splendor of this Christ of God in the mighty offices which He sustains! He is the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand! Who is like HE in all eternity? "The government shall be upon His shoulders and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!"

Let our hearts give Him our adoring praise tonight, for He is great in the glorious offices which God has heaped upon Him. His Nature and His offices would, alone, furnish us with a lengthened theme, but oh, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus is great *in the splendor of His achievements*. He does not wear an office whose duty is neglected—His name is faithful and true. He is no holder of a lie—He claims to have finished the work which His Father gave Him to do. He has undertaken great things and, glory be to His name, He has achieved them! His people's sins were laid upon Him and He bore them up to the Cross and on the Cross He made an end of them—that they will never be mentioned against them any more forever!

Then He went down into the grave and slept there for a little season. But He tore away the bars of the sepulcher and left Death dead at His feet, bringing life and immortality to light by His Resurrection! This was His high calling and He has fulfilled it! His victory is complete! The defeat of the foe is perfect. "O Death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" Springing upward from the tomb when the appointed day was come, He opened Heaven's gates to all Believers, according to the Word of God—"The breaker is come up before them, and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them." As He opened the golden gates, He led captivity captive and, receiving gifts for men, He cast down a royal largess among the poorest of His people that they might be enriched. This was His objective and the design has been carried out without flaw or failure!

Within the veil He went, our Representative, to take possession of our crowns and thrones, which He holds for us to this day by the tenure of His own Cross. Having purchased the inheritance and paid off the heavy mortgage that lay upon it, He has taken possession of the Canaan wherein our souls shall dwell at the end of the days when we shall stand in our lot. Is it not proven that He is great? Conquerors are great and He is the greatest of them! Deliverers are great and He is the greatest of them! Liberators are great and He is the greatest of them! Saviors are great and He is the greatest of them! They that multiply the joys of men are truly great—and what shall I say of Him who has bestowed everlasting joy upon His people and entailed it upon them by a Covenant of salt forever and ever? Well did you say, O Gabriel, "He shall be great," for great, indeed, He is!

He shall be great, again, *in the prevalence of His merits*. Never a Being had such merit as Christ. His life and death cover all Believers from head to foot with a perfect obedience to the Law of God! With royal vesture are they clad—Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these! His

blood has washed Believers white as the driven snow and His righteousness has made them to be “accepted in the Beloved.” He has such merit with God that He deserves of the Most High whatever He wills to ask—and He asks for His people that they shall have every blessing necessary for eternal life and perfection! He is great, indeed, my Brothers and Sisters, when we think that He has clothed us all in His righteousness and washed us all in His blood!

Nor us alone, but ten thousands times ten thousands of His redeemed stand, today, in the wedding dress of His eternal merit and plead before God a claim that can never be denied—the claim of a perfect obedience which must always please the Father’s heart! Oh, what mercy is that which has turned our Hell to Heaven; transformed our disease into health and lifted us from the dunghill and set us among the princes of His people! In Infinite power to remove sin, to perfume with acceptance, to clothe with righteousness, to win blessings, to preserve saints and to save to the uttermost, the Lord Jesus is great beyond all greatness!

My theme will never be exhausted, though I may be. Let me not delay to add that our Lord Jesus Christ is great *in the number of His saved ones*. I do not believe in a little Christ, or a little Heaven, or a little company before the Throne of God, or a few that shall be saved! Hear this, for I would gladly reply to a *lie* that is often stated and is the last resort of those who assail the Doctrines of Grace! They say that we believe that God has left the great mass of His creatures to perish and has arbitrarily chosen an elect few. We have never thought such a thing! We believe that the Lord has an elect MANY! And it is our joy and delight to think of them as a number that no man can number!

“Oh,” they say, “you think that the few who go to your little Bethel or Salem are the elect of God.” That, Sirs, is what you invent for your own purposes! We have never said anything of the sort! We rejoice to believe that as many as the stars of Heaven shall be the redeemed of Christ—that as many as the sands that are upon the seashore, even an innumerable company, are those for whom Christ has shed His precious blood that He might effectually redeem them! As I look up to the Heaven of the sanctified, my mind’s eyes do not see a few dozen saints met together in select circles of exclusiveness—no, my eyes are dazzled with the countless lights which shine, each one, from the illustrious brows of the redeemed! Illustrious, I say, for each glorified one wears upon his forehead the name of the Most High!

My heart is glad to turn away from the multitude that throng the broad way and to see a greater multitude that throng the heavenly fields and, day without night, celebrate redemption by the blood of the Lamb! Have they not washed their robes and made them white in His blood? In all things our Lord will have the pre-eminence—and this shall be the case in the number of His followers—He shall therein vanquish His great enemy! His redeemed shall fly as a cloud, as doves to their windows. Countless as the drops of morning dew shall His people be in the day of His power. He shall be great in the host of His adherents in Glory.

Multitudes upon earth are even now pursuing their road to Heaven and greater hosts are yet to follow them. A day shall be when the people of

God shall be increased exceedingly—above anything that we see at the present—they shall spring up as the grass and as willows by the water-courses, as if every stone that heard the ripple of the brook had been turned into a man! The seed of the Lord Jesus Christ shall multiply till arithmetic shall be utterly baffled and numeration shall fail. He is great—a great Savior of a great mass of great sinners who shall, by His redeeming arm, be brought safely, without fail, to His right hand in endless Glory! As the tribes of the natural Israel increased exceedingly, so, also, shall the *spiritual* Israel. The Lord shall multiply His Zion with men as with a flock—and thus shall the King of Israel be great!

Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ shall be great *in the estimation of His people*. If I were to try, tonight, to praise my Lord to the highest heavens, my Brother might well follow me and extol our Lord much more. Then I would get up from my seat, again, and I would not rest until I found yet loftier praises for my Lord and God! Then might my dear Brother return to the happy task and excel me, yet again! And then, for sure, I would be on my feet a *third* time and keep up the hallowed rivalry, lauding and magnifying Jesus to my mind’s utmost! And, if the Lord permitted, we would never stop, for I would give in to no man in my desire to extol my Lord Jesus Christ! I am sure that none of His people would give way to others in a humble sense of supreme indebtedness, but each one would say, “There is something which He has done for *me* which He never did for you. There is some point of view in which He is greater to *me* than He is to you.”

Brothers and Sisters, I admit that there are many points in which He is greater to you than He is to me! But yet, to me He is higher than Heaven, vaster than eternity, more delightful than Paradise, more blessed than blessedness itself! If I could speak of Him according to my soul’s desire, I would speak in great capital letters and not in the small italics which I am compelled to use. If I could speak as I would, I would make winds and waves my orators and cause the whole universe to become one open mouth with which to proclaim the praises of Emmanuel! If all eternity would speak as though it, too, were but one tongue, yet it could not tell all the charms of His love and the sureness of His faithfulness and His truth! We must leave off somewhere, but, truly, if it is the point of our estimation of Him, we can never express our overwhelming sense of His honor, His excellence, His sweetness!

Oh, that He were praised by every creature that has breath! Oh, that every minute placed another gem in His crown! Oh, that every soul that breathes did continue to breathe out nothing but hosannas and hallelujahs unto Him, for He deserves all possible praises! Do you hear the crash of the multitudinous music of Heaven? It is like many waters and like the mighty waves of the sea—and it is all for Him! Can you hear the charming notes of “harpers harping with their harps”? Their harplings are all for Him! Can you conceive the unutterable joys of the glorified? Every felicity of eternity is a song to His honor! Heaven and earth shall yet be full of the brightness of His Glory! Who can look the sun in the face in the height of his noontide? Who can tell the illimitable greatnesses of the Son of God?—

***“To Him, even to Him, let all praises be,
For He has redeemed our souls with blood***

And set the captives free!

He has made us unto our God both kings and priests—and we shall reign with Him forever and forever! Truly, He is great, and shall be eternally great!

But, oh, Brothers and Sisters, how great must Christ be *in the glory of Heaven!* We have never seen that. Some of us shall see it very soon—

***“For we are in the border-land,
The heavenly country’s near at hand!
A step is all ‘twixt us and rest,
E’en now we converse with the blest.”***

But the greatness of Christ in Heaven! Surely this is the grand sight for which we long to go to Heaven—that we may behold His Glory! “The Glory which He had with the Father before the world was,” and the Glory which He has gained by His service for the Father here below! Has He not said, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory”? What honor and majesty surround our Prince in the metropolis of His empire! What is this city? From where comes its brightness? The sun is dim. The moon no more displays herself. “The glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the Light thereof.”

The whole city shines in the Redeemer’s Glory! And who are these that come trooping down the golden streets?—these shining ones, each one comparable to a living, moving sun? Each one as bright as the star of the morning? Ask them where their brightness comes from and they tell you that the Glory of Christ has risen upon them and they are *reflecting His brightness* as the moon reflects the brilliant radiance of the sun! If you sit down with one of these shining ones and hear him tell his story, the sum of the matter will be, “Not unto us; but unto Him that loved us, be honor and glory.” This will be the substance of every testimony—“He loved me and gave Himself for me.” But they will put it something like this—“HE loved *me!* He, that great HE!”

How they will pronounce it as they point to His Glory—“HE loved me—that little *me.*” They will sink their voices, oh, so low, as with wonder and surprise they express their admiration that ever *He* could have loved such unworthy ones as they were. But I must not—dare not—try to touch upon the *Glory of Christ upon the Throne of the Father.* Certain great divines have written upon the Glory of Christ, but I will guarantee you that when they died and went to Heaven, they half wished that they could come back again to amend their most glowing pages! Ah me, what can ignorance say of the All-Wise? What do blinking owls know of high noon? What do we poor limited creatures, babes of yesterday, know of the Infinite, the Ancient of Days and of the splendor that comes from the Firstborn at the right hand of the Most High?

It would need an angel to tell us that but, perhaps if he did, either we would not understand, or else what we did understand would overpower us and we should fall before our Lord as dead! The heavens are now telling the Glory of our Lord, but the half of it will never be told throughout ages of ages. Assuredly, concerning our adorable Lord Jesus, it is true—“He shall be great.”

II. Now, by your leave, I want to turn the subject around a little and look at it in another light. “He shall be great,” and He is so, for HE IS

WITH GREAT THINGS. He is a Savior and a great one. As I have already said, it was a *great ruin* which He came to restore. The wind came from the abyss and smote the four corners of the house of manhood and it fell. Devils laughed and triumphed as they saw God’s handiwork spoiled. Human nature sank in shame. Paradise was blasted, sin was triumphant and the fiery sword was set at Eden’s gate to exclude us. It was a hideous ruin. But, oh, when Christ came, He brought a great salvation! He came to prepare a better Paradise and to plant in it a better Tree of Life. He came to give us possession of it upon a better tenure than before. Oh, He is a great Savior! He worked amid the chaos of the Fall and restored what Adam had destroyed!

And, Beloved, we were covered with *great sin*—some of us, especially so. But “He shall be great,” and therefore He makes short work of great sin! Great sinners, what a joy it ought to be to you to think that He is great and, therefore, has come to rescue such as you are and deal with such difficulties as beset and surround *you*! What if sin is great? His arrangement for its removal is great, too. Look, there, at Calvary, and if you can see it through your blinding tears, behold the Sacrifice He offered once and for all to put away sin! Regard the old Tabernacle and its faulty types—Aaron has offered his bullock which has smoked to Heaven, but no result has followed! Aaron has brought his lambs, his goats, his rams—and their blood in basins is thrown at the foot of the altar—the whole soil of the Tabernacle is saturated with the blood of bullocks and of goats! And no result has come of it—these can never take away sin!

See, now, the greater Sacrifice which Jesus brings. That great High Priest of ours is great, indeed, for He has offered up *Himself* without spot unto God! Lo, on His great altar there smokes to Heaven no longer clouding incense or burning flesh, but the body and soul of the appointed Substitute offered up in sacrifice for men! We have, none of us, a due conception of the grandeur of that vicarious offering which at once and forever made an end of sin! Think of it carefully and in detail. Count it no light thing that He who was the Father’s equal; that He who was pure and perfect in both Natures became a curse for us—and was made sin for us—and presented Himself as a *Victim* to Justice on our behalf!

This is a wonder among wonders, as much exceeding miracle as miracle exceeds the most commonplace fact! It overtops the highest lips of thought, that He who was offended should expiate the offense! He who was perfect should suffer punishment! He who was all Goodness should be made sin and He who was all Love should be forsaken of the God of Love! What merit and majesty are found in His glorious oblation! Great is the sin, but greater is the Sacrifice! The Atonement has covered the guilt and left a margin of abounding righteousness! Beloved, what a mercy it is for us that we have such a High Priest, for if you and I are burdened, tonight, with great transgression, there is *great pardons* to be had! Pardon so great that it actually annihilates the sin—pardon so great that the sin is cast behind Jehovah’s back while the pardon rings out perpetual notes of joy and peace in the soul—

**“His the pardon, ours the sin—
Great the pardon great.
Great His good which healed our ill,**

Great His love which killed our hate.”

He shall be great, indeed, who has worked us so great a salvation.

And now, dear Friends, you and I, being greatly pardoned through the great Sacrifice, are journeying through the wilderness toward Canaan and we have *great needs* pressing upon us every day. We are poverty, itself, and only All-Sufficiency can supply us—and that is found in Jesus. We need great abundance of food—the heavenly Bread lies around the camp and each may fill his own. We require rivers of Living Water—the smitten Rock yields us a ceaseless flood—the stream never ceases. We have great demands, but Christ has *great supplies*. Between here and Heaven we shall have, perhaps, greater needs than we have yet known, but, all along, every resting place is ready, stores are laid up, good cheer is stored, nothing has been overlooked. The commissariat of the Eternal is absolutely perfect!

Do you feel, sometimes, so thirsty for Grace that like Behemoth, you could drink up Jordan at a draught? More than that river could hold is given you! Drink abundantly, for Christ has prepared you a bottomless sea of Grace to fill you with all the fullness of God! Deprive not yourselves and doubt not your Savior—why should you limit the Holy One of Israel? Be great in your experience of His all-sufficiency and great in your praises of His bounty—and then in Heaven you shall pour at His feet great treasures of gratitude forever and ever. Yes, and He is a Christ of *great preparations*. He is engaged before the Throne of God, today, in preparing a *great Heaven* for His people!

It will be made up of great deliverance, great peace, great rest, great joy, great victory, great discovery, great fellowship, great rapture, great glory! He is preparing for His redeemed no little Heaven, no starveling banquet, no narrow delight! He is a great Creator and He is creating a great Paradise wherein a great multitude shall be greatly happy forever and ever! “He shall be great”—great in the bliss of His innumerable elect! If we once get within the pearly gates and walk those golden streets, we are not ashamed, tonight, to vow that He shall be great—we will make Him glorious before His holy angels!

If praises can make Him great, our praises shall ring out night and day at the very loudest—and ten thousands times ten thousands of the glorified shall join with us in perpetual hallelujahs to Him who loved us before all worlds—and will still love us when all worlds shall cease to be! “He shall be great.” He *must* be great! If we live, it shall be our business to sing like the Virgin, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

III. I have come to a close when I have said a few words upon the last point, which is this—HIS GREATNESS WILL SOON APPEAR. It now lies under a cloud to men’s bleary eyes. They still belittle Him with their vague and vain thoughts, but it shall not always be so. It is midnight with His honor, here, just now—or if it isn’t midnight, it is much the same, for men are stone blind. But it will not long be darkness, nor shall human minds be blinded forever. My eyes foresee the dawning. Did you hear the clarion just now? I dream not that ears of flesh can catch the sound as yet, but the ears of faith can hear it! The trumpet rings out exceedingly loud and long! And after the trumpet there is heard this voice—“Behold, the Bride-

groom comes! Go you forth to meet Him." Hear you not the shouts of armies—"Lo, He comes! Lo, He comes! Lo, He comes!" Right gladly I hear the cry. Let the world ring with the notes of joy. He comes! That trumpet proclaims Him!

I shall propound no order, now, as to how predicted events shall happen, but I know this, that the Lord shall reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords. Hallelujah! "He shall be great." The nations shall bow at His feet. Rebellious enemies shall acknowledge Him as their King. The whole universe shall be filled with the Glory of God! There shall be left no space where this Light of God shall not shine. "He shall be great." To Him "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Fret not yourselves, Brothers and Sisters, because of the false doctrine which roams through the world today. Worry not your hearts as though Christ were defeated. He is clad in shining armor through which no dart of error can ever pierce.

He lingers for a little while upon the hills, surveying the battlefield with eagle eyes. He leaves His poor servants to prove how weak they are, as they almost turn their backs in the day of battle. He lets Heaven and earth see the weakness of an arm of flesh. But courage, Brothers and Sisters! The Prince Emmanuel hastens! You may hear His horse hoofs on the road. He is near! On white horses shall His chosen follow Him, going forth "conquering and to conquer," for the battle is the Lord's and He will deliver the enemy into our hands. The Lord shall reign forever and ever—king of kings! Hallelujah! "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet."

The day is coming when the mighty progress of the Gospel shall make Christ to be great among men! And then you need not listen long to hear that other trumpet which shall wake the sleeping dead. The Risen One descends. *Resurrection* is at hand! Oh, what greatness will be upon Christ in that hour when all shall leave their graves, even the whole multitude of the slain of death! He shall be glorious among them, the First-fruits of the Resurrection, illustrious in those who rise by virtue of His rising! Oh, what honor will He have that day! Jesus, You are He whom Your elect shall praise as they see You victorious over Death in all those quickened myriads!

Then shall come the *Judgment*—and oh, how great will Christ be in men's eyes in that day when He sits upon the Throne and holds the scales of justice and judges men for the deeds done in the body! I guarantee you that none will deny His Godhead in that day! None will proclaim themselves His adversaries in that dread hour! The earth is reeling! The sky is crumbling! The stars are falling! The sun is quenched! The moon is black as sackcloth! And Jesus is sitting on the Throne! A cry is heard from all His enemies. "Hide us, mountains! Fall upon us, rocks! Hide us from His face!" That face of His—calm, quiet and triumphant—shall be terrible to them.

They will cry in horror, "Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." But they cannot be hidden! Fly where they may, those eyes pursue them—those eyes of love more terrible than flames of wrath! Oil, though it is soft, yet burns furiously—and Love

on fire is Hell! Fiercer than a lion on his prey is Love when once it grows angry for holiness’ sake and the Truth of God’s sake! In that day those who know His love shall admire Him beyond measure, but those who know His wrath shall equally feel that “He is great.” Though it is their Hell to feel it, yet shall they know that there is none so great as He when He shall take the iron rod and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel! Their cries of remorse and despair, as they rise up to the Throne of His awful majesty, shall proclaim to an awe-struck universe that Jesus is great! “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

He shall be great, finally, *when He shall gather all His elect about Him*—when all the souls redeemed by blood shall assemble within His palace gate to worship Him. Oh, what a sight it will be when He is seen as the center, while, far away from north, south, east and west, a blazing host of shining ones, all glorious in His Glory, shall, in ever-widening circles, surround His Person and His Throne—all bowing down before the Son of God and crying, “Hallelujah!” as they adore Him! Not one will doubt Him nor oppose Him there! Oh, what a sight it shall be when everyone shall praise Him to the uttermost—when from every heart shall leap up reverent love, when every tongue shall sound forth His honors, when there shall be no division, no discord, no jarring notes—and countless armies shall as one man adore the Lord whom they love!

Again they say, “Hallelujah!” and the incense of their adoration goes up forever and ever. Oh, for that grandest of cries, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns and His Son is exalted to sit with Him upon the Throne of His Glory forever and ever!” Truly, He shall be great! Oh, make Him great tonight, poor Sinner, by trusting Him! Make Him great tonight, dear child of God, by longing for Him! Make Him great as you come to the table by hungering after Him! Count it a great privilege to eat and drink with Him with overflowing delight!

Come with a great hunger and a great thirst after Him and take Him into your very self, and say, “He is my bread—He is my drink! He is my life—He is my All.” All the while let your spirit live by adoring and let every pulse of your body beat to His honor. Tune your hand, your heart, your tongue to this one song, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! Unto Him that loved us and died for us, and rose again, be glory forever and ever!”—

***“To the Lamb that was slain all honor be paid,
Let crowns without number encircle His head!
Let blessing, and glory, and riches, and might,
Be ascribed evermore by angels of light.”***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 1:5-80.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—387, 414.**

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THE KEYNOTE OF A CHOICE SONNET NO. 1514

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

***“My soul does magnify the Lord.”
Luke 1:46.***

MARY had received a wonderful intimation from Heaven of which she herself scarcely understood the full length and breadth. Her faith had apprehended a great promise which, as yet, her mind hardly comprehended. Her prayer, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Your word,” showed her joyful submission and childlike confidence and this made her blessed with the blessedness of patient hope. Under Divine guidance she made a speedy journey into the hill country to see her cousin Elizabeth and from her she received a confirmation of the wonderful tidings which the angel had brought to her cousin, Elizabeth, herself had been favored from above, for the Lord had looked upon her and taken away from her the reproach of barrenness. Among other choice words, Elizabeth said to her, “Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

When Mary had thus been comforted by her friend and her spirit had been elevated and her confidence confirmed, she began to sing unto the Lord most sweetly, saying, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” Now, if it is a good time with any of you—if in communion with some older Believer your confidence has been strengthened—make sure that the Lord has a return for it. When your heart is lifted up, then lift up the name of the Lord! Exalt Him when He exalts you. You will, perhaps, tell me that the Virgin had a very special reason for magnifying the Lord and I answer, Assuredly she had. “Blessed is she among women,” and we are not backward to acknowledge the eminent honor which was put upon her!

Blessed, indeed, she was and highly favored! But yet, is there any true Believer who has not, also, received special favor of the Lord? Sitting down quietly in our chamber, can we not, each one, say that the Lord has favored him or her with some special token of Divine love? I think there is something about each Believer’s case which renders it special. We are, none of us, exactly like our Brethren, for the manifestations of Divine Grace are very various and there are some bright lines about your case, Brothers and Sisters, which will be seen nowhere else and some peculiar manifestations about your happiness of which no one else can tell.

I might not be straining words if I were to say to many a Sister in Christ here, “Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women!” And I might say the same to many a Brother here, “Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among men! The Lord has done great things for you and let your spirit be glad.” True, there is one point in which we cannot be compared, literally, to Mary. She was to be the mother of the human Nature of our Lord! But there is a parallel case in each one of us in which a higher mystery—a

more spiritual mystery—gives us a like privilege, for, behold, the Holy Spirit dwells in each Believer! He lives within us as within a temple and reigns within us as in a palace! If we are partakers of the Holy Spirit, what more can we desire by way of favor from God and what greater honor can be bestowed upon us?

It was by Mary that the Word became Incarnate, but so also is it by us, for we can make God's Word stand out visibly in our lives! It is ours to turn into actual, palpable existence among the sons of men the glorious Spirit of Grace and Truth which we find in the Word of God! Truly did our Lord speak when He said to His disciples, "These are My mother and sister and brother." We bear as close a relationship to Christ as did the Virgin mother and we, in some sense, take the same position spiritually which she took up corporeally in reference to Him. May He be formed in us the hope of Glory and may it be ours to tend His infant cause in the world and watch over it as a nurse does over a child and spend our life and strength in endeavoring to bring that infant cause to maturity, even though a sword should pass through our own heart while we cherish the babe!

But now, having introduced to you her Magnificat, we will dwell upon these words, "My soul does magnify the Lord," and I do earnestly hope that many of us can adopt the language without being guilty of falsehood. I hope we can as truly say as Mary did, "My soul does magnify the Lord." If there are any of you present tonight who cannot say it, get to your chambers, fall upon your knees and cry to the Lord to help you to do so, for as long as a man cannot magnify God, he is not fit for Heaven where the praises of God are the eternal occupation of all the blessed spirits! If you cannot magnify God, it is probably because you are magnifying yourself! May the Lord cut self down and make nothing of you—and then grant you Grace to make everything of Him. When you sink in your own estimation, then will God rise in your esteem. May God the Holy Spirit make it so!

I. Touching these words, I notice that, first, our text suggests to us AN OCCUPATION FOR ALL GRACIOUS PEOPLE—"My soul does magnify the Lord." Here is an occupation for all of us who know the Lord and have been born into His family. Observe, it is an occupation which may be followed by all sorts of people. This humble woman speaks of her low estate and yet she could magnify the Lord! All Believers, of every rank and condition, can attend to this work. There are some things that you cannot do, but this one thing every gracious heart *can* do and should delight to do, namely, to magnify the Lord.

This is an occupation which can be followed in all places. You need not go up to the meeting house to magnify the Lord, you can do it at home! You need not step out of your own quiet little room, for you may sit still and, all alone, you may magnify the Lord! You may be tossed about upon the sea in a storm, but you may trust His name and be calm and so magnify Him. Or, you may not be a traveler and never go a hundred yards out of the village in which you were born, but you may magnify the Lord just as well for all that—

***"Where'er we seek Him He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground"***

and in every place this hallowed occupation may be carried out and we may always say—at least the place will not prevent our saying—“My soul does magnify the Lord.”

This is not an occupation which requires a crowded congregation, it can be fitly performed in solitude. I suppose that this sonnet of the Virgin was sung with only one to hear it, her cousin Elizabeth. There is a quorum for God’s praise even where there is only one, but, where there are two that agree to praise God, then is the praise exceedingly sweet. Ah, my dear Sisters, you will never stand up to speak to thousands and many of my Brothers now present would be very timid if they had to praise the Lord before a dozen! Never mind about that. Praise does not require even two or three, but in the quiet of the night, or in the loneliness of the forest, far away from the haunts of men, your soul may pursue this blessed task and daily, hourly, constantly sing—“My soul does magnify the Lord.”

This is an occupation, also, dear Friends, which requires no money. Mary was a poor maiden. She had no gold or silver and yet did she sweetly say, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” It is an honorable thing to be entrusted with this world’s treasure to lay it out for Jesus. The Church has its temporal needs and happy is that man who is privileged to supply them. But this kind of work can be followed by the child who has no money and by the workwoman who scarcely knows how to find bread for herself! It may be followed by the poor man reduced to the workhouse and by the poor woman who lies in the infirmary breathing out her life. “My soul does magnify the Lord,” is as fit for paupers as for peers!

Oh, these are golden notes and those that use them have golden mouths, as golden as Chrysostom of old, even though they have to say, “Silver and gold I have none.” And this is an occupation, dear Friends, which I commend to all here present, because it does not require great talent. A simpleton may sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” We have, each one, a soul and when that soul has been renewed by Grace, it can follow this blessed pursuit of magnifying the Lord. Perhaps you have not the abilities of Mary, for she was, doubtless, a woman of considerable culture, like Hannah who preceded her, whose song she partly borrowed.

Hannah seems to me to be one of the most gifted women of the Old Testament and to be worthy of more notice than is generally given to her. But if you could not write a hymn; if you could not compose a verse; if you have no ability that way, yes, and if you cannot sing—and there are some of us that have such cracked voices that we never shall! And there are one or two Brethren here who have such bad ears for time that I generally hear them a note behind everybody else, as I did tonight—well, never mind about that—our souls can magnify the Lord! It is an occupation that does not depend upon the voice, or upon any kind of talent whatever! Those who sing worst to the ear of man may, perhaps, sing best to the ear of God! And those who have the least apparent ability may, from the warmth of their heart and the ardor of their devotion, really have the greatest capacity, in God’s judgment, for magnifying His name!

“My soul does magnify the Lord.” I would invite all my Brothers and Sisters to take this for their occupation as long as they live and never to cease from it. No, even should death, for a moment, suspend it, let them

so praise God that it shall be no new work for them to begin again and praise Him forever in Heaven! Dear Friends, albeit that this magnifying of the Lord is an occupation to be taken up by all Christians, do not let us think little of it. To magnify the Lord, seems to me, the grandest thing we mortals do, for, as I have already said, it is the occupation of Heaven! When the saints of the Most High pass into their glorified state, they have nothing else to do but to magnify the Lord!

The word signifies, to put it in a Saxon form instead of a Latin one, to “greaten God.” We cannot make Him really greater, but we can *show forth* His greatness. We can make Him *appear* greater. We can make others have greater thoughts of Him and that we do when we are praising Him. We can, ourselves, try to have greater and yet greater thoughts of Him—make Him to our apprehension a greater God than we once knew Him to be—and this, I say, is no mean occupation because it is followed in Heaven by all redeemed and perfected spirits. Even *here* it is the end of everything! Praying is the end of preaching, for preaching and hearing are nothing, in themselves, unless men are brought to Christ and led to prayer!

But then praying is not the end—*praising* is the end of praying. Prayer is the stalk of the corn, but praise is the ear of the corn—it is the harvest itself. When God is praised, we have come to the ultimatum. This is the thing for which all other things are designed. We are to be saved for this end, “To the praise of the glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” We are not saved for our own sakes. How often does the Scripture tell us this in sense and sometimes in words, “Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.” The Glory of God is, to my mind, the highest conceivable end—it certainly is the chief end of my being.

So, my dear Brother, if you cannot go out to preach—if, after looking over all your situation, you feel that your sickness and other circumstances may excuse you from active service—and even if you are compelled to stay in your bed—do not suppose that you are useless as to the highest end of your being! You may still serve Him by lying upon the couch of pain and magnifying the Lord by patience! Have you ever looked at those lovely lilies which adorn our gardens with their golden petals and their milk-white leaves? How they praise God! And yet *they* never sing. You do not even hear a rustle, but they stand still and praise God by existing—by just, as it were, enjoying the sun and the dew and showing what God can do.

A genuine Christian shut up under pain and sickness may glorify God by being His beloved child; by receiving the love of God; by showing, in his common daily character, (which is only noticeable from its holiness), what the Grace of God can do. Oh may this be the occupation of all of us all since it is so noble a pursuit! “My soul does magnify the Lord.” Come, what are you doing tonight? Have you been, during this day, murmuring and complaining and grumbling? End that and begin praising! Some of you are farmers and I have no doubt you have grumbled because of the weather. I do not wonder, but I hope that you will not do it any more, but

rather believe that God knows better about skies and clods and clouds and crops than you do.

If we had the management of the weather, I have no doubt we think we should do it very splendidly, but I question whether we should not ruin all creation! Our great Lord and Master knows how to manage *everything*. Let us cease from all criticism of what He does and say, "My soul does not grumble. My soul does not complain. I have taken up a better business than that. 'My soul does magnify the Lord.' That is her one engagement from which she will never cease."

II. Secondly, if you look at the text from another point of view, it provides for us A REMEDY FOR SELF-CONGRATULATION. If any one of us had been favored as Mary was, with the promise that we should become the parent of the Savior, do you not think that we should have felt exceedingly lifted up? It was natural that she should be proud, but it was gracious on her part that she was humble. Instead of magnifying *herself* she magnified the Lord. It was a great thing and somebody must be magnified for it.

Nature would have said, "Mary, magnify yourself," but Grace said, "Mary, magnify the Lord." If the Lord has been very gracious to any one of us, our only way to escape from vain-glorious pride which will be exceedingly wicked if we indulge in it, is by giving vent to our feelings in quite another direction. Do you notice how she sets off the greatness of God by her own insignificance? "He that is mighty has done to me great things." "To me," she says. "They are great things and He is mighty, but they are *to me*. He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." Over against the greatness of God's goodness to you, be sure to set in contrast your own meanness and unworthiness.

Has the Lord redeemed you, called you, justified you, sanctified you, set you in His Church and given you a name and a place among His people? When you are inclined to run up the flag and to glory in your flesh, remember who you are and *what* you are and the hole of the pit from which you were drawn and the rock out of which you were hewn and say, "Why *me*, Lord? Why *me*?" Begin to magnify the name of the Lord and that will be a death blow to the temptation of pride.

Mary had a specialty—no one else would be the mother of our Lord—but so have we. Electing love has pitched on us! Many have been passed by and the Lord has loved us with a special love. Yet we cannot rejoice in it so as to glory in *ourselves*, for this election is according to His sovereign will and not of ourselves. It is all of Grace and free favor and not according to merit. Therefore my soul does magnify the Lord for everlasting love and special redemption. Why this amazing goodness to me? What am I and what is my father's house, that You, O Lord, should choose *me*?

Mary knew, also, that she was to be famous. "All generations shall call me blessed." But notice how she balances her fame with another fame. She says, "Holy is His name and His mercy is on them that fear Him." She magnifies the name of the Lord! If He has given her a measure of honor, she lays it at His feet. Mind you, do the same. Be not so vain as to be lifted up with a little success. We have all passed through this test of character and in the refining pot, how few of us have borne the fire with-

out loss! Perhaps you have preached a sermon and God has blessed it—the congregation is increased and crowds are gathering.

The probability, also, is that the devil whispers, “You are a capital preacher. Well done! You put your point admirably! God is blessing you. There must be something admirable in your character and abilities.” Away, away, you fiend of Hell! This is ruinous pride! But suppose, dear Brother, that the fiend will not go away while he finds you musing upon your success? What are you to do? Try him with this—“My soul does magnify the Lord.” Praise the name of the Lord that ever He should make use of such a poor, unsuitable instrument as yourself! Give Him all the honor and all the glory, if honor and glory there are, and see if the arch-enemy does not take to flight, for God’s praises are abhorrent to the devil!

In whatever capacity you are serving the Lord, if He puts any honor upon you, mind you give it all back to Him. Sedulously and carefully endeavor to do this, for robbery here will be fatal. He will not give His Glory to another. If we begin to pilfer, even, a little of the praise, we shall find that our Master will reckon us to be unfaithful stewards and give us a discharge. If we glory in *our* strength, we may have to go out and shake ourselves like Samson when his hair was lost because the Lord has taken our strength away from us. A heart that is lifted up with self-esteem will soon be cast down in the mire.

Mary knew that God’s favors are *given* to us, not that we may congratulate ourselves, but that we may worship Him and she acted accordingly. If Grace comes to you, my Brother, it is a wanton waste of it to pride yourself upon it. Like the manna in the Israelite’s house when kept till the morning, it will breed worms and stink—no worm ever brought swifter decay than pride! Bear the shield of your honor as an armor-bearer for your Lord. Know that you have nothing but what belongs to Him. Use all for Him and glorify Him for all and in all and so will you do well. I recommend the text, then, as a cure for pride—“My soul does magnify the Lord.”

III. Thirdly and I will be brief on each point, the text is A FRUITFUL UTTERANCE FOR HOLY FEELINGS. “My soul does magnify the Lord” is evidently the overflow of a full soul. There must have been great mixture of feeling in the heart of this holy woman, but these few words furnished expression for every variety of her emotions. Those feelings were of an opposite character and yet they all spoke by this one sentence. It is clear that she was filled with wonder. Her thoughtful spirit asked, how can so great a thing be true of me? Shall the Son of the Highest be born of Mary, the village maiden? Oh, miracle of condescension!

With the amazement there was not mingled the unbelief which too often comes of wonder, but an expectation of the promised marvel. She believed that the things which were spoken to her would be performed by the Lord and she looked that God should keep His Word to her. How sweetly those two feelings, wonder and expectation, are blended, hidden away and yet expressed in these few words, “My soul does magnify the Lord”! It is as though she had said, “I cannot understand the favor promised me. How glorious in His Grace is the Lord my God! But I expect the blessing. I am sure of it, for the Lord is true! So I praise Him concerning it.” The sentence is tinged with two fair colors, the vermilion of wonder and the azure

of hope and they meet harmoniously upon the same ground. The words are wonderful on that account.

Now take two other mental states. The first would be her believing. She was not like Zacharias, who needed to be struck dumb because he doubted the Word of the Lord. Mary had faith and yet, at the same time, she must have been awe-stricken by the revelation. That she should give birth to the Son of the Highest must have utterly abashed and overwhelmed her. Now both these states of mind are here—faith and awe. Faith says, “I know that the angel’s message is true and therefore my soul does magnify the Lord.” Awe says, “What a solemn thing it is that God should come to dwell in my breast! My soul does magnify the Lord.”

Thus, in these words, confidence and reverence have met together, assurance and adoration have kissed each other! Here is faith with its familiarity and devotion with its godly fear. Here, also, you very clearly perceive two other holy emotions. Her humility is apparent and in the text it seems to ask the question, “How can this happen to me? How can it be that such a poor woman, affianced to a humble carpenter, should be the mother of my Lord?” Humility sheds its perfume here like a violet hidden away.

She seems to say, “Not unto me, not unto me be the glory! My soul does magnify the Lord.” But that humility is not of the cringing and crouching kind which draws back from God, for it is clearly mixed with love. “I rejoice in my gracious Lord,” she seems to say, “I bless Him: I love Him: I praise Him. My soul does magnify the Lord. I am not worthy of His promised visitation, but it will be mine and infinite condescension will do this thing unto me. Therefore do I love my God and I draw near to Him. My soul does magnify the Lord.”

Brothers and Sisters, you will often find the language of my text the most expressive of utterances for all that is good in your minds. Many sweet passions, like little birds, may fold their wings and dwell together in this one well-compacted nest—“My soul does magnify the Lord,” Holy emotions may fly here in swarms and make the text like a hive of bees stored with honey. As I turn and think it over, it sheds abroad its own spirit within me as spices breathe out their own perfume and I cry, “My soul does magnify Him.” I think I perceive in these words a singular mixture of admiration and calm thought—a wonder in which there is no surprise.

The blessed Virgin is evidently, as I have said before, wonder-struck that such a thing should come to her and yet there is about that wonder no startling of amazement, but a marveling which is the result of previous careful thought. She had considered the prophecies and promises and saw them about to be fulfilled in her seed. She sang in the 54th and 55th verses, “He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.” She had turned over the subject in her mind and she came to the conclusion, “He has said He will do this. It is as He spoke.”

So, oftentimes, when you get a mercy given to you, you will be surprised at it at first, but afterwards you will say, “This is even as the Lord promised to me. He does no new thing to His servant. It is only my forget-

fulness that has made me to be astonished. Did He not promise that He would help me—that He would deliver me—that He would give me all that I needed? And inasmuch as He has done it in this surprising way, my soul does magnify Him twice over for the wonderful mercy and for the faithfulness of His Covenant love which kept the ancient promise which He made to be yes and amen in Christ Jesus.”

Again, I say, I commend the text as an expression of your feelings. How sweet are the words, “My soul does magnify the Lord”! They are full, many-sided and natural and yet most spiritual.

V. Fourthly, I think my text may be used as A REASON FOR HOPEFULNESS. It would be well to be wrapped up in this spirit with regard to *everything*. The mood which bids us sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord” is full of a hope which will be useful in a thousand ways. For instance, concerning our own providential condition, let us magnify the Lord. Surrounded with difficulties, let us walk on with confidence because our great God is equal to every emergency and can both level the mountains and fill up the valleys.

Burdened with labors and stripped by necessities, let us maintain an unchanging cheerfulness because we magnify the might and the bounty of the eternal Jehovah whose name is God All-Sufficient! When danger is magnified by fear, let God be magnified by faith! When the troubles of our heart are enlarged, let our expectations from the Lord be enlarged, also. The same God-magnifying spirit should attend our glances into the future, if we indulge in any, and we are all too apt to do so. Ah, we would like to know, some of us, what is going to happen to us! Gladly would we steal a glance behind the screen and each one see—

**“What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what dark scenes arise.”**

There is a desire in most persons’ minds to draw the curtain which God has so wisely placed over the future. This is very wrong of us and yet it is as common as it is blamable. We all turn prophets, every now and then, and when we do, we prophesy evil and, therefore, it would be well if we could catch the spirit of Mary with regard to our forecasts of the future and say, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” Why do we set our bleary-eyed anxieties to watch the signs of Heaven? If we must pry and guess and speculate, why not employ our brighter powers and let blue-eyed hope scan the ensigns of the sky?

When we meddle with the future, how dare we foretell that which would dishonor the Lord? If we must write bitter things against ourselves, yet we ought not to write untruthful things against Him! When we forecast the future at all, let us do it in the spirit wherewith we sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” Let us be certain that we shall find Him to be a great God in the future, greatly good, wondrously gracious, magnifying His mercy! We shall have troubles, but our soul does magnify the Lord, for she foresees that we shall ride out all storms with Jesus at the helm and come safe into port.

Our anxious eyes foresee necessities, but our soul does magnify the Lord, for she sees Him with a golden key opening the treasures of David and supplying all her needs. Our troubled ears can hear the wolf, but our soul does magnify the Lord, for she sings, “The Lord is my Shepherd and

He will preserve me.” In this spirit you may look forward to the swellings of Jordan, magnifying the living God while you lie down to die. If you faint and begin to say, “Ah, I shall never be able to die triumphantly,” you are minimizing and not magnifying the Lord! You are making Him little and not great. Try and say, “How marvelously will He show His Grace to me, a dying worm! Oh, how wondrous He will be in the eyes of angels that will crowd the banks to hear a poor trembling soul like I go singing through the stream! My God will be great in that day—then will He lay bare His arm and therefore will I fear no evil, for He will be with me—His rod and His staff will comfort me.”

Think great things of God! Greaten God! Magnify His name whenever you look forward to the future! Chase from your mind any imagination or foreboding which would detract from the greatness or the goodness of your God. Judge in the same manner with regard to the salvation of your fellow men. Never say, “It is of no use inducing such a man to attend the means of Grace. He is a blaspheming wretch! All that he would do, if he heard a sermon, would be to make sport of it for the next week. I have no faith in taking such a man to hear a ministry which he would be sure to ridicule.” Such unbelieving talk is making little of God! Is it not so? Is it not dishonoring God to think that His Gospel cannot reach the most depraved hearts?

Why, if I knew that a man had 7,000 devils in him, I believe the Gospel could drive them all out! Get the sinners under the sound of the Word of God and the worse they are, oftentimes, the more does God love to display the greatness of His Grace in casting down the power of their sin! Believe great things of God! I can honestly say this—that since God saved *me*, I never doubted His power to save anybody! All things are possible, now that He has brought me to His feet and kept me these years as His loving child. I must think great things of God who has done such great things for so great a sinner as I am! Greaten God, my Brothers and Sisters! Greaten God! Believe great things of Him!

Believe that China can be made into a province of the celestial kingdom! Believe that India will cast her riches at Jesus’ feet! Believe that the round world will yet be a pearl on Christ’s ring finger. Do not go in for the dispiriting, despairing, unmanly, un-Christly ideas of those who say, “The world is not to be converted. It is a poor wreck that will go to pieces and we are to fish off here and there one from the water-logged hulk.” Brethren, never believe that we are to stand by and see the eternal defeat of God! Dream not that our God is unable to win upon the old lines and must shift the plan of the campaign. It shall never be said that God could not save the world by the preaching of the Gospel and by the work of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, must bring in the Advent of the Lord to do it.

I believe in the coming of the Lord, but, blessed be His name, I believe, also, that the battle which He has begun in the Spirit, He will fight out in the old style and finish with a victory in the very manner in which He opened the conflict! It pleases Him, by the foolishness of *preaching*, to save them that believe and it will please Him to continue to do so till the whole round earth shall ring with hallelujahs of praise to the Grace of God who, by the feeblest of His creatures, shall have defeated sin and death

and Hell! Do not get into a desponding state of mind and rush into half-insane theories of prophecy in order to excuse your unbelief and idleness! Never throw down your weapons and pretend that the victory is to be won by doting and dreaming—we are to fight to the end with the same weapons and in the same name. We will drive the devil out of the world yet, by the Grace of God, by the old, efficient weapons of the Word of God and the Spirit of God!

Greaten God and magnify His name by believing in the success of the Gospel of His dear Son. As to the nearer future, never believe any human prophecy that does not glorify God. Expect great things of God and if you hear any prediction that is not to the glory of God, conclude that it is a blunder. “Oh!” said one to me, “this country will go back to Romanism—the Gospel light will be quenched in England.” Ah, dear me! Some Brethren are mightily fond of this prognostication. But, my dear Friend, there is one thing that always comforts me, namely, that God is not dead and He is not going to be defeated by the pope of Rome, or 50 popes of Rome! He will win the victory yet! Always have courage, for it is God’s cause and it is in God’s hands and, being in God’s hands, it is safe enough.

See what you are doing? Because you cannot trust God’s hand, you trust your own! You thrust out your sacrilegious arm to interfere with God’s peculiar work. What are you doing? You are about to defile God’s Ark! Remember the story of Uzzah? Pluck your hand back and leave the Ark alone. The Lord will help you to do such work as He gives you to do, but He has not made you Lord of Empires, nor Director of Providence. Leave to His sovereign sway the purposes of His eternal Grace and depend upon it, He will bring the world to Jesus’ feet! Christ Himself shall come! Look for Him every day, but be constant in His service, working for Him every hour.

Believe, too, that He shall reign among His ancients gloriously! And where, amidst Judea’s glades, Christ has been dishonored and the false Prophet has ruled—there, too, He shall reign—and Jew and Gentile shall worship and adore His ever-blessed name! I say again, magnify the Lord with all your souls! Greaten God! Expect great things in the future and with the cheery note of confidence, go forward to battle for Him whose is the victory forever and ever!

V. Once more and I have done. Our text should be used as a GUIDE IN OUR THEOLOGY. We will finish with that. Here is a very useful test for young disciples who are beginning to study God’s Word. “My soul does magnify the Lord.” If you will carry this with you, it will often save you from error and guide you into the Truth of God. There is certain teaching which makes a great deal of *man*—it talks much of man’s free will, ability, capacity and natural dignity. It evidently makes man the center and end of all things and God is placed in a position of service to His creature! As for the Fall—father Adam slipped and broke his little finger, or something of the kind! But this theology sees no great ruin as the result of the Fall. As for salvation—it is a slight cure for a small ill and by no means the infinite Grace which we consider it to be.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let those have this theology who like it, but do not you touch it even with a pair of tongs. It is of no use to man, for it

mistakes his position and only ministers to his pride. Man's place is not on the throne, but at the foot of the Cross. Listen to another theology, in which the sinner is laid low, his sinfulness is exposed, his corruption is unfolded, Christ's redemption is magnified, free Grace is extolled and the Holy Spirit is adored! That is the theology for you! Believe it! That is the theology of the Scriptures! Accept it! I do not think that you will often be led wrong if this is your mode of judgment—that which glorifies God is true and that which does not glorify God is false.

Sometimes you will meet with an undoubted teaching of God's Word which you do not understand. You know that the doctrine is taught in the Word, but you cannot make it coincide with some other Truth and you cannot quite see, perhaps, how it glorifies God. Then, dear Brother, dear Sister, glorify God by believing it! To believe a doctrine which you see to be true by mere reason is nothing very wonderful. There is no very great glory to God in believing what is as clear as the sun in the heavens! But to believe a Truth of God when it staggers you—oh, gracious faith! Oh, blessed faith!

You will remember, perhaps, an illustration taken from Mr. Gough, where the little boy says, "If mother says it is so, it is so if it is not so." That is the kind of believing for a child towards its mother and that is the sort of believing we ought to exercise towards God. I do not see the fact and I cannot quite apprehend it, but God says it is so and I believe Him. If all the philosophers in the world should contradict the Scriptures, so much the worse for the philosophers—their contradiction makes no difference to our faith. Half a grain of God's Word weighs more with us than a thousand tons of words or thoughts of all the modern theologians, philosophers and scientists that exist on the face of the earth!

God knows more about His own works than they do. They do but think, but the Lord *knows*. With regard to Truths of God which philosophers ought not to meddle with because they have not especially turned their thoughts that way—they are not more qualified to judge than the poorest man in the Church of God—no, nor one-half so much! Inasmuch as the most learned unregenerate men are dead in sin, what do they know about the living things of the children of God? Instead of setting them to judge, we will sooner trust our boys and girls that are just converted, for they know something of Divine things while carnal philosophers know nothing of!

Do not be staggered, Brothers and Sisters, but honor God, glorify God and magnify Him by believing great things and unsearchable—past your finding out—which you know to be true because He declares them to be so. Let the *ipse dixit* of God stand to you in the place of all reason, being, indeed, the highest and purest reason, for God, the Infallible, speaks what must be true! So, then, I come back to where I started. Let us go forth and practically try to magnify the name of the Lord. Go home and speak well of His name! Gather your children together and tell them what a good and great God He has been.

Some of you who have a swarm of youngsters could not do better than spend half an hour in telling them of His goodness to you in all your times of trouble. Leave to your children the heirloom of *gratitude*. Tell them how

good the Lord was to their father and how good He will be to His children. Tell your servants, tell your work people, tell anybody with whom you come in contact what a blessed God the Lord is. For my part, I never can speak well enough of His adorable name. He is the best of masters, His service is delight! He is the best of fathers, His commands are pleasure! Was there ever such a god as our God, our enemies themselves being judges?

Magnify His name by the brightness of your countenances. Rejoice and be glad in Him. When you are in sorrow and must fast, yet appear not unto men to fast, but anoint your faces and still wear a smile! Let not the world think that the servants of *the* King go mourning all their days. Make the world feel what a great God you serve and what a blessed Savior Christ is and thus always let your soul magnify the Lord! God grant you Grace to do so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—Your continued prayers are sought for the SPECIAL SERVICES at the Tabernacle, that by their success any injury occurring through the Pastor's enforced absence may be remedied. It would be an affliction, indeed, if our lifework should suffer through painful sickness, which, in itself, is a heavy cross to bear. By your prayers this will be averted and the trial will be turned into a blessing! Right thankful am I to report rapid and, I trust, real progress in my own case. Living in an unbroken series of summer days, where no cold mists are dreamed of, it is no great marvel that rheumatic pains fly away and depression of spirit departs. The healing Lord has breathed a restoring influence over land and sea and sky and I am feeling it to my great joy.

Hoping soon to be among my own people and to issue sermons newly preached, I am, to my many hearty friends, their grateful servant.

C. H. SPURGEON

Mentone, January 8, 1880

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A HARP OF TEN STRINGS

NO. 2219

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 30, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my
spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”
Luke 1:46, 47.***

IT is very clear that Mary was not beginning a new thing, for she speaks in the present tense, and in a tense which seems to have been present for a long time, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” Ever since she had received the wonderful tidings of the choice which God had made of her for her high position, she had begun to magnify the Lord. And when once a soul has a deep sense of God’s mercy and begins magnifying Him, there is no end to it. This grows by what it feeds upon—the more you magnify God, the more you can magnify Him. The higher you rise, the more you can see. Your view of God is increased in extent and, whereas you praised Him somewhat at the bottom of the hill, when you get nearer and nearer to the top of His exceeding goodness, you lift up the strain still more loudly and your soul does more fully and exultantly magnify the Lord!

“My soul does magnify the Lord.” What does it mean? The usual meaning of the word, “magnify,” is to make great, or to make to appear great. We say, when we use the microscope, that it magnifies so many times. The insect is the same small and tiny thing, but it is increased to our apprehension. The word is very suitable in this connection. We cannot make God greater than He is. Nor can we have any conception of His actual greatness. He is infinitely above our highest thoughts! When we meditate upon His attributes—

***“Imagination’s utmost stretch
In wonder dies away.”***

But we magnify Him by having higher, larger, truer conceptions of Him, by making known His mighty acts and praising His glorious name so that others, too, may exalt Him in their thoughts. This is what Mary was doing—she was a woman who was given, in later life, to pondering. Those who heard what the shepherds said concerning the Holy Child Jesus, *wondered*, but, “Mary kept all these things, and *pondered* them in her heart.” They wondered—Mary pondered. It is only the change of a letter, but it makes a great difference in the attitude of the soul—a change from a vague flash of interest to a deep attention of heart. She pondered. She weighed the matter. She turned it over in her mind. She thought about it. She estimated its value and result. She was like that other Mary, a medi-

tative woman who could quietly wait at her Lord's feet to hear gracious words and drink them in with yearning faith.

It is no idle occupation, then, to get alone and in your own hearts to magnify the Lord—to make Him great to your mind, to your affections—great in your memory, great in your expectations. It is one of the grandest exercises of the renewed nature! You need not, at such a time, think of the deep questions of Scripture. You may leave the abstruse doctrines to wiser heads, if you will, but if your very soul is bent on making God great to your own apprehension, you will be spending time in one of the most profitable ways possible to a child of God. Depend upon it, there are countless holy influences which flow from the habitual maintenance of great thoughts of God—just as there are incalculable mischiefs which flow from our small thoughts of Him! The root of false theology is belittling God and the essence of true Divinity is greatening God, magnifying Him and enlarging our conceptions of His majesty and His Glory to the utmost degree.

But Mary did not mean, by magnifying the Lord, merely to extol Him in her own thoughts. Being a true poetess, she intended to magnify the Lord by her *words*. No, I must correct myself—she did not *intend* to do it—she had been doing it all along! She was doing it when she came, panting and breathless, into her cousin Elizabeth's house. She said, "My soul does magnify the Lord. I am now in such a favored condition that I cannot open my mouth to talk to you, Elizabeth, without speaking of my Lord. My soul now seems filled with thoughts of Him. I must speak, first of all, about *Him* and say such things of His Grace and power as may help even you, my goodly elder sister, still to think grander thoughts of God than you have ever before enjoyed. My soul does magnify the Lord."

We must recall the fact that Mary was highly distinguished and honored. No other woman was ever blessed as she was. Perhaps no other could have borne the honor that was put upon her—to be the mother of the Human Nature of our Savior. It was the highest possible honor that could be put upon mortal and the Lord knew, at the appointed time, where to find a guileless, lowly woman who could be entrusted with such a gift and yet not seek to filch away His Glory. She is not proud. No, it is a false heart that steals the revenues of God and buys the intoxicating cup of self-congratulation. The more God gives to a true heart, the more it gives to Him. Like Peter's boat, which sank into the waters the more deeply, the more fully it was laden with fish, God's true children sink in their own esteem as they are honored by their Lord! God's gifts, when He gives Grace with them, do not puff us up—they build us up. A humble and lowly estimate of ourselves is added to a greater esteem of Him. The more God gives you, the more do you magnify Him and not yourself. Be this your rule—"He must increase and I must decrease." Be you less and less. Be you the Lord's humble handmaid, yet bold and confident in your praise of Him who has done for you great things! From now on and forever, let this be the one description of your life—"My soul does magnify the Lord; I have nothing else to do any more but to magnify Him and to rejoice in God my Savior."

A week might be profitably employed were I to attempt to preach upon each part of Mary's song, but with quite another purpose in view I am going to present it to you as a whole. As I put before you this instrument of ten strings, I will ask you, just for a minute or two, to place your fingers on each of them as they shall be indicated and see whether you cannot wake some melody to the praise of the great King, some harmony in His honor—whether you cannot, at this good hour, magnify the Lord and rejoice in God your Savior! Luther used to say that the glory of Scripture was to be found in the pronouns and it is certainly true of the text. Look at the personal touch of them, how it comes over and over again! “*My* soul does magnify the Lord, and *my* spirit has rejoiced in God *my* Savior.”

At one of our Orphanage Festivals, I put before our many friends who were gathered together, several reasons why everybody should contribute to the support of the children. Indeed, I said, nobody ought to go off the ground without giving something. I was struck with one Brother who had no money with him, but who brought me his watch and chain. “Oh,” I said, “do not give me these, these things sell for so little compared with their value.” But he insisted upon my keeping them and said, “I will redeem them tomorrow, but I cannot go away without giving something now.” How glad I would be if every child of God here would be as earnest in adoration and say, “I am going to give some praise to God at this service—out of some of those strings I will get music—perhaps out of them all. I will endeavor with my whole heart to say, at some portion of the sermon, and from some point of view, ‘My soul does magnify the Lord!’” Do I hear you whisper, “My soul is very heavy.” Lift it up, then, by praising the Lord! Begin a Psalm, even if at first the tune must be in a minor key! The strain will soon change and the “Miserere” will become a “Hallelujah Chorus.”

I. The first string which Mary seems to touch and which, I trust, we, too, may reach with the hand of faith, is that of THE GREAT JOY WHICH THERE IS IN THE LORD. “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” Let us bless God that our religion is not one of gloom! I do not know of any command anywhere in Scripture, “Groan in the Lord always, and again, I say, Groan.” From the conduct of some people we might almost imagine that they must have altered their New Testament in that particular passage and thus woefully changed the glory of the original verse, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.” The first I ever knew of Christ, my Master, truly, was when I found myself at the foot of His Cross with the great burden that had crushed me, effectually gone. I looked round for it, wondering where it could be and, behold, it was tumbling down into His sepulcher! I have never seen it since, blessed be His name, nor do I ever want to see it again! Well do I remember the leaps I gave for joy when first I found that all my burden of guilt had been borne by Him and was now buried in the depths of His grave—

***“Many days have passed since then;
Many changes I have seen.”***

I have been to a great many wells to draw water, but when I have drawn it, and tasted it, it has been brackish as the waters of Marah. But whenever I have gone to this well—"my God, my Savior"—I have never drawn one drop that was not sweet and refreshing! He who truly knows God must be glad in Him—to abide in His house is to be still praising Him—yes, we may exalt in Him all day long! A very notable Word of God is that which is found in the mouth of David—"God, my exceeding joy." Other things may give us pleasure. We may be happy in the gifts of God and in His creatures, but God, Himself, the spring of all our joys, is greater than them all! Therefore, "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord." This is His command—is it not a lovely one? Let no one say that the faith of the Christian is not to be exultant! It is to be a delight and so greatly does God desire us to rejoice in Him, that to the command is added a promise, "And He shall give you the desires of your heart."

What a religion is ours, in which delight becomes a *duty*—in which to be happy is to be obedient to a command! Heathen religions exact not only self-denials of a proper kind, but tortures which men invent to accustom themselves to misery. But in our holy faith, if we keep close to Christ, while it is true that we bear the cross, it is also true that the cross ceases to be a torture! In fact, it often bears *us* as we bear it—we discover in the service of our Master that "His yoke is easy and His burden is light," and, strange to say—His burden gives us rest and His yoke gives us liberty! We have never had anything from our Master but it has ultimately tended to our joy. Even when His rod has made us smart, He has intended it to work for our good and so it has! Praise Him, then, for such goodness!

Our religion is one of holy joy, especially with regard to our Savior. The more we understand that glorious word, "Savior," the more are we ready to dance with delight. "My spirit has rejoiced in God *my Savior*." The good tidings of great joy have reached us and as we, by His Grace, have believed them, He has saved us from sin, death and Hell! He has not simply promised to do it some day, but He has *done* it—we have been saved! What is more, we have, many of us, entered into rest by faith in Him. Salvation is to us a present experience at this hour, though we still wait for the fullness of it to be revealed in the world to come.

Oh, come, let us joy in our Savior! Let us thank Him that we have so much for which to thank Him! Let us praise Him that there is so much that we may rejoice in! No, so much that we *must* rejoice in! Let us adore His dear name that He has so arranged the whole plan of salvation—that it is calculated to bring Heaven to us while we are here—and to bring us who are here, into Heaven hereafter! Thus we lift up our hearts because of the great joy there is laid up for us in God. This is the first string. Touch it. Think of all the joy you have had in God. Praise Him for all the holy mirth He has given you in His House—the bliss of communion with Him at His table—the delights of fellowship with Him in secret. Sing to Him with a grateful heart, saying, "My soul does magnify the Lord."

II. The second string we would desire to lay our fingers on is THE GODHEAD OF OUR SAVIOR. "My soul does magnify the Lord." I have not a little Lord. "And my spirit has rejoiced in *God my Savior*." I know that

my Savior is a Man and rejoice in His Humanity, but we will contend to the death for this—that He is more than Man—He is our Savior! One human being could not redeem another, or give to God a ransom for his brother. An angel's arm could not bear the tremendous load of the disaster of the Fall, but Christ's arm is more than angelic! He whom we magnify as our Savior counted it not robbery to be equal with God. And when He undertook the wondrous task of our redemption, He brought the Godhead with Him to sustain Him in the more than Herculean labor. Our trust is in Jesus Christ, very God of very God! We shall never cease, not only to believe in Him, but to speak of Him, rejoice in Him and sing of Him as the Incarnate Deity. What a frozen religion that is which has not the Godhead of Christ in it! Surely, they must be men of a very sanguine and imaginative temperament who can pretend to receive any comfort out of a Christianity which has not the Divine Savior as its very center. I would as soon think of going to an iceberg to warm myself, as to a faith of that kind to find comfort! Nobody can ever praise up Christ too much for you and for me—they can never say too much of His wisdom, or of His power. Every Divine attribute ascribed to Christ makes us lift up a new song unto Him, for, whatever He may be to others, He is to us God over all, blessed forever! Amen.

I wish that I could sing instead of speaking to you of Him who was with the Father before all worlds began, whose delights, even then, were with the sons of men in prospect of their creation. I wish that I could tell the wonderful story of how He entered into Covenant with God on the behalf of His people and pledged Himself to pay the debts of those His Father gave to Him. He undertook to gather into one fold, all the sheep whom He pledged Himself to purchase with His precious blood. He engaged to bring them back from all their wanderings and fold them on the hilltops of the Delectable Mountains at His Father's feet. This He vowed to do and He has gone about His task with a zeal that clothed Him as a cloak—and He will achieve the Divine purpose before He delivers up the Kingdom to God, even the Father. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

It is our delight to hear this Son of God, this Son of Mary, this wondrous Being in His complex Nature as our Mediator, exalted and extolled, and made very high. Have you not sometimes felt that if the minister preached more about Jesus Christ, you would be very glad to hear him? I hope that is your inclination, yet I am afraid that we talk a great deal about many things rather than about our Master. Come, let me hear of Him! Sing to me or talk to me of Jesus, whose name is honey in the mouth, music in the ear and Heaven in the heart! Oh, for more praise to His holy name! Yes, some of us can touch this string and say with Mary, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

III. The third string has softer, sweeter music in it, and it may suit some of us better than the more sublime themes that we have already touched. Let us sing and magnify the LORD'S LOVING CONDESCENSION, for so the blessed virgin did when she went on to say, "for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." Here is something to sing

about, for ours was not only a low estate, but perhaps some here would have had to say, like Gideon, “My family is poor, and I am the least in my father’s house” and, like he, you would have been passed over by most of the people. Perhaps even in your own family you were counted as nobody. If there was a jest uttered, you were sure to be the butt of it, and generally you were misunderstood and your actions misinterpreted. This was a trying experience for you, but from this you have been gloriously delivered. It may have been that, like Joseph, you were a little dreamy and, perhaps, you were a trifle too fond of telling your dreams. Yet, though because of this you were much put upon, the Lord, at last, raised your head above those round about you. It may have been that your lot in life was cast among the very poorest and lowest of mankind, yet the Lord has looked upon you in infinite compassion and saved you! Will you not, then, magnify Him?

If Christ wanted a people, why did He not choose the kings, princes and nobles of the earth? Instead of that, He takes the poor and makes them to know the wonders of His dying love! And instead of selecting the wisest men in the world, He takes even the most foolish and instructs them in the things of the Kingdom of God—

**“Wonders of Grace to God belong,
Repeat His mercies in your song.”**

All of us who have been saved by Grace must still strike a more tender note, for we were sinful as well as lowly. We went astray like lost sheep and, therefore, we magnify the Lord who bought us, sought us and brought us back to His fold. It may be painful to remember what we once were, but it is well, sometimes, to go back in our thoughts to the time past when we lived in sin, that we may the better appreciate the favor of which we have been made partakers. When the Apostle Paul wrote out a catalog of those who shall *not* inherit the Kingdom of God, he added, “And such were some of you: but you are washed.” Oh, let us bless the name of the Lord and magnify Him for this! Who else could have cleansed us from our sin, or in what other Fountain save that opened to the house of David could we have plunged to rid us of our awful defilement? He stoops very low, for some of God’s elect were once the offscouring of all things—and even when converted, many of them remained so, in the estimate of the world which sneers at humble Christians.

If the professed followers of Christ happen to meet in some fine building and worship God with grand music and gorgeous rituals, *then* the people of the world put up with them! They may go even so far as to patronize them, though, even then, their respect is chiefly called forth, not on behalf of the people, but because of the building, the fine music and the carriages. The *carriages* are especially important, for without a certain number of them at the door, it is deemed *impossible* to have a proper display of cultured Christianity! But the more God’s people cling to the Lord, the less likely are they to be esteemed by the vulgar judgment of unholy men. Yet the Lord has chosen such, blessed be His name! It is a great wonder to me that the Lord ever chose some of you—but it is a far greater wonder that He should ever have chosen *me*. I can somehow understand His love

for you when I look at the gracious points in your character, though I am fully aware that they are only worked by Grace, but I cannot understand the love which He has displayed to *me*, who am the least of all the saints. “Oh!” you say, “that is what we were going to say about ourselves.” Yes, I know. I am trying to put it into your mouths, so that we may all join in adoring gratitude! It is a miracle of mercy that He should have loved any of us, or stooped in His Grace to have raised such beggars from the dung-hill to set us among the princes at His right hand—

***“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there’s room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come.”***

IV. The next string, however, is THE GREATNESS OF GOD’S GOODNESS, for Mary goes on to sing—“He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” Oh, the Lord has done great things for His people! “He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name.” God has made you blessed. You were once under the curse, but for you there is now no condemnation, for you are in Christ Jesus. If the curse had withered you, like some lightning-blasted oak, you would not have wondered, but, instead thereof, the gracious Lord has planted you by the rivers of water and He makes you to bring forth your fruit in your season and your leaf does not wither. “The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad.” To be lifted up from that horrible pit is such a great thing that we cannot measure it—but to be set up on that Throne of Mercy exceeds our highest thought—who can measure that? Take your line and see if you can fathom the depth of such Grace, or measure the height of such mercy! Shall we be silent when we behold such marvelous loving kindness? God forbid it! Let us break forth in our hearts, now, with gladsome hallelujahs to Him who has done such wonderful things for us!

Think, Brothers and Sisters, you were blind—He has made you see! You were lame—He has made you leap! Worse than that, you were dead—He has made you live! You were in prison—and He has made you free! Some of us were in the dungeon with our feet fast in the stocks. Can I not well remember when I did lie in that inner prison, moaning and groaning, without any voice to comfort me, or even a ray of light to cheer me in the darkness? And now that He has brought me out, shall I forget to utter my deep thanks? No! I will sing a song of deliverance that others may hear, and fear, and turn unto the Lord! But that is not all. He has not only taken us from the prison, He has raised us to the Throne of God—you and I could go in and out of Heaven tonight if God called us there—and every angel would treat us with respect! If we entered into Glory, even though we had come from the poorest home in London, we would find that the highest angels are only ministering servants to the chosen people of God! Oh, He has done wonders for us!

I am not so much attempting to preach as trying to wake up your memory, that you may think of the goodness of the Lord’s Grace and say, “Oh, yes, it is so, and my soul does magnify the Lord!” Not one of the wonders of Divine Grace has been worked for us without deep necessity for its

manifestation. If the very least Grace which may, perhaps, up to now have escaped your attention, were taken from you, where would you be? I often meet with people of God who used to be very happy and joyful, but who have fallen into despondency, and who now talk about the mercies of God's Covenant love in such a way as to make me blush. They say, "I thought I once had that blessing, Sir, and I am afraid I have not got it now, though there is nothing I long for more. Oh, what a precious thing it would be to be able to have access to God in prayer! I would give my eyes to be able to know that I am really a child of God."

Yet those of us who have those blessings do not half value them. No, Brothers and Sisters, we do not value them a thousandth part as much as we ought! Our constant song should be, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." Instead of that, we often take the gifts thoughtlessly and unthankfully from His hands. When a man is in the ocean, he may have much water over his head and not feel it, but when He comes out, if you then put a little pail of water on his head, it becomes quite a burden as he carries it. So some of you are swimming in God's mercy—you are diving into it and you do not recognize the weight of the Glory which God has bestowed upon you. But if you should once get out of this ocean of joy and fall into a state of sadness of heart, you would begin to appreciate the weight of any *one* of the mercies which now do not seem to be of much consequence, or to make any claim upon your gratitude. Without waiting to lose the sense of God's Grace, in order that we may know the value of it, let us bless Him who has done such inconceivably great things for us, and say, "My soul does magnify the Lord."

V. The fifth string that I would touch is THE COMBINATION OF GRACE AND HOLINESS that there is in what God has done for us. "He that is mighty has done great things for me; and holy is His name." I may not even hint at the peculiar delicacy of Mary's case, but she knew that it was wholly holy and pure. Now, when the Lord has saved you and me, who did not deserve saving, He did a very wonderful act of Sovereign Grace in making us to differ, but the mercy is that He did it all *justly*. Nobody can say that it ought not to be done. At the Last Great Day, what God has done in His Grace will stand the test of justice, for He has never, in the splendor and lavishness of His love, violated the principles of eternal righteousness, even to save His own elect. "He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name."

Sin must be punished—it has been punished in the Person of our glorious Substitute. No man can enter into Heaven unless he is perfectly pure—they who are redeemed shall take no unclean thing within the gates. Every rule and mandate of the Divine empire shall be observed. The *Law-Maker* will not be the *Law-Breaker* even to save the sinner! But His Law shall be honored as surely as the sinner shall be saved. Sometimes I feel that I could play on this string for an hour or two. Here we have Justice magnified in Grace and holiness rejoicing in the salvation of sinners! The attributes of God are like the amazing crystal shining out with its clear white light, but which may be divided into all the colors of the prism,

each different and all beautiful. The dazzling radiance of God is too glorious for our mortal eyes, but each Revelation teaches us more of His beauty and perfectness. In the ruby light of an atoning Sacrifice we are enabled to see how God is just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. Glory be to His name for the power of Grace mingled with holiness! My soul does magnify the Lord for this wonderful salvation in which every attribute shall have its glory—justice as well as mercy, wisdom as well as might. “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Who could have invented such a plan and who could have carried it out when it was thought of? Only He who came “with dyed garments from Bozrah.” “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

VI. The sixth string is one which should be sweet in every way. Mary now goes on to touch the string of GOD’S MERCY. “And His mercy is on them that fear Him.” The saints of old often touched this string in the Temple. They often sang it, lifting up the refrain again and again—“His mercy endures forever!”—

***“For His mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.”***

Mercy! Sinner, this is the silver bell for you—it is of the Lord’s mercies that you are not consumed—because His compassions fail not. Listen to the heavenly music that calls you to repent and live! God delights in mercy. He waits to be gracious. Mercy! Saint, this is the golden bell for you, for you still need mercy. Standing with your foot upon the jasper doorstep of Paradise, with the pearly gate just before you, you will still need mercy to help you over the last step. And when you enter the choir of the redeemed, mercy shall be your perpetual song! In Heaven you will chant the praises of the God of Grace whose mercy endures forever.

Do you mourn over your own backsliding? God will have mercy upon you, dear child, though you have wandered since you have known Him! Come back to Him this very hour! He would woo you again. He would press you to His bosom. Have you not often been restored? Have you not often had your iniquities put away from you in the years gone by? If so, again, this moment, touch this string—a child’s finger can make it bring forth its music—touch it now! Say, “Yes, concerning mercy, mercy to the very chief of sinners, my soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

VII. Time would fail us if we tried to dwell at any length upon these wondrous themes, so we pass to the next string, number seven, GOD’S IMMUTABILITY, because in the verse we have already touched upon, there are two notes. Mary said, “His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.” He that had mercy in the days of Mary, has mercy *today*—“from generation to generation,” He is the same God. “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” You that once delighted in the Lord, do not suppose that He has changed! He still invites you to come and delight in Him! He is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” What a poor foundation we would have for our hope if God could change! But He has confirmed His

Word by an oath, “that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

The God of my grandfather, the God of my father, is my God this day—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the God of every Believer! He is the same God and is prepared to do the same—and to *be* the same to us as to them! Look back into your own experience. Have you not found God always the same? Come, protest against Him, if you have ever found Him to change! Is the Mercy Seat altered? Do the promises of God fail? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Will He no more be favorable? No, even “if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself!” And when all things melt away, this one eternal Rock abides! Therefore, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” It is a blessed string to touch! If we had time, we would play upon it and evoke such harmonies as would make the angels want to join us in the chorus!

VIII. The next string which will awaken a responsive echo in your hearts is GOD’S POWER. “He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.” This string gives us deep bass music and requires a heavy hand to make it pour forth any melody. What wonders of power God has worked on the behalf of His people, from the days of Egypt, when the horse and his rider He cast into the Red Sea, even till now! How strong is His arm to defend His people!

In these days some of us have been driven to look to that power, for all other help has failed. You know how it was in the dark ages—it seemed as if the darkness of popery would never be removed—but how soon it was gone when God called forth His men to bear witness to His Son! What reason we have to rejoice that He “scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts”! They thought that they could readily burn up the heretics and put an end to this Gospel of theirs, but they could not do it. And today there is a dark conspiracy to stamp out the evangelical faith. First, on the part of some who go after their superstitions, they set up the *crucifix* to hide the Cross and point men to *sacraments* instead of to the Savior.

And then, worse than these, are those who undermine our faith in Holy Scripture—they tear from the Book this chapter and that, deny this great Truth of God and the other—and try to bring the inventions of man into the place that ought to be occupied by the Truth of God. But the Lord lives! Jehovah’s arm has not waxed short! Depend upon it, before many years have passed, He will take up the quarrel of His Covenant and will bring the old banner to the front again! We shall yet rejoice to hear the Gospel preached in the most plain terms, accentuated by the Holy Spirit, Himself, upon the hearts of His people. Let us touch this string again! The Almighty God is not dead! “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”

IX. The next string is one that some friends do not like. At least they do not say much about it—it is DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY. Listen to it. You know how God thunders it out. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” God’s will is supreme! Whatever the wills of men may be, God will not be

driven from His Throne, nor will His scepter be made to quiver in His hands! After all the rebellious acts of men and devils, He will still be eternal and supreme, with His Kingdom ruling over all. And thus the virgin sings, "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away." Who can speak the wonders of His Sovereign Grace? Was it not strange that He should ever have chosen you?—

***"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father,' you must ever sing,
Because it seemed good in Your sight."***

Is it not strange that the Lord should not take the Kings and mighty ones, but should so order it, that the poor have the Gospel preached to them? God is King of kings and Lord of lords—and He acts like a king. "He gives not account of any of His matters." But He lets us see right clearly that He has no respect to the greatness and fancied goodness of man—that He does as He pleases and that He pleases to give His mercy to them that fear Him and bow before Him! He dispenses His favors to those who tremble at His Presence, who come humbly to His feet and take His mercy as a free gift—who look to His dear Son because they have nothing else to look to and, as poor, guilty worms, find in Christ their life, their wisdom, their righteousness, their all! Oh, the splendor of this great King!

X. The tenth string is GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. "He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever." God remembers what He has said. Take those three words, "As He spoke." Whatever He said, though it was thousands of years ago, it stands fast forever and ever! God cannot lie. Beloved, are any of you in trouble? Search the Scriptures till you find a promise that suits your case. And when you get it, do not say, "I hope that this is true." That is an insult to your God! Believe it, believe it up to the hilt! Do as I have seen boys do in the swimming hole—take a header and go right into the stream of God's mercy! Dive as deeply as you can—there is no drowning here! These are "waters to swim in" and the more you can lose yourself in this blessed crystal flood of promised mercy, the better it shall be! You shall rise up out of it as the sheep come from the washing! You shall feel refreshed beyond measure in having cast yourself upon God!

When God's promises fail, let us know of it, for some of us have lived so long on those promises that we do not care to live on anything else! And if they can be proved to be false, we had better give up living altogether! But we delight to know that they are *all* absolutely true—what God said to our fathers stands good to their children—and will stand good even to the end of time and to all eternity.

If any of you have not been able to touch even one of these strings, I would bid you get to your knees and cry to God, and say, "Why is it that I cannot magnify You, O Lord?" I should not be surprised if you discovered the reason to be that you are so big, yourself. He never magnifies God who magnifies himself! Belittle yourself and magnify your God! Down with self

to the lowest depths and up, higher and still higher, with your thoughts of God!

Poor Sinner, you that have not yet laid hold on God, there is sweet music even for you in the virgin's song. Perhaps you are saying, "I am nothing but a lump of sin and a heap of misery." Very well. Leave the lump of sin and the heap of misery and let Christ be your All-in-All! Give yourself up to Christ. He is a Savior—let Him do His own business. If a man sets up to be a lawyer and I have a case in court, I should not think of giving him the case and then, afterwards, go into court and begin to meddle with it for myself! If I did, he would say, "I must drop the case if you do not let it alone."

Sometimes the idea may come into your mind that you will do something towards saving yourself and have some share in the glory of your salvation. If you do not get rid of that idea, you will be lost! Surrender yourself to Christ and let *Him* save you! And then, afterwards, He will work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure, while you shall make melody in your heart unto the Lord—and from this harp of ten strings shall proceed such delightful music that many shall listen with such rapture that they shall go to your Master and take lessons in this heavenly music for themselves!

The Lord bless you, Beloved, and send you away happy in Him!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 1:39-80.*
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 775, 245.**

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Mr. Spurgeon appeared to be rallying when the note for last week's sermon was being written and that rallying continued for three or four days. Towards the end of the week, however, the inability to take food and the consequent weakness once more returned. No progress can, therefore, be reported in his general condition—the serious malady from which he has been suffering remains much the same as it has been for many weeks. Readers of the sermons will see that the need for continued supplication is still as great as during any part of the past three months. Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon are deeply grateful for the widespread sympathy and prayer on their behalf and they join in intercession for the many friends who have been remembering them at the Throne of Grace.

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

MARY'S MAGNIFICAT NO. 2941

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 1905.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 22, 1875.*

*“And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and
my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”
Luke 1:46, 47.*

MARY'S Magnificat was a song of faith. You have thought, perhaps, that you could easily have sung this song if you had been as highly favored as she was, but are you sure that you could have done so? Have you ever realized the difficulties under which this hymn was composed and sung? If not, permit me to remind you that the wondrous birth which had been promised to her had not then been accomplished and in her mind there must have been a consciousness that many would doubt her statements. The visitation of the angel and all its consequences would seem to be ridiculous and even impossible to many to whom she might venture to mention the circumstances—no, more than that—would subject her to many cruel insinuations which would scandalize her character! And that which conferred upon her the highest honor that ever fell to woman would, in the judgment of many, bring upon her the greatest possible dishonor. We know what suspicions even Joseph had and that it was only a Revelation from God that could remove them. Mary would have been sorely troubled if she had been influenced by her natural feelings and had been swayed by external circumstances.

It was only her wondrous faith—in some respects, her *matchless* faith, for no other woman had ever had such a blessed trial of faith as she had—it was only her matchless faith that she should be the mother of the holy Child Jesus, that sustained her. Truly blessed was she in believing that and blessed, indeed, was she in that even before there was an accomplishment of the things that were told her by the angel, she could sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” Unbelief would have said, “Wait.” Fear would have said, “Be silent.” But faith could not wait and could not be silent! She must sing and sing she did most sweetly. I call your attention to this fact because when we ourselves have a song to sing unto the Lord, we may perhaps be tempted not to sing it till our hopes are accomplished and our faith has been exchanged for fact. Brothers and Sisters, if this is your case, do not wait, for your song will spoil if you do! There is another song to be sung for the accomplished mercy, but there is a song to be sung now for the *promised* mercy! Therefore, let not the present hour lose the song which is due to it.

I am not going to expound the text so much as to ask you to practice it with me. So, first, *let us sing*. Secondly, *let us sing after Mary's manner*. And, thirdly, *let us sing with Mary's purpose*.

I. Firstly, then, LET US SING.

Let us sing, first, *because singing is the natural language of joy*. Do not even the ungodly sing when their corn and wine increase? Have they not their harvest hymns and vintage songs? Do they not sing right merrily when they go forth to the dance? And if the wicked sing thus, shall the righteous be silent? Are the jubilant songs all made for the ungodly and the dirges for us? Are they to lift high the festive strain and we to be satisfied with the "Dead March" in *Saul*, or some such melancholy music as that? No, Brothers and Sisters, if they have joy, much more have we! Their joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, but ours is the shining of a star that shall never be quenched. Let us sing, then, for our joy abounds and abides. Therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." If the joy of the Lord is your strength, why not express it in holy song? Why should not your joys have a tongue as well as the joys of ungodly men? When warriors win victories, they shout. Have we won no victories through Jesus Christ our Lord? When men celebrate their festivals, they sing. Are there any festivals equal to ours—our Paschal Supper, our passage of the Red Sea, our Jubilee, our expectation of the coronation of our King, our hymn of victory over all the hosts of Hell? Oh surely if the children of earth sing, the children of Heaven ought to sing far more often, far more loudly, far more harmoniously than they do! Come, then, let us sing because we are glad in the Lord!

Let us sing, too, *because singing is the language of Heaven*. It is thus that they express themselves up yonder. Many of the songs and other sounds of earth never penetrate beyond the clouds. Sighs and groans and clamors have never reached those regions of serenity and purity! But they do sing there. Heaven is the home of sacred song and we are the children of Heaven. Heaven's light is in us! Heaven's smile is upon us! Heaven's all belongs to us and, therefore—

"We would begin the music here,

And so our souls should rise.

Oh, for some Heavenly notes to bear

Our passions to the skies!"

The music of joy and the music of Heaven should often be upon our lips in the form of Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Let us also sing *because singing is sweet to the ears of God*. I think I may venture to say that even the song of birds is sweet to Him, for in the 104th Psalm, where it is written, "The Lord shall rejoice in His works," it is also mentioned that the birds "sing among the branches." Is there anything sweeter in the world than to wake up, about four or five o'clock in the morning, just at this time of the year and hear the birds singing as if they would burst their little throats and, pouring out in a kind of contest of sweetness, their little hearts in joyous song? I believe that in the wild places of the earth, where no human foot has ever defiled the soil, God loves to walk. When I have been alone among the fir trees, inhaling their sweet fragrance, or have wandered up the hill where the

loudest voice could not be answered by another voice, for no man was there, I have felt that God was there and that He loved to listen to the song of birds that He had created. Yes, even the harshly croaking ravens He hears when they cry!

I do not think that mere music is sweet to God's ears when it comes from man in lewdness, attended with lascivious thoughts. And even sacred music which is sweet in itself, when used for mere amusement, must be an abomination to the Most High when it is so degraded. But He loves to hear us sing when we sing His praises from our hearts. Do you not delight to hear your own children sing and is there anything sweeter than a song from a child? At the Orphanage, the other day, they brought me a little boy who had just been taken in. I felt a special interest in him because his father had been a minister of the Gospel. They told him to sing to me and it was a very sweet song—one of Mr. Sankey's hymns—which came from his lips. His singing quite touched my heart. Had it been my own child, I do not doubt that it would have touched my heart still more! And God loves to hear His children sing. Even your discords, as long as they do not affect your heart, but are only of sound and not of soul, shall please Him. What a beautiful simile is used in the 22nd Psalm—"O You that inhabit the praises of Israel!" Just as God's ancient people, during the feast of tabernacles, dwelt under booths made from the branches of trees, so Jehovah is represented as having made for Himself a tabernacle out of the praises of His people! They are only like fading branches that soon turn brown, yet the great Lord of All condescends to sit beneath them and as we, each one, bring a new branch, plucked from the tree of Mercy, we help to make a new tabernacle for the Most High to dwell in!

One reason why they sing in Heaven is *because all there are seeking to please the heart of God*. They sing not merely that they may practice Psalmody and have their voices in good order, or that they may interest the strangers who are constantly arriving from these nether lands, or even that they may please each other and delight the angels, but unto the Lord is their perpetual song, for He delights in it. Let us also sing unto Him as long as we live. Sometimes it would be well for us to make hymns, rather than to repress the making of them, as we often do. The Moravians were accustomed to gather up in their churches the very poorest rhymes and dibbles that were made by the brethren—and they used to shape them as best they could into something like a singable form. Their hymnbook has in it a great number of hymns that I should not like to hear you sing! But, for all that, I like the spirit that was in the early Moravians. "Let us each one try to make a hymn," they said. "Let us encourage one another to express some personal experience of our life, for we have each one of us had some special point of God's Grace illustrated in us." I would that the men who can so well write popular songs and give to the people attractive words and tunes to sing in the street or in the home, would consecrate their talents to a better purpose by writing hymns and spiritual songs to the praise and glory of God. We would then be the richer in our Psalmody, as, indeed, we always are

when God sends us a true revival of religion, for revivals of religion always bring with them new hymns and spiritual songs.

But if we cannot ourselves compose hymns, let us sing those that somebody else has made and let us sing the right ones—those that suit us best. There are some hymns that I cannot sing at present—they are too high for me, but I shall sing them, by-and-by. There are others that are too low for me—I cannot get down to such depths of doubt and trembling as the poets seem to have been in when they composed them. Every Christian should have some particular hymn that he loves best, so that when his heart is merriest, he should sing that hymn. How many good old people I have known who used to sit and sing, or walk about the house, just humming or crooning—

***“When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.”***

Some have other favorites, but whatever our choice is, I think it is well to have a hymn which, although we have not ourselves written it, has, nevertheless, been made our own by our circumstances and experiences. When we have fixed on such a hymn as that, let us sing it unto the Lord again and again!

Let us not be among these who make excuses for not singing. One says that he has no voice. Then, sing with your heart, Brother! Perhaps even your voice would improve if you used it more, but if there is such a grating noise about it that you dare not sing when another person is listening, get *alone* and sing to the Lord.

Do not say that you are unable to sing because you are always in company. I would have you make it your general rule to sing in almost any company where your lot may be cast, though, sometimes it is not right to cast your pearls before swine. Watch your opportunity. If all in the room are silent, perhaps you had better be silent, too. But if one of your workfellows feels that he must sing a song and he has taken the liberty to do it, now is your turn and you may sing, too. I remember being on Mount St. Bernard, spending a night with the monks at the hospice. There was a piano which had been given by the Prince of Wales, and the different persons who were spending the night there, sang and played by turns. One sang a Spanish hymn and another a German hymn. And when it came to our turn, we sang—

***“There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins.”***

And why should we not sing it? Had we not as much a right to sing as the other people had? Do not abate your rights and privileges, dear Friends, but if others sing, you sing, too, and never mind who listens! It will do no man any harm to hear the praises of the Lord!

And do not say that you cannot sing because of your occupation! Your hands may be just as busy as usual even while the songs of Zion are rising from your lips. You may even be writing, or otherwise mentally occupied and yet, at the same time, your heart may be ascending to God in praise!

Make no excuse because you are ill. Sometimes a little song between the sheets is very sweet in the ears of God, even though it has to be accompanied by sighs and groans. Pain makes every note come out with great effort, yet I believe God bends down His ears to hear such singing as that. I have known birds in cages sing better than those outside—and the Lord sometimes puts us in a cage on purpose that He may hear us sing the sweeter. He loves to hear His sick children sing His praises upon their beds and His high praises in the midst of the furnace of affliction. Are you very poor? Then sing from your heart to the Lord and your music shall be better than silver and gold unto God! Even death, itself, need not stay our songs—let us sing right up to this side of the Glory gate—there is no fear about our keeping on with our song on the other side! As long as we can sing here, let us do so, praising the Lord right up to the last hour of our lives—then shall our voices be tuned immediately to noble songs, for in a moment, we shall—

***“Sing with rapture and surprise
His loving-kindness in the skies!”***

II. Now, passing on to our second point, LET US SING AFTER MARY'S MANNER, as far as that manner may be transferable to us. No bird ought to try to sing exactly like another. The blackbird ought not to imitate the thrush, nor the thrush the canary—let them all keep to their own notes and let each one of us sing his own song unto the Lord. Yet I think we shall see that there is something about Mary's music that will suit us all.

First, *let us sing reverently.* Mary was very joyful, but there was nothing in her song that would strike you as being irreverent, vulgar, or commonplace. I am not squeamish about music, but I must confess that I hardly like to hear the high praises of God sung to the tune of a comic song or of a dance. There is a certain congruity about things that must be observed and some good music may have associated with it such strange ideas that we had better let it alone till those associations have died out, lest, haply, while we are uttering holy words, some people may be reminded by the tune of unholy things! Mary sings very reverently and so should we. And though I like some of the new tunes very much and am glad that they are so popular, yet, for my own part, I like a good old Psalm tune much better. It seems to me like going away from the snows of Lebanon to seek after the stale cisterns of earth when we leave the old music, and the old hymns, and the old Psalms for any of your modern melodies. Still, if you can praise God better with the new songs, do so, but let it always be done reverently.

But, secondly, *Mary praised God with personal devotion.* Notice how intensely personal her song is. Elizabeth is there, yet Mary sings as though she were all alone—“My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” It seemed as though her song meant something like this, “Elizabeth is glad, but I, Mary, am also glad, and I have a gladness which is all my own, which even Elizabeth cannot know. ‘My soul does magnify the Lord.’” It ought to be so in our congregations—we should join with our fellow Christians in their songs of praise, but we must always mind that our personal note is not omitted—“My soul does magnify the Lord.” Do you not think that some of

you too often forget this? You come to hear sermons and sometimes you do not come to the assembly as much as you ought for the purpose of directly and distinctly praising God in your own personality and individuality. The music is delightful to us as it rises from thousands of voices, but to God it can be pleasant only as it comes from each heart. "My soul"—whether other people are praising the Lord or not—"my soul"—for I have a personal indebtedness to You, my God, and there is a personal union between You and me. I love You and You love me and, therefore, even if all other souls are dumb, "my soul does magnify the Lord." In this fashion, dear Brothers and Sisters, have a song to yourself and mind that it is thoroughly your own.

Thirdly, *in Mary's song we see great spirituality*. You observe how she puts this matter twice over—"My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." She is far from being content with mere lip service. Her language is poetic, but she is not satisfied with her language. I have no doubt that her voice was exceedingly sweet, but she does not say anything about that, but she does speak of, "my soul," and, "my spirit." O dear Friends, let us never be satisfied with any kind of worship which does not take up the whole of our inner and higher nature! It is what you are *within*, that you really are before the living God! And it is quite a secondary matter how loud the chant may be, or how sweet the tune of your hymn, or how delightfully you join in it unless your spirit, your soul, truly praises the Lord! You can sometimes do this in "songs without words"—and he that has no voice for singing can, after this fashion, magnify the Lord with his soul and spirit.

Mary also praised the Lord intelligently. Notice how she sings, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." You observe that she varies the names which she uses and she varies them with great propriety. She magnifies Jehovah. She makes Him great, which is the proper thing to do concerning Jehovah. But she rejoices in God, her Savior. In that aspect, her Lord comes nearer to her and becomes more immediately the object of joy to her, so she rejoices in God her Savior. She dwells first upon Jehovah's power to save—"My soul does magnify *the Lord*." Then she dwells upon His willingness to save—"My spirit has rejoiced in *God my Savior*." She seems to see the two points—the greatness and the goodness of the Lord Jehovah, yet her Savior. The Ruler and Lawgiver, yet the gracious One who pardons and blots out sin.

Mary praised God enthusiastically, for the reduplication of the terms, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior," indicates the fervor and ardor of her praise. It is natural to us to repeat ourselves when we begin to glow with holy gladness, so Mary stays, "My soul, my natural life—my spirit, my newborn, my intense, diviner life—my soul, my mind, my intellect—my spirit, my affections, my heart, my emotions, my entire being, my soul and spirit praise the Lord." She did not need to add that her body praised the Lord, for the very sound of her voice bore witness that her body was joining with her soul and spirit—so that her triple nature was magnifying the Lord. There was enthusiasm in her song and if ever any of us ought to be stirred to the very depths of our spirit, it is when we are praising the Lord. Sing,

Brothers and Sisters, sing sweetly, but sing loudly, too, unto God, your strength!

Further, we may sing, as Mary did, Divinely. I mean, of course, with regard to the object of her song. So let it be with us. "My soul does magnify"—a Doctrine? A church! A priest?—God forbid! "My soul does magnify *the Lord* and my spirit has rejoiced in"—the success of my pastor's ministry? Yes, it may do so, but that is one of the inferior themes for joy. "My spirit has rejoiced in" my own success in casting out devils and working miracles? Yes, it may do that, but still, it would be better to rejoice that our names are written in Heaven. The subject of Mary's joy is nothing low, nothing less than Heavenly—"My spirit has rejoiced in *God my Savior*." If that is your declaration, you may well lift up your voice and sing—

***"Go up, go up, my heart,
Dwell with your God above."***

Note, again, that *Mary sang evangelically* and we must mind that we always do the same, for I am afraid that there are some popular hymns which have something that is not Gospel in them. And whenever there is a hymn that has the slightest taint of that sort in it, we ought to abandon it forever, however sweet its poetry may be. Mary sings, "My spirit does rejoice in God my Savior." She was no Socinian and she was no Romanist—she knew that she needed a Savior and that she needed a God for her Savior, so her spirit rejoiced in God, her Savior. When we reach the highest point in our devotions, we still need a Savior. I do not at all like the boastful talk about "the higher life" in which some people seem to revel. We cannot have too high a life, but, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is about as big a prayer as I can manage at present. And often does my soul pray the dying thief's prayer with such earnestness that his petition is forced to my lips, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." The place of the perfect does not suit me yet, at any rate, but the place of the publican and of the penitent more becomes me, as I think it does the most of us. Oh, yes, we still need a Savior! So, like Mary, we will sing about our Savior and even if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we cannot do without the blood of Jesus Christ constantly cleansing us from all sin—for we do still sin.

Once more, *Mary praised the Lord with assurance*. It is a grand thing to be able to sing, "My soul *does* magnify the Lord, and my spirit *has* rejoiced in God"—"who will, I hope, and pray, and sometimes believe, be my Savior"? I have spoilt the music—have I not—by putting in those words of my own? It goes better as Mary sang it, "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." She was quite assured of that fact and had not any doubts or fears concerning it! It is well to get such a firm grip of the Savior that we rest in Him completely and so can sing to His praise. "Oh!" says one, "I cannot praise Jesus as I would because of my sins." And I reply to that remark—But my dear Friend, would you praise Him if you had no sins? Would He be needed by you and wanted by you then? Could He be of any use to you then? Would you feel any gratitude to Him? If you were not sinners, of what use would a Savior be to you? But we praise Him because though we are conscious of sin, we are equally

conscious of cleansing in His precious blood! We take Him to be our All-in-All because we ourselves are nothing at all! If we had been of any account, He would have been just so much less, but, since we are nothing, there is the opportunity for Him to be All-in-All to us. Let us sing, then, to His praise! May God the Holy Spirit teach us to do so, even as He taught the Virgin Mary!

III. Now, thirdly, and briefly, LET US SING WITH MARY'S PURPOSE. That was twofold—"My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

The first part of our PURPOSE, then, should be, "*Magnify the Lord.*" How can we do that? We cannot really make God great, though that is the meaning of the word. How, then, can we magnify Him?

Well, first, let us think of His greatness. It will be really praising Him if we thus *think* of Him. You need not speak, but just ponder, weigh, consider, contemplate, meditate, ruminare upon the attributes of the Most High. Begin with His mercy if you cannot begin with His holiness, but take the attributes one by one and think about them. I do not know a single attribute of God which is not wonderfully quickening and powerful to a true Christian. As you think of any one of them, it will ravish you and carry you quite away. You will be lost in wonder, love and praise as you consider it. You will be astonished and amazed as you plunge into its wondrous depths and everything else will vanish from your vision. That is one way of making God great—by often thinking about Him!

The next way to make God great is by often drinking Him into yourself. The lilies stand and worship God simply by being beautiful—by drinking in the sunlight which makes them so charming and the dewdrops which glisten upon them. Stand before the Lord and drink Him in—do you understand what I mean by this expression? You go down to the seaside, when you are sickly, and you get out on a fine morning and there is a delightful breeze coming up from the sea. And you feel as if it came in at every pore of your body and you seem to be drinking in health at every breath you breathe! Do just like that in a spiritual sense with God—go down to the great sea of Godhead—magnify it by thinking how great it is and then take it into your very soul. God cannot be greater than He is, but He can be greater in you than He is at present! He cannot increase—there cannot be more of God than there is—but there may be more of God in you. More of His great love, more of His perfect holiness, more of His Divine power may be manifested in you and more of His likeness and light may be revealed through you. Therefore, make Him great in that respect.

And when you have done that, by His help, then try to make Him great by what you give forth, even as the rose, when she has satisfied herself with the sweet shower, no sooner does the clear shining come after the rain than she deluges the garden all around with her delicious perfume. Do you the same—first drink in all you can of the Deity and then exhale Him—breathe out again, in your praise, in your holy living, in your prayers, in your earnest zeal, in your devout spirit, the God whom you have breathed in! You cannot make more of God than He is, but you can

make God more consciously present to the minds of others and make them think more highly of God by what you say and what you do!

I should like to be able to say, as long as I live, "My soul does magnify the Lord." I should like to have this as the one motto of my life from this moment until I close my eyes in death, "My soul does magnify the Lord." I would gladly preach that way! I would gladly eat and drink that way. I would even sleep that way, so that I could truthfully say, "I have no wish but that God should be great, and that I should help to make Him great in the eyes of others." Will not you also, dear Friends, make this the motto of your life-Psalm?

Then Mary added, "*and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.*" Is there any true praise without joy? Is not praise twin brother to joy? And do not joy and praise always dwell together? Rejoice, then, Beloved, not in the scenes you see, for they are fleeting, but rejoice in your Savior—in Him above everything else! Never let any earthly thing or any human being stand higher in your joy than Jesus Christ of Nazareth! Rejoice in Him as most surely yours, for, dear Brothers and Sisters, as a Believer, Christ *is* yours. If you are resting in Him, He belongs to you, so rejoice in your own Savior, for all of Christ is yours—not half a Savior, not one of His wounds for you and one for me, but all His wounds for you, and all for me! Not His thoughtful head for you, and His loving heart for me, but His head and His heart all for you and all for me—He is my Savior, He is your Savior—from His feet that were pierced by the nails to His head that was crowned with thorns!

Oh, how we ought to rejoice in Him, whatever our union with Him may cost us! Mary did not know what that wondrous visitation would cost her—and it was to cost her much, as Simeon said to her—"Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also." But even though the sword must go through her soul, it mattered not to her, for unto her a Child was to be born, unto her a Son was to be given, who was to be called "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." So, if the fact that Christ is ours involves the bearing of the Cross, we are glad to bear it. It may involve suffering and shame and a thousand temptations and trials—if it is so, each true Believer can say with Mary, "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior"—in what He is, in what He is to me, in what He is to all His elect, in what He is to poor sinners, in what He is to God, in what He will be when He comes again and in what He will be throughout eternity." If a little bird has nothing else to do but sing, it has a great deal to do. And if you and I should have, tonight, when we get home, nothing to do but to praise the Lord, we have the best employment out of Heaven! We must not think that Christians are wasting time when they pray and praise. Some fussy folk seem to imagine that we must always be talking, or attending meetings, or giving away tracts. Well, do as much as you can of all good things, but still, there must be times for quiet meditation, times for reading, times for praying and times for praising. There is no waste about such things—they are among the best spent hours that we ever have. To work is the stalk of the wheat, but to praise is the full corn in the ear. You and I,

Beloved, are living to praise God. This is the culmination, the very apex of the pyramid of existence, pointing straight up to Heaven—that we praise God with all our heart and soul.

So then, to conclude, here is something for every child of God to do. You can all magnify the Lord and you may all rejoice in Him. You cannot all preach. If you could, who would there be to hear you? If all were preachers, where would be the hearers? But you can all praise God. If there is any Brother or Sister here who has only one talent, let not such an one say, "I cannot do anything." You can magnify the Lord and you can rejoice in Him! To be happy in Him is to praise God. The mere fact of our being happy in the Lord makes music in His ears. If you are one of His children, you can be happy in Him, so get out of those doleful dumps and cast out that spirit of murmuring and complaint which so often possesses you! Pray the Lord to help you shake off your natural tendency to look on the dark side of everything, and say, "No, no, I must not do that. After all, I am not on the road to Hell—I am on the way to Heaven! And this world is the ante-room to Heaven, so my soul shall magnify the Lord and my spirit shall rejoice in God my Savior."

I believe that if we could brighten the faces of all the saints and anoint them with the oil of gladness, we would do more than anything else could do to spread Christianity. I mean if we could make the children of the King rejoice, we should cause worldlings to ask, "Where does this joy come from?" And as they asked this question, we would give them the answer and so the Gospel would be sure to spread.

My closing word is concerning those who cannot magnify the Lord and cannot rejoice in God their Savior, those who cannot sing to God's praise and who never have any joy in the Lord. Then how can they be His children? God has many children and they have many infirmities, but He never yet had a dumb child. They can, every one, say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and they can all sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Prayer and praise are two of the sure signs of a true-born heir of Heaven. If you never praise God, my Friend, you can never go to Heaven. Till the Lord has taken out of you the praise of other things, the love of other things and given you the Grace to love Him and praise Him, you cannot enter into His Glory. May some poor soul here that has not anything for which it could praise itself, begin now to praise that God who freely forgives the greatest sin and who is willing to cleanse the very blackest sinner, for He has given Christ to die, the Just for the unjust, that He may bring them unto God! Oh, begin to magnify Him and rejoice in Him now, and you will never want to leave off doing so, world without end! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 1:39-56.**

Verses 39-41. *And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb; and*

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. We do not read that Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit, possibly because she was always in that condition, living very near to God in hallowed fellowship. Some of us have occasional fillings with the Holy Spirit, but blessed are they who dwell in Him, having been baptized into Him and enjoying continual nearness to God as the blessed result.

42, 43. *And she spoke out with a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* Those who are most holy are most humble. You will always find those two things go together. Elizabeth was the older woman, but, inasmuch as Mary was more highly favored than she was, she asked, "Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Genuine Christians do not exalt themselves above their fellow Believers, but they have a self-depreciatory spirit and each one esteems others better than himself.

44, 45. *For, lo, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.* What a benediction that is! If any of us truly believe God's Word, we are blessed from that very fact, for God's promise never misses its due performance. Men find it convenient to forget their promises, but God never forgets—He takes as much delight in keeping His promise as He does in making it.

46. *And Mary said.* We do not read that she spoke with a loud voice. Occasionally, the visitation of the Spirit causes excitement. Thus Elizabeth spoke with a loud voice, but Mary, though full of a rapturous joy, spoke calmly and quietly, in a royal tone of holy calm. "Mary said"—

46. *My soul does magnify the Lord.* She was weary, for she had come a long journey, but she was like Abraham's servant who said, "I will not eat until I have told my errand." So Mary will not eat until she has sung the praises of her God! "My soul does magnify the Lord."

47, 48. *And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.* Some have done so to the grief of genuine Christians, for they have apostatized from the faith and made Mary into a kind of goddess and, therefore, Protestant Christians have gone to the other extreme and have not always given her the respect which is due her.

49, 50. *For He that is mighty has done to me great things, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.* Notice how Mary quotes Scripture. Her mind seems to have been saturated with the Word of God, as though she had learned the Books of Scripture through and had them "by heart" in more senses than one. And it is significant that though the Holy Spirit was speaking by her, yet even He quoted the older Scriptures in preference to uttering new sentences. What honor He put upon the Old Testament by so continually quoting it in the New Testament, even as the Lord Jesus also did. Let us, too, prize every part of God's Word. Let us soak in it till we

are saturated with Scriptural expressions! We cannot find any better ones, for there are none.

51-53. *He has showed strength with His arm, He has scattered the proud in the imagination of the hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.* Mary's song reminds us of the Song of Hannah, yet there is a different tone in it. Hannah's has more of exultation over enemies cast down, but Mary's is more becoming to the new dispensation as Hannah's was to the old. There is a gentle quietness of tone about the Magnificat all through, yet even Mary cannot help rejoicing that the Lord "has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty."

54-56. *He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to His seed forever. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.* Wondrous as her future was to be, she would not neglect the duties of her home. When any of you are privileged to share high spiritual enjoyments, mind that you always return to your own home fit for your domestic duties. We read that David, after he had danced before the Ark, "returned to bless his household." We must never set up God's altar in opposition to the lawful duties of our home. The two *together* will make us strong for service and enable us to glorify the name of the Lord!

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MARY'S SONG

NO. 606

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 25, 1864,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”
Luke 1:46, 47.***

MARY was on a visit when she expressed her joy in the language of this noble song. It were well if all our social communion were as useful to our hearts as this visit was to Mary. “Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” Mary, full of faith, goes to see Elizabeth, who is also full of holy confidence and the two are not long together before their faith mounts to full assurance and their full assurance bursts forth in a torrent of sacred praise!

This praise aroused their slumbering powers and instead of two ordinary village women, we see before us two prophetesses and poetesses upon whom the Spirit of God abundantly rested. When we meet with our kinsfolk and acquaintance, let it be our prayer to God that our communion may be not only pleasant, but profitable. Let us pray that we may not merely pass away time and spend a pleasant hour, but may advance a day’s march nearer Heaven and acquire greater fitness for our eternal rest!

Observe, this morning, the sacred joy of Mary that you may imitate it. This is a season when all men expect us to be joyous. We compliment each other with the desire that we may have a “Merry Christmas.” Some Christians who are a little squeamish do not like the word “merry.” It is a right good old Saxon word, having the joy of childhood and the mirth of manhood in it. It brings before one’s mind the old song of the midnight peal of bells, the holly and the blazing log.

I love it for its place in that most tender of all parables, where it is written, that, when the long-lost prodigal returned to his father safe and sound, “They began to be merry.” This is the season when we are expected to be happy. And my heart’s desire is that in the highest and best sense, you who are Believers may be “merry.”

Mary’s heart was merry within her—but here was the mark of her joy—it was all *holy* merriment, it was every drop of it sacred mirth. It was not such merriment as worldlings will revel in today and tomorrow, but such merriment as the angels have around the Throne of God, where they sing, “Glory to God in the highest,” while we sing, “On earth peace, goodwill towards men.” Such merry hearts have a continual feast.

I want you, you children of the bride-chamber, to possess today and tomorrow, yes, all your days, the high and consecrated bliss of Mary that you may not only read her words but use them for yourselves, ever experiencing their meaning—“My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has

rejoiced in God my Savior.” Observe, first, that she sings. Secondly, she sings sweetly. Thirdly, shall she sing alone?

I. First observe that MARY SINGS. Her subject is a Savior. She hails the Incarnate God. The long expected Messiah is about to appear. He for whom Prophets and princes waited long is now about to come—to be born of the virgin of Nazareth. Truly there was never a subject of sweeter song than this—the stooping down of Godhead to the feebleness of manhood! When God manifested His power in the works of His hands the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy. But when God manifests Himself, what music shall suffice for the grand Psalm of adoring wonder?

When wisdom and power are seen, these are but attributes. But in the Incarnation it is the Divine Person which is revealed wrapped in a veil of our inferior clay—well might Mary sing when earth and Heaven even now are wondering at the condescending Grace! Worthy of peerless music is the fact that “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” There is no longer a great gulf fixed between God and His people. The humanity of Christ has bridged it over. We can no more think that God sits on high indifferent to the wants and woes of men—for God has visited us and come down to the lowliness of our estate.

We no longer need bemoan that we can never participate in the moral glory and purity of God, for if God in Glory can come down to His sinful creature, it is certainly less difficult to bear that creature, blood-washed and purified, up that starry way that the redeemed one may sit down forever on His Throne. Let us dream no longer in somber sadness that we cannot draw near to God so that He will really hear our prayer and pity our necessities seeing that Jesus has become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! He was born a babe as we are born, living a man as we must live, bearing the same infirmities and sorrows and bowing His head to the same death.

O, can we not come with boldness by this new and living way and have access to the Throne of the heavenly Grace, when Jesus meets us as Immanuel, God with us? Angels sung, they scarcely knew why. Could they understand why God had become Man? They must have known that here was a mystery of condescension. But all the loving consequences which the Incarnation involved, even their acute minds could scarcely have guessed!

But we see the whole and comprehend the grand design most fully. The manger of Bethlehem was big with Glory—in the Incarnation was wrapped up all the blessedness by which a soul, snatched from the depths of sin, is lifted up to the heights of Glory. Shall not our clearer knowledge lead us to heights of song which angelic guesses could not reach? Shall the lips of cherubs move to flaming sonnets and shall we, who are redeemed by the blood of the Incarnate God, be treacherously and ungratefully silent?—

***“Did archangels sing Your coming?
Did the shepherds learn their ways?
Shame would cover me ungrateful,
Should my tongues refuse to praise.”***

This, however, was not the full subject of her holy hymn. Her peculiar delight was not that there was a Savior to be born, but that He was to be born of her! Blessed among women was she and highly favored of the Lord. But we can enjoy the same favor—no, we *must* enjoy it—or the coming of a Savior will be of no benefit to us. Christ on Calvary, I know, takes away the sin of His people. But none would have ever known the virtue of Christ upon the Cross unless they have the Lord Jesus formed in them as the hope of Glory!

The stress of the virgin's canticle is laid upon God's special Grace to her. Those little words, the personal pronouns, tell us that it was truly a personal affair with her. "My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." The Savior was peculiarly and in a special sense, hers. She sung no "Christ for all," but "Christ for *me*," as her glad subject! Beloved, is Christ Jesus in your heart? Once you looked at Him from a distance and that look cured you of all spiritual diseases, but are you now living upon Him, receiving Him into your very vitals as your spiritual meat and drink?

In holy fellowship you have oftentimes fed upon His flesh and been made to drink of His blood. You have been buried with Him in Baptism unto death. You have yielded yourselves a sacrifice to Him and you have taken Him to be a sacrifice for you. You can sing of Him as the spouse did, "His left hand is under my head and His right hand does embrace me. . . My beloved is mine and I am His: He feeds among the lilies."

This is a happy style of living and anything short of this poor slavish work, oh, you can never know the joy of Mary unless Christ becomes truly and really yours! But oh, when He is yours, yours within, reigning in your heart! Yours controlling all your passions! Yours changing your nature, subduing your corruptions, inspiring you with hallowed emotions! When He is yours within, a joy unspeakable and full of Glory—oh, then you can sing, you *must* sing—who can restrain your tongue? If all the scoffers and mockers upon earth should bid you hold your peace, you must sing—your spirit must rejoice in God your Savior!

We should miss much instruction if we overlooked the fact that the choice poem before us is a hymn of faith. As yet there was no Savior born, nor, as far as we can judge had the virgin any evidence such as carnal sense required to make her believe that a Savior would be born of her. How can this thing be, was a question which might very naturally have suspended her song until it received an answer convincing to flesh and blood. But no such answer had been given. She knew that with God all things are possible. She had His promise delivered by an angel and this was enough for her—on the strength of the Word which came forth from God her heart leaped with pleasure and her tongue glorified His name! When I consider what it is which she believed and how unhesitatingly she received the Word, I am ready to give her, as a woman, a place almost as high as that which Abraham occupied as a man!

And if I dare not call her the mother of the faithful, at least let her have due honor as one of the most excellent of the mothers in Israel. The benediction of Elizabeth, Mary right well deserved, "Blessed is she that believes." To her the "substance of things hoped for" was her faith and that

was also her "evidence of things not seen." She knew, by the Revelation of God, that she was to bear the promised Seed who should bruise the serpent's head. But other proof she had none.

This day there are those among us who have little or no conscious enjoyment of the Savior's Presence. They walk in darkness and see no light. They are groaning over inbred sin and mourning because corruptions prevail. Let them now trust in the Lord and remember that if they believe on the Son of God, Christ Jesus is within them. And by faith they may right gloriously chant the hallelujah of adoring love. Though the sun gleam not forth today, the clouds and mists have not quenched his light.

And though the Sun of Righteousness shines not on you at this instant, yet He keeps His place in yonder skies and knows no variableness, neither shadow of a turning. If with all your digging the well springs not up, yet there abides a constant fullness in that deep which crouches beneath in the heart and purpose of a God of Love. What, if like David, you are much cast down, yet like he can you say unto your soul, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."

Be glad then with Mary's joy—it is the joy of a Savior completely hers—but evidenced to be so, not by sense, but by *faith*. Faith has its music as well as sense, but it is of a more Divine sort—if the food on the table make men sing and dance, feasting of a more refined and ethereal nature can fill Believers with a hallowed plenitude of delight! Still listening to the favored virgin's canticle, let me observe that her lowliness does not make her stay her song. No, it imports a sweeter note into it—"For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden."

Beloved Friend, you are feeling more intensely than ever the depth of your natural depravity. You are humbled under a sense of your many failings. You are so dead and earth-bound even in this House of Prayer that you cannot rise to God. You are heavy and sad, even while our Christmas carols have been ringing in your ears. You feel yourself to be today so useless to the Church of God, so insignificant, so utterly unworthy, that your unbelief whispers, "Surely, surely, you have nothing to sing for."

Come, my Brother, come my Sister, imitate this blessed virgin of Nazareth and turn that very lowliness and meanness which you so painfully feel into another reason for unceasing praise! Daughters of Zion, sweetly say in your hymns of love, "He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." The less worthy I am of His favors, the more sweetly will I sing of His Grace! What if I am the most insignificant of all His chosen? Then will I praise Him who with eyes of love has sought me out and set His love upon me. "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that while You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, You have revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

I am sure, dear Friends, the remembrance that there is a Savior and that this Savior is *yours*, must make you sing. And if you set side by side with it the thought that you were once sinful, unclean, vile, hateful and an enemy to God—then your notes will take yet a loftier flight and mount to the third heavens to teach the golden harps the praise of God!

It is right well worthy of notice that the greatness of the promised blessing did not give the sweet songster an argument for suspending her

thankful strain. When I meditate upon the great goodness of God in loving His people before the earth was, in laying down His life for us, in pleading our cause before the Eternal Throne, in providing a paradise of rest for us forever—the black thought has troubled me—“Surely this is too high a privilege for such an insect of a day as this poor creature, man.”

Mary did not look at this matter unbelievably—although she appreciated the greatness of the favor—*she* did but rejoice the more heartily on that account. “For He that is mighty has done to me great things.” Come, Soul, it is a great thing to be a child of God, and your God does great wonders—therefore be not staggered through unbelief—but triumph in your adoption, great mercy though it is. Oh, it is a mighty mercy, higher than the mountains, to be chosen of God from all eternity, but it is true that even so are His redeemed chosen and therefore sing of it!

It is a deep and unspeakable blessing to be redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, but you are so redeemed beyond all question. Therefore doubt not, but shout aloud for gladness of heart! It is a rapturous thought that you shall dwell above and wear the crown and wave the palm branch forever. Let no mistrust interrupt the melody of your Psalm of expectation, but—

***“Loud to the praise of love Divine,
Bid every string awake.”***

What a fullness of the Truth of God is there in these few words—“He that is mighty has done to me great things.” It is a text from which a glorified spirit in Heaven might preach an endless sermon!

I pray you, lay hold upon the thoughts which I have in this poor way suggested to you and try to reach where Mary stood in holy exultation. The Grace is great, but so is its Giver. The love is infinite, but so is the heart from which it wells up. The blessedness is unspeakable, but so is the Divine Wisdom which planned it from of old. Let our hearts take up the Virgin's Magnificat and praise the Lord right joyously at this hour.

Still further, for we have not exhausted the strain, the holiness of God has sometimes dampened the ardor of the Believer's joy. But not so in Mary's case. She exults in it—“And holy is His name.” She weaves even that bright attribute into her song. Holy Lord! When I forget my Savior, the thought of Your purity makes me shudder! Standing where Moses stood upon the holy mountain of Your law, I do exceedingly fear and quake. To me, conscious of my guilt, no thunder could be more dreadful than the seraph's hymn of, “Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabaoth.” What is Your holiness but a consuming fire which must utterly destroy me—a sinner?

If the heavens are not pure in Your sight and You charged your angels with folly, how much less, then, can You bear with vain, rebellious man that is born of woman? How can man be pure and how can Your eyes look upon him without consuming him quickly in Your anger? But, O Holy One of Israel, when my spirit can stand on Calvary and see Your holiness vindicate itself in the wounds of the Man who was born at Bethlehem, then my spirit rejoices in that glorious holiness which was once her terror!

Did the thrice holy God stoop down to man and take man's flesh? Then there is hope, indeed! Did a holy God bear the sentence which His own

Law pronounced on man? Does that holy God Incarnate now spread His wounded hands and plead for me? Then, my Soul, the holiness of God shall be a consolation to you. Living waters from this sacred well I draw. And I will add to all my notes of joy this one, "and holy is His name." He has sworn by His holiness and He will not lie. He will keep His Covenant with His Anointed and His seed forever.

When we take to ourselves the wings of eagles and mount towards Heaven in holy praise, the prospect widens beneath us—even so as Mary poises herself upon the poetic wings, she looks down the long aisles of the past and beholds the mighty acts of Jehovah in the ages long back. Mark how her strain gathers majesty. It is rather the sustained flight of the eagle-winged Ezekiel, than the flutter of the timid dove of Nazareth.

She sings, "His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation." She looks beyond the captivity to the days of the kings—to Solomon, to David—along through the Judges into the wilderness, across the Red Sea to Jacob, to Isaac, to Abraham and onward, till, pausing at the gate of Eden, she hears the sound of the promise, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." How magnificently she sums up the book of the wars of the Lord and rehearses the triumphs of Jehovah, "He has showed strength with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts."

How delightfully is mercy intermingled with judgment in the next canto of her Psalm—"He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away." My Brothers and Sisters, let us, too, sing of the past, glorious in faithfulness, fearful in judgment, teeming with wonders! Our own lives shall furnish us with a hymn of adoration. Let us speak of the things which we have made touching the King.

We were hungry and He filled us with good things. We crouched upon the dunghill with the beggar and He has enthroned us among princes. We have been tossed with tempest, but with the Eternal Pilot at the helm, we have known no fear of shipwreck. We have been cast into the burning fiery furnace, but the Presence of the Son of Man has quenched the violence of the flames. Proclaim to all, O you daughters of music, the long tale of the mercy of the Lord to His people in the generations long departed!

Many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it! Persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword—none of these have separated the saints from the love of God which is in Christ our Lord. The saints beneath the wings of the Most High have been ever safe! When most molested by the enemy they have dwelt in perfect peace—"God is their refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Plowing at times the blood red wave, the ship of the Church has never swerved from her predestined path of progress. Every tempest has favored her—the hurricane which sought her ruin has been made to bear her the more swiftly onward. Her flag has braved, these 1800 years, the battle and the breeze and she fears not what may yet be before her. But, lo, she nears the haven! The day is dawning when she shall bid farewell to

storms. The waves already grow calm beneath her. The long-promised rest is near at hand—her Jesus Himself meets her—walking upon the waters!

She shall enter into her eternal haven and all who are on board shall, with their Captain, sing of joy and triumph and victory through Him who has loved her and been her Deliverer! When Mary thus tuned her heart to glory in her God for His wonders in the past, she particularly dwelt upon the note of election. The highest note in the scale of my praise is reached when my soul sings, "I love Him because He first loved me." Well does Kent put it—

**"A monument of Grace,
A sinner saved by blood.
The streams of love I trace,
Up to the fountain, God.
And in His mighty breast I see,
Eternal thoughts of love to me."**

We can scarcely fly higher than the source of love in the mount of God. Mary has the doctrine of election in her song—"He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things. And the rich He has sent empty away." Here is *distinguishing* Grace, *discriminating* regard! Here are some suffered to perish! Here are others, the least deserving and the most obscure, made the special objects of Divine affection! Do not be afraid to dwell upon this high doctrine, Beloved in the Lord. Let me assure you that when your mind is most heavy and depressed you will find this to be a bottle of richest cordial.

Those who doubt these doctrines, or who cast them into the cold shade, miss the richest clusters of Eshcol. They lose the wines on the lees well refined, the fat things full of marrow. But you who by reason of years have had your senses exercised to discern between good and evil—you know that there is no honey like this—no sweetness comparable to it! If the honey in Jonathan's woods when but touched, enlightened the eyes to see, this is honey that will enlighten your *heart* to love and learn the mysteries of the kingdom of God!

Eat and fear not overindulgence! Live upon this choice dainty and fear not that you shall grow weary of it for the more you know, the more you will want to know. The more your soul is filled, the more you will desire to have your mind enlarged that you may comprehend more and more the eternal, everlasting, discriminating love of God!

But one more remark upon this point. You perceive she does not finish her song till she has reached the Covenant. When you mount as high as election, tarry on its sister mount, the Covenant of Grace. In the last verse of her song, she sings, "As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." To her, that was the Covenant. To us who have clearer light, the ancient Covenant made in the council chamber of eternity is the subject of the greatest delight. The Covenant with Abraham was in its best sense only a minor copy of that gracious Covenant made with Jesus, the Everlasting Father of the faithful, before the blue heavens were stretched abroad.

Covenant engagements are the softest pillows for an aching head. Covenant engagements with the Surety, Christ Jesus, are the best props for a trembling spirit!—

***“His oath, His Covenant, His blood,
Support me in the raging flood.
When every earthly prop gives way,
This still is all my strength and stay.”***

If Christ did swear to bring me to Glory and if the Father swore that He would give me to the Son to be a part of the infinite reward for the travail of His soul, then, my Soul, till God Himself shall be unfaithful, till Christ shall cease to be the Truth, till God's eternal council shall become a lie and the red roll of His election shall be consumed with fire, you are safe! Rest, then, in perfect peace, come what will! Take your harp from the willows and never let your fingers cease to sweep it to strains of richest harmony. O for Grace from first to last to join the Virgin in her song!

II. Secondly, SHE SINGS SWEETLY. She praises her God right heartily. Observe how she plunges into the midst of the subject. There is no preface, but “My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” When some people sing, they appear to be afraid of being heard. Our poet puts it—

***“With all my powers of heart and tongue
I'll praise my Maker in my song.
Angels shall hear the notes I raise,
Approve the song and join the praise.”***

I am afraid angels frequently do not hear those poor, feeble, dying whispers which often drop from our lips merely by force of custom.

Mary is all heart! Evidently her soul is on fire! While she muses, the fire burns. Then she speaks with her tongue. May we, too, call home our wandering thoughts and wake up our slumbering powers to praise redeeming love. It is a noble word that she uses here—“My soul does magnify the Lord.” I suppose it means, “My soul does endeavor to make God great by praising Him.” He is as great as He can be in His Being—my goodness cannot extend to Him. But yet my soul would make God greater in the thoughts of others and greater in my own heart.

I would give the train of His Glory a wider sweep. The light which He has given me I would reflect. I would make His enemies His friends. I would turn hard thoughts of God into thoughts of love. “My soul would magnify the Lord.” Old Trapp says, “My soul would make greater room for Him.” It is as if she wanted to get more of God into her, like Rutherford, when he says, “Oh, that my heart were as big as Heaven, that I might hold Christ in it,” and then he stops himself—“But Heaven and earth cannot contain Him. Oh, that I had a heart as big as seven heavens, that I might hold the whole of Christ within it.”

Truly this is a larger desire than we can ever hope to have gratified! Yet still our lips shall sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” Oh, if I could crown Him! If I could lift Him higher! If my burning at the stake would but add a spark more light to His Glory, happy would I be to suffer! If my being crushed would lift Jesus an inch higher, happy were the destruction which should add to His Glory! Such is the hearty spirit of Mary's song!

Again, her praise is very joyful—"My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." The word in the Greek is a remarkable one. I believe it is the same word which is used in the passage, "Rejoice you in that day and leap for joy." We used to have an old word in English which described a certain exulting dance, "a galliard." That word is supposed to have come from the Greek word used here. It was a sort of leaping dance. The old commentators call it a "levalto." Mary, in effect, declares, "My spirit shall dance like David before the ark, shall leap, shall spring, shall hound, shall rejoice in God my Savior."

When we praise God it ought not to be with dolorous and doleful notes. Some of my Brethren praise God always on the minor key, or in the deep, deep bass—they cannot feel holy till they have the horrors. Why cannot some men worship God except with a long face? I know them by their very walk as they come to worship—what a dreary pace it is! How solemnly proper and funereal, indeed! They do not understand David's Psalm—

***"Up to her courts with joys unknown,
The sacred tribes repair."***

No, they come up to their Father's house as if they were going to jail and worship God on Sunday as if it were the most doleful day in the week!

It is said of a certain Highlander, when the Highlanders were very pious, that he once went to Edinburgh and when he came back again he said he had seen a dreadful sight on Sunday—he had seen people at Edinburgh going to Church with happy faces! He thought it wicked to look happy on Sunday—and that same notion exists in the minds of certain good people hereabouts. They fancy that when the saints get together they should sit down and have a little comfortable misery but little delight.

In truth, moaning and pining is *not* the appointed way for worshipping God. We should take Mary as a pattern. All the year round I recommend her as an example to fainthearted and troubled ones. "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Cease from rejoicing in sensual things and with sinful pleasures have no fellowship—for all such rejoicing is evil—but you cannot rejoice too much in the Lord! I believe that the fault with our public worship is that we are too sober, too cold, too formal. I do not exactly admire the ravings of our Primitive-Methodist friends when they grow wild. But I should have no objection to hear a hearty, "Hallelujah! "now and then.

An enthusiastic burst of exultation might warm our hearts. The shout of "Glory!" might fire our spirits. This I know—I never feel more ready for true worship than when I am preaching in Wales—when the throughout whole sermon, the preacher is aided rather than interrupted by shouts of "Glory to God!" and "Bless His name!" Why, then, one's blood begins to glow and one's soul is stirred up! This is the true way of serving God with joy! "Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, Rejoice." "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

She sings sweetly, in the third place, because she sings confidently. She does not pause while she sings to questions herself, "Have I any right to sing?" but no, "My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the low estate of His hand-maiden." "IF" is a sad enemy to all Christian happiness—"but," "perhaps,"

“doubt,” “surmise,” “suspicion”—these are a race of highwaymen who waylay poor timid pilgrims and steal their spending money! Harps soon get out of tune and when the wind blows from the doubting quarter, the strings snap by the wholesale.

If the angels of Heaven could have a doubt, it would turn Heaven into Hell. “If you are the Son of God,” was the dastardly weapon wielded by the old enemy against our Lord in the wilderness. Our great foe knows well what weapon is the most dangerous. Christian, put up the shield of faith whenever you see that poisoned dagger about to be used against you!

I fear that some of you foster your doubts and fears. You might as well hatch young vipers and foster the cockatrice. You think that it is a sign of Divine Grace to have doubts, whereas it is a sign of infirmity! It does not prove that you have no Grace when you doubt God's promise, but it does prove that you *need* more—for if you had more Grace, you would take God's Word as He gives it and it would be said of you as of Abraham, that, “he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform.”

God help you to shake off your doubts! Oh, these are devilish things! Is that too hard a word? I wish I could find a harder! These are felons. These are rebels, who seek to rob Christ of His Glory. These are traitors who cast mire upon the escutcheon of my Lord. Oh, these are vile traitors—hang them on a gallows, high as Haman's—cast them to the earth and let them rot like carrion, or bury them with the burial of an ass. Abhorred of God are doubts—abhorred of men let them be! They are cruel enemies to your souls! They injure your usefulness, they despoil you in every way. Smite them with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon! By faith in the promise seek to drive out these Canaanites and possess the land. O you men of God, speak with confidence and sing with sacred joy!

There is something *more* than confidence in her song. She sings with great familiarity, “My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He that is mighty has done to me great things. And holy is His name.” It is the song of one who draws very near to her God in loving intimacy. I always have an idea, when I listen to the reading of the Liturgy, that it is a slave's worship. I do not find fault with its words or sentences, perhaps of all human compositions the Liturgical service of the Church of England is, with some exceptions, the noblest.

But it is only fit for slaves, or at the best for subjects. The whole service through one feels that there is a boundary set round about the mountain, just as at Sinai. Its Litany is the wail of a sinner and not the happy triumph of a saint! The service genders unto bondage and has nothing in it of the confident spirit of *adoption*. It views the Lord afar off, as One to be feared rather than loved and to be dreaded rather than delighted in. I have no doubt it suits those whose experience leads them to put the Ten Commandments near the communion table for they hereby evidence that their dealings with God are still on the terms of *servants* and not of *sons*.

For my own part I want a form of worship in which I may draw near to my God and come even to His feet, spreading my case before Him and ordering my cause with arguments—talking with Him as a friend talks with his friend, or a child with its father—otherwise the worship is of little

worth to me. Our Episcopalian friends, when they come here, are naturally struck with our service as being irreverent because it is so much more familiar and bold than theirs. Let us carefully guard against really deserving such a criticism and then we need not fear it. A renewed soul yearns after that very communion which the formalist calls irreverent!

To talk with God as my Father—to deal with Him as with one whose promises are true to me and to whom I, a sinner washed in blood and clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ may come with boldness, not standing afar off—I say this is a thing which the outer-court worshipper cannot understand. There are some of our hymns which speak of Christ with such familiarity that the cold critic says, “I do not like such expressions, I could not sing them.” I quite agree with you, Sir Critic, that the language would not befit you, a stranger.

But a *child* may say a thousand things which a servant must not. I remember a minister altering one of our hymns—

**“Let those refuse to sing
Who never knew our God.
But favorites of the heavenly King
May speak their joys abroad.”**

He sung it—“But *subjects* of the heavenly King.” Yes. And when he sang it, I thought, “That is right. You are singing what you feel—you know nothing of discriminating Grace and special manifestations and therefore you keep to your native level, “subjects of the heavenly King.” But oh, *my* heart wants a worship in which I can feel and express the feeling that I am a *favorite* of the heavenly king and therefore can sing His special love, His manifested favor, His sweet relationships, His mysterious union with my soul!

You never get right till you ask the question, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?” There is a secret which is revealed to us and not to the outside world—an understanding which the sheep receive and not the goats. I appeal to any of you who during the week are in an official position—a judge, for instance. You have a seat on the bench and you wear no small dignity when you are there. When you get home there is a little fellow who has very little fear of Your Judgeship, but much love for your person! He climbs your knee. He kisses your cheek and says a thousand things to you which are meet and right enough as they come from him—but which you would not tolerate in court from any living man.

The parable needs no interpretation. When I read some of the prayers of Martin Luther they shock me, but I argue with myself thus—“It is true I cannot talk to God in the same way as Martin, but then perhaps Martin Luther felt and realized his adoption more than I do and therefore was not less humble because he was more bold. It may be that he used expressions which would be out of place in the mouth of any man who had not known the Lord as he had.”

Oh my Friends, sing this day of our Lord Jesus as One near to us! Get close to Christ! Read His wounds! Thrust your hand into His side! Put your finger into the print of the nails and then your song shall win a sacred softness and melody not to be gained elsewhere. I must close by ob-

serving that while her song was all this, yet how very humble it was and how full of gratitude. The Papist calls her, "Mother of God," but she never whispers such a thing in her song. No, it is "God my Savior," just such words as the sinner who is speaking to you might use, and such expressions as you sinners who are hearing me can use, too.

She needs a Savior. She feels it. Her soul rejoices because there is a Savior for her. She does not talk as though she could commend herself to Him, but she hopes to stand accepted in the Beloved. Let us, then, take care that our familiarity has always blended with it the lowliest prostration of spirit when we remember that He is God over all, blessed forever and we are nothing but dust and ashes! He fills all things and we are less than nothing and vanity.

III. The last thing was to be SHALL SHE SING ALONE? Yes, she must, if the only music we can bring is that of carnal delights and worldly pleasures. There will be much music tomorrow which would not chime in with hers. There will be much mirth tomorrow and much laughter and I am afraid the most of it would not accord with Mary's song. It will not be, "My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

We would not stop the play of the animal spirits in young or old. We would not abate one jot of your relish of the mercies of God, so long as you break not His command by wantonness, or drunkenness, or excess—but still, when you have had the most of this bodily exercise, it profits little—it is only the joy of the fleeting hour and not the happiness of the spirit which abides. And therefore Mary must sing alone, as far as you are concerned.

The joy of the table is too low for Mary. The joy of the feast and the family grovels when compared with hers, but shall she sing alone? Certainly not, if this day any of us by simple trust in Jesus can take Christ to be our own! Does the Spirit of God this day lead you to say, "I trust my soul on Jesus?" My dear Friend, then you have conceived Christ—after the mystical and best sense of that word—Christ Jesus is conceived in your soul! Do you understand Him as the Sin-Bearer, taking away transgression? Can you see Him bleeding as the Substitute for men?

Do you accept Him as such? Does your faith put all her dependence upon what He did, upon what He is, upon what He does? Then Christ is conceived in you and you may go your way with all the joy that Mary knew! And I was half ready to say, with something more—for the natural conception of the Savior's holy body was not one-tenth so meet a theme for congratulation as the spiritual conception of the holy Jesus within your heart when He shall be in you the Hope of Glory.

My dear Friend, if Christ is yours, there is no song on earth too high or too holy for you to sing! No, there is no song which thrills from angelic lips, no note which thrills Archangel's tongues in which you may not join! Even this day the holiest, the happiest, the most glorious of words and thoughts and emotions belong to you. Use them! God help you to enjoy them. And His be the praise, while yours is the comfort evermore. Amen.

ALTO AND BASS

NO. 2582

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 7, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 1, 1883.**

*“He has filled the hungry with good things; and
the rich He has sent away empty.”
Luke 1:53.*

THIS song of Mary is full of sweet Gospel teaching. She was evidently a woman well instructed in Divine Truth and, though but young in years, she must have been deeply experienced in the things of God. Notice how she casts the Truth of God into the form of song—there is a wisdom in this, for we are to teach and admonish one another, “in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.” Truth is never more likely to abide in the memory and to impress the heart than when it is delivered in verse. Both the ears of men and the minds of men delight in rhyme and rhythm—memory grasps and retains Truth more readily when it is put into poetic form than in any other. Therefore they do well who enrich the Church with “Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.” And you who cannot make songs will do equally well if you sing them! Let us set the Gospel to music! Let us especially do this in our daily life. I think that the Doctrines of Grace were never intended to be made into a dirge, but they make a most heavenly marriage song. The great Truths of the Gospel were never meant to be told with dolorous tones as if they were sad solemnities, but they are meant to fill us with delight—and if they thoroughly permeate our nature, they will turn our whole life into a hallelujah and make every breath a verse of a sonnet that shall know no end! Whenever you feel most glad in the things of God, be sure you do as Mary did—sing out your gladness and make the people of God know that the things of Christ are things of joy to you. Obey the poet's injunction—

***“Children of the heavenly King,
As you journey, sweetly sing!
Sing your Savior's worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways!”***

I commend to you the song of Mary for another reason—not only because she turned the Truth of God into poetry and song, but because she sang of mercies which were not yet visible to her. She had, with gladness, beheld the King of Glory in her own heart, although the promised Child was not yet born, so with exulting faith she sings, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” Brothers and Sisters, there are some of you who cannot even

sing over a mercy when it is born, but here is a woman who sings over an *unborn mercy*. Oh, what a faith is this! If you have like precious faith, what a joy it will give to your lives! Is there nothing to sing about today? Then borrow a song from tomorrow! Sing of what is yet to be! Is this world dreary? Then think of the next! Is all around you dark? Then look upward, where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light! “Yet a little while”—and we know not how short that, “little while,” will be—and, “He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” Then shall the children of the bride chamber rejoice with unspeakable joy, because the Bridegroom Himself has come and the day of His marriage has arrived! I beseech you, if you have been silent and hung your harps on the willows, take them down at once and sing and give praise to God for the glory which is yet to be revealed in us—the precious things that are laid up for them that love Him, which eye has not seen, nor ear heard—but the certainty of which He has revealed unto us by His Spirit. Sing unto the Lord concerning mercies yet unborn! Sing those sweet verses which I so often quote to you—

**“And a ‘new song’ is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set.
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet!
I have a heritage of joy
That yet I must not see—
The hand that bled to make it mine
Is keeping it for me.”**

There is something more than this in Mary’s song, for it is made up entirely of what God has done. Let me read you a verse or two—“He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. He that is mighty has done to me great things. He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.” It is all about HIM, you see—all concerning what the Lord had done.

If I had to write a song about myself—humph!—well, that is all I could write! And if you had to write a song about yourself, it would be a wretched ditty if it spoke the truth—and I hope you would not want to sing it if it were not the truth! Some people’s songs are all about themselves, and very poor things they are. I heard of a Brother, the other day, who made a speech, and someone said to me, “Would you like a full report of his speech?” I said, “Yes,” for I was curious to hear what he would say. The friend said, “I was there and took a full report of his speech. Here it is.” He passed it over to me and there was nothing but one great capital letter, “I.” I have known some people who could both speak and sing that way, but that straight, stiff-backed letter, “I,” makes a very poor song. The less we sing about it, the better. There is no such note in the whole gamut, so let us never attempt to sing it. But when we sing, let us sing unto the Lord and let our song be concerning what *He* has done.

Where shall we begin, then? Let us begin with everlasting love. “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Where shall we end? Well, there can be no end to this song, for the Lord’s mercies are new every morning—great is His faithfulness and His loving kindness to His people never knows a pause, much less a close! Therefore, when we begin to sing of what He is doing, let us go on to sing it again, and again, and again, and again! And never let us spoil the tune by coming down to sing of what *we* have done, or offering any praise or glory to the sons of men.

Do you, then, children of God, see what an example Mary sets you? Turn the Truth of God into song—sing of unborn mercies—and sing of what the Lord has done and will do, world without end!

Now we come to consider the stanza of Mary’s song which forms our text. There are two parts to her music. “He has filled the hungry with good things”—that is *the air*, or perhaps we may say, *the alto*. “And the rich He has sent away empty”—that is *the base*. As we mean to play the bass softly and to give the other part more emphasis, we will take the bass first, and then, afterwards, we will have the alto.

I. First, then, here is THE BASS—“The rich He has sent away empty.”

Are there any such people in the world in a *spiritual* sense? Yes. Every now and then we come across them. They are not truly rich—they are naked, poor and miserable—but they are rich in their own esteem and think they need nothing. They have kept the Law of God from their youth up, or, if they have not done that, they have done something quite as good. They are very full of grace and, sometimes, they wonder that they can hold so much! They are as good as ever they can be and they hardly know how to put up with the company of some Christians—especially those who are mourners in Zion and are lamenting their sins and their departure from God. They have no patience with these people! They stand by themselves, as did he who was called a Pharisee and who went up to the Temple to pray. And as they hear others making confession of sin, they proudly say, “Lord, we thank You that we are not as other men are.” Very superior persons, indeed, are they—sometimes in education, sometimes in rank and station, sometimes in the weight of their money-bags—but anyhow, very superior indeed! They consider themselves the “upper-crust” of society. They are spiritually and morally rich before God—so they think.

What does the Lord do with such people? Mary says He sends them away empty. They verily thought that he would come out to them! They are so respectable that they are accustomed to be run after and they are greatly astonished that Jesus of Nazareth does not at once bow down to them and thank them for patronizing Him! But He sends them away empty. He wants nothing of them and while they are in such a condition, He has nothing for them. Off they must go with such a word as this in their ears, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners unto repentance.” So He sends them away. Does He not give them something as they go? No, He sends them away *empty*—giving them no comfort, no joy!

He certainly does not flatter them, for His lips are lips of Truth—no encouragement—for His office is to pull down the mighty from their seats and to spoil the glory of all human boasting and make it bite the dust! He sends them away empty. Does this seem to you like hard treatment? Mary did not think so—she *sang* about it, she was glad of it! And so am I. “Why?” you ask. Why?

Well, first, *how could Christ fill these people?* They are already full! What can Christ do for a man who has no sin? He came on purpose to save His people from their sins—but if we haven’t any, He has nothing to do with us. How shall Christ be bread to a man who is not hungry? How shall He be life to a man who has life in himself? How shall He be the Alpha and Omega of the salvation of a man who is the first and the last to himself and who begins and carries on his own salvation? No, a doctor does not go to heal the man who has no sickness—and Christ does not give His alms away to those who are not needy. When He makes a feast, it is for the poor and the hungry, for they cannot pay Him back except by giving Him their gratitude and their love. So it is right—since Christ cannot do anything for these rich people in their present condition—He sends them away empty.

And, next, *what glory would Christ have if He were to fill them?* To fill the full is no great achievement! To heal the healthy is no great triumph! To save those who are already saved is surely a superfluity! To give righteousness to those who are already righteous is ridiculous! And to find eternal life for those who have all the life they need is an absurdity! It is well, then, that those who are so full should be sent away empty. They cannot be filled and if they could be, there would be no glory for Christ at all in filling them.

Next, supposing that Christ were to do something for them, then *His riches and theirs would have to mix together*. That would never do—human merits and Christ’s merits to be placed side by side as of equal value? Who thinks of sewing on a royal robe a rag picked off a dunghill? Yet, what else are those men doing who think that they can add their own righteousness to the righteousness of Christ? No, Sir, if you are rich and increased in goods, you would only have to take Christ’s goods into your store and lay them along with your own goods—and what a come-down that would be for the righteousness of Christ—to lie side by side with your own as though it were worth no more! You would need to put up over your door the name of your firm—“Self and Christ.” And salvation would have to be the work of yourself and the Savior, too—and you would want to share the glory of it. No, no! That can never be! Send that man away empty who has the impertinence to think that he can add something of his own to the merits of Christ, the only Savior!

Yet again, well may such people be sent away empty—and we may almost be glad of it and sing about it as we see what they do. If a man does not really want salvation and he reads the Bible or hears a sermon, he *criticizes the style of it*. When some gentlemen go out to dinner, they are very busy examining the table and the ornaments with which it is

adorned. They watch the waiters and criticize every dish that is served. Oh, how daintily they taste everything, for they are connoisseurs and everything must be most *exquisite* to please them! But when you and I come home from a day's work, we do not trouble about that kind of thing—we want something to eat and are grateful to have it. Those who have no appetite for Christ begin picking, first, at this and then at that, and even the Bible is not good enough for them—they want to have this amended and that altered! As for the poor sermons preached by mortal men—this does not suit them and the other does not suit them—nothing pleases them. There are some children who always pick over their food and their father says, “Ah, my boy, if you are sent to the workhouse for a week and get put on short commons, I'll guarantee that you will eat that good meat! You will find an appetite then! So Christ, when these people are at His table turning over every morsel of the heavenly meat, sends them packing! And it serves them right, for they spoil the banquet for those who would enjoy it.

Beside that, they not only criticize, but *they also quibble*. Preach the Doctrines of Grace to a man who never had a sense of sin and he says, “I don't believe in Calvinism.” Tell him of the Sovereignty of God, which is a sweet morsel to God's own people, and he says “I, I, I—I don't believe in that doctrine. I think there is some merit in the creature—some claim in fallen humanity to the goodness of God.” Solomon said, “To the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet,” but to this man, who is so full of conceit, there is nothing in the Gospel that is good enough—so he puffs at this and sneers at that, and “pshaws” at the other—and if you put the butter in a lordly dish, such as the children like to see, he will not have it! Therefore Christ will not have him—He sends him away empty.

I do not know whether it is not the very best thing that could happen to some of those who think themselves rich that they should be sent away empty, for if they were once to feel their emptiness, they would then come to Christ in quite another style—and then would they join in singing Mary's song, “He has filled the hungry with good things.” If any of you are satisfied with your own goodness—and perhaps there are some such people here—I would remind you of what the farmer said to Mr. Hervey. When Mr. Hervey had become the rector of the parish, he went round and spoke to his parishioners. And he asked a farmer, “What have we to overcome in order to get to Heaven?” “Well, Sir,” he replied, “you are a clergyman and I think that you ought to tell me, and not ask me to tell you that.” “Well,” said Mr. Hervey, “I think that the most difficult thing to overcome is sinful self.” “Excuse me,” said the farmer, “but I have found one thing harder than that.” “What is that?” enquired Mr. Hervey. “To overcome righteous self,” answered the man. And that, I believe, is a most solemn Truth of God! In the case of some of you, I am a deal more afraid of your self-righteousness than I am of your unrighteousness! One thing I know, Christ thinks more of our sins than He does of our righteousness, for He gave Himself for our sins—I never heard that He gave Himself for our righteousness. By His most precious blood, He has put

away the sins of all who trust Him. But take care that your self-righteousness does not come in between you and the Savior, for if it does, you will be among the rich whom He will send away empty! Empty your pockets and make yourselves poor! I do not mean in money, but in spirit. Get down to spiritual poverty and beggary, for that is the *only* way to attain spiritual riches!

So much for the bass—"The rich He has sent away empty."

II. Now we come to THE ALTO of this song of Mary—"He has filled the hungry with good things." I have not many minutes left, so I will pack my thoughts closely.

First, here is *chosen company*. "He has filled *the hungry* with good things." Who are the hungry? Well, they are men and women full of desires for spiritual blessings. They are always desiring good things. They do not say much about what they think, but they have great longings for many things that they do not yet possess. Are you, dear Friend, desiring to be saved? Are you desiring to be reconciled to God? Are you desiring to look unto Christ by faith? Are you desiring to be sanctified? Are you desiring to grow in Grace? Then you are among the hungry ones.

But hunger is more than a desire—it is an appetite—it is a craving born of a stern necessity. A man must eat, or he must die. Therefore hunger is not a desire that he can lay aside. Have you come into such a condition of heart that you must have Christ or die? That you must have mercy or be lost? That you must be forgiven or be cast into Hell? And do you begin, now, to really hunger and thirst after the righteousness which is in Christ? If so, you are among the people whom He will fill with good things! The hungry man sometimes becomes a fainting man. He may tighten his belt to try to stop the gnawing of the inward wolf, but it cannot be stopped, and he gets to feel as if he had no strength and were ready to be dissolved. Do you feel like that? Do you need mercy so badly that you hardly know how to ask for it, you have become so weak, you have sunk down so low? Well, I am glad of it! You are among the very first of those whom Christ will fill with good things!

The hungry man is often a despised man. They say of such a person, "Ah, he has a lean and hungry look!" People do not like to associate with men who are very hungry, so they say, "Ah, poor beggar! I do not want to be where he is." You have heard that said, have you not? And that is just what men say of those who are spiritually hungry. "Very poor company is that man. The other day, when he was sitting in the room where we were all making fun, he was sighing all the time. There is no merriment about him! He sits by himself in the corner, or he gets into his own room and he begins crying, and says that he is a lost man if God does not have mercy upon him." Ah, that is the man for me! I would sit up all night, seven nights running, I think, to meet with people of that kind! They are the sort for whom Christ died, they are the sort Christ loves to feed—"He has filled the hungry with good things."

And you know that when a man gets to be very poor and hungry, not only do people think little of him, but he generally gets to think very little

of himself. When the bread is out of a man, the spirit is out of him, too, and he goes groping up and down the streets to try to find a place where he may beg a bit of bread. He is “down at the heel,” men say. Is there anyone here who is “down at the heel” spiritually, altogether done for? Poor creature, you are the one Christ came to save! You are the very sort for whom the banquet of love is spread! Your emptiness is that for which Christ is seeking—“He has filled the hungry with good things.” He has been doing this ever since Mary sang of it—He has done it in the case of many who are now present and He is ready to do it for you. Only open your mouth wide that He may fill it! Put your trust in Him and you shall be filled with good things! That is the first part of this sweet song—the chosen company—“the hungry.”

Note, next, *the choice meat*. “He has filled the hungry with *good things*.” Mary might have said, “He has filled the hungry with the best of things.” See what “good things” Christ puts into a hungry man’s mouth. “Lord,” he says, “I am a sinner. I need pardon.” Christ answers, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” Is not that good meat to put in the hungry man’s mouth? “Lord,” he says, “I need renewal, I need a change of heart.” The Lord replies, “A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” Certainly that is a good thing with which to fill his mouth! “But, Lord, if I am saved, I am so weak that I do not know how I shall stand.” “Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be.” Is not that a good morsel with which to fill his mouth? “Ah, Lord!” he says, “I am prone to wander and I fear that I shall go astray again.” “I will put My fear in your heart, that you shall not depart from Me.” Oh, is not that a blessed morsel to fill his mouth? There is no need which a poor destitute sinner can have which is not provided for in Christ! Listen, poor hungry sinner! There is laid up in Christ all the food that you need between here and Heaven—the best of food—the very food that your sickly fainting spirit needs is all stored up in Him! How sweet is this song! “He has filled the hungry with good things.”

The third thing to be noted is this, *the completeness of the supply*. “He has *filled* the hungry with good things.” It is a good thing to give a hungry man a bit and a sup just to stay his stomach for a while, but that is not Christ’s way of feeding the famishing—“He has *filled* the hungry with good things.” I appeal to those of you here present who were once hungry and who came to Christ—how did Christ treat you, my Brothers and Sisters? Did He give you just a little scrap of spiritual food, or has He filled you with good things? I think I hear you say, “Sir, now I have Christ to live upon, I need nothing else. There is nothing outside the great circle of Christ that I could possibly wish for—He is all I need, all I desire, all I can imagine, all for life and all for death, all for this world and all for the world that is to come.” I ask you—“Are you perfectly satisfied with Christ?” “Yes!” you say, “I need none but Christ. He is my All-in-All.” Ah, my Brother, my Sister! I, also, can speak as you do. There is an intense

enjoyment in the man who has received Christ. He has not only enough, but sometimes he so overflows with satisfaction that he does not know how to tell his tale to others and he longs for the time when he shall get to Heaven—when the strings of his tongue shall be loosed and he will stop the angels as they go down the golden streets and say, “Please, bright spirit, stay a while and let me tell you what Christ did for me, for He has filled me to the brim with His own dear Self and His own infinite love! He has fed me till I need no more.” Is not that a blessed word? “He has *filled* the hungry with good things.”

Now, lastly, this song tells us of *the glorious Benefactor*. “HE has filled the hungry with good things.” It is God that does it all! He provides the feast. He invites the guests. He brings them to the table. He gives them the appetite, He gives them the power to receive what He has prepared. It is He who fills the hungry with good things. I am so glad of that, for I know some poor hungry souls that cannot even feed themselves—but the Lord can fill them with good things. We have brought them to the table laden with spiritual dainties, yet their soul has abhorred all manner of meat and they have drawn near to the gates of death. But when no preacher can feed you, God can! And when your very soul seems to turn away, even from heavenly comforts, till you say with the Psalmist, “My soul refused to be comforted,” the Lord, the Holy Spirit, *the Comforter*, can bring the Truth of God home to your heart till you say, “He has done it! He has done it! He has filled the hungry with good things.”

If I had the time and the power, I would like to take that word, He—HE—HE, and speak it as with a trumpet voice—“HE has filled the hungry with good things!” Who made the earth and the heavens and filled them with light and glory? The answer is, “He has done it.” It was the Lord alone who redeemed His people from their sins, who paid the purchase price, who wrestled with their adversaries and trod them under His feet as grapes are trod in the winepress! “He has done it. HE has done it!” Unto His name be all the praise! Who began the good work in you, my Brother, my Sister in Christ? Who has carried it on up to now? Who will perfect it? Like thunder, I hear the answer from all the redeemed who are before the Throne of God—“HE, HE, HE has done it, and unto His name be honor and glory forever and ever!”

Go to Him, thirsty ones! Go to Him by a simple, childlike faith, and you shall then come and join with us in the song, “He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.” The Lord bless you, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 148; LUKE 1:5-35; 46-56.**

We will first read a short Psalm inciting all to praise the Lord and then we will read part of the first Chapter of Luke’s Gospel, especially noticing Mary’s song of praise. It is a blessed thing to indulge our holy gratitude and to let it have speech in sacred Psalm and song. Praise is the end of

prayer and preaching. It is the ear of the wheat: it is God's harvest from all the seed of Grace that He has sown.

Psalm 148:1. *Praise you the LORD. Hallelujah!*

1. *Praise you the LORD from the heavens.* Begin the song, you holy angels before the Throne of God. Lead us in praise, O you glorified spirits above!

1. *Praise Him in the heights.* Sing aloud, you that sit at God's right hand in the heavenly places! Let the highest praises be given to the Most High.

2, 3. *Praise Him, all His angels: praise Him all His hosts. Praise Him, sun and moon: praise Him, all you stars of light.* Shine out His glory! You are but dim reflections of His brightness, yet praise Him.

4. *Praise Him, you Heaven of heavens, and you waters that are above the heavens.* Stored up there for man's use and benefit. You clouds that look black to us and yet are big with blessings, praise the Lord. See, Beloved, how the song comes down from the praises of the angels nearest the Throne of God, to the glorified saints, then to the sun, moon, stars and the clouds that float in the firmament of Heaven!

5, 6. *Let them praise the name of the LORD: for He commanded, and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever: He has made a decree which shall not pass.* Or, pass away. Now the Psalmist begins at the bottom and works up to the top.

7. *Praise the LORD from the earth, you dragons, and all deeps.* Right down there, however low the caverns may be, let the strange creatures that inhabit the secret places in the very bottoms of the mountains and the depths of the seas—let them send out the deep bass of their praise!

8-10. *Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling His word: mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl.* If you cannot praise God by soaring up like eagles. If you feel more like the creeping things of the earth, still praise Him! There is something very pleasant in the spiritual allusion that grows out of this verse. You who seem like poor worms of the dust, or insects of an hour, can yield your little need of praise to God!

11-14. *Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens; old men and children: let them praise the name of the LORD: for His name, alone, is excellent; His glory is above the earth and Heaven. He also exalts the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto Him.* They ought to sing best and most sweetly, because they are nearest to His heart. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." If all other tongues are silent, let them praise the Lord.

14. *Praise the LORD.* The Psalm ends, as it began, with Hallelujah! "Praise the Lord."

Luke 1:5, 6. *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of*

the Lord, blameless. There have been some good people who have lived in very bad times. Never was there a worse reign than that of Herod—seldom or never a better man and woman than Zacharias and Elizabeth. Let no man excuse himself for sinning because of the times in which he lives. You may be rich in Divine Grace when others around you have none, even as Gideon's fleece was wet with dew when the whole floor was dry. God help us, in these evil days, to be "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless"!

7. *And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well advanced in years.* We do not, at the present time, understand the anguish which filled the heart of an Eastern woman who had no child. It was considered to be a disgrace—and many suffered very bitterly on that account, as did Hannah, Rachel and others.

8-12. *And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. Zacharias must have been astonished as he saw that strange visitor—no wonder that "fear fell upon him."*

13-17. *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.* Happy is the father of such a child! Happy is that man whose office it is to be the herald of Christ! Brothers, many of us are called to that office in a certain sense as we come in our Master's name and preach concerning Him—

***"'Tis all my business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb.'"***

And in this way we may be partakers of John the Baptist's joy!

18-20. *And Zacharias said unto the angel, How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well advanced in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel that stands in the Presence of God; and am sent to speak unto you, and to show you these glad tidings. And, behold, you shall be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things—These glad tidings—*

20. *Shall be performed, because you believe not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.* Many a child of God is dumb because of unbelief. Mary believed and, therefore, she sang a holy, joyous song—a sweet canticle of delight—"My soul does magnify the Lord." But Zacharias, be-

cause of his unbelief, was unable to speak. I wonder whether there is a man here who might have spoken for his God with power, but whose mouth is closed because of his unbelief? If so, may the Lord hasten the time when his dumbness shall be ended!

21, 22. *And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. By the signs he made, he impressed them with the fact that something extraordinary had happened.*

23-25. *And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus has the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me to take away my reproach among men. I do not wonder, that in her solemn joy, she shunned the gossips of the neighborhood and kept herself in seclusion. I believe that there is many a soul which, when it has found Christ, feels itself much too full of joy to speak and asks not for a crowded temple, but for a quiet chamber where the heart may pour itself out before God.*

26-35. *And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. So was she thus visited, and thus she believed with a wonderful faith—much too wonderful for me to describe in this place. But now let us see what Mary said when she went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth.*

46, 47. *And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. She needed a Savior, you see. Though about to become the mother of Jesus, Mary did not think herself without sin! Her eyes still looked to Him who should be her Savior from guilt and condemnation.*

48-55. *For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty has done to me great things and holy is His name. And His mercy*

is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant, Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to His seed forever. This is one of the sweetest songs that was ever sung and is equal to any of those which came from the Inspired lips of the Hebrew Prophets. Well might she sing who had been thus favored! Oh, if Christ Jesus should come to any of us by faith, what reason would we have for singing! And will not each one of us, who has been thus honored, cry with Mary, “My soul does magnify the Lord”?

56. *And Mary lived with her about three months, and returned to her own house.* What wonderful interviews those two holy women had! The one well advanced in years, and the other youthful, yet both highly favored of God. I wonder what they said? Doubtless angels remember their charming conversation. May the day come when all that fear the Lord, both men and women, shall speak often, one to another, concerning their Redeemer and all that relates to His glorious cause! And then the Lord shall write another Book of Remembrance concerning their hallowed fellowship and communion!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— 397, 778.

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

THE HUNGRY FILLED, THE RICH EMPTIED

NO. 3019

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 26, 1869.

*“He has filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich He has sent away empty.”
Luke 1:53.*

Divine Providence is like a wheel and as the wheel revolves, that spoke which was highest becomes the lowest, and that which was lowest is elevated to the highest place. It seems to be one of the works in which God delights to cast down the lofty and to lift up the lowly. He hurls down princes from their thrones and lifts up beggars from the dunghill! “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.” Like the woodman with his axe, the Providence of God is cutting down the high and goodly cedars while making trees that were dry and withered, fruitful. That which is full, God empties. And that which is empty, God fills. That which is something, He makes to be nothing, and that which is nothing, He makes to be something. That which is reckoned the wisdom of this world, God makes to be utter folly, but base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen that He may elevate them and crown them with His Glory.

I am going to take our text as one instance of the general Providence of God and to use it, first, in reference to sinners. Then in reference to saints and, lastly, in reference to saints in their capacity as workers for Christ.

I. First, then, WITH REFERENCE TO SINNERS it is true that, “He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.”

“The hungry” are the poorest of the poor. When a man is homeless, he is poor, but he may still have something in his purse with which to supply his present necessities. When a man is penniless, he is certainly poor, yet he may have just satisfied the cravings of his hunger and before the time shall come for another meal, he may be able to procure it. But when the hour has passed in which the man should have refreshed himself and he is liberally hungry, yet has no means of getting food, then he is one of the poorest of the poor! There are thousands in London who are very poor, but still, they are not actually hungry. They are brought down to poverty, but yet, by some means or other, they are able to get their daily needs supplied. The hungry man is worse off and he represents the lowest degree of *spiritual* poverty. When a man has lost all his former treasures of self-righteousness, when he has no merits, no

strength, no might whatever—when he is entirely empty and his soul craves for what it cannot find in itself, nor earn of itself, nor by any possibility procure by its own merit or power—then is the man in the lowest state of spiritual destitution. And when he is brought to that state, then may he expect, in his experience, the fulfillment of the first part of our text, “He has filled the hungry with good things.”

More than that, the man who is hungry is not only abjectly poor, but *he feels his poverty in a way that does not permit him to forget it*. The man who has but few clothes upon his back may, by reason of the genial weather, scarcely realize that he is wearing the garb of poverty. A man who sleeps in a miserable hut may seldom have been better housed and, therefore, may scarcely recognize that he is dwelling among the very poor. But he that is hungry has internal evidence that will not allow him to deny, nor even for a moment to forget, his destitution! So is it with certain sinners. They have within them an insatiable hunger which causes a desperate unrest. There is no peace for them—neither by day nor by night can they be at ease. Their sins haunt them and the fear of punishment dogs their heels. They long to find mercy, but know not how to seek it rightly. They would be thankful, indeed, to be saved from the wrath to come, but they wonder whether salvation is possible for them. They know they are guilty in the sight of God yet, possibly, they feel grieved to think that they do not feel as much grieved as they should—and are vexed to think that they are not more vexed on account of their sins! All this shows very clearly how utterly destitute they must be, and how truly they may write themselves down among the spiritually “hungry.”

I hope I am now addressing some who are in this condition. Dear Friends, you are well aware that there is no good thing in you, yet you wish there were. Sometimes you fear that you have not even the desire to be right. To be able to confess your sins with a proper tenderness of conscience seems to be a task beyond your powers. You say that you wish you could repent and could believe—but I think you *are* repenting and believing all the while! But even if you are not, this only proves how abjectly poor you are spiritually and how far you have gone astray from God—and how lost, how undone you are! And then comes in this blessed message of our text, “He has filled the hungry”—that is, such sinners as you are, so full of needs—“He has filled the hungry with good things.”

How is it that the hungry get filled while the rich are sent away empty? I think it is, partly, because *the hungry are not to be satisfied with anything but bread*. There are many in the world who spend their money for that which is not bread—and they are content with an unsubstantial diet. But a really hungry soul knows that it needs bread and will not be put off with anything else. When a soul really feels the pressure of sin, it needs to have it pardoned, and it will not be content with anything less than pardon. It needs peace with God, and it will never rest till it gets it. The soul that once hungers after God, the living God, will not be put off with ceremonies and so-called “sacraments.” It needs Christ, Himself! It needs to hear Him say, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven; go in

peace.” You can pacify those whose desires are only whims, but when men’s desires are based on such voracious appetites as the hungry have, you cannot satisfy them by the clatter of plates and dishes, or the rattling of knives and forks, or even with the sight of food. They must have it to *eat*—they will not be put off without it! They cry until they get it and, therefore, they get it, for God hears their cry and grants their request. If a man’s prayer is of such a character that only Sovereign Grace, real pardon and true salvation will content his soul, then he shall not be put off with anything else, but he shall have that for which his soul craves. Such a man prays with one of our hymn-writers—

**“Gracious Lord, incline Your ear,
My requests vouchsafe to hear.
Hear my never-ceasing cry,
Give me Christ, or else I die!
Lord, deny me what You will,
Only ease me of my guilt!
Suppliant at Your feet I lie,
Give me Christ or else I die!
You have promised to forgive
All who in Your Son believe—
Lord, I know You cannot lie.
Give me Christ, or else I die!”**

How vain a thing it is for a man to boast of the privileges he enjoys rather than of the use which he has made of them! How many say, like the Jews of old, “The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these,” because they think they belong to an orthodox denomination or they are members of a church which is correct in its creed, or they attend a ministry which God has greatly blessed to the salvation of souls. Ah, Sirs! But if the Creed is not believed in your heart, and if the ministry is not blessed to you, your boasting is as vain as that of one who was clothed in rags, died in poverty, but who boasted of the wealth of London! Or of the man who shut his eyes, but who, nevertheless, boasted of the light that shone upon his countenance. Unless you *use* your privileges. Unless you get through the external husks into the very spirit and kernel of them, instead of boasting, you have reason to be ashamed and to hide your heads! But the truly hungry soul is not satisfied with privileges and opportunities—he wants Christ! To sit in a place of worship to hear a Gospel sermon, he counts to be a favor, for he is very humble, but it is a favor that cannot content him. His soul cries, “Lord, give me Christ! Give me salvation! Give me assurance to know that my many iniquities are cast behind Your back, to be remembered against me no more forever!” He cannot be content with anything short of a full Christ for his poor empty spirit!

Further, a hungry soul is likely to get the blessing it craves *because it is an importunate soul*. You know that our Lord Jesus Christ, in His parable of the widow and the unjust judge, set forth the prevalence of importunate pleading with God. And, on another occasion our Lord used the figure of one who, though not himself hungry, was able to satisfy the hunger of a friend who had unexpectedly called upon him when he had

nothing to set before him. But, by his importunity, he obtained for his friend the food that he needed. Yes, and let a man really have the fear of Hell before his eyes and a sincere desire for reconciliation with God—let his soul be really hungering after peace with God through Jesus Christ—and he will be at Mercy's door both night and day! He will hammer away at the knocker and give God no rest until He puts forth His hand and gives the Bread of Life to that poor starving suppliant. Yes, it is holy importunity that wins the day—and the spiritually hungry man gets the blessing because his importunity gives success to his pleading with God!

I feel sure that there are some in this place who, knowing their need—being painfully conscious that they have no good thing of their own—are hungering after eternal life. I trust that this hunger will grow into a craving that will never be satisfied until you get what your spirit wants. I pray God that you may never be comforted till Christ comforts you—never get peace till He becomes your peace, never feel that you are safe till you get into the very heart of Christ—and never suppose that you are clean till you are washed in the Fountain filled with His blood! Beware of getting peace apart from Christ! Always be afraid of a hope that is not grounded upon Him, for it is far better to continue to hunger and to thirst than to be satisfied with the dust and ashes of this world's religion, or this world's pleasures! O you hungry ones, hear the words of the text and be encouraged—"He has filled the hungry." Look at that blessed word, "filled." He has not merely given them a little refreshment, or administered some temporary consolation to them, but, "He has *filled* the hungry"—given them all that they can wish for, all that their souls really need! Turn to this blessed Book of God and see what promises are there for needy souls. Do they need pardon? There is plenteous forgiveness! Do they need adoption? "They shall be My sons and my daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Do they need comfort? There is the Holy Spirit, Himself, to be their Comforter. Do they need anything on earth or in Heaven? Then it shall not be denied to them, seeing that, in giving Christ to them, God has given them all things! "He has *filled* the hungry."

It is a blessed thing to see the man who was once spiritually hungry, after he has had his soul filled by God. How he rejoices! He dances like David did before the Ark—no, more than that—his soul seems as though it would dance into Heaven itself with glorious leaps of overwhelming joy! As Christ is mine and Christ is All, I have in Christ all that I can ever desire! It is a blessed fullness, a Divine satiety, a heavenly satisfaction which the Lord gives to us when He makes our youth to be renewed like the eagles by filling our mouth with good things!

We must notice one other word in the text. "He has filled the hungry with *good* things." I shall not be altering the text, but only giving its true sense if I say that He fills the hungry soul with the best of things. They are positively good and they are comparatively good—better than all the good things of the world. And they are superlatively good, for even Heaven, itself, has no better things than God gives to poor hungry souls when they come to Him by faith in Jesus. We are apt to think that if men are starving, the most common kind of food will do for them as long as

they are able to keep away from death's door—but it is not thus that God deals with the spiritually hungry. He spreads the table bounteously, royally, with the best of food and fills the hungry with good things—not simply with *a* good thing, but the word is in the plural, “with good things.” Their needs are many, so the mercies given to them shall also be many! Their needs seem to be as many as their moments, but the mercies of God exceed their utmost needs! All their capacious souls can wish, they shall find in Jesus Christ, who shall be their All-in-All.

The text, you observe, refers to the past, but it may be taken for granted that what God did yesterday, He will do today—and what He does today, He will do forever, so far as it is necessary and right. And as He is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever,” all the blessings that He gives to His people shall be continued to them as long as they need them. Some of us can say that we were filled with these good things 20 years ago, and we have never again hungered as we hungered then. The Lord has satisfied our souls by giving us Christ—and we are fully content with Him! His own word is true to us, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” God is still filling the hungry with good things. There are many in this house who can testify that in answer to prayer, they have had their griefs relieved and heavenly comforts granted to them and, poor Sinner, God is willing to do the same for you! If you are hungering and thirsting, come unto Him, for there is as much Grace in Him today as there ever was! So come, just as you are, and trust Him—rely upon Him and you, too, shall be filled with good things!

The other half of the text, in its reference to sinners, I shall touch upon very briefly—“The rich He has sent away empty.” Oh, how many sinners there are who think themselves rich! According to their own valuation, they are rich in merit, but the Gospel has nothing to do with merit! It only deals with misery and, therefore, it sends them away empty because it does not conduct its business on the lines that they approve. There are many sinners who are so rich in their own estimation that they will not take Christ and His Cross for nothing. David knew enough to say to the Lord, “With the froward You will show Yourself froward. For You will save the afflicted people, but will bring down high looks.” If a man thinks that he is so good that he does not need the Gospel, God regards him as so vile that the Gospel brings no message of mercy to him until he humbles himself and repents. Jesus said, “They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Of all the sins that can happen to us, perhaps the deadliest of all is that of not being conscious of having any sin. A good old Scotchman used to say that there was no devil in the world so bad as having no devil at all, and that not to be tempted was the worst sort of temptation. I agree, and not to be conscious of any sin is, perhaps, to be at the furthest point from God to which any human being can go, for, the

nearer we are to God, the more conscious we are of our own shortcomings and the more earnestly do we struggle to overcome every atom of sin which we discover to be within our souls.

“The rich” are those who are far from being hungry—they have enough, and to spare. Instead of going down upon their knees, like beggars, to ask mercy from God as a charity, they talk proudly about what they *deserve*, what good deeds they have done and what they mean to do in the future and, therefore, they thank God that they are not as other men are.

Now, what becomes of these sinners who think themselves so rich that they have no need of the good things with which God fills the hungry? The text does not simply say that they are not fed. It does not say that the door of Mercy is shut in their faces, but it says that they are sent right away from Mercy’s door because they have no right to stand there! Why should a man be allowed to pray when he has nothing to pray for? These rich people are sent away from Mercy’s table because they do not want to feed on Mercy’s fare. Why should they sit there and uselessly occupy places where hungry ones might sit and feast? So they are sent away.

And, mark you, it is an awful thing to be sent away from the Gospel. And it is a remarkable thing that the only people who are sent away from the Gospel are those who consider themselves spiritually rich. You who think yourselves so excellent, moral and amiable. You who cannot see any fault in yourselves. You who think you are going to Heaven because of your good deeds—the Gospel not only does not open its door to you, but it even sends you away from its door! And how does it send you away? The text says, “The rich he has sent away *empty*.” Empty even of what you once thought you had! I only hope that the gracious meaning of the text may be fulfilled to some of you and that while listening to the Gospel, you may be made to feel that, after all, you are not spiritually rich, but that you are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” It will be the best day’s work that was ever done for you if you are brought to realize your true position and come to Christ confessing your abject poverty! For, as Joseph Hartwell says—

**“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.”**

We know what happened to the two debtors. [See sermon Number 3015, Volume 52—THE TWO DEBTORS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.” But if they had had anything with which they could pay, there would have been no forgiveness vouchsafed to them. Oh, for such an emptying that you may afterwards be filled with good things!

But there are some who are sent away from hearing the Gospel with the same conceit of fullness as they had before—and they are allowed to remain empty without discovering their true condition. This is a dreadful state for anyone to be in—to go on deceiving one’s self and thinking all is well for time and eternity—and only to find out one’s fatal mistake where

the discovery will come too late! “Woe is me,” cries the self-righteous professor, when he wakes up in the world to come and finds that he is shut out of Heaven—“Woe is me that I should ever have fancied that I had a sufficient store of good things for eternity, yet now I have not so much as a drop of water to coat my tongue and I am tormented in this flame! Woe is me that I am banished forever from the Presence of God, and from the glory of His power—‘sent away empty!’”

O my dear Hearers, may this text be fulfilled to you in a gracious sense, and not in this sense of terrible justice! One of the two it must be, for if you are “rich” as the text uses that term, you must be “sent away empty” in one sense or the other. I pray that instead, you may be filled with good things because the Spirit of the Lord has caused you to hunger and thirst after righteousness!

II. I shall now briefly use the text WITH REFERENCE TO SAINTS.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if your experience at all tallies with mine, I think you will have found that the first clause of this portion of Mary’s song is most true to you in your spiritual experiences. I find that whenever I am hungry—that is to say, conscious of my utter unworthiness, weakness, insignificance—then it is that Christ is most precious to me. The promises are peculiarly sweet, the Covenant of Grace is a dainty morsel and the assembling of myself with the Lord’s people brings me to the King’s banqueting table! Is it so with you? When you are hungry, do you get filled with good things? You remember when you were under the Lord’s chastening hand and much broken in spirit through bodily pain, how precious that promise was, “You will make all his bed in his sickness”? You were laid aside both from the means of Grace and the cares of business life—and your soul had time for thought and meditation—and in its hunger, the Lord was made very sweet to you. You remember when you were poor, some years ago, when you had to live from hand to mouth, what blessed times you had with your Lord and Master?

You are supposed to be better off now, but you are really worse off if you do not have so much of Christ as you had then! You used to, then, take the promise, “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure” in a more literal fashion than you do now. A message which came to your soul with quickening power was this, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” You were hungry then, so your Lord filled you with good things. Every now and then the pangs of this hunger seize us—our spirits sink, our confidence grows dim through the smoke of our sin and we get such a sense of our sinnership as we have not had, perhaps for months. We feel as if we ought never to have made a profession of religion. We are so ashamed of ourselves that if we could ship with Jonah to go to Tarshish, we would be glad to flee from the Presence of the Lord and from the presence of His people, too! At such a time as that, if we hear a Gospel sermon preached to the very chief of sinners, if the preacher opens his mouth wide concerning Sovereign Grace, and forgiving mercy, and the cleansing

power of the precious blood of Jesus, oh, how welcome the message is to us! We go to the sanctuary, not to criticize the preacher, but to seek spiritual food for our souls—and if the preacher does the work which God gave him to do, we are filled with good things!

But, on the other hand, those who reckon themselves to be spiritually rich are “sent away empty.” Yes, “sent away empty” from a full Gospel! How many people there are who have such peculiar tastes—they call them such *refined* tastes—that there are only one or two ministers whom they can hear in a radius of twenty miles! It is a sure sign of a bad spiritual appetite when you must always have little dainties all to yourself, or, in other words, when the old-fashioned Truths of God become distasteful to your palate. There are two things that I always like to see on the table—whether at breakfast, dinner, or tea—they are never out of place. And those two things are bread and salt. And the old-fashioned Gospel, like bread and salt on the table, ought to be in every sermon! And those whose souls are in a right spiritual condition will always want to hear it. There are some who crave fancy cookery—this dish must be prepared after the Plymouth fashion and that dish must be spiced according to some other mode. And if it is not made according to the last new fashion in theology, there are some who cannot feed thereon. Oh, to be brought down from such richness as that and to be made spiritually poor! I am sure that our Bibles would be a hundred times richer to us than they are now if we were a hundred times poorer than we are—by which I mean that the Bible would be more truly to us what it really is if we had a truer sense of what we really are. As we went down in our own esteem, it would go up, and the Doctrines of the Bible, the Promises of the Bible—yes, and even the Precepts of the Bible—would possess a wonderful sweetness to us if we had a greater spiritual hunger. Solomon said, “The full soul loathes honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” There is such a thing as getting full of our own graces, full of our own prayers, full of our own sermons, full of our own good works, full of ourselves—and what state can be worse than this? It is being blown out almost to bursting. Then, Soul, empty yourself of yourself! And when you think of yourself as you ought to think, you will abhor yourself. You will see no good in yourself whatever, but you will see the black fingerprints of your fallen nature even upon the bright alabaster works of Divine Grace within your soul—and you will mourn over even your best things because you have defiled them. When we become thus empty, God will fill us with good things.

III. Now, lastly, I believe, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that our text is true WITH REFERENCE TO CHRISTIANS IN THEIR CAPACITY AS WORKERS FOR CHRIST.

Give me hungry dogs to hunt with and give me really hungry workers to work with for the Lord Jesus Christ! I mean, men and women who are dissatisfied with the present spiritual condition of the nominal Christian Church, dissatisfied with the progress that is being made, earnestly longing for something better, determinately set on doing something that shall be for God’s Glory and the good of the people—crying and sighing

for the conversion of souls, not satisfied with ones and twos, but wanting to see the Kingdom of Christ come in all its power and the will of God done on earth as it is done in Heaven! Give me men who will not slumber although the professing Church of God slumbers! Men who cannot rest because sinners do not find rest in Christ! Men who have no peace because Christ has not become the sinner's peace! Give me such men, for they will be filled with good things. A Church that longs for the blessing and will not be content without it, will get it, but, on the other hand, the "rich" church which says, "We have got the blessing. We are doing very well. We cannot see anything in which we could improve—we preach the Gospel, we have all the usual agencies, they are all conducted with propriety and with a measure of success. Everything goes on exceedingly well. On the whole, we, perhaps, are ahead of the rest of the churches—we ought to let well enough alone and not try to get up excitement, or be seeking after what is not attainable and attempting such great things that we are pretty sure to fail in our attempts." Such "rich" people will be "sent away empty."

Self-satisfaction is the death of progress. Contentment with worldly goods is a blessing, but contentment in spiritual things is a curse and a sin. What did Paul say? "Not as though I had already attained." Some of us think, "If we could get as far as Paul did, we would be satisfied." But Paul said, "Not as though I had already attained," and then he added, "Forgetting those things which are behind"—why, some of us wish we had such things to remember! But he wished to forget all that he had done and to think only of what *remained to be done*—"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Oh, for this sacred forgetfulness, by way of contentment, of all successes and achievements so as still to be pressing forward! I would that every Believer had, for the Glory of God, that spirit which is never satisfied, but always cries for more! I would have the hearts of Christians insatiable as death and the grave, for how can we stand that men should be forever lost? How can we be quiet while Hell is being filled and souls are perishing day and night? How can we be at ease while God is blasphemed, while Christ is unknown in a great part of the world, and where He is known, He is not loved? How can we be contented while the black Prince of Hell seeks to steal the crown rights of King Jesus? Contented and satisfied? Never! Until all over this, our highly-favored land, Christ shall reign as Sovereign Lord! No, not then, nor till in every continent and island the nations of the whole world shall have heard the Gospel and vast multitudes have prostrated themselves at Messiah's feet in loyal and loving adoration!

Up, saints of God, from your resting places of inglorious sloth and begin to cry aloud, and spare not! Come to God's Throne with a sacred spiritual hunger, for thus shall the Church of God be filled with good things! May God, in His Infinite Mercy, bless this message and HIS shall be the praise and Glory forever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 1:26-56.**

Verses 26, 27. *And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.* It was by the temptation of an evil angel that man fell and Paradise was lost. It was, therefore, most appropriate that good angels should be sent to announce the coming of the Restorer, through whom Paradise is regained. "Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth." Christ's coming to earth must be announced in the lowliest of cities and He must be born in the small Judean town of Bethlehem. But it was also decreed that He must die at Jerusalem—in the metropolitan city. Mark the simplicity, and yet the sublimity of the arrangement by which the meek and lowly Savior was to be born in our nature. The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin, whose name was Mary.

28, 29. *And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this was.* The best of news may sometimes cause the greatest trouble of mind and heart. If you feel troubled when you receive a message from God, do not be astonished, as though some strange thing had happened to you. See how Mary, who was told that she was to receive the greatest honor and favor possible to a mortal being, was troubled by the angel's speech, perplexed by his extraordinary salutation.

30. *And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God.* If we have found favor with God, there is no cause for us to fear. If God is gracious to us, we are raised above all reason for alarm. Some court the fickle favor of men but even if they gain it, they may well fear that they may shortly lose it. But the angel said, "Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God." And having found that favor, she would never lose it.

31, 32. *And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great.* How true is that prophecy—"He shall be great." Christ is the greatest of all great ones. How great He is in our esteem! The tongues of men and of angels could not tell all His greatness! "He shall be great."

32-37. *And shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the Throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, your cousin Elizabeth, she has also conceived*

a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible. It seemed meet that the Gospel dispensation should thus begin with two great wonders. The age of wonders has opened upon us now that the day of Grace has dawned. Now shall the barren woman keep house and be the joyful mother of children according to the ancient prophecy.

38. *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word.* Oh, that we all had such a spirit of submission as she had, that we might be willing to place ourselves absolutely at God's disposal, for Him to do with us as He pleased!

38. *And the angel of the Lord departed from her.* His mission was accomplished, so he might go back to the Glory from which he had come at God's command.

39-43. *And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah and entered into the house of Zachariah, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she spoke out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* The most gracious people are always the most humble people. This question of Elizabeth, "Why is this granted to me?" has been one that we have often put concerning ourselves. She was the older woman of the two, but she felt herself highly honored by this visit from her younger relative whom the Lord had so wondrously favored. It is well when Christian people have a high regard for one another and think less of themselves than they do of others whom God has especially favored. It is one of the traits in the character of God's true people that they have this mind in them—while they who think themselves great prove that they are not the Lord's. If you think much of yourself, He thinks little of you.

44, 45. *For, lo, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed.* Not only Mary, who believed the angel's message, and was, therefore, blessed, but everyone of us who believes in God may share in this benediction!

45, 46. *For there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said.* This humble Jewish maiden was a woman of great natural ability. This song of hers is worthy to be sung throughout all ages. It is true that it is mainly taken from the song of Hannah and other songs of devout persons in former ages, but this shows how Mary had studied the Word of God and laid it up in her heart. The best preparation that you young people can have for the highest honor and service in your future life is to bathe frequently in the Word of God and to perfume your whole life by a familiar and accurate acquaintance with Scripture Truths. Nothing else can make you so pure, or so prepared for all service which God may yet have for you to perform.

46. *My soul does magnify the Lord.* That is a good beginning. Mary does not magnify herself in her Magnificat, she has nothing to say concerning her own dignity, though she was of a noble lineage. But she sang, “My soul does magnify the Lord.”

47. *And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.* She needed a Savior as much as we do, for she was a sinner like ourselves. And though she was blessed among women, she here indicates that she owed all that blessedness to the Grace of God, who had become a Savior to her, as well as to us.

48. *For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden.* The family from which Mary sprang had become poor and she dwelt in lowliness at Nazareth.

48, 49. *For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name.* She was indeed a blessed woman to have such holy thoughts, such reverence for God, such a true idea of His might and majesty—and of the marvelous favor which He had shown to her.

50. *And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.* Remember this, it was not mercy to Mary only—it was mercy to us, and mercy to all who truly trust the Savior in whom she trusted!

51. *He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.* Sometimes we read of God’s “finger.” That refers to a part of His great power. At other times, we read of His “hand.” That is a more brilliant display of His power. But here, as elsewhere, we read of His “arm.” This is the majesty of His Omnipotence. Pharaoh’s magicians told the king that it was the finger of God that worked the plagues of Egypt, but it was with His outstretched arm that He divided the Red Sea and overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts. Mary felt that in the work of salvation we see God’s arm—not merely His finger, or His hand.

52. *He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.* This is what God is constantly doing—casting down the high and mighty ones and lifting up the meek and lowly!

53. *He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.* They who are self-satisfied shall sooner or later be cast out, but those who look to God, alone, and are hungry after Him, shall be satisfied with His favor.

34-56. *He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy. As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever. And Mary abode with her about three months and returned to her own house.*

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

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

END OF VOLUME 52.

“THE TENDER MERCY OF OUR GOD”

NO. 1907

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1886,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission
 of their sins through the tender mercy of our God, with which
 the Dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light
 to those who sit in darkness
 and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*
Luke 1:77-79.

OBSERVE how Zacharias, in this his joyful song, extolled the remission of sins as one of the most extraordinary proofs of the tender mercy of our God. He had been dumb for a season, as a chastisement for his unbelief and, therefore, he used his recovered speech to sing of pardoning mercy. No salvation is possible without forgiveness and so Zacharias says, “To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins.” The Lord could not forgive them on the ground of justice and, therefore, He did so because of His tender mercy—the tender mercy of our God who has made Himself, “our God,” by the Covenant of Grace. He passes by the transgression of His people because He delights in mercy.

At the very outset, I want any soul here that is burdened with sin to believe in the forgiveness of sins and to believe in it because God is Love and has a great tenderness towards the work of His hands. He is so full of pity that He loves to not condemn the guilty and looks with anxious care upon them to see how He can turn away His wrath and restore them to favor. For this reason, alone, there is remission of sins! Forgiveness comes not to us through any merit of ours, present or foreseen, but only through the tender mercy of our God and the marvelous visit of love which came of it. If He is gracious enough to forgive our sins, it can be done, for every arrangement is already made to accomplish it. The Lord is gracious enough for this—for anything! Behold Him in Christ Jesus and there we see Him full of compassion. We sang just now and sang most truly—

***“His heart is made of tenderness,
 His heart melts with love.”***

The main point of this morning’s sermon will be to bring into prominence those few words, “*the tender mercy of our God.*” To me, they gleam with kindly light—I see in them a soft radiance, as of those matchless pearls of which the gates of Heaven are made. There is an exceeding melody to my ears as well as to my heart in that word, “tender.” “Mercy” is music, but, “tender mercy,” is the most exquisite form of it, especially to a

broken heart! To one who is despondent and despairing, this word is life from the dead! A great sinner, much bruised by the lashes of conscience, will bend his ears this way and cry, "Let me hear, again, the dulcet sound of these words, 'tender mercy!'" If you think of this tenderness in connection with God, it will strike you with wonder, for an instant, that One so great should be so tender, for we are apt to impute to Omnipotence a crushing energy which can scarcely take account of little, feeble and suffering things. Yet if we think again, the surprise will disappear and we shall see, with a new wonder of admiration, that it must be so! He that is truly great among men is tender because He is great in heart as well as in brain and hands. The truly great spirit is always gentle and because God is so infinitely great, He is, therefore, tender. We read of His gentleness and of His tenderness towards the children of men and we see them displayed to their fullest in the Gospel of our salvation! Very conspicuous is this, "tender mercy of our God."

Now, the original word is, "The mercy of the heart of our God." The Evangelists, though they wrote in Greek, carried with them into that language the idioms of the Hebrew tongue, so that they do not use an adjective, as it would seem from our translation—"tender mercy"—but they say, "mercy of the heart," or of the inwards, or of the heart of God. "The mercy of the heart of God" is to be seen in the remission of sin and in the visitation of His love when He comes to us as "the Dayspring from on high." Great is the tenderness of Divine mercy!

But I call your attention to the original reading because it seems to me not only to mean tenderness, but much more. The mercy of the heart of God is, of course, the mercy of His great tenderness, the mercy of His infinite gentleness and consideration. But other thoughts also come forth from the expression like bees from a hive. It means the mercy of God's very soul! The heart is the seat and center of life and mercy is to God as His own life. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God." God is Love—not only is He loving, but He is Love itself! Mercy is of the Divine Essence—there is no God apart from His heart—and mercy lies in the heart of God. He has bound up His mercy with His existence! As surely as God lives, He will grant remission of sins to those who turn to Him.

Nor is this all—the mercy of God's heart means His hearty mercy, His cordial delight in mercy. Remission of sins is a business into which the Lord throws His heart. He forgives with an intensity of will and readiness of soul. God made Heaven and earth with His fingers, but He gave His Son with His heart in order that He might save sinners. The Eternal God has thrown His whole soul into the business of redeeming men! If you desire to see God most Godlike, it is in the pardon of sin and the saving of men! If you desire to read the Character of God written out in capital letters, you must study the visitation of His love in the Person of His dear Son and all the wonderful works of Infinite Grace which spring from them. It is a grand sight to behold God in earnest when He says, "Now will I arise." With awe we watch Him as He lays bare His arm—but this full energy of

power is best seen when His work is Grace. When He stirs up His strength to come and save us and brings the Essence of His Being into intense action to bless us, we are, indeed, favored! It is this watching to do us good, this eagerness to bless us which is meant by the mercy of His heart. It is not only tenderness, but intensity, heartiness, eagerness, delight and concentration of power. All this is to be seen in the dealing of God with guilty men when He visits them to grant them the remission of their sins!

Just as the leader of our Psalmody sometimes sounds his tuning-fork at the commencement of our song, so have I done in these opening remarks. “Tender mercy” is the keynote of my discourse, I want you to keep it, still, in your ears. Whatever else of melody there may come from the text, yet this is to be the chief note—the tender, hearty, intense mercy of God which He has shown us!

I. In the first place, I invite you to observe that He shows this tender mercy in that HE DEIGNS TO VISIT US. “Through the tender mercy of our God; with which the Dayspring from on high *has visited us.*”

Observe that God has not merely pitied us from a distance and sent us relief by way of the ladder which Jacob saw, but He has, Himself, *visited us.* It needs no studied language to preach from this text, the expressions, themselves, are full of holy thought. A visit from God, what must it be! “Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?” A visit from the Queen would be remembered by most of you all your lives—you would feel yourselves half ennobled. But a visit from *God*, what shall I say of it?—that He should stoop to leave His high abode and the majesty wherein He reigns to visit insignificant beings like ourselves? This Bible is a letter from Him and we prize it beyond the finest gold—but an actual *visit* from God, Himself—what shall we say of such a favor?

In what ways has the Lord shown His tender mercy in deigning to visit us?

I answer, first, God’s great visit to us is the *Incarnation of our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.* Many visits of God to men had been paid before that—read your Bibles and see—but the most wonderful visit of all was when He came to tarry here, some 30 years and more, to work out our salvation! What but “tender mercy,” hearty mercy, intense mercy could bring the great God to visit us so closely that He actually assumed our nature? Kings may visit their subjects, but they do not think of taking upon themselves their poverty, sickness, or sorrow—they could not if they wanted to—and would not if they could! This were more than we could expect from them. But our Divine Lord, when He came here, came in our flesh. He veiled His Godhead in a robe of our inferior clay!

O children! The Lord so visited you as to become a Baby and then a Child who dwelt with His parents and was subject to them—and He grew in stature, as you must do. O working men! The Lord so visited you as to become the carpenter’s son and to know all about your toil and your weariness—yes, even to hunger and faintness! O sons of men! Jesus Christ has visited you so as to be tempted in all points like you are, though with-

out sin! He really assumed our nature and thus paid to us a very close visit. He took our sickness and bore our infirmities. This was a kind of visit such as none could have thought of granting save the infinitely tender and merciful God! The Man is our next kinsman, a Brother born for adversity! In all our affliction He is afflicted—He is tenderness itself.

Remember that He not only took our nature, but He dwelt among us in this world of sin and sorrow. This great Prince entered our abode—what if I call it our hut and hovel?—wherein our poor humanity finds its home for a season. This little planet of ours was made to burn with a superior light among its sister stars while the Creator sojourned here in human form. He trod the acres of Samaria and traversed the hills of Judea. “He went about doing good.” He mingled among men with scarcely any reservation, being, through His purity, separate from sinners as to His Character, yet He was the visitor of all men. He was found eating bread with a Pharisee, which, perhaps, is a more wonderful thing than when He received sinners and ate with them. A fallen woman was not too far gone for Him to sit on the lip of the well and talk to her. Nor were any of the poor and ignorant too mean for Him to care for them. He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—and His visit to us was, therefore, of the most intimate kind. He disdained no man’s lowliness. He turned aside from no man’s sin.

But remember that He visited us not merely to look upon us and to talk with us. Not only to teach us and set us a high and Divine example, which, as I have said, were incomparably gracious, if it went no further—but He so visited us that He went down into our condemnation that He might deliver us from it! He was made a curse for us, as it is written, “Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.” He took our debts upon Him that He might pay them, minting His own heart to create the coinage. He gave *Himself* for us, which is more than if I said, “He gave His blood and His life”—He gave *Himself*. So did He visit us that He took away with Him our ill and left all good behind. He did not come into our nature and yet keep Himself reserved from all the consequences of our sin. Nor did He come into our world and yet maintain a status superior to the usual denizens of it—no, He came to be a Man among men and to bear all that train of woes which had fallen upon human nature through its departure from the ways of God! Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows because the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all! Our Lord so visited us as to become our Surety and our Ransom. This was a wonderful piece of tender mercy, indeed!

I feel at this moment as if I could not talk about it, for it excels all conception and speech. Even if I were not full of pain, the subject would master me. If for the first time you had heard of the visit of the Incarnate God to this world, you would be struck with a wonder which would last throughout all eternity—that God Himself should really condescend to such a deed as this! This is the heart of the Gospel—the incomparable fact of the Incarnation of the Son of God, His dwelling upon the earth and His presentation of Himself as a Sacrifice unto God. You need no flourish of words! Just hear the bare statement of the fact and leap for joy because of

it! Since God has visited us, not in form of vengeance, nor as a cherub with a flaming sword, but in the gentle Person of that lowliest of the lowly, who said, “Suffer little children to come to Me,” we are herein made to see the tender mercy of our God! Nothing could be more tender than the Divine appearance of the Man of Sorrows.

But I do not think we ought to insist upon this as the only visit of God’s tender mercy, since the text is, in the Revised Version, rendered in the future—“The tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high *shall* visit us.” To this day we are visited of God in other respects, but with equal mercy. *The proclamation of the Gospel* in a nation, or to any individual, is a visit of God’s mercy. Whenever you come and hear the Gospel, you can be sure of this, whether you receive it or not, the Kingdom of God has come near to you! Even if you stop your ears and will have none of it, yet God has visited you in tender mercy in that by the Gospel He tells you that there is a way of salvation, that there is a plan for the remission of sin. It is a monstrosity—what if I say, a *miracle*—of iniquity, that men having sinned and God, having done so much to work out a way of remission of those sins, men should refuse to accept God’s pardoning love! Oh, my Hearers, why are you so foolish? Why do you hate your own souls? Surely, the devils, themselves, would, at the first, have scarcely believed it, that there could exist a race of creatures so hardened as to refuse the love which visits them in Grace! This is what devils never did. Men sin not only against God, but against their own interest when they turn aside from the wooing of disinterested goodness and refuse salvation through Him who loved us even to the death! That which God has so tenderly and heartily worked out in the gift of His dear Son to die for us ought to be received with eagerness. Will not you receive it? My dear Hearers, you shall not go out of this place this morning without knowing that God in great tender mercy has visited you by the blessed fact of your having heard the good tidings of Free Grace! Jesus seeks you, will you not seek Him?

But, blessed be His name, He has visited some of us in a more remarkable manner, still, for, *by the Holy Spirit He has entered into our hearts* and changed the current of our lives! He has turned our affections towards that which is right by enlightening our judgments. He has led us to the confession of sin. He has brought us to the acceptance of His mercy through the atoning blood—and so He has truly saved us! What a visit is this! This visit of the Holy Spirit, when He comes to dwell in us, is surpassingly condescending. I have often said that I never know which to admire more, the Incarnation of the Son of God, or the indwelling of the Spirit of God! This last is a wonderful condescension, for the Holy Spirit does not take a *pure body* of His own, but He makes *our bodies* to be His temples—He dwells not only in one of these, but in tens of thousands—and that not only by the space of 30 years, but throughout the whole life of the Believer! He dwells in us notwithstanding all our provocations and rebellions. Mark the word, not only *with* us, but *in* us and that, always! Oh, this tender mercy! Who can describe it? Sweet Spirit, gentle Spirit,

how can You abide with me? O heavenly Dove, how can You find rest in such a soul as mine? Yet without You, we are undone and, therefore, we adore the tender mercy which makes You bear with us so long and work in us so graciously till You have conformed us to the image of the First-Born. We are melted by the love of the Spirit—the communion of the Holy Spirit by which the Lord has visited us!

Often and often, since our first visitation by the Lord, I trust *we have had special visits from Him*, bringing with them rapturous joys, singular deliverances and countless blessings. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.” The Lord has visited us in the night. He has drawn near unto our spirit and so He has preserved us. We have enjoyed near and dear communion with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Have we not? This has often happened when we have been in great trouble. When we were depressed in spirit, when we were burdened with unusual cares, or weeping over heart-breaking bereavements, the mercy of our God has made the Dayspring from on high visit us at just such times—and in it we have seen His tenderness! Our life is bright with these visits as the sky with stars. I cannot enlarge upon this charming theme, but I leave it to your thoughts, O you whose experience will be the best sermon on the text! The visits of God to His own children are proofs of the heartiness, the intensity, the tenderness of His mercy. Talk of it, you who have had most enjoyment of such visits!

II. I call your attention, now, to a second point. There is so much sea here that one scarcely knows which way to steer. Secondly, He shows His tender mercy in that HE VISITS US AS THE DAYSPRING FROM ON HIGH. This means the dawning in the east, the rising of the sun at break of day. He does not come to us in Christ, or by His Spirit, as a tempest, as when He came from Paran with 10,000 of His holy ones, in all the pomp of His fiery Law, but He has visited us as smiling morn which, in gentle glory, floods the world with joy.

While this Gospel visitation is thus apparently less in splendor than that of the Law, yet it is not deficient in efficacy or in true Glory. God has not visited us as a candle which might suffice to cheer our darkness but could not change it into day. David rejoiced, saying, “The Lord will light my candle,” but in this we go far beyond him—we need no candle, for the Lord has visited us with the dawn of day.

He has come, moreover, not as a blaze which will soon die down, but as a light which will last our day, yes, last forever. After the long dark and cold night of our misery, the Lord comes in the fittest and most effectual manner—neither as lightning, nor candle, nor flaming meteor, but as the sun which begins the day!

The visitation of the Lord to us is as the Dayspring because *it suits our eyes*. Observe how the eyes are suited to the light and the light to the eyes in the economy of Nature—and it is even so in the realm of Grace. Day, when it first breaks in the east, has not the blaze of burning noon about it, but it peeps forth as a gray light, which gradually increases to the per-

fect day. So did the Lord Jesus Christ come—dimly, as it were, at first, at Bethlehem, but, by-and-by, He will appear in all the Glory of the Father. So does the Spirit of God come to us in gradual progress. There is sweet suitableness in the Grace of God to the heart and in the renewed heart to the Grace of God. He has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. The Revelation of God to each individual is made in form and manner tenderly agreeable to the condition and capacity of the favored one. I sometimes think the Gospel was made exactly to meet my case. Do you not think the same of it, yourselves? The morning light suits your eyes as exactly as if there were no other creature to behold it and so, in Divine tenderness, the Lord has made His visits suitable to our sorrow and even to our weakness! He shows us just so much of Himself as to delight us without utterly overwhelming us with the excess of brightness. He might have come in the majesty of His Grace to us at the first, as He does to us afterwards, but then we would not be able to bear it, and so He forbore. We are now more ready to sup with Him upon strong meat and so He puts us upon men’s fare, whereas, before, He gave us milk which is more convenient for babes. All the visits of God to us are merciful, but in those of the dawn of Grace we see tenderness as well as mercy.

The visits of God are like the dayspring, because they *end our darkness*. The dayspring banishes the night. Without noise or effort, it removes the ebony blackness and sows the earth with Oriental pearl. Night stretches her bat’s wings and is gone—she flies before the arrows of the advancing sun. And the coming of Jesus to us, when He does really come into our hearts, takes away the darkness of ignorance, sorrow, carelessness, fear and despair. Our night is ended once and for all when we behold God visiting us in Christ Jesus! Our day may cloud over, but night will not return. O, you that are in the blackest midnight, if you can but get a view of Christ, morning will have come to you! There is no light for you elsewhere, believe us in this, but if Jesus is seen by faith, you shall need no candles of human confidence, nor sparks of feelings and impressions—the beholding of Christ shall be the ending of all night for you. “They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.”

I like to think of Christ as coming into the world as the morning light because He comes *with such a largeness of present blessing*—blessing unlimited and immeasurable! Some are always for measuring out Christ—they can never do without estimates of how much and how far. Truly our Lord comes to save His elect, that I do verily believe and, therefore, certain friends would allot so many beams of light to so many eyes and limit the Light of God by the number of those who rejoice in it! Not so, Beloved! Jesus is the Light of the *world*! He comes from on high to shed light over the whole universe, even as the sun goes forth from one end of Heaven to the other, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. He appears as the Light of God which lightens every man that comes into the world—there is no other Light! Whoever is willing to receive that Light is free to do so! Yes, He shines on blind eyes. This light comes even to those who hate it and thus they are left without excuse—“the light shines in darkness; and the

darkness comprehended it not." And "this is the condemnation, that Light of God is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than Light because their deeds were evil." When the Lord comes to men, His blessings are infinite. You might as well take your three feet rule and begin to measure the length and breadth of the sunlight as measure the length and breadth of the tender mercy of our God in the Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ!

When the Lord visits us, it is as the dayspring, because *He brings us hope of greater Glory yet to come*. The first coming of Christ has not, at once, manifested everything. The dayspring is not the noon, but it is the sure guarantee of it. And so is the First Advent, the pledge of the Glory to be revealed. The sun never rises in error to set upon a sudden—he rises to complete his course, as the strong man comes out of his chamber to fulfill his race. When we receive a visit from the Lord, it may be in the way of rebuke, or of feeble hope, but let us be patient, for the dawn shall grow with constant increase of light—and there is no fear of its dying down into the old sinful darkness. "Sacred, high, eternal noon" is the destiny of all those whose eyes have beheld the Christ, so as to rejoice in His Light!

Now all this seems to me to be a wonderful instance of the tenderness of Divine mercy. Do you not think so? This coming of the Lord and of His Light so gradually and yet so lavishly—so fittingly and yet so effectually—does it not fill you with gratitude? Every little bird rejoices in the rising of the sun—God has made that great orb to rise so graciously that not even a sparrow trembles at it, but chirps with confidence its happy praises! Not even a little flower trembles because the great sun is about to flood the heavens, but God has so made the sun to rise that every tiny cup of every flower that blooms opens to drink in the golden light and is refreshed. The coming of Christ is just such to us, even to the least and feeblest of us! It is not a stupendous blessing, crushing us by its enormous weight. It is not a mysterious Revelation, confounding us by its profundity. It is simplicity, itself, gentleness itself—none the less, but all the more grand and sublime because it is so simple and so tender! Let us bless God this morning, then, that He visits us and that when He visits us, it is as the Dayspring from on high.

III. Thirdly, there is another instance of great tenderness in this, in that THE LORD VISITS US IN OUR VERY LOWEST ESTATE. Permit me to read the text to you—"To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins," from which it appears that *God comes to visit us when we are in our sins*. If the plan of salvation were that we were to get out of our sins and *then* God would come to us, it might be full of mercy, but it would not be tender mercy! Let it never be forgotten that, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I feel always at home when I get upon this blessed topic of the visits of God to undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners! His saving visits spring from Grace, pure Grace, alto-

gether unmixed with any merit or claim on our part. God comes to us as the morning which does not wait for man, nor tarry for the sons of men.

I cannot stand the spirit which I see spreading among us in reference to almsgiving. It should not be indiscriminate, but it should be bounteous. Many cry, “We shall give help only to the deserving.” If *God* were to adopt *that* rule, where would you and I be? It has even been muttered in an undertone that with regard to hospitals, no doubt they are used by persons who ought to provide for themselves and so help to support struggling medical men. It may be so, but I do not like the hard and niggardly spirit which suggests such criticisms! Talk not so—this is fit chatter for barbarians! Those who know the tender mercy of God will remember that when we had no good about us, whatever, His tender mercy visited us, even as the sun arises upon the just and upon the unjust! He gives with gladness to those who have no merit of any kind. He will not mar the magnificence of His goodness by asking our pitiful pence of merit as a payment for it, but He gives freely, according to the riches of His Grace. As He makes His rain to water the fields of the miser and of the fool, as well as those of the kind and the generous, so does He give His bounty to the worst of men! Let us learn this and imitate it, for thus we shall know the tender mercy of God. To copy the Divine Example will be the most sure method of coming to an understanding of it.

Furthermore, *our God visits us when we are in darkness*—when we are in such darkness as to know nothing, see nothing, believe nothing, hope nothing—even then, the Lord’s mercy comes to us! Is not this tenderness? “Educate a man up to a certain point,” says one, “and then we may hope that God’s Grace will visit him.” Educate him, by all means, but have hope that God may visit even those who have no education of any sort! “Follow the advance of civilization,” cries one, “and do not risk your missionaries among barbarians.” Not so! Our marching orders are, “Preach the Gospel to every creature.” The Gospel is to precede and produce civilization! To them that sit in darkness, the Lord is pleased to send the dayspring from on high. To send light where there is light is superfluous. Have we not a proverb about sending coals to Newcastle? God sends not Grace to us because we have something already which may be viewed as anticipatory and preparatory, but the anticipatory and the preparatory are of His Grace and He comes in love to bring these with Him, to those who as yet know nothing of His light and life! They are in the dark and He creates their day. Did you notice that it is said, “to those that sit in darkness”? This is more than being in the dark! The man who sits in darkness does so because he feels that his case is hopeless and, therefore, he forbears all further action. A poor benighted traveler has wandered this way and that to find a road, but it is so dark that he cannot perceive his road and so, at last, he embraces the rock for need of a shelter, crouching to the earth in despair! It is a part of the tender mercy of our God that He visits those who despond and are motionless in a dread inactivity. Those who have lost hope are lost, indeed, and such the Savior has come to save!

Then it is added, "*and in the shadow of death.*" Did you ever feel that shadow? It has a horrible influence. Chill and cold, it freezes the marrow of the bones and stops the genial current of life in the veins. Death stands over the man and if his hand does not smite, yet his shadow darkens joy and chills hope, benumbing the heart and making life, itself, a mode of death. The shadow of death is confusion of mind, depression of spirit, dread of the unknown, horror at the past and terror of the future. Are any of you, at this time, bowing down under the shadow of death? Has Hell gaped wide and opened her jaws for you? Have you, in your despair, made a league with death and a covenant with Hell? Thus says the Lord, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand," for the Lord has come forth and visited you in the Person of His dear Son to deliver the captive and save those who are appointed unto death! Knowing your guilt, the Lord visits you, this morning, and bids you look up. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Look and live; look and be delivered at once, even from the horrible death shadow which now broods over you.

I delight to think of this tender mercy of God to those who are lost! There are lost who shall be found and last who shall be first! You seem forgotten of God, left out of the register of hope, but yet to you have Jesus come—"to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Is not this tender mercy? If He had not come to shine on such, I would never have been saved! A Gospel for the cheerful would never have met my case. I needed a Gospel for the despairing! I know some here who would have perished if the Gospel had only been suitable to those who are of good character and have the beginnings of natural religion within them. Only a sinner's Savior could have suited some of you, or, indeed, any of us! As the good Samaritan did to the wounded man, "he came where he was," so did Jesus come to us in our ruin. The benefactor of the wounded did not stand and say to him, "Come here and get on my beast, and he shall carry you to the inn." But *he went to him* when he was lying half dead and, therefore, helpless! And he poured the oil and wine into his wounds while the poor wretch could not move an inch, nor stir hand or foot. He bound up his wounds and then set him on his own beast and took him to the inn! This is tender mercy—and in this fashion Jesus deals with us! He does everything for us from the very beginning. He is Alpha, even as He must be Omega! Does not this show the tender mercy of our God, that He comes to us in the darkness and, under the grim shadow of death—then and there reveals His love to us?

IV. Both time and strength fail me, so now I must finish with a fourth reflection from the text—Our God shows His tender mercy in that HE VISITS US WITH SUCH WONDERFUL AND JOYFUL RESULTS—"To give light to those who sit in darkness, to guide our feet into the way of peace." One sketch must suffice. Help me as I make an outline. Imagine a caravan in the desert which has long lost its way and is famishing. The sun has long gone down and the darkness has caused every one's heart to droop. All around them is a waste of sand and an Egyptian darkness. There they

must remain and die unless they can find the trail. They feel themselves to be in a fearful case, for, hungry and thirsty, their soul faints in them. They cannot even sleep for fear. Heavier and heavier the night comes down and the dampness is on the tents chilling the souls of the travelers. What is to be done? How they watch! Alas, no star comforts them! At last the watchmen cry, “The morning comes!” It breaks over the sea of sand and, what is better, it reveals a heap which had been set up as a way mark, and the travelers have found the trail! The dayspring has saved them from swift destruction by discovering the way of peace!

Our point is this, that when the Lord Jesus Christ visits us, He actually brings the Light of God to our darkness. He really leads into the Way and makes that Way a way of peace to us. Put all together and remember what the Lord has done for you! You did not know the way, once, and all the preaching in the world would not have made you know it, if Jesus had not, by His Spirit, visited you as the Dayspring! When you did know the Way, you could not reach it by yourself—you saw it as from a distance and could not enter upon it—but when Jesus came near, He actually guided your feet into that Way. He put your feet upon a rock and established your goings. That Way, good as it was, would have been to you a way of doubt, fear and hesitation, if the Lord had not so sweetly shone upon you that your road became a way of perfect peace. Peace in our text means prosperity, plenty, rest, joy. I ask you, Friends, whether you have not found it so. Since the Lord has visited you, have you not gone forth with joy and been led forth with peace?

Well, now, the conclusion of all this is a practical matter. If the tender mercy of God has visited us and done so much more for us than I can tell, or than you can hear, let *us* exhibit tender mercy in our dealings with our fellow men. It is a wretched business for a man to call himself a Christian and have a soul which never peeps out from between his own ribs! It is horrible to be living to be saved, living to get to Heaven, living to enjoy religion and yet never to live to bless others and ease the misery of a moaning world! Do you not know that it is all nonsense to regard religion as a selfish spiritual trade by which we save our own souls? It is useless to hope for peace till you know how to love! Where do wars and fights come from but from a lack of love? Unless your religion tears you away from yourself and makes you live for something nobler than even your own spiritual good, you have not passed out of the darkness into the Light of God. Only the way of unselfishness is the way of peace! I ask you, therefore, today, to think very tenderly of all poor people. These are hard times—let those who have more than they actually need be always ready to relieve distress which is very urgent just now.

The call this morning is for liberal help to our hospitals. These are called in France, “houses of God”—truly they are Godlike in their design! There is not a man here but may be in a hospital tomorrow. Do you reply that you are a wealthy man? Yet you may be run over in the street, or fall in a fit—but the hospital’s door is open to you. It is not merely for the beggar, but for the noble, that this is a refuge. Many a time men of immense

wealth have had to be carried to the hospital from injury inflicted by fire or water, accident, or sudden sickness. I appeal to your selfishness and to your honor—pay your proportion towards a common protection.

But I appeal to you on higher grounds. I forget, just now, how many thousands of cases of accident have gone into the hospital during the past year, but it is very surprising. They never ask who they are, or where they come from, but receive all the wounded. Every great accident involves a huge expense upon the hospital which is near the spot. This is not sufficiently thought of, or there would be special contributions on each sad occasions. Few consider how these noble institutions are supported. “Oh, the rich people give to them!” Alas, the rich people often forget them! “Oh, but these general collections will do the work!” No such thing! It is such a pitiful contribution which usually makes up a collection that the hospitals are little aided. These institutions are left to run into debt, or spend their capital, or keep their beds empty. I could not too strongly put the case of hospitals just now. I have half wished that the Government would undertake them, only I am not sure that they would be so well conducted in that case as when they are left to private management by hearts that feel for men.

Something must be done. We must give a great deal more! The collections ought to be at least twice as much in all our Churches and Chapels as they have ever been. If you were present when a man was run over and you heard his bones break, you would put your hand into your pocket, or do anything else in your power to help him. I wish I could make you feel as if you were in the presence of such a calamity for a minute, so as to touch your hearts and your hands. Diseases are always abroad and driving thousands to seek hospital help. I would like to take you down a ward and cause you to listen to the stories told from half-a-dozen beds. What sickness! What poverty caused by sickness! What pains poor bodies are capable of enduring! Oh, come, let us help them! Let us give to the support of those who nurse them and for the help of those who exercise their best skill for their relief. Who can withhold? By the tender mercy of our God, I charge you to give freely to this excellent cause! As the box goes round, remember that this is not the time for three-penny pieces. You who are wealthy must write checks or give notes—you may send them to our treasurer if you prefer. All must be generous for the sake of that tender mercy which is the dayspring of our hope and life!

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GOD'S TENDER MERCY

NO. 3029

**A SERMON
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***"The tender mercy of our God."
Luke 1:78.***

IT was a proof of great tenderness, on God's part, to think of His sinful creature, man, at all. When the created one had willfully set himself in opposition to his Creator, that Creator might at once have destroyed him, or have left him to himself—to work out his own destruction. It was Divine tenderness that looked on such an insignificant creature impudently engaging in so gross a revolt! It was also infinite tenderness which had, long before that, considered man so carefully as, practically, to frame a plan by which the fallen might be restored. It was a wonder of mercy that Infallible Wisdom should unite with almighty power to prepare a method by which rebellious man might be reconciled to his Maker. It was the highest possible degree of tenderness that God should give up His own Son, His only-begotten Son, that He might bleed and die in order to accomplish the great work of our redemption. It is also indescribable tenderness that God should, in addition to the gift of His Son, take such pity upon our weakness and our wickedness as to send the Holy Spirit to lead us to accept that "unspeakable Gift." It is Divine tenderness which bears with our obstinacy in rejecting Christ—Divine tenderness which plies us with incessant exhortation and invitation—all to induce us to be merciful to ourselves by accepting the immeasurable Gift which God's tender mercy so freely presents to us.

It was wonderful tenderness on God's part that when He thought of saving man, He was not content with lifting him up to the place which he had occupied before he fell, but he must lift him far higher than he was before, for, before the Fall, there was no man who could truly call himself the equal of the Eternal—but now, in the Person of Christ Jesus, manhood is united with Deity! And of all the creatures that God has made, man is the only one whom He has taken into union with Himself and set over all the works of His hands. There was infinite tenderness in God's first thoughts of love toward us and it has been Divine tenderness right through up till now! And that same tenderness will bring our souls into Heaven where we shall say with David, "Your gentleness has made me great."

I am going to speak of the tenderness of God's mercy towards sinners, in the fond hope that, perhaps, some of you who have never yet loved our God, may see how great has been His love to you and so may be

enamored of Him—and trust in His dear Son, Jesus Christ—and so be saved!

I. And, first, I will try to show you that in the mercy of God THERE IS GREAT TENDERNESS IN ITS GREAT PROVISIONS.

There is a wounded soldier bleeding out his life upon the battlefield and here comes a friend, merciful and tender, who has brought him a refreshing draught which will help to bring him back to consciousness and open his half-glazed eyes again. He is covered with a clammy sweat, but there is cold water with which to wipe his fevered brow. His wounds are gaping wide and his very life is oozing forth from him, but his friend has brought the salve and bandages with which to strap up every wound. Is this all that he has provided for the wounded warrior? No, for there is a stretcher, carried by men who choose their steps with care, so that they do not jolt the poor invalid. Where will they carry him? The hospital is prepared. The bed—so soft, just fit to bear such a mass of weakness and pain—is waiting for him and the nurse stands there in readiness to render such service as may be required. The man soon sleeps the sleep that brings with it restoration—and when he opens his eyes, what does he see? Just such food as is suited to his circumstances and needs! A bunch of flowers is also placed near him, to gladden and cheer him with their beauty and fragrance. And a friend comes stepping softly up, and asks whether he has a wife, or a mother, or any friend to whom a letter may be written for him. Before he thinks of anything that he needs, it is there beside him and, almost before he can express a wish, it is supplied! This is one instance of the tenderness of human sympathy, but infinitely greater is the tenderness of God towards guilty sinners! He has thought of all that a sinner can possibly need and he has provided in abundance all that the guilty soul can require to bring him safe into Heaven itself!

For every individual case, God, in the Covenant of His Grace, seems to have prepared some separate good thing. For great sinners, whose iniquities are many and gross, there are gracious words like these, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” If the man has not fallen into such depths of open sin, the Lord says to him, as the tender-hearted Savior said to one who was in that condition, “One thing you lack”—and that one thing the Grace of God is prepared to supply! There is as much in the Word of God to encourage the moral to come to Christ as there is to woo the immoral to forsake their sins and accept “the tender mercy of our God.” If there are children or young people who desire to find the Lord, there is this special promise for them, “Those that seek Me early shall find Me.” Yes, even for the little ones there are such tender words as these, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.” Then, if the sinner is an aged man, he is reminded that some were brought to labor in the vineyard even at the 11th hour! And if he is actually dying, there is encouragement for him in the narrative of the dying thief who trusted in the dying Savior and who, when he closed his eyes on earth, opened them with Christ in Paradise! So again I say that in the Covenant of His Grace, God has seemed to meet the peculiar case of every sinner who

really desires to be saved. If you are very sad and depressed, desponding and almost dismayed, there are Divine declarations and promises that are exactly suited to your case! Here are a few of them—"He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." Everything seems to be done on purpose that into whatever condition a man may have fallen through the grievous malady of sin, God may come to him, not roughly, but most tenderly, and give to him just what he most needs! I rejoice to be able to say that all that a sinner can need between here and Heaven is provided in the Gospel of Christ—all for pardon, all for the new nature, all for preservation, all for perfecting and all for glorifying is treasured up in Christ Jesus, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell!

Let us, then, before we go any further, bless that tender thoughtfulness of God which, foreseeing the greatness of our sins and our sorrows, our needs and our weaknesses, has provided for our vast necessities a boundless store of Grace and mercy!

II. But, secondly, the tenderness of God is seen IN THE METHODS BY WHICH HE BRINGS SINNERS TO HIMSELF.

The old system of surgery may have been useful in its time, but it certainly was not very tender. On board a man-of-war after action, what rough methods were adopted by those who were trying to save the lives of the wounded! Some of the remedies that we read of in the old doctors' books must have been a great deal more horrible than the diseases they were intended to cure, and I do not doubt that many of the patients died through the use of these rough remedies. But God's method of showing mercy to man is always Divinely tender. It is always powerful but, while masculine in its force, it is feminine in its tenderness.

See now, my dear Hearer, God has sent the Gospel to you, but how has He sent it? He might have sent it to you by an angel—a bright seraph might have stood here to tell you, in flaming sentences, of the mercy of God. But you would have been alarmed if you could have seen him and you would have fled from his presence! You would have been altogether out of order for the reception of the angelic message. Instead of sending an angel to you, *the Lord has sent the Gospel to you by a man of like passions with yourself*—one who can sympathize with you in your waywardness and who will affectionately try to deliver his message to you in such a form as will best meet your weakness. Some of you first heard the Gospel from your dear mother's lips—who else could tell the sweet story as well as she could? Or you have listened to it from a friend whose tearful eyes and heaving bosom proved how intensely she loved your soul. Be thankful that God has not thundered out the Gospel from Sinai with sound of trumpet, waxing loud and long, reminding you of the terrific blast of the last tremendous day, but that the blessed message of salvation, "Believe and live," comes to you from a fellow creature's tongue in melting tones that plead for its reception!

See also the tenderness of God's mercy in another respect, in that *the Gospel is not sent to you in an unknown tongue*. You have not to go to school to learn the Greek, or Hebrew, or Latin language in order that you may read about the way of salvation. It is sent to you in your homely Saxon mother tongue. I can honestly say that I have never sought after the beauties of eloquence and the refinements of rhetoric, but if there has been a word, more rough and ready than another, which I thought would favor my purpose of making plain the message of the Gospel, I have always chosen that word. Though I might have spoken in another fashion had I chosen to do so, I have thought it right and best, as the Apostle Paul did, to "use great plainness of speech," that no one of my hearers might be able to truthfully say, "I could not understand the plan of salvation as it was set forth by my minister." Well, then, since you have heard the Gospel so plainly preached that you have no need of a dictionary in order to understand it, see in this fact the tender mercy of God and His desire to win your soul unto Himself!

Remember, too, that the Gospel comes to men not only by the most suitable form of ministry, and in the simplest style of language, but *it also comes to men just as they are*. Whatever your condition may be, the Gospel is suitable to you. If you have lived a life of vice, the Gospel comes to you and says, "Repent you therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." You may, on the other hand, have lived a life of self-righteousness. If so, the Gospel bids you lay aside this worthless righteousness of your own, which is as filthy rags, and bids you put on the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness! You may be very tender-hearted, or you may be quite the reverse. Your tears may readily flow, or you may be hard as the neither millstone, but, in either case, God's Gospel is exactly suited to you! Yes, blessed be the name of the Lord, if a sinner is at the very gates of Hell, the Gospel is adapted to his desperate condition and can lift him up even out of the depths of despair!

One other thing I want you to particularly notice, and that is *that the mercy of God is so tender because it comes to you now*. If you are able to relieve a poor sufferer at once, and yet you keep him waiting, your treatment is as cruel as it is tardy. But God's Gospel says, "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation!" If any sinner stands outside Mercy's gate for even half an hour, he must put the blame for his exclusion down to his own account, for, if he would but obey the Gospel message and trust to the finished work of Christ, the door would be opened at once! Such delays as this are not God's delays, but ours! And if we postpone our acceptance of His mercy, we have ourselves to blame!

III. Now I must pass on to notice, thirdly, THE TENDERNESS OF GOD'S MERCY IN THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GOSPEL.

What does the Gospel ask of us? It certainly asks nothing of us but what it gives to us. It never asks of any man a sum of money in order that he may redeem his soul with gold. The poorest are as heartily welcomed by Christ as the richest! And the beggar who could count all his money on his fingers is as gladly received as the millionaire who has

his stocks and his shares, his lands and his ships! Poor men are bid to come to Jesus “without money and without price.”

Neither does the Lord ask of us any severe penances and punishments in order to make us acceptable to Him. He does not require you to put your bodies to torture, or to pass through a long series of outward and visible mortification of the flesh. You may trust Christ while you are sitting in your pew—and if you do so, you shall be at once forgiven and accepted!

No great depth of learning is asked as a condition of salvation. In order to be a Christian, one need not be a philosopher. Do you know yourself to be a sinner—guilty, lost, condemned—and Christ to be a Savior? Do you trust Christ to be *your* Savior? Then you are saved, however ignorant you may be about other matters!

Nor is any great measure of spiritual depression asked as a qualification for coming to Christ. I know that some preachers seem to teach that you must not come to Christ till you have first been to the devil—I mean that you must not believe that Christ is able and willing to save you until you have been, as it were, right up to Hell's gates in terror of conscience and awful depression of spirits! Jesus Christ asks not anything like this of you—but if you truly repent and forsake your sins, give up the evils which are destroying you and put your trust in the griefs and pains which He endured upon the Cross, you are saved!

Nor does the Gospel even ask a great amount of faith of you. To be saved does not require Abraham's faith, nor the faith of Paul or Peter. It requires a like precious faith—faith similar in substance and in essence, but not in degree. If you can but touch the hem of Christ's garment, you shall be made whole! If your view of Christ is such a poor trembling glance that you seem to yourself scarcely to have seen Him, yet that look will be the means of salvation to you! If you can but believe, all things are possible to him that believes! And though your belief is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet shall it ensure your entrance into Heaven! What a precious Savior Christ is! If you have sincere trust in Him, even though it is but very faint and feeble, you shall be accepted. If you can, from your heart, say to Christ, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom,” you shall soon have His gracious assurance, “You shall be with Me in Paradise.” Do not delude yourself with the idea that there is a great deal for you to *do* and to *feel* in order to fit yourself for coming to Christ. All such fitness is nothing but unfitness! All that you can do to make yourself ready for Christ to save you is to make yourself more unready! The fitness for washing is to be filthy—the fitness for being relieved is to be poor and needy. The fitness for being healed is to be sick—and the fitness for being pardoned is to be a sinner! If you are a sinner—and I guarantee you that you are—here is the Inspired Apostolic declaration, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” And to that declaration we may add our Lord's own words, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Oh that God would give all of you the Grace to receive this gracious Gospel,

whose requirements are so tenderly and so mercifully brought down to your low estate!

IV. The fourth point which illustrates God's tender mercy is this—**THERE IS GREAT TENDERNESS ABOUT ALL THE ARGUMENTS OF THE GOSPEL.**

How does the Gospel speak to men? It tells them, first, of *the Father's love*. You never can forget, if you have once heard or read it, the story of the prodigal son who wasted his substance with riotous living. You remember how he said, when he was feeding the swine, "I will arise and go to my father." That was a Divine touch and showed the Savior's master hand when He put it in and again when He added this affecting description, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Sinner, that is God's way of coming to meet you! If you want to meet Him, He sees that yearning desire and that trembling wish of yours and He will come more than half way to meet you! Yes, it is because He comes *all the way* that you are able to go any part of the way!

How else does the Gospel talk to men? Why, it tells them of *the great Shepherd's love*. He lost one sheep from His flock and He left the 99 in the wilderness while He went to seek the one which had gone astray. And when He had found it, He laid it on His shoulders, rejoicing, and when He came home, He said to His friends and neighbors, "Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost." That lost sheep was the type of an unconverted sinner, and that Shepherd is the bleeding Savior who came to seek and to save that which was lost!

Ought not such arguments as these prevail with you? When the Gospel seeks to win a sinner's heart—its master plea comes from the heart, the blood, the wounds, the death of the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ, the compassionate Savior! The thunders of Sinai might drive you away from God, but the groans of Calvary ought to draw you to Him! God's tender mercy appeals even to man's self-interest and says to him, "Why will you die? Your sins will kill you. Why do you cling to them?" It says to him, "The pains of Hell are terrible." And it only mentions them in love, so that the sinner may never have to feel them, but may escape from them. Mercy also adds, "The Grace of God is boundless, so your sin may be pardoned. The Heaven of God is wide and large, so there is room for you there." Mercy thus pleads with the Sinner, "God will be glorified in your salvation, for He delight in mercy, and He says that as He lives, He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

I cannot enlarge upon this point, but must be content with saying that *all Scripture proves God's love to sinners*. Almost every page of Scripture speaks to you, Sinner, with a message of love! And even when God speaks in terrible language, warning men to flee from the wrath to come, there is always this gracious purpose in it—that men may be persuaded not to ruin themselves and may, through the abounding mercy of God, accept the free gift of eternal life instead of willfully choosing the wages of sin which must assuredly be death!

O my dear Hearers, as I think of some of you who are unconverted, I can hardly tell you how sad I feel when I recollect against what tenderness you have sinned! God has been very good to many of you. You have been kept from the depths of poverty, you have even been dandled on the knee of prosperity. Yet you have forgotten God! Others of you have had many Providential helps in fighting the battle of life. You have been often Divinely assisted when you were sick, or when your poor wife and children were all but in need. God very graciously stepped in to supply your needs, yet now you talk to your friends about how “lucky” you have been, whereas the truth is that God has been tenderly merciful towards you! Yet you have not even seen His hand in your prosperity and, instead of giving God the glory for it, you have ascribed it to that heathen goddess, “Luck.” God has been patient and gentle with you as a nurse might be toward a wayward child, yet you altogether ignore Him or turn away from Him! You were sick, a little while ago, and God raised you up again to health and strength—is there still no burning of your heart towards God? I pray that God’s Grace may work in you the change that no pleading of mine can ever produce, and that you may say, “I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned.” If you heartily make that confession to your Heavenly Father, He will forgive you and welcome you as freely as the father in the parable welcomed the returning prodigal!

V. The last point of the tenderness of God’s mercy that I can now speak of is this, THE TENDERNESS OF ITS APPLICATIONS AND OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

What does God do for sinners? Well, when they trust in Jesus, *He forgives all their sins, without any upbraiding or drawbacks.* I have sometimes thought that if I had been the father of a prodigal son, I could have forgiven him when he came home and I hope I should have very freely done so. But I do not think I could ever have treated him in quite the same way that I treated his elder brother. I mean this—I would have had them sit at the same table, and feast on the same food—but I think that when market-day came round, I would have said to my younger son, “I shall not trust you with the money. I must send your elder brother to the market with that, for you might run away with it.” Perhaps I would not go so far as to say this, but I think I would feel it, for such a son as that one would be rather suspicious for a long time. Yet see how differently God deals with us! After some of us have been great sinners and He has forgiven us, He puts us in trust with the Gospel and bids us go and preach it to our fellow sinners! Look at John Bunyan—a swearing, drinking profligate playing at “tip-cat” on Sundays—yet, when the Lord had forgiven him, He did not say to him, “Now, Master John, you will have to sit in the back seats all your life. You shall go to Heaven, I will provide you a place there, but I cannot make as much use of you as I can of some who have been kept from such sins as you have committed.” Oh, no! He is put in the front rank of the Lord’s servants, an angel’s pen is given to him that he may write *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, and he has the high honor of lying for nearly 13 years in prison for the

Truth's sake! And among all the saints there is scarcely one who is greater than John Bunyan! Look at the Apostle Paul, too. He called himself the chief of sinners, yet his Lord and Father made him, after his conversion, such an eminent servant of Christ that he could truly write, "In nothing am I behind the very chief of Apostles, though I am nothing."

It is a proof of great tenderness on God's part that He gives liberally and upbraids not. He not only forgives, but He also forgets! He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And although we may have been the vilest of the vile, He makes no drawbacks on that account. I have known a father who has said to his bankrupt son, "Now, you young scapegrace, I will set you up in business again, but I have already lost so much money through you that I shall have to make a difference in my will, for I cannot give all this to you and then treat you as I treat your brother." But, blessed be God, He makes no difference in His will! He has not said that He will give the front seats in Heaven to those who have sinned less than others have done, and put the greater sinners somewhere in the background. Oh no! They shall all be with Jesus where He is and shall behold and participate in His Glory! There is not one Heaven for the great sinners and another for the little ones—but there is the same Heaven for those who have been the greatest sinners, but who have repented and trusted in Jesus, as there is for those who have been kept from running into the same excess of riot. Let us admire the wondrous tenderness of Divine Grace in its dealings with the very chief of sinners! When God deigns to cleanse a sinner, He does not partly wash him, but He takes away all his sin! He does not partly comfort him, but He loads him with loving kindness and gives him all that his heart could wish! Oh, that sinners could be persuaded to come unto Him for His full and free forgiveness!

Possibly somebody here says, "If God is so tender in mercy towards those who come to Him through Christ, I should be glad if you could explain why His mercy has not been extended to me. I have been seeking the Lord for months! I am at His House as often as I can be. I delight to hear the Gospel preached and I long for it to be blessed to me. I have been reading the Scriptures and searching for precious promises to suit my case, but I cannot find them. I have been praying for a long while, but my prayers still remain unanswered. I cannot get any peace! I wish I could. I have been trying to believe, but I cannot." Well, my Friend, let me tell you a story that I heard the other day. I cannot vouch for its truth, but it will serve for an illustration for me. There were two drunken sailors who wanted to go across a narrow inlet. They got into a boat and began to row, in their wild drunken way, but they did not appear to make any headway. It was not far across, so they ought to have been on the other side in a quarter of an hour, but they were not across in an hour, nor yet in several hours! One of them said, "I believe the boat is bewitched." The other one said he thought *they* were and I suppose they were, through the liquor they had been drinking! At last, the morning light came and one of them, who had become sober by that time, looked over the side of the boat and then called out to his mate, "Why, Sandy, you never pulled up the anchor!" They had been tugging at the oars all night long, but had

not pulled up the anchor! You smile at their folly and I do not regret that you do because you can now catch the meaning of what I am saying. There is many a man who is, as it were, tugging away at the oars with his prayers, and his Bible reading, and his going to Chapel, and his trying to believe. But, like those drunken sailors, he has not pulled up the anchor! That is to say, he is either holding fast to his own supposed righteousness, or else he is clinging to some old sin of his which he cannot give up. Ah, my dear Friend! You must pull up the anchor whether it holds you to your sins or to your self-righteousness! That anchor, still down out of sight, fully accounts for all your lost labor and fruitless anxiety. Pull up that anchor and there will soon be a happy end of all your troubles—and you will find God to be full of tender mercy and abundant Grace even to you! May it be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 54.**

The precious promises contained in this chapter belong in the first place to the Church of God, but, as that which belongs to the Church really belongs to every member of it, we shall not be acting dishonestly with the Scripture if we who are Believers, personally take home to ourselves every drop of comfort that we can find here!

Verse 1. *Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child.* Sing, even though you are barren! Do not postpone your song until God's promise is fulfilled unto you, but sing even while you are desolate and forlorn—and let faith pitch the key-note. Let me, therefore, entreat any of you who are disconsolate and sad, to give heed to the words of the Prophet and even *now* begin to sing! Give to God songs in the night—imitate the nightingale and sing though not a star is to be seen!

1. *For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the LORD.* After all, we who have the deepest sorrow have the highest joy, and if we are sometimes desolate, we need not wish to change with those who always keep the even tenor of their way. If we have great downs, we also have great ups! If the valleys are deep, blessed be God, the hills are high and the view from their summits is glorious! Let us be thankful even if our lot is a hard one, if we are the Lord's, "for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord."

2, 3. *Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; for you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.* This is another act of faith—not only singing before the mercy comes, but getting ready to receive it before it is in sight, stretching the curtains and the cords in order to have room to house the blessing which has not yet arrived! Carnal reason says, "When we have

the children, we will enlarge the tent. When we have gathered the congregation, we will build a House of Prayer." But faith says, "I will enlarge my heart that it may be able to take in the blessing which is sure to come. I will be big with expectation. I will open my mouth wide—not when I see the blessing, but before I see it, that God may place the blessing in my open, empty mouth." May the Lord graciously give us enlarged expectations, for, according to our faith, so shall it be unto us!

4. *Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth, and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more.* Here is a third line for faith to run upon, namely, that of courage. Before you are strong, before you have been lifted up out of your weakness, be of good courage and fear not, for if you walk by faith and trust in the Lord with all your heart, you shall never have any cause to be ashamed of having done so. The Lord will always honor your faith because your faith honors Him. Be of good cheer, for you shall yet have good reason to rejoice and all those days that you are now ashamed to think of, in which you lived without God, and without Christ—your days of sad and terrible widowhood—shall be so completely surpassed by the abundance of mercy which you shall receive from the Lord that you shall not remember them anymore!

5. *For your Maker is your husband; the LORD of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall He be called.* Oh, how blessed it is that Jehovah, Israel's God, the Lord of Hosts, is the God of the whole earth—so that we poor Gentiles may come and hide under the shadow of His wings! And what a joy it is to all Believers that this great God has united us in the sacred bonds of marriage with Himself! "Your Maker is your husband." Oh, what bountiful provision will such a Husband make for us! How well will He comfort us! How abundantly will He bless us! So let our hearts be glad in Him.

6. *For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God.* Some of you know what it is to have had your affections betrayed and your hearts broken by unfaithful friends. Now the Lord calls you to come close to Himself that you may prove His faithfulness and so forget your past sorrows in your present and future joy.

7, 8. *For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer.* These choice words do not need any explanation! This blessed plaster only needs to be applied to the wounded heart and it will heal it at once. If the Lord will but speak these sentences into our souls, so that we may know that they are really meant for us, our rapture will be complete! Let me read these verses again—"For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says Jehovah, your Redeemer"—your God—your next

of kin—your Advocate and Champion! What a blessed name is this and what a wonderful combination is this—Jehovah, your next of kin!

9, 10. *For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed. There is nothing really stable about them—all things that are visible must melt and flow away.*

10. *But My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you. What gracious words are these! What majesty there is in such consoling sentences as these! They remind us of Mr. Paxton Hood's lines—*

***“All His words are music, though they make me weep,
Infinitely tender, infinitely deep.”***

11. *O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted. Where are you? Have you come in here to seek the consolation you cannot find anywhere else? Then see how God lays Himself out to comfort you! He has put into human language the true sympathy for you that He feels in His heart. And again He says to you, “O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted.”*

11. *Behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. You shall have done with the rough tossing of the troubled sea and you shall come to land—to a royal city which has foundations of sapphire—to a king's palace where even the stones shall be stained with rich vermilion such as only princes use in their costly buildings—“I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires.”*

12. *And I will make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of pleasant stones. See what riches belong to the Church of the living God! And, as I have already reminded you, everything that belongs to the Church belongs to every member of it. So we expect to see our Lord's face through a window of agate and to go through a gate of carbuncle to meet Him in the place of communion which shall itself be enriched with all manner of precious stones. Yes, and everything that has to do with us—even the very “borders” of our life shall be laid with “pleasant stones.” Happy are all you who are the favorites of Heaven, the Beloved of the Lord! Blessed are you even in your shop and your store—blessed in the common things of your life, as well as in the choicest parts of your Christian experience!*

13. *And all your children shall be taught of the LORD. Our children are often our greatest care. We ask, “How shall they be educated? Where shall we place our boys and our girls?” Put them under the care of God, for, as Elihu said to Job, “Who teaches like Him?”*

13, 14. *And great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness shall you be established: you shall be far from oppression; for you shall not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near you. The man who has the fear of God within his heart need have no fear of anybody else—*

***“Fear Him you saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear!
Make His service your delight—***

He'll make your needs His care."

15. *Behold, they shall surely gather together.* You will have enemies, even if you lead the most blameless life that can be lived, for the absolutely Blameless One had many cruel enemies who hounded Him to death.

15. *But not by Me.* God is not with them, for He is on your side.

15. *Whoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake.* Oh, how often, and how mysteriously, and how terribly God has smitten the enemies of His people! The hand of the Lord has gone out against them as it went out against Sennacherib and his host in the days of good King Hezekiah.

16. *Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire, and that brings forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the spoiler to destroy.* Even over the most wicked and the most powerful of men there is the supremacy of God! And deep and mysterious though the Doctrine is, yet Divine Predestination applies even to such sinners as Judas Iscariot and the vilest of the vile in all times. And herein is our confidence—that God is greater than death, and the devil, and Hell! He is supreme above all the malice and craft and cruelty of the worst and the greatest of men.

17. *No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper—*

***“Neither two-edged sword nor falchion bright,
Nor barbed arrow that flies by night”—***

“No weapon” of any kind—however cunningly made, or however deftly handled—“no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.”

17. *And every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn.* The tongue—that worst of weapons, whose wicked words are sharper than swords—is like a condemned criminal.

17. *This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.* Did I not rightly say that these precious promises belong not only to the whole Church of God as a body, but also to each individual member of that Church?

17. *And their righteousness is of Me, says the LORD.* If, then, your righteousness is found in God, in God you shall find everything else that you need for time and for eternity! God grant this unto each one of us for His dear name's sake! Amen.

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

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

NO ROOM FOR CHRIST IN THE INN

NO. 485

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING,
DECEMBER 21, 1862,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And she brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. Because there was no room for them in the inn.”
Luke 2:7.

IT was necessary that it should be distinctly proven, beyond all dispute, that our Lord sprang out of Judah. It was necessary, also, that He should be born in Bethlehem-Ephratah, according to the Word of the Lord which He spoke by His servant Micah. But how could a public recognition of the lineage of an obscure carpenter and an unknown maiden be procured? What interest could the keepers of registers be supposed to take in two such humble persons?

As for the second matter, Mary lived at Nazareth in Galilee and there seemed every probability that the birth would take place there. Indeed, the period of her delivery was so near that, unless absolutely compelled, she would not be likely to undertake a long and tedious journey to the southern province of Judea. How are these two matters to be arranged? Can one turn of the wheel effect two purposes? It can be done! It shall be done! The official stamp of the Roman empire shall be affixed to the pedigree of the coming Son of David and Bethlehem shall behold His nativity.

A little tyrant, Herod, by some show of independent spirit, offends the greater tyrant, Augustus. Augustus informs him that he shall no longer treat him as a friend but as a vassal. And albeit Herod makes the most abject submission, and his friends at the Roman court intercede for him, yet Augustus, to show his displeasure, orders a census to be taken of all the Jewish people, in readiness for a contemplated taxation, which, however, was not carried out till some ten years after. Even the winds and waves are not more fickle than a tyrant's will.

But the Ruler of tempests knows how to rule the perverse spirits of princes. The Lord our God has a bit for the wildest war horse and a hook for the most terrible leviathan. Autocratic Caesars are but puppets moved with invisible strings, mere drudges to the King of kings. Augustus must be made offended with Herod. He is constrained to tax the people. It is imperative that a census be taken—no, it is of necessity that inconvenient, harsh and tyrannical regulations should be published and every person must repair to the town to which he was reputed to belong.

Thus, Mary is brought to Bethlehem. Jesus Christ is born as appointed and, moreover, He is recognized officially as being descended from David by the fact that His mother came to Bethlehem as being of that lineage. She remained there and returned to Galilee without having her claims questioned, although the jealousy of all the women of the clan would have been aroused had an intruder ventured to claim a place among the few females to whom the birth of Messiah was now, by express prophecies, confined. Remark here the wisdom of the God of Providence and believe that all things are ordered well.

When all persons of the house of David were thus driven to Bethlehem, the scanty accommodation of the little town would soon be exhausted. Doubtless, friends entertained their friends till their houses were all full, but Joseph had no such willing kinsmen in the town. There was the caravanserai, which was provided in every village, where free accommodation was given to travelers. This, too, was full, for coming from a distance and compelled to travel slowly, the humble couple had arrived late in the day. The rooms within the great brick square were already occupied with families.

There remained no better lodging, even for a woman in travail, than one of the meaner spaces appropriated to beasts of burden. The stall of the ass was the only place where the Child could be born. By hanging a curtain at its front, and perhaps tethering the animal on the outer side to block the passage, the needed seclusion could be obtained. And so, here, in the stable, was the King of Glory born and in the manger was He laid.

My business, this morning is to lead your meditations to the stable at Bethlehem, that you may see this great sight—the Savior in the manger, and think over the reason for this lowly bed—“because there was no room for them in the inn.”

I. I shall commence by remarking that THERE WERE OTHER REASONS WHY CHRIST SHOULD BE LAID IN THE MANGER.

1. I think it was intended thus *to show forth His humiliation*. He came, according to prophecy, to be “despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” He was to be “without form or comeliness,” “a root out of a dry ground.” Would it have been fitting that the Man who was to die naked on the Cross should be robed in purple at His birth? Would it not have been inappropriate that the Redeemer who was to be buried in a borrowed tomb, should be born anywhere but in the most humble shed, and housed anywhere but in the most ignoble manner?

The manger and the Cross standing at the two extremes of the Savior’s earthly life seem most fit and congruous the one to the other. He is to wear through life a peasant’s garb. He is to associate with fishermen. The lowly are to be His disciples. The cold mountains are often to be His only bed. He is to say, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.” Nothing, therefore, could be more fitting than that in His season of humiliation, when He laid aside all His glory, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and condescended even to the mean estate, He should be laid in a manger.

2. By being in a manger *He was declared to be the king of the poor*. They, doubtless, were at once able to recognize His relationship to them, from the position in which they found Him. I believe it excited feelings of the most tender brotherly kindness in the minds of the shepherds, when the angel said—“This shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Child wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger.” In the eyes of the poor, imperial robes excite no affection—a man in their own garb attracts their confidence.

With what pertinacity will workingmen cleave to a leader of their own order, believing in him because he knows their toils, sympathizes in their sorrows, and feels an interest in all their concerns! Great commanders have readily won the hearts of their soldiers by sharing their hardships and roughing it as if they belonged to the ranks. The King of men, who was born in Bethlehem, was not exempted in His infancy from the com-

mon calamities of the poor. No, His lot was even worse than theirs. I think I hear the shepherds' comments on the manger-birth:

"Ah," says one to his fellow, "then He will not be like Herod the tyrant. He will remember the manger and feel for the poor. Poor helpless Infant, I feel a love for Him even now. What miserable accommodation this cold world yields its Savior. It is not a Caesar that is born today. He will never trample down our fields with His armies, or slaughter our flocks for His courtiers. He will be the poor man's Friend, the people's Monarch. According to the words of our shepherd-king, He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy."

Surely the shepherds and such as they—the poor of the earth, perceived at once that here was the plebeian king—noble in descent, but still as the Lord has called Him, "one chosen out of the people." Great Prince of Peace! The manger was Your royal cradle! Therein were You presented to all nations as Prince of our race, before whose Presence there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. But You are Lord of all. Kings, your gold and silver would have been lavished on Him if you had known the Lord of Glory but inasmuch as you knew Him not, He was declared with demonstration to be a leader and a witness to the people.

The things which are not, under Him shall bring to nothing the things that are, and the things that are despised which God has chosen, shall under His leadership break in pieces the might and pride and majesty of human grandeur.

3. Further, in thus being laid in a manger, He did, as it were, *give an invitation to the most humble to come to Him*. We might tremble to approach a throne but we cannot fear to approach a manger. Had we seen the Master at first riding in state through the streets of Jerusalem with garments laid in the way and the palm branches strewed and the people crying, "Hosanna," we might have thought, though even the thought would have been wrong, that He was not approachable. Even there, riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass, He was so meek and lowly, that the young children clustered about Him with their boyish "Hosannas."

Never could there be a being more approachable than Christ. No rough guards pushed poor petitioners away. No array of officious friends were allowed to keep off the importunate widow or the man who clamored that his son might be made whole. The hem of His garment was always trailing where sick folk could reach it, and He, Himself, had a hand always ready to touch the disease, an ear to catch the faintest accents of misery, a soul going forth everywhere in rays of mercy, even as the light of the sun streams on every side beyond that orb itself.

By being laid in a manger He proved Himself a priest taken from among men, one who has suffered like His Brethren and therefore can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Of Him it was said, "He does eat and drink with publicans and sinners." "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." Even as an Infant, by being laid in a manger, He was set forth as the sinner's Friend. Come to Him, you that are weary and heavy laden! Come to Him, you that are broken in spirit, you who are bowed down in soul! Come to Him, you that despise yourselves and are despised of others!

Come to Him, publican and harlot! Come to Him, thief and drunkard! In the manger there He lies, unguarded from your touch and unshielded from your gaze. Bow the knee and kiss the Son of God. Accept Him as

your Savior, for He puts Himself into that manger that you may approach Him. The throne of Solomon might awe you, but the manger of the Son of David must invite you.

4. Methinks there was yet another mystery. You remember, Brethren, that this place was free to all. It was an inn, and please remember the inn in this case was not like our hotels, where accommodation and provision must be paid for. In the early and simple ages of the world, every man considered it an honor to entertain a stranger. Afterwards, as traveling became more common, many desired to shift the honor and pleasure upon their neighbors—why should they engross all the dignity of hospitality?

Further on still, some one person was appointed in each town and village and was expected to entertain strangers in the name of the rest. But, as the ages grew less simple and the pristine glow of brotherly love cooled down, the only provision made was the erection of a huge square block, arranged in rooms for the travelers and with lower stages for the beasts. And here, with a certain provision of water, and in some cases chopped straw for the cattle, the traveler must make himself as comfortable as he could.

He had not to purchase admittance to the caravanserai, for it was free to all and the stable especially so. Now, Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the stable of the inn to show how free He is to all comers. The Gospel is preached to every creature and shuts out none. We may say of the invitations of Holy Scripture, “None are excluded but those—

Who do themselves exclude.

Welcome the learned and polite,

The ignorant and rude.

Though Jesus' Grace can save the prince,

The poor may take their share.

No mortal has a just pretense

To perish in despairs.”

Class exclusions are unknown here and the prerogatives of caste are not acknowledged. No forms of etiquette are required in entering a stable. It cannot be an offense to enter the stable of a public caravanserai. So, if you desire to come to Christ you may come to Him just as you are. You may come *now*. Whosoever among you has the desire in his heart to trust Christ is free to do it. Jesus is free to you. He will receive you. He will welcome you with gladness and to show this, I think, the young Child was cradled in a manger.

We know that sinners often imagine that they are shut out. Oftentimes the convicted conscience will write bitter things against itself and deny its part and lot in mercy's stores. Brother, if *God* has not shut you out, do not shut yourself out. Until you can find it written in the Book that you may not trust Christ. Until you can quote a positive passage in which it is written that He is not able to save you, I pray you take that heavenly word wherein it is written—“He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” Venture on that promise. Come to Christ in the strength and faith of it, and you shall find Him free to all comers.

5. We have not yet exhausted the reasons why the Son of Man was laid in a manger. It was at the manger that *the beasts were fed*. And does the Savior lie where weary beasts receive their provender and shall there not be a mystery here? Alas, there are some men who have become so brutal through sin, so utterly depraved by their lusts, that to their own

consciences everything manlike has departed. But even to such, the remedies of Jesus, the Great Physician, will apply.

We are constantly reading in our papers of men who are called incorrigible, and it is fashionable just now to demand ferociously that these men should be treated with unmingled severity. Some few years ago all the world went mad with a spurious humanity, crying out that gentleness would reform the brutal thief whom harsh punishments would hopelessly harden. Now the current has turned, and everybody is demanding the abandonment of the present system. I am no advocate for treating criminals daintily. Let their sin bring them a fair share of punishment. But if by any means they can be reformed, pray, let the means be tried.

The day will come when the paroxysm of this garroting fever is over, and we shall blush to think that we were frightened by silly fears into a dangerous interference with a great and good work which up to now has been successfully carried on. It is a fact that under the present system, which (abating some faults that it may be well to cure) is an admirable one, crime is growing less frequent and the class of gross offenders has been materially lessened.

Whereas in 1844 18,490 convicts were transported, in 1860 the corresponding number was 11,533 and that notwithstanding the increase of the population. The ticket-of-leave system, where the public would employ the convicts and so give them a chance of gaining a new character, worked so well that little more than one percent in a year were reconvicted and even now only five per cent per annum are found returning to crime and to prison. Well, now, if the five percent receive no good, or even become worse, ought we not to consider the other ninety-five and pause awhile before we give loose to our vengeance and exchange a Christian system of hopeful mercy for the old barbarous rule of unmitigated severity?

Beware, fellow citizens, beware of restoring the old idea that men can sin beyond hope of reformation, or you will generate criminals worse than those which now trouble us. The laws of Draco must ever be failures but fear not for the ultimate triumph of plans which a Christian spirit has suggested. I have wandered from the subject—I thought I might save some from the crime of opposing true philanthropy on account of a sudden panic. But I will return at once to the manger and the Babe.

I believe our Lord was laid in the manger where the beasts were fed, to show *that even beast-like men may come to Him and live*. No creature can be so degraded that Christ cannot lift it up. Fall it may, and seem to fall most certainly to Hell, but the long and strong arm of Christ can reach it even in its most desperate degradation. He can bring it up from apparently hopeless ruin. If there is one who has strolled in here this morning whom society abhors and who abhors himself, my Master in the stable with the beasts presents Himself as able to save the vilest of the vile and to accept the worst of the worst even now. Believe on Him and He will make you a new creature.

6. But as Christ was laid where beasts were fed, you will please remember that after He was gone *beasts fed there again*. It was only His Presence which could glorify the manger and here we learn that if Christ were taken away, the world would go back to its former heathen darkness. Civilization itself would die out, at least that part of it which really

civilizes man, if the religion of Jesus could be extinguished. If Christ were taken away from the human heart, the most holy would become debased again, and those who claim kinship with angels would soon prove that they have relationship to devils.

The manger, I say, would be a manger for beasts still, if the Lord of Glory were withdrawn. And we should go back to our sins and our lusts if Christ should once take away His Divine Grace and leave us to ourselves. For these reasons which I have mentioned, methinks, Christ was laid in a manger.

II. But still the text says that He was laid in a manger because there was no room for Him in the inn and this leads us to the second remark, **THAT THERE WERE OTHER PLACES BESIDES THE INN WHICH HAD NO ROOM FOR CHRIST.** *The palaces of emperors and the halls of kings afforded the royal stranger no refuge?* Alas, my Brethren, seldom is there room for Christ in palaces! How could the kings of earth receive the Lord? He is the Prince of Peace and they delight in war!

He breaks their bows and cuts their spears in sunder. He burns their war chariots in the fire. How could kings accept the humble Savior? They love grandeur and pomp, and He is all simplicity and meekness. He is a carpenter's son, and the fisherman's companion. How can princes find room for the new-born monarch? Why, He teaches us to do to others as we would that they should do to us! And this is a thing which kings would find very hard to reconcile with the knavish tricks of politics and the grasping designs of ambition. O great ones of the earth, I am but little astonished that amid your glories, and pleasures, and wars, and councils, you forget the Anointed and cast out the Lord of All.

There is no room for Christ with the kings. Look throughout the kingdoms of the earth now and with here and there an exception it is still true—"The kings of the earth stand up and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed." In Heaven we shall see here and there a monarch. But ah, how few. Indeed a child might write of them, "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen."

State-chambers, cabinets, throne-rooms, and royal palaces are about as little frequented by Christ as the jungles and swamps of India by the cautious traveler. He frequents cottages far more often than regal residences, for there is no room for Jesus Christ in regal halls—

***"When the Eternal bows the skies
To visit earthly things,
With scorn Divine He turns His eyes
From towers of haughty kings.
He bids His awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul
With pleasure in His eyes."***

But there were senators, there were forums of political discussion, there were the places where the representatives of the people make the laws, was there no room for Christ there? Alas, my Brethren, none. And to this day there is very little room for Christ in parliaments. How seldom is religion recognized by politicians! Of course a State religion, if it will consent to be a poor, tame, powerless thing, a lion with its ties all drawn, its mane all shaven off and its claws all trimmed—yes, that may be recognized. But the true Christ, and they that follow Him and dare to obey His laws in an evil generation, what room is there for such?

Christ and His Gospel—oh, this is sectarianism and is scarcely worthy of the notice of contempt. Who pleads for Jesus in the Senate? Is not His religion, under the name of sectarianism, the great terror of all parties? Who quotes His golden rule as a direction for prime ministers, or preaches Christ-like forgiveness as a rule for national policy? One or two will give Him a good word, but if it is put to the vote whether the Lord Jesus should be obeyed or not, it will be many a day before the *ayes* have it. Parties, policies, place-hunters and pleasure-seekers exclude the Representative of Heaven from a place among representatives of Earth.

Might there not be found some room for Christ *in what is called good society*? Were there not in Bethlehem some people that were very respectable, who kept themselves aloof from the common multitude? Persons of reputation and standing? Could not they find room for Christ? Ah, dear Friends, it is too much the case that there is no room for Him in what is called good society. There is room for all the silly little forms by which men choose to trammel themselves—room for the vain niceties of etiquette, room for frivolous conversation, room for the adoration of the body. And there is room for the setting up of this, and that, as the idol of the hour—but there is too little room for Christ—and it is far from fashionable to follow the Lord fully.

The advent of Christ would be the last thing which society would desire. The very mention of His name by the lips of love would cause a strange sensation. Should you begin to talk about the things of Christ in many a circle, you would be tabooed at once. “I will never ask that man to my house again,” so-and-so would say—“if he must bring his religion with him.” Folly and finery, rank and honor, jewels and glitter, frivolity and fashion—all report that there is no room for Jesus in their abodes.

But is there not room for Him *on the exchange*? Cannot He be taken to the marts of commerce? Here are the shop-keepers of a shop-keeping nation—is there not room for Christ here? Ah, dear Friends, how little of the spirit and life and doctrine of Christ can be found here! The trader finds it inconvenient to be too scrupulous. The merchant often discovers that if he is to make a fortune he must break his conscience. How many there are—well, I will not say they tell lies directly but still, still, still—I had better say it plainly—they do lie indirectly with a vengeance!

Who does not know, as he rides along, that there must be many liars abroad? For almost every house you see is, “The cheapest house in London,” which can hardly be—full sure they cannot all be the cheapest! What sharp practice some indulge in! What puffery and falsehood! What cunning and sleight of hand! What woes would my Master pronounce on some of you if He looked into your shop windows, or stood behind your counters. Bankruptcies, swindling, frauds are so abundant that in hosts of cases there is no room for Jesus in the market or the shop.

Then there are *the schools of the philosophers*, surely *they* will entertain Him. The wise men will find in Him incarnate wisdom. He, who as a youth is to become the teacher of doctors, who will sit down and ask them questions and receive their answers, surely He will find room at once among the Grecian sages, and men of sense and wit will honor Him. “Room for Him, Socrates and Plato? Stoics and Epicureans give way! And you, you teachers of Israel, vacate your seats. If there is no room for this Child without your going, go. We must have Him in the schools of philosophy, even if we have to put you all away.”

No, dear Friends but it is not so. There is very little room for Christ in colleges and universities, very little room for Him in the seats of learning. How often learning helps men to raise objections to Christ! Too often learning is the forge where the nails are made for Christ's crucifixion. Too often human wit has become the craftsman who has pointed the spear and made the shaft with which His heart should be pierced. We must say it—philosophy, falsely so called, (for true philosophy, if it were handled aright, must ever be Christ's friend)—philosophy, falsely so called, has done mischief to Christ but seldom has it served His cause.

A few with splendid talents, a few of the erudite and profound have bowed like children at the feet of the Babe of Bethlehem, and have been honored in bowing there. But too many, conscious of their knowledge, stiff and stern in their conceit of wisdom, have said—"Who is Christ, that we should acknowledge Him?" They found no room for Him in the schools.

But there was surely one place where he could go—it was *the Sanhedrim*, where the elders sit. Or could He not be housed in the priestly chamber where the priests assemble with the Levites. Was there not room for Him in the temple or the synagogue? No, He found no shelter there. It was there, His whole life long, that He found His most ferocious enemies. Not the common multitude but the priests were the instigators of His death! The priests moved the people to say, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." The priests paid out their shekels to bribe the popular voice, and then Christ was hounded to His death.

Surely there ought to have been room for Him in the Church of His own people. But there was not. Too often in the priestly Church, when once it becomes recognized and mounts to dignity, there is no room for Christ. I allude not now to any one denomination, but take the whole sweep of Christendom. It is strange that when the Lord comes to His own, His own receive Him not. The most accursed enemies of true religion have been the men who pretended to be its advocates.

It is little marvel when bishops undermine the popular faith in revelation. This is neither their first nor last offense. Who burned the martyrs and made Smithfield a field of blood, a burning fiery furnace, a great altar for the Most High God? Why, those who professed to be anointed of the Lord, whose shaven crowns had received Episcopal benediction. Who put John Bunyan in prison? Who chased such men as Owen and the Puritans from their pulpits? Who harried the Covenanters upon the mountains? Who, Sirs, but the professed messengers of Heaven and priests of God?

Who have hunted the baptized saints in every land and hunt them still in many a continental state? The priests. The priests. There is no room for Christ with the prophets of Baal, the servants of Babylon. The false hirelings that are not Christ's shepherds and love not His sheep, have ever been the most ferocious enemies of our God and of His Christ. There is no room for Him where His name is chanted in solemn hymns and His image lifted up amid smoke of incense. Go where you will, and there is no space for the Prince of Peace but with the humble and contrite spirits which by Divine Grace He prepares to yield Him shelter.

III. But now for our third remark, **THE INN ITSELF HAD NO ROOM FOR HIM.** And this was the main reason why He must be laid in a manger. What can we find in modern times which stands in the place of the

inn? Well, there is *public sentiment free to all*. In this free land, men speak of what they like and there is a public opinion upon every subject. And you know there is free toleration in this country to everything—permit me to say, toleration to everything but Christ. You will discover that the persecuting spirit is now as much abroad as ever.

There are still men at whom it is most fashionable to sneer. We never scoff at Christians now-a-days. We do not sneer at that respectable title, lest we should lose our own honor. We do not now-a-days talk against the followers of Jesus under that name. No—but we have found out a way of doing it more safely. There is a pretty word of modern invention—a very pretty word—the word “*Sectarian*.” Do you know what it means? A sectarian means a true Christian—a man who can afford to keep a conscience and does not mind suffering for it. A man who, whatever he finds to be in that old Book, believes it and acts upon it and is zealous for it.

I believe that the men aimed at under the term, “sectarians,” are the true followers of Christ and that the sneers and jeers and all the nonsense that you are always reading and hearing, is really aimed at the Christian, the true Christian, only he is disguised and nicknamed by the word sectarian. I would give not a farthing for your religion, no, not even the turn of a rusty nail, unless you will sometimes win that title. If God’s Word is true, every atom of it, then we should act upon it. And whatever the Lord commands, we should diligently keep and obey, remembering that our Master tells us if we break one of the least of His commandments and teach men so, we shall be least in His kingdom.

We ought to be very jealous, very precise, very anxious, that even in the least significant of our Savior’s laws, we may obey, having our eyes up to Him as the eyes of servants are to their mistresses. But if you do this, you will find you are not tolerated and you will get the cold shoulder in society. A zealous Christian will find as truly a Cross to carry now-a-days, as in the days of Simon the Cyrenian. If you will hold your tongue, if you will leave sinners to perish, if you will never endeavor to propagate your faith, if you will silence all witnessing for the Truth of God, if, in fact, you will renounce all the attributes of a Christian, if you will cease to be what a Christian must be, then the world will say, “Ah, that is right. This is the religion we like.”

But if you will believe, believe firmly, and if you let your belief actuate your life and if your belief is so precious that you feel compelled to spread it, then at once you will find that there is no room for Christ even in the inn of public sentiment, where everything else is received. Be an infidel and none will treat you contemptuously. But be a Christian and many will despise you. “There was no room for Him in the inn.”

How little room is there for Christ, too, *in general conversation*, which is also like an inn. We talk about many things. A man may now-a-days talk of any subject he pleases. No one can stop him and say, “There is a spy catching your words. He will report you to some central authority.” Speech is very free in this land. But, ah, how little room is there for Christ in general talk! Even on Sunday afternoon how little room there is for Christ in some professed Christian’s houses.

They will talk about ministers, tell strange anecdotes about them—perhaps invent a few, or, at least, garnish the old ones and add to them and make them a little more brilliant. They will talk about the Sunday school, or the various agencies in connection with the Church—but how little they say about Christ! And if someone should in conversation make

this remark, "Could we not speak upon the Godhead and manhood, the finished work and righteousness, the ascension, or the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Why we should see many, who even profess to be followers of Christ, who would hold up their heads and say, "Why, dear, that man is quite a fanatic, or else he would not think of introducing such a subject as that into general conversation." No, there is no room for Him in the inn.

To this day He can find but little access there. I address many who are working men. You are employed among a great many artisans day after day. Do you not find, Brethren—I know you do—that there is very little room for Christ *in the workshop*. There is room there for everything else. There is room for swearing. There is room for drunkenness. There is room for lewd conversation. There is room for politics, slanders, or infidelities—but there is no room for Christ.

Too many of our working men think religion would be an encumbrance, a chain, a miserable prison to them. They can frequent the theater, or listen in a lecture hall, but the House of God is too dreary for them. I wish I were not compelled to say so, but truly, in our factories, workshops and foundries, there is no room for Christ. The world is elbowing and pushing for more room, till there is scarce a corner left where the Babe of Bethlehem can be laid.

As for the inns of modern times—who would think of finding Christ there? Putting out of our catalog in those hotels and roadside houses which are needed for the accommodation of travelers, what greater curse have we than our taverns and pothouses? What wider gates of Hell? Who would ever resort to such places as we have flaring with gas lights at the corners of all our streets to find Christ there? As well might we expect to find Him in the bottomless pit! We should be just as likely to look for angels in Hell, as to look for Christ in a gin palace! He who is separate from sinners finds no fit society in the reeking temple of Bacchus. There is no room for Jesus in the inn.

I think I would rather rot or feed the crows, than earn my daily bread by the pence of fools, the hard earnings of the poor man, stolen from his ragged children and his emaciated wife. What do many publicans fatten upon but the flesh and bones and blood and souls of men? He who grows rich on the fruits of vice is a beast preparing for the slaughter. Truly, there is no room for Christ among the drunkards of Ephraim. They who have anything to do with Christ should hear Him say—"Come you out from among them and be you separate. Touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you and be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters." There is no room for Christ now-a-days even in the places of public resort.

IV. This brings me to my fourth head, which is the most pertinent and the most necessary to dwell upon for a moment. **HAVE YOU ROOM FOR CHRIST? HAVE YOU ROOM FOR CHRIST?** As the palace and the forum and the inn have no room for Christ, and as the places of public resort have none, have *you* room for Christ?

"Well," says one, "I have room for Him but I am not worthy that He should come to me." Ah, I did not ask about worthiness. Have you room for Him? "Oh," says one, "I have an empty void the world can never fill!" Ah, I see you have room for Him. "Oh, but the room I have in my heart is so base!" So was the manger. "But it is so despicable!" So was the manger a thing to be despised. "Ah, but my heart is so foul!" So, perhaps, the

manger may have been. “Oh, but I feel it is a place not at all fit for Christ!” Nor was the manger a place fit for Him and yet there He was laid.

“Oh, but I have been such a sinner. I feel as if my heart had been a den of beasts and devils!” Well, the manger had been a place where beasts had fed. Have you room for Him? Never mind what the past has been. He can forget and forgive. It matters not what even the present state may be if you mourn it. If you have but room for Christ, He will come and be your guest. Do not say, I pray you, “I hope *I shall have* room for Him.” The time is come that He shall be born. Mary cannot wait months and years.

Oh, Sinner, if you have room for Him let Him be born in your soul today. “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation.” “Today is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation.” Room for Jesus! Room for Jesus, now! “Oh,” says one, “I have room for Him but will He come?” Will He come, indeed! If you but set the door of your heart open, and say, “Jesus, Master, all unworthy and unclean I look to You. Come, lodge within my heart,” He will come to you and He will cleanse the manger of your heart. No—He will transform it into a golden throne and there He will sit and reign forever and forever.

Oh, I have such a free Christ to preach this morning! I would I could preach Him better. I have such a precious, loving, Jesus to preach! He is willing to find a home in humble hearts. What? Are there no hearts here this morning that will take Him in? Must my eye glance round these galleries and look at many of you who are still without Him, and are there none who will say, “Come in, come in”? Oh, it shall be a happy day for you if you shall be enabled to take Him in your arms and receive Him as the consolation of Israel!

You may then look forward even to death with joy, and say with Simeon—“Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.” My Master wants room! Room for Him! Room for Him! I, His herald, cry aloud, Room for the Savior! Room! Here is my royal Master—have you room for Him? Here is the Son of God made flesh—have you room for Him? Here is He who can forgive all sin—have you room for Him? Here is He who can take you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—have you room for Him? Here is He who, when He comes in will never go out again but abide with you forever to make your heart a Heaven of joy and bliss for you—have you room for Him?

It is all I ask. Your emptiness, your nothingness, your want of feeling, your want of goodness, your want of Grace—all these will be but room for Him. Have you room for Him? Oh, Spirit of God, lead many to say, “Yes, my heart is ready.” Ah, then He will come and dwell with you—

***“Joy to the world the Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let every heart prepare a throne
And every voice a song.”***

V. I conclude with the remark, that if you have room for Christ, then from this day forth remember **THE WORLD HAS NO ROOM FOR YOU.** For the text says not only that there was no room for Him but look—“There was no room *for them*”—no room for Joseph, nor for Mary—any more than for the Babe. Who are His father and mother and sister and brother but those that receive His word and keep it? So, as there was no

room for the blessed Virgin, nor for the reputed father, remember from now on there is no room in this world for any true follower of Christ.

There is no room for you to take your *ease*. No, you are to be a soldier of the Cross and you will find no ease in all your life-warfare. There is no room for you to sit down *contented with your own attainments*, for you are a traveler and you are to forget the things that are behind and press forward to that which is before. No room for you *to hide your treasure* in, for here the moth and rust does corrupt. No room for you *to put your confidence*, for “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” From this day there will be no room for you *in the world’s good opinion*—they will count you to be an offscouring.

No room for you in the world’s *polite society*—you must go without the camp, bearing His reproach. From this time forth, I say, if you have room for Christ, the world will hardly find room of sufferance for you. You must expect now to be laughed at. Now you must wear the fool’s cap in men’s esteem. And your song must be at the very beginning of your pilgrimage—

**“Jesus, I Your Cross have taken, (by Your Grace)
All to leave and follow You.
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
You from now my All shall be.”**

There is no room for you in the worldling’s love. If you expect that everybody will praise you and that your good actions will all be applauded, you will be quite mistaken. The world, I say, has no room for the man who has room for Christ. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. “Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.” “You are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world.” Thank God, you need not ask the world’s hospitality. If it will give you but a stage for action and lend you for an hour a grave to sleep in, it is all you need.

You will require no permanent dwelling place here, since you seek a city that is to come, which has foundations and whose builder and maker is God. You are hurrying through this world as a stranger through a foreign land, and you rejoice to know that though you are an alien and a foreigner here, yet you are a fellow citizen with the saints and of the household of God. What do you say, young Soldier, will you enlist on such terms as these?

Will you give room for Christ when there is to be from now on no room for you—when you are to be separated forever, maybe cut off from among the world’s kith and kin—cut off from carnal confidence forever? Are you willing, notwithstanding all this, to receive the Traveler? The Lord help you to do so and to Him shall be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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THE GREAT BIRTHDAY

NO. 1330

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24, 1876.
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”
Luke 2:10.***

THERE is no reason upon earth, beyond that of ecclesiastical custom, why the 25th of December should be regarded as the birthday of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ anymore than any other day from the first of January to the last day of the year. And yet some persons regard Christmas with far deeper reverence than the Lord's-Day. You will often hear it asserted that, “The Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of Protestants,” but it is not so! There are Protestants who have absorbed a great deal beside the Bible into their religion and among other things they have accepted the authority of what they call, “the Church,” and by that door all sorts of superstitions have entered. There is no authority whatever, in the Word of God, for the keeping of Christmas at all! And there is certainly no reason for keeping it just now except that the most superstitious section of Christendom has made a rule that December 25th shall be observed as the birthday of the Lord and the Church, established by State Law in this land, has agreed to follow in the same track.

You are under no bondage, whatever, to regard the regulation. We owe no allegiance to the ecclesiastical powers which have made a decree on this matter, for we belong to an old-fashioned Church which does not dare to *make* laws, but is content to *obey* them. At the same time, the day is no worse than another, and if you choose to observe it and observe it unto the Lord, I doubt not that He will accept your devotion. But, if you do not observe it, but unto the Lord observe it not for fear of encouraging superstition and will-worship, I doubt not but what you shall be as accepted in the non-observance as you could have been in the observance of it!

Still, as the thoughts of a great many Christian people will run, at this time, towards the birth of Christ—and as this cannot be wrong—I judged it meet to use ourselves of the prevailing current and float down the stream of thought. Our minds will run that way because so many around us are following customs suggestive of it. Therefore let us get what good we can out of the occasion. There can be no reason why we should not, and it may be helpful that we should, now, consider the birth of our Lord Jesus. We will do that voluntarily which we would refuse to do as a matter of obligation—we will do that simply for convenience sake which we should not think of doing because enjoined by authority or demanded by superstition!

The shepherds were keeping their flocks by night. Probably a calm, peaceful night, wherein they felt the usual difficulty of keeping their weary eyelids open as sleep demanded its due of them. All of a sudden, to their amazement, a mighty blaze lit up the heavens and turned midnight into midday! The Glory of the Lord, by which, according to the idiom of the language, is meant the greatest conceivable glory as well as a Divine Glory, surrounded and alarmed them! And in the midst of it they saw a shining spirit, a form, the like of which they had never beheld before, but of which they had heard their fathers speak, and of which they had read in the Books of the Prophets so that they knew it to be an angel.

It was, indeed, no common messenger from Heaven, but “the angel of the Lord,” that choice presence angel, whose privilege it is to stand nearest the heavenly majesty, “mid the bright ones doubly bright,” and to be employed on weightiest errands from the eternal Throne of God. “The angel of the Lord came upon them.” Are you astonished that at first they were afraid? Would you not be alarmed if such a thing should happen to you? The stillness of the night, the suddenness of the apparition, the extraordinary splendor of the light, the supernatural appearance of the angel—all would tend to astound them and to put them into a quiver of reverential alarm—for I doubt not there was a mixture both of reverence and of fear in that feeling which is described as being “sorely afraid.”

They would have fallen on their faces to the ground in fright had there not dropped out of that, “glory of the Lord,” a gentle voice, which said, “Fear not.” They were calmed by that sweet comfort and enabled to listen to the announcement which followed. Then that voice, in accents sweet as the notes of a silver bell, proceeded to say, “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” They were bid to shake off all thoughts of fear and to give themselves up to joy! Doubtless they did so and, among all mankind, there were none so happy at that dead of night as were these shepherds who had seen an amazing sight!

They would never forget that night and now were consulting whether they should not hasten away to gaze upon a sight which would be more delightful still, namely, the Babe of which the angel spoke! May great joy be upon us, also, while our thought shall be that *the birth of Christ is the cause of supreme joy*. When we have spoken upon this we shall have to enquire, *to whom does that joy belong?* And thirdly, we shall consider *how they shall express that joy* while they possess it. May the Holy Spirit now reveal the Lord Jesus to us and prepare us to rejoice in Him.

I. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST SHOULD BE THE SUBJECT OF SUPREME JOY. Rightly so. We have the angelic guarantee for rejoicing because Christ is born! It is a Truth of God so full of joy that it caused the angel who came to announce it, to be filled with gladness! He had little to do with the fact, for Christ took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham. But I suppose that the very thought that the Creator should be linked with the creature—that the great Invisible and Omnipotent should

come into alliance with that which He, Himself, had made—caused the angel, as a creature, to feel that all creatureship was elevated and this made him glad.

Besides, there was a sweet benevolence of spirit in the angel's bosom which made him happy because he had such gladsome tidings to bring to the fallen sons of men! Although they are not our brethren, yet do angels take a loving concern in all our affairs. They rejoice over us when we repent! They are ministering spirits when we are saved and they bear us aloft when we depart! And we are sure that they can never be unwilling servants to their Lord, or tardy helpers of His beloved ones. They are friends of the Bridegroom and rejoice in His joy! They are household servants of the family of love and they wait upon us with an eager diligence which betokens the tenderness of feeling which they have towards the King's sons.

Therefore the angel delivered his message cheerfully, as became the place from which he came, the theme which brought him down and his own interest therein. He said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy," and we are sure he spoke in accents of delight. Yes, so glad were angels at this Gospel that when the discourse was over, one angel, having evangelized and given out the Gospel for the day, there suddenly appeared a band of choristers and sang an anthem loud and sweet that there might be a full service at the first propounding of the glad tidings of great joy! A multitude of the heavenly host had heard that a chosen messenger had been sent to proclaim the new-born King and, filled with holy joy and adoration, they gathered up their strength to pursue him, for they could not let him go to earth alone on such an errand!

They overtook him just as he had reached the last word of his discourse and then they broke forth in that famous chorale, the only one sung of angels that was ever heard by human ears here below, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Thus, I say, they had a full service—there was Gospel ministry in rich discourse concerning Christ—and there was hearty and devout praise from a multitude all filled with heavenly joy! It was so glad a message that they could not let it be simply spoken by a solitary voice, though that were an angel's, but they must pour forth a glad chorus of praise, singing unto the Lord a new song!

Brothers and Sisters, if the birth of Jesus was so gladsome to our cousins, the angels, what should it be to us? If it made our neighbors, who had comparatively so small a share in it, sing, how should it make us leap for joy? Oh, if it brought Heaven down to earth, should not our songs go up to Heaven? If Heaven's gate of pearl was set open at its widest and a stream of shining ones came running downward to the lower skies to anticipate the time when they shall all descend in solemn pomp at the glorious advent of the great King. If it emptied Heaven for a while to make earth so glad, ought not our thoughts and praises and all our loves to go pouring up to the eternal gate, leaving earth, awhile, that we may crowd Heaven with the songs of mortal men? Yes, verily, so let it be!—

“Glory to the new born King!

**Let us all the anthem sing
‘Peace on earth, and mercy mild;
God and sinners reconciled.’”**

For, first, *the birth of Christ was the Incarnation of God*—it was God taking upon Himself human nature—a mystery, a wondrous mystery, to be believed in rather than to be defined! Yet so it was that in the manger lay an Infant who was also Infinite! A feeble Child who was also the Creator of Heaven and earth! How this could be we do not know but that it was so we assuredly believe, and therein do we rejoice! If God thus takes upon Himself human nature, then manhood is not abandoned nor given up as hopeless! When manhood had broken the bonds of the Covenant and snatched from the one reserved tree the forbidden fruit, God might have said, “I give you up, O Adam, and cast off your race. Even as I gave up Lucifer and all his host, so I abandon you to follow your own chosen course of rebellion!”

But we have now no fear that the Lord has done this, for God has espoused manhood and taken it into union with Himself! Now manhood is not put aside by the Lord as an utterly accursed thing, to be an abomination unto Him forever, for Jesus, the Well-Beloved, is born of a virgin! God would not have taken manhood into union with Himself if He had not said, “Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it.” I know the curse has fallen upon men because they have sinned, but evidently not on *manhood* in the abstract, for else had not Christ come to take upon Himself the form of man and to be born of woman! The Word made flesh means hope for manhood, notwithstanding the Fall!

The race is not to be outlawed and marked with the brand of death and Hell, or to be utterly abandoned to destruction, for, lo, the Lord has married into the race and the Son of God has become the Son of Man! This is enough to make all that is within us sing for joy! Then, too, if God has taken manhood into union with Himself, He loves man and means man’s good. Behold what manner of love God has bestowed upon us that He should espouse our nature! For God had never so united Himself with any creature before. His tender mercy had ever been over all His works, but they were still so distinct from Himself that a great gulf was fixed between the Creator and the created, so far as existence and relationship are concerned.

The Lord had made many noble intelligences, principalities and powers of whom we know little. We do not even know what those four living creatures may be who are nearest the eternal Presence—but God had never taken up the nature of any of them, nor allied Himself with them by any actual union with His Person. But, lo, He has allied Himself with man, that creature a little lower than the angels, that creature who is made to suffer death by reason of his sin! God has come into union with man and, therefore, full sure He loves him unutterably well and has great thoughts of good towards him. If a king’s son does marry a rebel, then for that rebel race there are prospects of reconciliation, pardon and restoration!

There must be in the great heart of the Divine One wondrous thoughts of pity and condescending love if He deigns to take human nature into union with Himself! Joy, joy forever! Let us sound the fond cymbals of delight for the Incarnation bodes good to our race! If God has taken manhood into union with Himself, then God will feel for man! He will have pity upon him! He will remember that he is dust. He will have compassion upon his infirmities and sicknesses. You know, Beloved, how graciously it is so, for that same Jesus who was born of a woman at Bethlehem is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points like we are! Such intimate practical sympathy would not have belonged to our great High Priest if He had not become Man!

Not even though He is Divine could He have been perfect in sympathy with us if He had not, also, become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The Captain of our salvation could only be made perfect through suffering—it is necessary that since the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He, Himself, also should take part of the same. For this, again, we may ring the silver bells, since the Son of God now intimately sympathizes with man because He is made in all points like unto His brethren!

Further, it is clear that if God condescends to be so intimately allied with manhood, He intends to deliver man and to bless him. Incarnation prophesies salvation. Oh, believing Soul, your God cannot mean to curse you! Look at God Incarnate! What do you see there but salvation? God in human flesh must mean that God intends to set man above all the works of His hands and to give him dominion, according to His first intent, over all sheep and oxen and all that pass through the paths of the sea and the air! Yes, it must mean that there is to be a man beneath whose feet all things shall be placed, so that even Death, itself, shall be subject unto Him. When God stoops down to man it must mean that man is to be lifted up to God! What joy there is in this! Oh that our hearts were but half alive to the Incarnation! Oh that we did but know a thousandth part of the unutterable delight which is hidden in this thought, that the Son of God was born a Man at Bethlehem! Thus you see that there is overflowing cause for joy in the birth of Christ because it was the Incarnation of the Deity.

But further, the angel explained our cause for joy by saying that *He, who was born, was unto us a Savior*. “Unto you is born this day a Savior.” Brothers and Sisters, I know who will be most glad, today, to think that Christ was born a Savior. It will be those who are most conscious of their sinnership! If you would draw music out of that ten-stringed harp—the word, “Savior”—pass it over to a sinner. “Savior” is the harp, but “sinner” is the finger that must touch the strings and bring forth the melody. If you know yourself lost by nature and lost by practice. If you feel sin like a plague at your heart. If evil wearies and worries you. If you have known the burden and the shame of iniquity, then will it be bliss to you even to *hear* of that Savior whom the Lord has provided!

Even as a Babe, Jesus, the Savior, will be precious to you! But most of all because He has now finished all the work of your salvation! You will look to the commencement of that work and then survey it even to its

close and bless and magnify the name of the Lord. Unto you, O you who are the chief of sinners, even unto *you*, you consciously guilty ones, is born a Savior! He is a Savior by birth—for this purpose is He born! To save sinners is His birthright and office! It is from now on an institution of the Divine dominion and an office of the Divine Nature to save the lost! Henceforth God has laid help upon One that is mighty, and exalted One chosen out of the people, that He may seek and save that which was lost. Is there not joy in this? Where else is joy if not here?

Next, the angel tells us that *this Savior is Christ the Lord* and there is much gladness in that fact. “Christ,” signified *anointed*. Now when we know that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save, it is most pleasant to perceive, in addition, that the Father does not let Him enter upon His mission without the necessary qualifications. He is anointed of the Highest that He may carry out the offices which He has undertaken—the Spirit of the Lord rested upon Him without measure! Our Lord is anointed in a threefold sense, as Prophet, Priest and King. It has been well observed that this anointing, in its threefold power, never rested upon any other man.

There have been kingly prophets, David to wit. There was one kingly priest, even Melchisedec. And there have also been priestly Prophets such as Samuel. Thus it has come to pass that two of the offices have been united in one man, but the whole three—Prophet, Priest and King—never met in one thrice-anointed being until Jesus came. We have the fullest anointing conceivable in Christ, who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. And as the Messiah, the Sent One of God, Jesus Christ is completely prepared and qualified for all the work of our salvation. Let our hearts be glad! We have not a nominal Savior, but a Savior fully equipped! He is One who in all points is like ourselves, for He is Man, but in all points fit to help the feebleness which He has espoused, for He is the *anointed Man*.

See what an intimate mingling of the Divine and human is found in the angel’s song. They sing of Him as “a Savior,” and a Savior must of necessity be Divine in order to save from death and Hell. And yet the title is drawn from His dealings with humanity! Then they sing of Him as, “Christ,” and that must be human, for only man can be anointed, yet that unction comes from the Godhead! Sound forth the jubilee trumpets for this marvelously Anointed One and rejoice in Him who is your Priest, to cleanse you, your Prophet to instruct you and your King to deliver you! The angels sang of Him as Lord, and yet as *born*. So here, again, the god-like in dominion is joined with the human in birth. How well did the words and the sense agree!

The angel further went on to give these shepherds cause for joy by telling them that while their Savior was born to be the Lord, yet He was so *born in lowliness* that they would find Him a Babe, wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. Is there cause of joy there? I say, yes, indeed, there is, for it is the *terror* of the Godhead which keeps the sinner, oftentimes, away from reconciliation! But see how the Godhead has graciously concealed itself in a Babe, a little Babe—a Babe that needed to be

wrapped in swaddling bands like any other new-born child! Who fears to approach Him? Who ever heard of trembling in the presence of a babe? Yet is the Godhead there!

My Soul, when you cannot, for very amazement, stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire. When the Divine Glory is like a consuming fire to your spirit and the sacred majesty of Heaven is altogether overpowering to you, then come to this Babe, and say, "Yet God is here, and here can I meet Him in the Person of His dear Son, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Oh, what bliss there is in Incarnation if we remember that herein God's Omnipotence comes down to man's feebleness and infinite Majesty stoops to man's infirmity!

Now mark, the shepherds were not to find this Babe wrapped in Tyrian purple nor swathed in choicest fabrics fetched from afar—

***"No crown bedecks His forehead fair,
No pearl, nor gem, nor silk is there."***

Nor would they discover Him in the marble halls of princes, nor guarded by praetorian legionaries, nor pampered by vassal sovereigns. They would find Him the Babe of a peasant woman, of princely lineage it is true, but of a family whose stock was dry and forgotten in Israel. The Child was reputed to be the son of a carpenter. If you looked on the humble father and mother and at the poor bed they had made up, where earlier oxen had come to feed, you would say, "This is condescension, indeed."

O you poor, be glad, for Jesus is born in poverty and cradled in a manger! O you sons of toil, rejoice, for the Savior is born of a lowly virgin and a carpenter is His foster father. O you people, oftentimes despised and downtrodden, the Prince of the Democracy is born—one chosen out of the people is exalted to the throne! O you who call yourselves the aristocracy, behold the Prince of the kings of the earth, whose lineage is Divine and yet there is no room for Him in the inn! Behold, O men, the Son of God, who is bone of your bone, intimate with all your griefs! Who in His life was hungry as you are hungry, was weary as you are weary and wore humble garments like your own! Yes, He suffered worse poverty than you, for He was without a place where to lay His head! Let the heavens and the earth be glad since God has so fully, so truly, come down to man!

Nor is this all. The angel called for joy, and I ask for it, too, on this ground, that *the birth of this child was to bring Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men.* The birth of Christ has given such Glory to God as I know not that He could ever have had here by any other means! We must always speak in accents soft and low when we talk of God's Glory. In itself it must always be infinite and not to be conceived by us. And yet may we not venture to say that all the works of God's hands do not glorify Him so much as the gift of His dear Son—that all creation and all Providence do not so well display the heart of Deity as when He gives His Only-Begotten and sends Him into the world that men may live through Him?

What wisdom is manifested in the plan of redemption of which the Incarnate God is the center! What love is there revealed! What power is that

which brought the Divine One down from Glory to a *manger*? Only Omnipotence could have worked so great a marvel! What faithfulness to ancient promises! What truthfulness in keeping covenant! What Grace and yet what justice! For it was in the Person of that newborn Child that the Law must be fulfilled and in His precious body must vengeance find recompense for injuries done to Divine righteousness! All the attributes of God were in that little Child most marvelously displayed and veiled. Conceive the whole sun to be focused to a single point and yet so softly revealed as to be endurable by the most tender eyes—even thus the glorious God is brought down for man to see Him born of a woman!

Think of it! The express image of God in mortal flesh! The heir of all things cradled in a manger! Marvelous is this! Glory to God in the highest! He has never revealed Himself before as He now manifests Himself in Jesus! It is through our Lord Jesus being born that there is already a measure of peace on earth and boundless peace yet to come. Already the teeth of war have been somewhat broken and a testimony is borne by the faithful against this great crime. The religion of Christ holds up its shield over the oppressed and declares tyranny and cruelty to be loathsome before God. Whatever abuse and scorn may be heaped upon Christ's true minister, he will never be silent while there are downtrodden nationalities and races needing his advocacy.

Nor will God's servants anywhere, if faithful to the Prince of Peace, ever cease to maintain peace among men to the utmost of their power. The day comes when this growing testimony shall prevail and nations shall learn war no more. The Prince of Peace shall snap the spear of war across His knee. He, the Lord of all, shall break the arrows of the bow, the sword and the shield and the battle—and He shall do it in His own dwelling place, even in Zion, which is more glorious and excellent than all the mountains of prey! As surely as Christ was born at Bethlehem, He will yet make all men brothers and establish a universal monarchy of peace, of which there shall be no end!

So let us sing if we value the Glory of God, for the new-born Child reveals it! And let us sing if we value peace on earth, for He is come to bring it! Yes, and if we love the link which binds glorified Heaven with pacified earth—the good will towards men which the Eternal herein manifests—let us give a third note to our hallelujah and bless and magnify Immanuel, God with us, who has accomplished all this by His birth among us. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

I think I have shown you that there was room enough for joy for the shepherds, but you and I, who live in later days, when we understand the whole business of salvation, ought to be even more glad than they were, though they glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us at least do as much as these simple shepherds and exult with our whole souls!

II. Secondly, let us consider TO WHOM THIS JOY BELONGS. I was very heavy yesterday in spirit, for this dreary weather tends greatly to depress the mind—

“No lark could pipe to skies so dull and gray.”

But a thought struck me and filled me with intense joy. I tell it to you, not because it will seem anything to *you*, but as having gladdened myself. It is a bit all for myself to be placed in a parenthesis! It is this, that the joy of the birth of Christ in part *belongs to those who tell of it*, for the angels who proclaimed it were exceedingly glad, as glad as glad could be! I thought of this and whispered to my heart, “As I shall tell of Jesus born on earth for men, I will take license to be glad, also, glad if for nothing else that I have such a message to bring to them.”

The tears stood in my eyes and stand there even now, to think that I should be privileged to say to my fellow men, “God has condescended to assume your nature that He might save you.” These are as glad and as grand words as he of the golden mouth could have spoken. As for Cicero and Demosthenes, those eloquent orators had no such theme to dwell upon! Oh, joy, joy, joy! There was born into this world a Man who is also God! My heart dances as David danced before the Ark of God! This joy was meant, not for the tellers of the news alone, *but for all who heard it*. The glad tidings “shall be unto all people.” Read, “*all the people*,” if you like, for so, perhaps, the letter of the original might demand.

Well, then, it meant that it was joy to all the nation of the Jews—but assuredly our version is truer to the inner spirit of the text—it is joy to all people upon the face of the earth that Christ is born! There is not a nation under Heaven but what has a right to be glad because God has come down among men! Sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! Take up the strain, O you dwellers in the wilderness, and let the multitude of the isles be glad! You, who beneath the frigid zone, feel in your very marrow all the force of God’s north wind, let your hearts burn within you at this happy truth! And you whose faces are scorched by the heat of the torrid sun, let this be as a well of water unto you! Exult and magnify Jehovah that His Son, His Only-Begotten, is also Brother to mankind!—

**“O wake our hearts, in gladness sing!
And hail each one the newborn King,
Till living song from loving souls
Like sound of mighty waters rolls.”**

But, Brothers and Sisters, they do not all rejoice, not even all of those who know this glorious Truth of God. Nor does it stir the hearts of half of mankind. To whom, then, is it a joy? I answer, to all who *believe* it and especially to all who believe it as the shepherds did—with that faith which staggers not through unbelief. The shepherds never had a doubt! The light, the angels and the song were enough for them. They accepted the glad tidings without a single question. In this the shepherds were both happy and wise, yes, wiser than the would-be wise whose wisdom can only manifest itself in quibbling.

This present age despises the simplicity of a childlike faith, but how wonderfully God is rebuking its self-conceit. He is taking the wise in their own craftiness. I could not but notice in the late discovery of the famous Greek cities and the sepulchers of the heroes, the powerful rebuke which

the spirit of skepticism has received! These wise doubters have been taken on their own ground and put to confusion! Of course they told us that old Homer was, himself, a myth, and the poem called by his name was a mere collection of unfounded legends and mere tales. Some ancient songster did but weave his dreams into poetry and foist them upon us as the blind minstrel's song—there was no fact in it, they said, nor, indeed, in any current history—everything was mere legend.

Long ago these gentlemen told us that there was no King Arthur, no William Tell, no anybody! Even as they questioned all sacred records, so have they cast suspicion upon all else that common men believe. But lo, the ancient cities speak! The heroes are found in their tombs! The child's faith is vindicated! They have disinterred the king of men and this and other matters speak in tones of thunder to the unbelieving ear, and say, "You fools! The simpletons believed and were wiser than your 'culture' made you. Your endless doubts have led you into falsehood and not into truth." The shepherds believed and were glad as glad could be, but if Professor _____ (never mind his name) had been there on that memorable night, he would certainly have debated with the angel and denied that a Savior was needed at all!

He would coolly have taken notes for a lecture upon the nature of light and have commenced a disquisition upon the cause of certain remarkable nocturnal phenomena which had been seen in the fields near Bethlehem. Above all, he would have assured the shepherds of the absolute non-existence of anything superhuman! Have not the learned men of our age proved that impossibility, scores of times, with sufficient arguments to convince a wooden post? They have made it as plain as that three times two are 18 that there is no God, nor angel, nor spirit! They have proven beyond all doubt, as far as their own dogmatism is concerned, that everything is to be doubted which is most sure and that nothing is to be believed at all except the infallibility of pretenders to science!

But these men find no comfort. Neither are they so weak as to need any, so they say. Their teaching is not glad tidings but a wretched negation, a killing frost which nips all noble hopes in the bud and in the name of reason steals away from man his truest bliss! Be it ours to be as philosophical as the shepherds, for they did not believe too much, but simply believed what was well attested—and this they found to be true upon personal investigation! In faith lies joy! If our faith can realize, we shall be happy.

I want, this morning, to feel as if I saw the Glory of the Lord still shining in the heavens, for it was there, though I did not see it. I wish I could see that angel, and hear him speak, but, failing this, I know he *did* speak, though I did not hear him. I am certain that those shepherds told no lies, nor did the Holy Spirit deceive us when He bade His servant, Luke, write this record! Let us forget the long interval between and only remember that it was really so. Realize that which was, indeed, matter of fact, and you may almost hear the angelic choir up in yonder sky still singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

At any rate, our hearts rehearse the anthem and we feel the joy of it by simply believing, even as the shepherds did.

Mark well that believing what they did, these simple-minded shepherds *desired to approach nearer* the marvelous Babe. What did they do but consult together and say, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass"? O Beloved, if you want to get the joy of Christ, come near to Him! Whatever you hear about Him from His own Book, believe it! But then say, "I will go and find Him." When you hear the voice of the Lord from Sinai, draw not near unto the flaming mountain—the Law condemns you, the Justice of God overwhelms you. Bow at a humble distance and adore with solemn awe.

But when you hear of God in Christ, hasten there! Hasten there with all confidence, for you are not come unto the mountain that might not be touched, and that burned with fire—you are come unto the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel! Come near, come nearer, nearer still! "Come," is His own word to those who labor and are heavy laden, and that same word He will address to you at the last—"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." If you want joy in Christ, come and find it in His bosom, or at His feet! There John and Mary found it long ago.

And then, my Brothers and Sisters, do what the shepherds did when they came near. They rejoiced to see the Babe of whom they had been told! You cannot see with the physical eye, but you must meditate—and so see with the *mental* eyes this great, grand and glorious Truth of God that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us! This is the way to have joy today, joy such as fitly descends from Heaven with the descent of Heaven's King! Believe! Draw near! And then fixedly gaze upon Him and so be blest!—

***"Hark how all the vault of Heaven rings
Glory to the King of kings!
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as Man with men to appear,
Jesus our Immanuel here."***

III. My time has fled, else I desired to have shown, in the third place, HOW THAT JOY SHOULD BE MANIFESTED. I will only give a hint or two. The way in which many believers in Christmas keep the feast we know too well. This is a Christian country, is it not? I have been told so, so often, that I suppose it must be true. It is a Christian country! But the Christianity is of a remarkable kind! It is not only that in the olden times, "Christmas broached the mightiest ale," but nowadays Christmas keepers must get drunk upon it! I slander not our countrymen when I say that drunkenness seems to be one of the principal items of their Christmastide delight!

If Bacchus were born at this time, I do think England keeps the birthday of that detestable deity most appropriately, but tell me not that it is the birth of the holy Child Jesus that they thus celebrate! Is He not crucified afresh by such blasphemy? Surely to the wicked, Jesus says, “What have you to do to keep My birthday and mention My name in connection with your gluttony and drunkenness?” Shame that there should be any cause for such words! Tenfold shame that there should be so much!

You may keep His birthday all the year round, for it were better to say He was born every day of the year than on any one, for truly in a *spiritual* sense He is born every day of every year in some men’s hearts! And that, to us, is a far weightier point than the observation of holy days! Express your joy, first, as the angels did, by public ministry. Some of us are called to speak to the many. Let us, in the clearest and most earnest tones proclaim the Savior and His power to rescue man.

Others of you cannot preach, but you can *sing*. Sing, then, your anthems and praise God with all your hearts! Do not be slack in the devout use of your tongues, which are the glory of your frames, but again and again and again lift up your joyful hymns unto the new-born King! Others of you can neither preach nor sing. Well, then, you must do what the shepherds did, and what did they do? You are told twice that they *spread the news*. As soon as they had seen the Babe, they made known abroad the saying that was told them, and as they went home they glorified God. This is one of the most practical ways of showing your joy. Holy conversation is as acceptable as sermons and anthems!

There was also one who said little, but thought the more—“Mary pondered all these things in her heart.” Quiet, happy spirit, weigh in your heart the grand Truth of God that Jesus was born at Bethlehem. Immanuel, God with us—weigh it if you can! Look at it again and again! Examine the varied facets of this priceless brilliant diamond and bless, and adore and love and wonder, and yet adore again this matchless miracle of love! Lastly, *go and do good to others*. Like the wise men, bring your offerings and offer to the newborn King your heart’s best gold of love, frankincense of praise and myrrh of penitence.

Bring *everything* of your heart’s best and something of your substance, also, for this is a day of good tidings and it were unseemly to appear before the Lord empty. Come and worship God manifest in the flesh and be filled with His light and sweetness by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 2:1-21.
HYMN FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—249, 260, 256.**

END OF VOLUME 22.

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GOD INCARNATE, THE END OF FEAR

NO. 727

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 23, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And the angel said unto them, Fear not.”
Luke 2:10.*

No sooner did the angel of the Lord appear to the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, than they were sorely afraid. It had come to this, that man was afraid of his God, and when God sent down His loving messengers with tidings of great joy, men were filled with as much fright as though the angel of Death had appeared with uplifted sword. The silence of night and its dreary gloom caused no fear in the shepherds' hearts, but the joyful herald of the skies, robed in mildest glories of Divine Grace, made them afraid.

We must not condemn the shepherds on this account as though they were peculiarly timid or ignorant, for they were only acting as every other person in that age would have done under the same circumstances. Not because they were simple shepherds were they amazed with fear, but it is probable that if they had been well-instructed Prophets they would have displayed the same feeling. There are many instances recorded in Scripture in which the foremost men of their time trembled and felt a horror of great darkness when special manifestations of God were vouchsafed to them. In fact, a slavish fear of God was so common that a tradition had grown out of it, which was all but universally received as nothing less than the Truth of God.

It was generally believed that every supernatural manifestation was to be regarded as a token of speedy death. “We shall surely die because we have seen God” was not only Manoah's conclusion, but that of most men of his period. Few, indeed, were those happy minds who, like Manoah's wife, could reason in a more cheerful style, “If the Lord had meant to destroy us He would not have showed us such things as these.” It became the settled conviction of all men, whether wise or simple, whether good or bad, that a manifestation of God was not so much to be rejoiced in as to be dreaded. Even Jacob said, “How dreadful is this place! It is none other but the House of God.”

Doubtless the spirit which originated this tradition was much fostered by the legal dispensation which is better fitted for trembling servants than for rejoicing sons. It was of the bond woman and it gendered into bondage. The solemn night in which its greatest institution was ordained was a night of trembling. Death was there in the slaughter of the lamb. Blood was there sprinkled on a conspicuous part of the house. Fire was there to roast the lamb—all the emblems of judgment were there to strike the mind with awe. It was at the dread hour of midnight when the solemn

family conclave was assembled. The door being shut, the guests, themselves, standing in an uneasy attitude, and awestricken, for their hearts could hear the wings of the Destroying Angel as he passed by the house.

Afterwards, when Israel came into the wilderness, and the Law was proclaimed, do we not read that the people stood afar off and that bounds were set about the mount? And if so much as a beast touched the mountain it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart! It was a day of fear and trembling when God spoke to them out of the fire. Not with the melting notes of harp, psaltery, or dulcimer did God's Law come to His people's ears! No soft wings of angels brought the message, and no sunny smiles of Heaven sweetened it to the mind! No, with sound of trumpet and thunder, out of the midst of blazing lightning—with Sinai altogether on a smoke—the Law was given.

The law's voice was, "Come not near here!" The spirit of Sinai is fear and trembling. The legal ceremonies were such as rather to inspire fear than to beget trust. The worshipper at the temple saw bloodshed from the first of the year to the end of the year. The morning was ushered in with the blood-shedding of the lamb, and the evening shades could not gather without blood again being spilt upon the altar! God was in the midst of the camp, but the pillar of cloud and fire was His unapproachable pavilion.

The emblem of His glory was concealed behind the curtain of blue and scarlet and fine twined linen—behind which only one foot might pass—and that but once in the year. Men spoke of the God of Israel with bated breath and with voices hushed and solemn. They had not learned to say, "Our Father which are in Heaven." They had not received the spirit of adoption, and were not able to say Abba, Father. They smarted under the spirit of bondage which made them sorely afraid when by any peculiar manifestation the Lord displayed His Presence among them. At the bottom of all this slavish dread lay *sin*.

We never find Adam afraid of God, nor of any manifestation of Deity while he was an obedient creature in Paradise. But no sooner had he touched the fatal fruit than he found that he was naked and hid himself! When he heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, Adam was afraid and hid himself from the Presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Sin makes miserable cowards of us all! See the man who once could hold delightful converse with his Maker now dreading to hear his Maker's voice and skulking in the grove like a felon who knows his guilt, and is afraid to meet the officers of justice!

Beloved, in order to remove this dread nightmare of slavish fear from the breast of humanity, where its horrible influence represses all the noblest aspirations of the soul, our Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh! This is one of the works of the devil which He was manifested to destroy. Angels came to proclaim the good news of the advent of the Incarnate God, and the very first note of their song was a foretaste of the sweet result of His coming to all those who shall receive Him. The angel said, "Fear not," as though the times of fear were over, and the days of hope and joy had arrived! "Fear not." These words were not meant for those trembling shep-

herds, only, but were intended for you and for me, yes, for all nations to whom the glad tidings shall come!

“Fear not.” Let God no longer be the object of your slavish dread! Stand not at a distance from Him any more. The Word is made flesh. God has descended to tabernacle among men, that there may be no hedge of fire, no yawning gulf between God and man. Into this subject I wish to go this morning as God may help me. I am sensible of the value of the theme, and am very conscious that I cannot do it justice. I would earnestly ask God the Holy Spirit to make you drink of the golden cup of the Incarnation of Christ such draughts as I have enjoyed in my quiet meditations. I can scarcely desire more delight for my dearest friends.

There is no antidote for fear more excellent than the subject of that midnight song, the first and best of Christmas chorales, which from its first word to its last note chimes out the sweet message, which begins with, “Fear not.”—

***“It is my sweetest comfort, Lord,
And will forever be,
To muse upon the gracious truth
Of your humanity.
Oh joy! There sits in our flesh,
Upon a throne of light,
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!
Though earth’s foundations should be moved,
Down to their lowest deep.
Though all the trembling universe
Into destruction sweep.
Forever God, forever man,
My Jesus shall endure.
And fixed on Him,
My hope remains
Eternally secure.”***

Dear Friends, I shall first detain your attention with a few remarks upon the fear of which I have already spoken. Then, secondly, we shall invite your earnest attention to the remedy which the angels came to proclaim. And then, thirdly, as we may have time, we shall endeavor to make an application of this remedy to various cases.

I. Turning to THE FEAR of the text, it may be well to discriminate. There is a kind of fear towards God from which we must not wish to be free. There is that lawful, necessary, admirable, excellent fear which is always due from the creature to the Creator, from the subject to the king, yes, and from the child toward the parent. That holy, *filial* fear of God, which makes us dread sin and constrains us to be obedient to His command is to be cultivated. “We had fathers of our flesh, and we gave them reverence, shall we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?”

This is the “fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom.” To have a holy awe of our most holy, just, righteous, and tender Parent is a privilege, not a bondage! Godly fear is not the “fear which has torment.” Perfect love does not cast out, but dwells in joyful harmony. The angels perfectly love God, and yet with holy fear they veil their faces with their wings as they approach Him. And when we shall in Glory behold the face of God, and shall be filled with all His fullness, we shall not cease humbly and

reverently to adore the Infinite Majesty. Holy fear is a work of the Holy Spirit, and woe unto the man who does not possess it! Let him boast as he may, his “feeding himself without fear” is a mark of his hypocrisy!

The fear which is to be *avoided*, is slavish fear—the fear which perfect love casts out, as Sarah cast out the bondwoman and her son. That trembling which keeps us at a distance from God, which makes us think of Him as a Spirit with whom we can have no communion—as a Being who has no care for us except to punish us—and for whom, consequently, we have no care except to escape if possible from His terrible Presence. This fear sometimes arises in men’s hearts from their thoughts dwelling exclusively upon the Divine *greatness*. Is it possible to peer long into the vast abyss of Infinity and not to fear? Can the mind yield itself up to the thought of the Eternal, Self-Existent, Infinite One without being filled, first with awe and then with dread?

What am I? An aphid creeping upon a rosebud is a more considerable creature in relation to the universe of beings than I can be in comparison with God! What am I? A grain of dust that does not turn the scale of the most delicate balance is a greater thing to man than a man is to Jehovah! At best we are less than nothing and vanity! But there is more to abase us than this. We have had the impertinence to be disobedient to the will of this great One! And now the goodness and greatness of His nature are as a current against which sinful humanity struggles in vain, for the irresistible torrent must run its course and overwhelm every opponent. What does the great God seem to us, out of Christ, but a stupendous rock threatening to crush us, or a fathomless sea, hastening to swallow us up?

The contemplation of the Divine greatness may of itself fill man with horror and cast him into unutterable misery! Dwell long upon such themes, and like Job, you will tremble before Jehovah, who shakes the earth out of her place, and makes the pillars tremble. Each one of the sterner attributes of God will cause the same fear. Think of His power by which He rolls the stars along, and lay your hand upon your mouth! Think of His wisdom by which He numbers the clouds, and settles the ordinances of Heaven. Meditate upon any one of these attributes, but especially upon His *justice*, and upon that devouring fire which burns unceasingly against sin—and it is no wonder if the soul becomes full of fear!

Meanwhile let a sense of sin with its great whip of wire flagellate the conscience, and man will dread the bare idea of God. For this is the burden of the voice of Conscience to guilty man—“If you were an obedient creature, this God were still terrible to you, for the heavens are not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly. What are you that you should be just with God, or have any claims upon Him? You have offended, you have lifted the hand of your rebellion against the infinite majesty of Omnipotence—what will become of you? What can be your portion but to be set up forever as a monument of His righteous wrath?”

Now such a fear as that being very easily created in the thoughtful mind, and being, indeed, as it seems to me, the natural heritage of man as the result of sin is most doleful and injurious. For wherever there is a slavish dread of the Divine Being it alienates man most thoroughly from his God. We are by our evil nature enemies to God, and the imagination

that God is cruel, harsh, and terrible adds fuel to the fire of our enmity. Those whom we slavishly dread we cannot love. You could not make your child show forth love to you if its little heart was full of fear—if it dreaded to hear your footsteps and was alarmed at the sound of your voice it could not love you. You might obey some huge monster because you were afraid of him, but to *love* him would be impossible.

It is one of the masterpieces of Satan to deceive man by presenting to his mind a hateful picture of God. He knows that men cannot love that which terrifies them and therefore he paints the God of Grace as a hard, unforgiving being who will not receive the penitent and have pity upon the sorrowful. God is love! Surely if men had but Grace enough to see the beauty of that portrait of God—that miniature sketched with a single line, “God is love!” they would willingly serve such a God. When the Holy Spirit enables the mind to perceive the Character of God, the heart cannot refuse to love Him.

Base, fallen, depraved as men are, when they are illuminated from on high so as to judge rightly of God, their hearts melt under the genial beams of Divine love and they love God because He has first loved them. But there is the master-piece of Satan, that he will not let the understanding perceive the excellence of God’s Character and then the heart cannot love that which the understanding does not perceive to be loveable. In addition to alienating the heart from God, this fear creates a prejudice against God’s Gospel of Grace. There are persons in this place this morning who believe that if they were religious they would be miserable. It is the settled conviction of half of London that to trust in Jesus and to be obedient to God, which is the essence of all true religion, would be wretchedness itself.

“Oh,” says the worldly man, “I should have to give up my pleasure if I were to become a Christian.” Now this is one of the most wicked slanders that was ever invented and yet it has current belief everywhere. It is the popular theology that to be an enemy to God is happiness, but to be the friend of God is misery. What an opinion men must have of God, when they believe that to love Him is to be wretched! Oh, could they comprehend, could they but know how good God is—instead of imagining that His service would be slavery, they would understand that to be His friend is to occupy the highest and happiest position which created beings can occupy!

This fear in some men puts them out of all hope of ever being saved. Thinking God to be an ungenerous Being, they keep at a distance from Him. If there are some sweet attractions, now and then in a sermon, some gentle melting of conscience, the good desire never matures into the practical resolve. They do not say, “I will arise and go unto my Father,” because they do not know Him as a Father—they only know Him as a consuming fire. A man does not say, “I will arise and go unto a consuming fire.”

No, but like Jonah, he would gladly pay his fare, regardless of the expense, and go to Tarshish to flee from the Presence of the Lord! This it is that makes calamity of being a man at all, to most men—that they cannot get away from God, since they imagine that if they could but escape from

His Presence they would then wander into bliss. But being doomed to be where God is, they then conceive that for them wretchedness and misery alone remain. The soft warnings of mercy and the thundering of justice are, alike, powerless upon men so long as their hearts are seared and rendered callous by an unholy dread of God.

This wicked dread of God frequently drives men to extremities of sin. The man says, "There is no hope for me. I have made one fatal mistake in being God's enemy and I am irretrievably ruined. There is no hope that I shall ever be restored to happiness or peace. Then what will I do? I will cast the reins upon the neck of my passions. I will defy fate and take my chance. I will get such happiness as may be found in sin. If I cannot be reconciled to Heaven I will be a good servant of Hell." And therefore men have been known to hasten from one crime to another with a malicious inventiveness of rebellion against God.

They act as if they could never be satisfied nor contented till they had heaped up more and more rebellions against the majesty of God whom in their hearts they dread with a burning Satanic dread mingled with hate. If they could but comprehend that He is still willing to receive the rebellious, that His heart yearns towards sinners! If they could but once believe that He is love and wills not the death of a sinner but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live, surely the course of their lives must be changed! But the god of this world blinds them and maligns the Lord until they count it folly to submit to Him.

Dear Friends, this evil which works a thousand ills operates in ways of evil quite innumerable. It dishonors God. Oh, it is infamous! It is villainous to make out our God, who is Light and in whom is no darkness at all, to be an object of horrible fear. It is infernal! I may say no less. It is devilish to the highest degree to paint Him as a demon, who is Jehovah, the God of Love. Oh, the impertinence of the Prince of Darkness, and the madness of man to consent to him, that God should be depicted as being unwilling to forgive, unkind, untender, hard, cruel—whereas He is *love*—supremely and above all things, LOVE!

He is just, but all the more truly loving because He is just. He is true, and therefore sure to punish sin, yet even punishing sin because it were not good to let sin go unpunished. This is base ingratitude on the part of a much-receiving creature that he should malign his Benefactor. The evil which is thus done to God recoils upon man—for this fear has torment. No more tormenting misery in the world than to think of God as being our implacable foe! You Christians who have lost, for a while, the spirit of adoption—you who have wandered a distance from God and nothing can be more tormenting to you than the fear that the Lord has cast you away and will not again receive you.

You backsliders, nothing can hold you back from your heavenly Father like a dread of Him! If you can but really know that He is not to be dreaded with slavish fear, you will come to Him as your child does to you, and you will say, "My Father, I have offended—pity me! My Father, I am vexed and grieved for my sin—forgive me, receive me again to Your arms, and help me, by Your mighty Grace, that from now on I may walk in Your Commandments and be obedient to Your will." My dear Friends, you who

know anything about spiritual life—don't you feel that when you have sweet thoughts of God breathed into you from above and have His special love to you shed abroad in your hearts—don't you feel that it is *then* that you are most holy?

Have you not perceived that the only way in which you can grow in that which is morally and spiritually lovely, is by having your gracious God high in your esteem, and feeling His precious love firing your hearts? That they may be like little children is the very thing which God desires for His elect ones! It is this which His Spirit works in His chosen! It is to this that we must come if we are to be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Slavish fear is so opposed to the child-like spirit that it is as the poison of asps to it. Dread and fear bring out everything in us that is of the man rather than of the child, for it stirs us up to resist the object of our fear.

An assured confidence in the goodness of God casts out fear and brings forth everything that is child-like in us. Have you ever seen a child trust some big, rough man, and melt him down by its trustfulness? It trusted where there was no ground for trust, apparently, and made ground for itself. That same child, simply and implicitly trusting in a good and generous father is a noble picture. And if I, a poor, weak, feeble child, conscious that I am such—knowing that I am all folly and weakness—can just believe in my good, great God, through Jesus Christ, and come and trust myself with Him and leave Him to do as He likes with me, believing that He will not be unkind, and cannot be unwise—if I can wholly repose in His love and be obedient to His will—why then I shall have reached the highest point that the creature can reach! The Holy Spirit will then have worked His finished work in me and I shall be fit for Heaven.

Beloved, it is because fear opposes this, and prevents this, that I would say with the angel, "Fear not."

II. I fear I weary you while I speak upon this somewhat dolorous theme, and therefore with as much brevity as the abundance of the matter may permit, let us notice in the second place, THE CURE FOR THIS FEAR, which the angel came to proclaim. It lies in this—"Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."—

***"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just and sacred Three,
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins!
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins."***

That is the remedy—God with us—God made flesh. Let us try and show this from the angel's song. According to the text they were not to fear, first of all, because the angel had come to bring them *good news*. How does it run? It says, "I bring you good tidings of great joy." But what was this Gospel? Further on we are told that the Gospel was the fact that Christ was born! So, then, it is good news to men that Christ is born, that God has come down and taken manhood into union with Himself. Verily this *is* glad tidings! He who made the heavens slumbers in a manger!

What then? Why, then God is not of necessity an *enemy* to man because here is God actually taking manhood into alliance with Deity! There cannot be permanent, inveterate, rooted enmity between the two natures, or otherwise the Divine Nature could not have taken the human into hypostatical union with itself. Is there not comfort in that? You are a poor, erring, feeble man, and that which makes you afraid of the Lord is this fear that there is an enmity between God and man—but there need not be such enmity—for your Maker has actually taken manhood into union with Himself!

Do you not see another thought? The Eternal seems to be so far away from us. He is infinite and we are such little creatures. There appears to be a great gulf fixed between man and God, even on the ground of creatureship. But observe, He who is God has also become *Man*. We never heard that God took the nature of *angels* into union with Himself—we may therefore say that between Godhead and angelhood there must be an infinite distance still—but here the Lord has actually taken manhood into union with Himself! There is, therefore, no longer a great gulf fixed. On the contrary, here is a marvelous union! Godhead has entered into marriage bonds with manhood!

O my Soul, you do not stand, now, like a poor lone orphan wailing across the deep sea after your Father who has gone far away and cannot hear you! You do not now sob and sigh like an infant left naked and helpless, its Maker having gone too far away to regard its needs or listen to its cries! No, your Maker has become like *yourself*! Is that too strong a word to use? He without whom was not anything made that was made is that same Word who lived and walked among us and was made flesh—made flesh in such a way that He was tempted in all points like as we are—yet without sin. O Manhood, was there ever such news as this for you! Poor Manhood, you weak worm of the dust—far lower than the angels—lift up your head and be not afraid!

Poor Manhood, born in weakness, living in toil, covered with sweat, and dying at last to be eaten by the worms—be not abashed even in the presence of seraphs—for next to God is man, and not even an archangel can come in between! No, not next to *God*, there is scarcely that to be said, for Jesus who is God is Man also! Jesus Christ, eternally God, was born and lived and died as we also do! That is the first word of comfort to expel our fear.

The second point that takes away fear is that this Man who was also God was actually *born*. Observe the angel's word, "Unto you is *born*." Our Lord Jesus Christ is in some senses more man than Adam. Adam was not born—Adam never had to struggle through the risks and weaknesses of infancy. He knew not the littlenesses of childhood—he was full grown at once. Father Adam could not sympathize with me as a babe and a child. But how man-like is Jesus! He is cradled with us in the manger. He does not begin with us in mid-life, as Adam, but He accompanies us in the pains and feebleness and infirmities of infancy! And He continues with us even to the grave.

Beloved, this is such sweet comfort! He that is God this day was once an Infant! So that if my cares are little and even trivial and comparatively

infantile, I may go to Him, for He was once a Child. Though the great ones of the earth may sneer at the child of poverty, and say, "You are too mean, and your trouble is too slight for pity," I remember with humble joy that the King of Heaven did hang upon a woman's breast, and was wrapped in swaddling bands—and therefore I tell Him all my griefs. How wonderful that He should have been an Infant, and yet should be God over all, blessed forever! I am no longer afraid of God! This blessed link between me and God, the holy Child Jesus, has taken all fear away!

Observe, the angel told them somewhat of His office, as well as of His birth. "Unto you is born this day a *Savior*." The very object for which He was born and came into this world was that He might deliver us from sin. What, then, was it that made us afraid? Were we not afraid of God because we felt that we were lost through sin? Well then, here is joy upon joy! Here is not only the Lord come among us as a Man, but made Man *in order to save* man from that which separated him from God!

I feel as if I could burst out into a weeping for some here who have been spending their living riotously and gone far away from God their Father by their evil ways. I know they are afraid to come back. They think that the Lord will not receive them, that there is no mercy for such sinners as they have been. Oh, but think of it—Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost! He was born to save! If He does not save He was born in vain, for the object of His birth was salvation! If He shall not be a Savior, then the mission of God to earth has missed its end, for its design was that lost sinners might be saved.

Lost One, oh, lost One!—if there were news that an angel had come to save you there might be some cheer in it. But there are *better* tidings still! GOD has come! The Infinite, the Almighty, has stooped from the highest Heaven that He may pick *you* up, a poor undone and worthless worm! Is there not comfort here? Does not the Incarnate Savior take away the horrible dread which hangs over men like a black pall? Note that the angel did not forget to describe the person of this Savior—"A Savior which is Christ." There is His Manhood! As Man He was anointed! "The Lord." There is His Godhead.

Yes, this is the solid Truth of God upon which we plant our feet. Jesus of Nazareth is God! He who was conceived in the womb of the virgin and born in Bethlehem's manger is now, and always was God over all, blessed forever! There is no Gospel if He is not God. It is no news to me to tell me that a great Prophet is born. There have been great Prophets before. But the world has never been redeemed from evil by mere *testimony* to the truth, and never will be. Tell me that God is born, that God, Himself, has espoused our nature, and taken it into union with Himself! Then the bells of my heart ring merry peals, for now may I come to God since God has come to me!

You will observe, dear Friends, that the substance of what the angel said lay in this. "Unto *you*." You will never get true comfort from the incarnate Savior till you perceive your *personal* interest in him. Christ as Man was a *representative* man. There never were but two thoroughly representative men—the first is Adam—Adam obedient and the whole race stands. Adam disobedient and the whole race falls. "In Adam all die." Now,

the Man Jesus is the second great representative man. He does not represent the whole human race—He represents as many as His Father gave Him—He represents a chosen company.

Now, whatever Christ did, if you belong to those who are in Him He did for *you*. So that Christ circumcised or Christ crucified, Christ dead or Christ living, Christ buried or Christ risen, you are a partaker of all that He did and all that He is, for you are reckoned as one with Him. See then, the joy and comfort of the Incarnation of Christ! Does Jesus, as Man, take manhood up to Heaven? He has taken *me* up there! Father Adam fell, and I fell, for I was in him. The Lord Jesus Christ rises, and I rise if I am in Him. See, Beloved, when Jesus Christ was nailed to the Cross all His elect were nailed there, and they suffered and died in Him.

When He was put into the grave the whole of His people lay slumbering there in Him, for they were in the loins of Jesus as Levi was in the loins of Abraham. And when He rose they rose and received the foretaste of their own future resurrection! Because He lives they shall live also! And now that He has gone up on high to claim the throne, He has claimed the throne for every soul that is in Him. Oh, this is joy, indeed! Then how can I be afraid of God, for this day, by faith, I, a poor undeserving sinner, having put my trust in Jesus, am bold to say that I sit upon the throne of God? Think not that we have said too much, for in the Person of Christ every Believer is raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Because as Jesus is there representatively, we are each one of us there in Him.

I wish that I had power to bring out this precious doctrine of the Incarnation as I desire, but the more one muses upon it, the more happy one becomes. Let us view it as an all-important Truth of God that Jesus, the Son of God, has really come in the flesh. It is so important a Truth that we have three witnesses appointed to keep it before us upon earth. We have been insisting many times in this place upon the spirituality of Christian worship. We have shown that the outward in religion, by itself, avails nothing. It is the *inward* spirit that is the great thing.

I must confess that I have sometimes said in myself, I hope not rebelliously, "What is this Baptism for, and what is this Communion of the Lord's Supper for?" These two outward ordinances, whatever may be their excellent uses, have been the two things around which more errors have clustered than around anything else! And I have heard it said, by friends inclined to follow more fully the teachings of the Quakers, "Why not put aside the outward and visible altogether? Let it be the Spirit Baptism, and not the water. Let there be no bread and wine, but let there be fellowship with Christ without the outward sign."

I must confess, though I dare not go with it because I hope to be held fast by the plain testimony of *Scripture*, yet my heart has somewhat gone with the temptation and I have half said, "Men always will pervert these two ordinances. Would it not be as well to have done with them?" While I have been exercised upon the point, conscious that the ordinances must be right, and must be held, I have rested upon that text, "There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood." And what

do they bear witness to? They bear witness to the mission of Jesus as the Christ, in other words, to the real Incarnation of God.

They bear witness to the materialism of Christ. Have you ever noticed that when people have given up the two outward ordinances, they have usually betrayed a tendency to give up the literal fact that "God was made flesh"? The literal fact that Christ was really a Man has generally been doubted or thrown into the background when the two outward ordinances have been given up. I believe that these two symbolical ordinances, which are a link between the spiritual and the material, are set up on purpose to show that Christ Jesus, though most gloriously a Spirit, was also a Man clothed in a body of real flesh and blood like our own, so that He could be touched and handled even as He said, "Handle Me and see. A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have."

When I think of the Holy Spirit who bears witness that Christ was really a Man, I thank Him for that witness! Then I turn to the water, and when I read that Christ was publicly baptized in the Jordan, I perceive that He could not have been a phantom. He could not have been a mere spectral appearance, for He was *immersed in water*. He must have been a solid substantial Man! The preservation of the ordinance of Baptism is a witness to the reality of the Incarnate God. Then comes the blood. He could not have shed blood on Calvary if He had been a specter. There could have been no blood streaming down from His side when the spear pierced Him if He had been only a ghostly apparition. He must have been solid flesh and blood like ourselves—and as often as we come to His table, and we take the cup and hear it said—"This cup is the New Covenant in My blood"—there is a third witness on earth to the fact that Jesus did appear in very flesh and blood among men!

So the Spirit, the water, and the blood are the three standing testimonies in the church of God that Christ was God, and that He was also really, solidly, and substantially Man. I shall delight in the ordinances all the more because of this. Those two ordinances serve to make us remember that Christ was really flesh and blood, and that religion has something to do with this flesh and blood of ours. This very body is to rise again from the tomb! Jesus came to deliver this poor flesh from corruption! And so, while we must ever keep the spiritual uppermost, we are prevented from casting away the material body as though that were of the devil. Christ purified as well the realm of matter as the realm of spirit! And in both He reigns triumphant! There is much comfort here.

III. Lastly, we can only occupy a few seconds in APPLYING THE CURE TO VARIOUS CASES. Child of God, you say, "I dare not come to God today, I feel so weak." Fear not, for He that is born in Bethlehem said, "A bruised reed I will not break, and the smoking flax I will not quench." "I shall never get to Heaven," says another, "I shall never see God's face with acceptance. I am so tempted." "Fear not," for you have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, for He was tempted in all points like as you are." "But I am so lonely in the world," says another, "no man cares for me." There is one Man, at any rate, who does so care—a true Man like yourself. He is your Brother, still, and does not forget the lonely spirit.

But I hear a sinner say, "I am afraid to go to God this morning and confess that I am a sinner." Well, do not go to God but go to *Christ*. Surely you would not be afraid of *Him*. Think of God *in* Christ, not out of Christ. If you could but know Jesus you would go to Him at once! You would not be afraid to tell Him your sins, for you would know that He would say, "Go, and sin no more."

"I cannot pray," says one, "I am afraid to pray." What? Afraid to pray when it is a Man who listens to you! You might dread the face of God, but when you see God in human flesh, why be alarmed? Go, poor Sinner, go to Jesus. "I feel," says one, "unfit to come." You may be unfit to come to God, but you cannot be unfit to come to Jesus! There is a fitness necessary to stand in the holy hill of the Lord, but there is no fitness needed in coming to the Lord Jesus! Come as you are—guilty, and lost, and ruined! Come just as you are and He will receive you! "Oh," says another, "I cannot trust." I can understand your not being able to trust the great invisible God, but cannot you trust that dying, bleeding Son of Man who is also the Son of God?

"But I cannot hope," says another, "that He would even look on me." And yet He used to look on such as you are. He received publicans and sinners and ate with them! And even harlots were not driven from His Presence. Oh, since God has thus taken man into union with Himself be not afraid! If I speak to one who by reason of sin has wandered so far away from God that he is even afraid to *think* of God's name, yet inasmuch as Jesus Christ is called "the sinner's Friend," I pray you think of Him, poor Soul, as *your* Friend!

And, oh, may the Spirit of God open your blind eyes to see that there is no cause for your keeping away from God except your own mistaken thoughts of Him! May you believe that He is able and willing to save to the uttermost! May you understand His good and gracious Character, His readiness to pass by transgression, iniquity, and sin! And may the sweet influences of Divine Grace quicken you to come to Him this very morning! God grant that Jesus Christ, the hope of Glory, may be formed in you! And then you may well sing, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, and goodwill toward men." Amen.

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END VOLUME 12

JOY BORN AT BETHLEHEM

NO. 1026

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”
Luke 2:10, 11, 12.***

WE have no superstitious regard for times and seasons. Certainly we do not believe in the present ecclesiastical arrangement called Christmas—first, because we do not believe in the mass at all, but abhor it, whether it is said or sung in Latin or in English. And, secondly, because we find no Scriptural warrant whatever for observing any day as the birthday of the Savior. And, consequently, because not of Divine authority, its observance is a superstition. Superstition has fixed most positively the day of our Savior's birth although there is no possibility of discovering when it occurred. Fabricius gives a catalog of 136 different learned opinions upon the matter. And various divines invent weighty arguments for advocating a date in every month in the year.

It was not till the middle of the third century that any part of the Church celebrated the nativity of our Lord. And it was not till very long after the Western Church had set the example, that the Eastern adopted it. Because the day is not known, superstition has fixed it. While the day of the *death* of our Savior might be determined with much certainty, superstition shifts the date of its observance every year. What is the method in the madness of the superstitious? Probably the fact is that the holy days were arranged to fit in with heathen festivals. We venture to assert that if there is any day in the year of which we may be pretty sure that it was *not* the day on which the Savior was born, it is the twenty-fifth of December.

Nevertheless, since the current of men's thoughts is led this way just now, and I see no evil in the current itself, I shall launch the boat of our discourse upon that stream and make use of the fact, which I shall neither justify nor condemn, by endeavoring to lead your thoughts in the same direction. Since it is lawful, and even laudable, to meditate upon the Incarnation of the Lord upon any day in the year, it cannot be in the power of other men's superstitions to render such a meditation improper for today.

Regarding not the day, let us, nevertheless, give God thanks for the gift of His dear Son. In our text we have before us the sermon of the first Evangelist under the Gospel dispensation. The preacher was an angel, and it was meet it should be so, for the grandest and last of all evangels will be proclaimed by an angel when he shall sound the trumpet of the Resurrection and the children of the regeneration shall rise into the full-

ness of their joy. The keynote of this angelic Gospel is *joy*—"I bring you good tidings of great *joy*." Nature fears in the Presence of God—the shepherds were sore afraid. The Law itself served to deepen this natural feeling of dismay—seeing men were sinful, and the Law came into the world to reveal sin—its tendency was to make men fear and tremble under any and every Divine Revelation.

The Jews unanimously believed that if any man beheld supernatural appearances, he would be sure to die, so that what Nature dictated, the Law and the general beliefs of those under it also abetted. But the first word of the Gospel ended all this, for the angelic Evangelist said, "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings." Henceforth it is to be no dreadful thing for man to approach his Maker. Redeemed man is not to fear when God unveils the splendor of His majesty, since He appears no more a Judge upon His Throne of terror, but a Father, unbending in sacred familiarity before His own beloved children.

The joy which this first Gospel preacher spoke of was no mean one, for he said, "I bring you good tidings"—that alone was joy—and not good tidings of joy only, but "good tidings of *great* joy." Every word is emphatic, as if to show that the Gospel is, above all things, intended to promote, and will most abundantly create the greatest possible joy in the human heart wherever it is received. Man is like a harp unstrung, and the music of his soul's living strings is discordant—his whole nature wails with sorrow. But the Son of David, that mighty harper, has come to restore the harmony of humanity, and where His gracious fingers move among the strings, the touch of the fingers of an Incarnate God brings forth music sweet as that of the spheres, and melody rich as a seraph's canticle.

Would God that all men felt that Divine hand! In trying to open up this angelic discourse this morning, we shall note three things—*the joy which is spoken of*. Next, *the persons to whom this joy comes*. And then, thirdly, *the sign*, which is to us a sign as well as to these shepherds—a sign of the birth and source of joy.

I. First, then, THE JOY, which is mentioned in our text—from where comes it, and what is it? We have already said it is a "*great joy*"—"good tidings of great joy." Earth's joy is small, her mirth is trivial, but Heaven has sent us joy immeasurable, fit for immortal minds. Inasmuch as no note of time is appended, and no intimation is given that the message will ever be reversed, we may say that it is a *lasting* joy—a joy which will ring all down the ages—the echoes of which shall be heard until the trumpet brings the Resurrection.

Yes, and onward forever and forever. For when God sent forth the angel in his brightness to say, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people," He did as much as say, "From this time forth it shall be joy to the sons of men. There shall be peace to the human race, and goodwill towards men forever and forever, as long as there is glory to God in the highest." O blessed thought! The Star of Bethlehem shall never set. Jesus, the fairest among ten thousand, the most lovely among the beautiful, is a joy forever!

Since this joy is expressly associated with the Glory of God, by the Words, "Glory to God in the highest," we may be quite clear that it is a

pure and holy joy. No other would an angel have proclaimed, and, indeed, no other joy is joy. The wine pressed from the grapes of Sodom may sparkle and foam—but it is bitterness in the end—and the dregs thereof are death. Only that which comes from the clusters of Eshcol is the true wine of the kingdom, making glad the heart of God and man. Holy joy is the joy of Heaven, and that, you can be sure, is the very cream of joy. The joy of sin is a fire-fountain, having its source in the burning soil of Hell—maddening and consuming those who drink its firewater. Of such delights we desire not to drink.

It were to be worse than damned to be *happy* in sin, since it is the beginning of Divine Grace to be *wretched* in sin, and the consummation of Grace to be wholly escaped from sin—and to shudder even at the thought of it. It is Hell to live in sin and misery—it is a lower deep still when men could fashion a joy in sin. God save us from unholy peace and from unholy joy! The joy announced by the angel of the nativity is as pure as it is lasting, as holy as it is great. Let us, then, always believe concerning the Christian religion that it has its joy within itself, and holds its feasts within its own pure precincts—a feast whose viands all grow on holy ground.

There are those who, tomorrow, will pretend to exhibit joy in the remembrance of our Savior's birth, but they will not seek their pleasure in the Savior—they will need many additions to the feast before they can be satisfied. Joy in Immanuel would be a poor sort of mirth to them. In this country, too often, if one were unaware of the name, one might believe the Christmas festival to be a feast of Bacchus, or of Ceres—certainly not a commemoration of the Divine birth. Yet is there cause enough for holy joy in the Lord Himself, and reasons for ecstasy in His birth among men.

It is to be feared that most men imagine that in Christ there is only seriousness and solemnity, and consequently weariness, gloom, and discontent. They therefore look out of and beyond what Christ allows, to snatch from the tables of Satan the delicacies with which to adorn the banquet held in honor of a Savior. Let it not be so among you. The joy which the Gospel brings is not borrowed, but blooms in its own garden. We may truly say in the language of one of our sweetest hymns—

***“I need not go abroad for joy,
I have a feast at home,
My sighs are turned into songs,
My heart has ceased to roam.
Down from above the Blessed Dove
Has come into my breast,
To witness His eternal love,
And give my spirit rest.”***

Let our joy be living water from those sacred wells which the Lord Himself has dug. May His joy abide in us, that our joy may be full. Of Christ's joy we cannot have too much. No fear of running to excess when His love is the wine we drink. Oh to be plunged in this pure stream of spiritual delights! But why is it that the coming of Christ into the world is the occasion of joy? The answer is as follows—First, because *it is evermore a joyous fact that God should be in alliance with man*, especially when the alliance is so near that God should in very deed take our manhood into un-

ion with His Godhead—so that God and man should constitute one Divine, mysterious Person.

Sin had separated between God and man. But the Incarnation bridges the separation—it is a prelude to the atoning Sacrifice—but it is a prelude full of the richest hope. From now on, when God looks upon man He will remember that His own Son is a Man. From this day forth, when He beholds the sinner, if His wrath should burn, He will remember that His own Son, as Man, stood in the sinner's place, and bore the sinner's doom. As in the case of war, the feud is ended when the opposing parties intermarry—so there is no more war between God and man—because God has taken man into intimate union with Himself.

Here, then, there was cause for joy. But there was more than that, for the shepherds were aware that *there had been promises made of old* which had been the hope and comfort of Believers in all ages—and these *were now to be fulfilled*. There was that ancient promise made on the threshold of Eden to the first sinners of our race, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Another promise made to the father of the faithful, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed, and promises uttered by the mouths of Prophets and of saints since the world began.

Now, the announcement of the angel of the Lord to the shepherds was a declaration that the Covenant was fulfilled—that now in the fullness of time God would redeem His Word, and the Messiah, who was to be Israel's glory and the world's hope was now really come. Be glad you heavens, and be joyful O earth, for the Lord has done it, and in mercy has He visited His people! The Lord has not suffered His Word to fail, but has fulfilled unto His people His promises. The time to favor Zion, yes the set time, is come. Now that the scepter is departed from Judah, behold the Shiloh comes, the Messenger of the Covenant suddenly appears in His temple!

But the angel's song had in it yet fuller reason for joy. For our Lord, who was born in Bethlehem, came as a *Savior*. "Unto you is born this day a Savior." God had come to earth before, but not as a Savior. Remember that terrible coming when there went three angels into Sodom at nightfall, for the Lord said, "I will go now and see whether it is altogether according to the cry thereof." He had come as a spy to witness human sin, and as an Avenger to lift His hand to Heaven, and bid the red fire descend and burn up the accursed cities of the plain. Horror to the world when God thus descends!

If Sinai smokes when the Law is proclaimed, the earth itself shall melt when the breaches of the Law are punished. But now not as an angel of vengeance, but as a Man in mercy, God has come. Not to spy out our sin, but to remove it. Not to punish guilt, but to forgive it. The Lord might have come with thunderbolts in both His hands. He might have come like Elijah to call fire from Heaven. But no, His hands are full of gifts of love, and His Presence is the guarantee of Grace. The Babe born in the manger might have been another Prophet of tears, or another son of thunder, but He was not so—He came in gentleness, His Glory and His thunder alike laid aside—

***"Twas mercy filled the Throne,
And wrath stood silent by,***

***When Christ on the kind errand came
To sinners doomed to die.***

Rejoice, you who feel that you are lost. Your Savior comes to seek and save you! Be of good cheer you who are in prison, for He comes to set you free. You who are famished and ready to die, rejoice that He has consecrated for you a Bethlehem, a house of bread, and He has come to be the Bread of Life to your souls. Rejoice, O sinners everywhere, for the Restorer of the castaways, the Savior of the fallen is born! Join in the joy, you saints, for He is the Preserver of the saved ones, delivering them from innumerable perils, and He is the sure Perfecter of such as He preserves. Jesus is no partial Savior, beginning a work and not concluding it—no—restoring and upholding, He also perfects and presents the saved ones without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing before His Father's Throne. Rejoice aloud all you people, let your hills and valleys ring with joy, for a Savior who is mighty to save is born among you!

Nor was this all the holy mirth, for the next word has also in it a fullness of joy—"a Savior, which is *Christ*," or the Anointed. Our Lord was not an amateur Savior who came down from Heaven upon an unauthorized mission. He was chosen, ordained, and anointed of God. He could truly say, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me." Here is great comfort for all such as need a Savior. It is to them no mean consolation that God has Himself authorized Christ to save. There can be no fear of a jar between the Mediator and the Judge, no peril of a non-acceptance of our Savior's work. God has commissioned Christ to do what He has done, and in saving sinners He is only executing His Father's own will.

Christ is here called, "*the Anointed*." All His people are anointed, and there were priests after the order of Aaron who were anointed, but He is *the Anointed*, "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." So plenteously anointed that, like the unction upon Aaron's head, the sacred anointing of the Head of the Church distils in copious streams, till we who are like the skirts of His garments are made sweet with the rich perfume. He is "the Anointed" in a threefold sense—as Prophet to preach the Gospel with power. As Priest to offer sacrifice. As King to rule and reign. In each of these He is preeminent. He is such a Teacher, Priest, and Ruler as was never seen before. In Him was a rare conjunction of glorious offices, for never did prophet, priest, and king meet in one person before among the sons of men, nor shall it ever be so again.

Triple is the anointing of Him who is a Priest after the order of Melchisedec, a Prophet like unto Moses, and a King of whose dominion there is no end. In the name of Christ the Holy Spirit is glorified by being seen as anointing the Incarnate God. Truly, dear Brethren, if we did but understand all this and receive it into our hearts, our souls would leap for joy on this Sunday to think that there is born unto us a Savior who is anointed of the Lord. One more note, and this the loudest, let us sound it well and hear it well—"which is Christ *the Lord*." Now the word Lord, or *Kurios*, here used, is tantamount to Jehovah. We cannot doubt that, because it is the same word used twice in the ninth verse, and in the ninth verse none can question that it means Jehovah.

Hear it, “And, lo, the angel of the *Lord* came upon them, and the glory of the *Lord* shone round about them.” And if this is not enough, read the 23rd verse, “As it is written in the Law of the *Lord*, every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the *Lord*.” Now the word, *Lord*, here assuredly refers to Jehovah, the one God, and so it must there. Our Savior is Christ, God, Jehovah. No testimony to His Divinity could be more plain. It is indisputable. And what joy there is in this—for suppose an angel had been our Savior—he would not have been able to bear the load of my sin or yours.

Or if anything less than God had been set up as the ground of our salvation it might have been found too frail a foundation. But if He who undertakes to save is none other than the Infinite and the Almighty, then the load of our guilt can be carried upon such shoulders. The stupendous labor of our salvation can be achieved by such a Worker, and that with ease—for all things are possible with God—and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. You sons of men perceive here the subject of your joy! The God who made you, and against whom you have offended, has come down from Heaven and taken upon Himself your nature that He might save you!

He has come in the fullness of His Glory and the infinity of His mercy that He might redeem you. Do you not welcome this news? What? Will not your hearts be thankful for this? Does this matchless love awaken no gratitude? Were it not for this Divine Savior your life here would have been wretchedness, and your future existence would have been endless woe. Oh, I pray you adore the Incarnate God, and trust in Him! Then will you bless the *Lord* for delivering you from the wrath to come, and as you lay hold of Jesus and find salvation in His name you will tune your songs to His praise, and exult with sacred joy. So much concerning this joy.

II. Follow me while I briefly speak of THE PEOPLE to whom this joy comes. Observe how the angel begins, “Behold, I bring *you* good tidings of great joy, for *unto you* is born this day.” So, then, the joy began with the first who heard it, the shepherds. “*To you*,” says he, “for *unto you* is born.” Beloved Hearer, shall the joy begin with you today? It little avails you that Christ was born, or that Christ died, unless *unto you* a Child is born, and for *you* Jesus bled. A personal interest is the main point. “But I am poor,” says one. So were the shepherds. O you Poor, to you this mysterious child is born!

“The poor have the Gospel preached unto them.” “He shall judge the poor and needy, and break in pieces the oppressor.” But I am obscure and unknown,” says one. So were the watchers on the midnight plain. Who knew the men who endured hard toil and kept their flocks by night? But you, unknown of men, are known to God—shall it not be said, that, “*unto you* a Child is born”? The *Lord* regards not the greatness of men, but has respect unto the lowly. But you are illiterate you say, you cannot understand much. Be it so, but unto the shepherds Christ was born, and their simplicity did not hinder their receiving Him, but even helped them to it. Be it so with yourself—receive gladly the simple Truth as it is in Jesus. The *Lord* has exalted one chosen out of the people. No aristocratic Christ

have I to preach to you, but the Savior of the people, the Friend of publicans and sinners!

Jesus is the true “poor men’s Friend.” He is “a Covenant for the people,” given to be “a Leader and Commander to the people.” To you is Jesus given. O that each heart might truly say, to me is Jesus born! For if I truly believe in Jesus, unto me Christ is born, and I may be as sure of it as if an angel announced it, since the Scripture tells me that if I believe in Jesus He is mine. After the angel had said “to you,” he went on to say, “it shall be *to all people*.” But our translation is not accurate. The Greek is, “it shall be to all *the* people.” This refers most assuredly to the Jewish nation. There can be no question about that. If anyone looks at the original, he will not find so large and wide an expression as that given by our translators. It should be rendered “to all *the* people.”

And here let us speak a word for the Jews. How long and how sinfully has the Christian Church despised the most honorable among the nations! How barbarously has Israel been handled by the so-called Church! I felt my spirit burn indignantly within me in Rome when I stood in the Jew’s quarter and heard of the cruel indignities which Popery has heaped upon the Jews even until recently. At this hour there stands in the Jew’s quarter a Church built right in front of the entrance to it, and into this the unhappy Jews were driven forcibly on certain occasions. To this Church they were compelled to subscribe—subscribe, mark you, as worshippers of the one invisible God, to the support of a system which is as leprous with idolatry as were the Canaanites whom the Lord abhorred.

Paganism is not more degrading than Romanism. Over the door of this Church is placed, in their own tongue in the Hebrew, these words—“All day long have I stretched out My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying generation.” How, by such an insult as that, could they hope to convert the Jew? The Jew saw everywhere idols which his soul abhorred and he loathed the name of Christ, because he associated it with idol worship, and I do not wonder that he did. I praise the Jew that he could not give up his own simple theism, and the worship of the true God, for such a base, degrading superstition as that which Rome presented to him!

Instead of thinking it a wonder of unbelief that the Jew is not a Christian, I honor him for his faith and his courageous resistance of a fascinating heathenism. If Romanism is Christianity I am not, neither could I be, a Christian! It were a more manly thing to be a simple Believer in one God, or even an honest doubter upon all religion, than worship such crowds of gods and goddesses as Popery has set up, and to bow, as she does, before rotten bones and dead men’s winding sheets. Let the true Christian Church think lovingly of the Jew, and with respectful earnestness tell him the true Gospel. Let her sweep away superstition, and set before him the one gracious God in the Trinity of His Divine Unity.

And the day shall yet come when the Jews, who were the first Apostles to the Gentiles, the first missionaries to us who were afar off, shall be gathered in again. Until that shall be, the fullness of the Church’s Glory can never come. Matchless benefits to the world are bound up with the restoration of Israel. Their gathering in shall be as life from the dead. Jesus the Savior is the joy of all nations, but let not the chosen race be de-

nied their peculiar share of whatever promise Holy Writ has recorded with a special view to them.

The woes which their sins brought upon them have fallen thick and heavily. And even so let the richest blessings distil upon them. Although our translation is not literally correct, it, nevertheless, expresses a great Truth, taught plainly in the context. And, therefore, we will advance another step. The coming of Christ is a joy to *all people*. It is so, for the fourteenth verse says—"On earth peace," which is a wide and even unlimited expression. It adds, "Good will towards"—not Jews, but "men"—all men. The word is the generic name of the entire race, and there is no doubt that the coming of Christ does bring joy to all sorts of people. It brings a measure of joy even to those who are not Christians.

Christ does not bless them in the highest and true sense, but the influence of His teaching imparts benefits of an inferior sort, such as they are capable of receiving. For wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, it is no small blessing to all the population. Note this fact—there is no land beneath the sun where there is an open Bible and a preached Gospel—where a tyrant long can hold his place. It matters not who he is, whether pope or king. Let the pulpit be used properly for the preaching of Christ crucified—let the Bible be opened to be read by all men—and no tyrant can long rule in peace.

England owes her freedom to the Bible. And France will never possess liberty, lasting and well-established, till she comes to reverence the Gospel which too long she has rejected. There is joy to all mankind where Christ comes. The religion of Jesus makes men think, and to make men think is always dangerous to a despot's power. The religion of Jesus Christ sets a man free from superstition. When he believes in Jesus, what cares he for Papal excommunications, or whether priests give or withhold their absolution? The man no longer cringes and bows down. He is no more willing, like a beast, to be led by the nose—but, learning to think for himself and becoming a man he disdains the childish fears which once held him in slavery.

Therefore, where Jesus comes, even if men do not receive Him as the Savior, and so miss the fullest joy, yet they get a measure of benefit. And I pray God that everywhere His Gospel may be so proclaimed, and that so many may be actuated by the spirit of it that it may be better for all mankind. If men receive Christ there will be no more oppression—the true Christian does to others as he would that they should do to him—and there is no more contention of classes, nor grinding of the faces of the poor. Slavery must go down where Christianity rules, and mark you, if Romanism is once destroyed, and pure Christianity shall govern all nations, war itself must come to an end. For if there is anything which this Book denounces and counts the greatest of all crimes, it is the crime of war.

Put up your sword into your sheath, for has not He said, "You shall not kill," and He meant not that it was a sin to kill one but a glory to kill a million—He meant that bloodshed on the smallest or largest scale was sinful. Let Christ govern, and men shall break the bow and cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot in the fire. It is joy to all nations that

Christ is born, the Prince of Peace, the King who rules in righteousness. But, Beloved, the greatest joy is to those who know Christ *as a Savior*. Here the song rises to a higher and more sublime note. Unto us, indeed, a Child is born, if we can say that He is our “Savior who is Christ the Lord.”

Let me ask each of you a few personal questions. Are your sins forgiven you for His name’s sake? Is the head of the serpent bruised in your soul? Does the Seed of the woman reign in sanctifying power over your nature? Oh, then, you have the joy that is to all the people in the true form of it! And, dear Brothers and Sisters, the further you submit yourself to Christ the Lord—the more completely you know Him, and are like He—the fuller will your happiness become! Surface joy is to those who live where the Savior is preached. But the great deeps, the great fathomless deeps of solemn joy which glisten and sparkle with delight are for such as *know* the Savior, *obey* the Anointed One, and have *communion* with the Lord Himself.

He is the most joyful man who is the most Christly man. I wish that some Christians were more truly Christians—they are Christians and something else. It were much better if they were altogether Christians. Perhaps you know the legend, or perhaps true history of the awakening of St. Augustine. He dreamed that he died and went to the gates of Heaven, and the keeper of the gates said to him, “Who are you?” And he answered, “*Christianus sum*,” I am a Christian. But the porter replied, “No, you are not a Christian, you are a Ciceronian, for your thoughts and studies were most of all directed to the works of Cicero and the classics, and you neglected the teaching of Jesus. We judge men here by that which most engrossed their thoughts, and you are judged not to be a Christian but a Ciceronian.”

When Augustine awoke, he put aside the classics which he had studied, and the eloquence at which he had aimed, and he said, “I will be a Christian and a theologian.” And from that time he devoted his thoughts to the Word of God, and his pen and his tongue to the instruction of others in the Truths of God. Oh I would not have it said of any of you, “Well, he may be somewhat a Christian, but he is far more a keen money-getting tradesman.” I would not have it said, “Well, he may be a Believer in Christ, but he is a good deal more a politician.”

“Perhaps he is a Christian, but he is most at home when he is talking about science, farming, engineering, horses, mining, navigation, or pleasure-taking.” No, no, you will never know the fullness of the joy which Jesus brings to the soul unless, under the power of the Holy Spirit, you take the Lord your Master to be your All in All, and make Him the fountain of your delight. “He is my Savior, my Christ, my Lord”—be this your loudest boast. Then will you know the joy which the angel’s song predicts for men.

III. But I must pass on. The last thing in the text is The SIGN. The shepherds did not ask for a sign, but one was graciously given. Sometimes it is sinful for us to require, as an evidence, what God’s tenderness may nevertheless see fit to give as an aid to faith. Willful unbelief shall have no sign, but weak faith shall have compassionate aid. The sign that the joy of the world had come was this—they were to go to the manger to find the Christ in it, and HE was to be the sign. Every circumstance is therefore

instructive. The Babe was found “wrapped in swaddling clothes.” Now, observe, as you look at this Infant, that there is not the remotest appearance of *temporal power* here. Mark the two little puny arms of a little babe that must be carried if it goes.

Alas, the nations of the earth look for joy in *military* power. By what means can we make a nation of soldiers? The Prussian method is admirable. We must have thousands upon thousands of armed men and big cannon and ironclad vessels to kill and destroy by wholesale. Is it not a nation’s pride to be gigantic in arms? What pride flushes the patriot’s cheek when he remembers that his nation can murder faster than any other people! Ah, foolish generation, you are groping in the flames of Hell to find your Heaven, raking amid blood and bones for the foul thing which you call Glory. A nation’s joy can never lie in the misery of others. Killing is not the path to prosperity—huge armaments are a curse to the nation, itself, as well as to its neighbors.

The joy of a nation is a golden sand over which no stream of blood has ever rippled. It is only found in that river which the streams make glad the city of God. The weakness of submissive gentleness is true power. Jesus founds His eternal empire not on force but on love. Here, O you people, see your hope! The mild pacific Prince, whose Glory is His self-sacrifice, is our true Benefactor. But look again, and you shall observe *no pomp* to dazzle you. Is the Child wrapped in purple and fine linen? Ah, no. Sleeps He in a cradle of gold? The manger alone is His shelter. No crown is upon the Babe’s head—neither does a coronet surround the mother’s brow. A simple maiden of Galilee, and a little Child in ordinary swaddling bands, it is all you see—

**“Bask not in courtly bower,
Or sun bright hall of power,
Pass Babel quick, and seek the holy land.
From robes of Tyrian dye,
Turn with undazzled eye
To Bethlehem’s glade, and by the manger stand.”**

Alas, the nations are dazzled with a vain show. The pomp of empires, the pageants of kings are their delight. How can they admire those gaudy courts in which too often glorious apparel, decorations, and rank stand in the place of virtue, chastity, and the Truth of God? When will the people cease to be children? Must they forever crave for martial music which stimulates violence, and delight in a lavish expenditure which burdens them with taxation? These make not a nation great or joyous. Bah! How has the bubble burst across yonder narrow sea. A bubble empire has collapsed. Ten thousand bayonets and millions of gold proved but a sandy foundation for a Babel throne. Vain are the men who look for joy in pomp. It lies in truth and righteousness, in peace and salvation, of which yonder new-born Prince in the garments of a peasant child is the true symbol.

Neither was there *wealth* to be seen at Bethlehem. Here in this quiet island, the bulk of men are comfortably seeking to acquire their thousands by commerce and manufactures. We are the sensible people who follow the main chance, and are not to be deluded by ideas of Glory. We are making all the money we can, and wondering that other nations waste so much in war. The main prop and pillar of England’s joy is to be found, as

some tell us, in the Three per Cents, in the possession of colonies, in the progress of machinery, in steadily increasing our capital. Is not Mammon a smiling deity?

But, here, in the cradle of the world's hope at Bethlehem, I see far more of poverty than wealth. I perceive no glitter of gold, or spangle of silver. I perceive only a poor Babe, so poor, so very poor, that He is laid in a manger. And His mother is a carpenter's wife, a woman who wears neither silk nor gem. Not in your gold, O Britons, will ever lie your joy, but in the Gospel enjoyed by all classes! The Gospel freely preached and joyfully received! Jesus, by raising us to spiritual wealth, redeems us from the chains of Mammon, and in that liberty gives us joy.

And here, too, I see *no superstition*. I know the artist paints angels in the skies, and surrounds the scene with a mysterious light, of which tradition's tongue of falsehood has said that it made midnight as bright as noon. This is merely fiction. There was nothing more there than the stable, the straw the oxen ate, and perhaps the beasts themselves, and the Child in the most plain, simplest manner, wrapped as other children are. The cherubs were invisible and of haloes there were none. Around this birth of joy was no sign of superstition—that demon dared not intrude its tricks and posturing into the sublime spectacle—it would have been, there, as much out of place as a harlequin in the holy of holies.

A simple Gospel, a plain Gospel, as plain as that Babe wrapped in the most common garments, is this day the only hope for men! Be you wise and believe in Jesus, and abhor all the lies of Rome, and inventions of those who ape her detestable abominations. Nor does the joy of the world lie in *philosophy*. You could not have made a schoolmen's puzzle of Bethlehem if you had tried to do so. It was just a Child in the manger and a Jewish woman looking on and nursing it, and a carpenter standing by. There was no metaphysical difficulty there, of which men could say, "A doctor of divinity is needed to explain it, and an assembly of divines must expound it."

It is true the wise men came there, but it was only to adore and offer gifts—would that all the wise had been as wise as they. Alas, human subtlety has disputed over the manger, and logic has darkened counsel with its words. But this is one of man's many inventions—God's work was sublimely simple. Here was, "The Word made flesh," to dwell among us, a mystery for faith, but not a football for argument. Mysterious, yet the greatest simplicity that was ever spoken to human ears, and seen by mortal eyes. And such is the Gospel, in the preaching of which our Apostle said, "we use great plainness of speech."

Away, away, away with your learned sermons, and your fine talk, and your pretentious philosophies. These never created a jot of happiness in this world. Fine spun theories are fair to gaze on, and to bewilder fools, but they are of no use to practical men! They comfort not the sons of toil, nor cheer the daughters of sorrow. The man of common sense who feels the daily rub and tear of this poor world needs richer consolation than your novel theologies, or neologies, can give him. In a simple Christ—and in a simple faith in that Christ—there is a peace deep and lasting. In a plain, poor man's Gospel, there is a joy and a bliss unspeakable, of which

thousands can speak, and speak with confidence, too, for they declare what they know, and testify what they have seen.

I say, then, to you who would know the only true peace and lasting joy, come you to the Babe of Bethlehem—in after days the Man of Sorrows—the substitutionary Sacrifice for sinners. Come, you little children, you boys and girls, come! For He also was a boy. “The holy Child Jesus” is the children’s Savior, and says still, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not. Come here, you maidens, you who are still in the morning of your beauty, and, like Mary, rejoice in God your Savior! The virgin bore Him on her bosom, so come you and bear Him in your hearts, saying, “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.”

And you, you men in the plenitude of your strength, remember how Joseph cared for Him, and watched with reverent solicitude His tender years. Be you to His cause as a Father and a helper. Sanctify your strength to His service. And you women advanced in years, you matrons and widows, come like Anna and bless the Lord that you have seen the salvation of Israel. And you gray heads, who like Simeon are ready to depart, come and take the Savior in your arms, adoring Him as your Savior and your All. You shepherds, you simple hearted, you who toil for your daily bread, come and adore the Savior. And stand not back you wise men, you who know by experience and who by meditation peer into deep Truth—come, and like the sages of the East bow low before His Presence—and make it your honor to pay honor to Christ the Lord.

For my own part, the Incarnate God is all my hope and trust. I have seen the world’s religion at the fountain head, and my heart has sickened within me. I come back to preach, by God’s help, yet more earnestly the Gospel, the simple Gospel of the Son of Man. Jesus, Master, I take You to be mine forever! May all in this house, through the rich Grace of God, be led to do the same, and may they all be Yours, great Son of God, in the day of Your appearing, for Your love’s sake. Amen.

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THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CAROL

NO. 168

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 20, 1857
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.”
Luke 2:14.***

IT is superstitious to worship angels—it is but proper to love them. Although it would be a high sin and an act of misdemeanor against the Sovereign Court of Heaven to pay the slightest adoration to the mightiest angel, yet it would be unkind and unseemly if we did not give to holy angels a place in our heart’s warmest love. In fact, he that contemplates the character of angels and marks their many deeds of sympathy with men and kindness towards them, cannot resist the impulse of his nature—the impulse of love towards them.

The one incident in angelic history to which our text refers is enough to weld our hearts to them forever. How free from envy the angels were! Christ did not come from Heaven to save their compeers when they fell. When Satan, the mighty angel, dragged with him a third part of the stars of Heaven, Christ did not stoop from His throne to die for them. But He left them to be reserved in chains and darkness until the last great day. Yet angels did not envy men. Though they remembered that He took not up angels, yet they did not murmur when He took up the seed of Abraham. And though the blessed Master had never condescended to take the angel’s form, they did not think it beneath them to express their joy when they found Him arrayed in the body of an infant.

How free, too, they were from pride! They were not ashamed to come and tell the news to humble shepherds. Methinks they had as much joy in pouring out their songs that night before the shepherds, who were watching with their flocks, as they would have had if they had been commanded by their Master to sing their hymn in the halls of Caesar. Mere men—men possessed with pride, think it a fine thing to preach before kings and princes. They think it great condescension now and then to have to minister to the humble crowd. Not so the angels. They stretched their willing wings and gladly sped from their bright seats above to tell the shepherds on the plain by night the marvelous story of an Incarnate God. Mark how well they told the story and surely you will love them!

Not with the stammering tongue of him that tells a tale in which he has no interest. Nor even with the feigned interest of a man that would move

the passions of others, when he feels no emotion himself. But with joy and gladness, such as angels only can know. They *sang* the story out, for they could not stay to tell it in heavy prose. They sang, “Glory to God on high and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Methinks they sang it with gladness in their eyes—with their hearts burning with love and with breasts as full of joy as if the good news to man had been good news to themselves. And, verily, it was good news to them, for the heart of sympathy makes good news to others good news to itself.

Do you not love the angels? You will not bow before them and there you are right. But will you not love them? Does it not make one part of your anticipation of Heaven, that in Heaven you shall dwell with the holy angels, as well as with the spirits of the just made perfect? Oh, how sweet to think that these holy and lovely beings are our guardians every hour! They keep watch and ward about us, both in the burning noontide and in the darkness of the night. They keep us in all our ways. They bear us up in their hands, lest at any time we dash our feet against stones. They unceasingly minister unto us who are the heirs of salvation. Both by day and night they are our watchers and our guardians, for know you not, that “the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him”?

Let us turn aside, having just thought of angels for a moment, to think of this song, rather than of the angels themselves. Their song was brief, but as Kitto excellently remarks, it was “well worthy of angels expressing the greatest and most blessed truths, in words so few, that they become to an acute apprehension almost oppressive by the pregnant fullness of their meaning.”—“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.” We shall, hoping to be assisted by the Holy Spirit, look at these words of the angels in a fourfold manner. I shall just suggest some *instructive thoughts* arising from these words, then some *emotional thoughts*. Then a few *prophetic thoughts*. And afterwards, one or two *perceptive thoughts*.

I. First then, in the words of our text. There are many INSTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS. The angels sang something which men could understand—something which men *ought* to understand—something which will make men much better if they *will* understand it. The angels were singing about Jesus who was born in the manger. We must look upon their song as being built upon this foundation. They sang of Christ and the salvation which He came into this world to work out. And what they said of this salvation was this—they said first, that it gave glory to God. Secondly that it gave peace to man. And thirdly, that it was a token of God’s good will towards the human race.

1. *Firs, they said that this salvation gave glory to God.* They had been present on many august occasions and they had joined in many a solemn

chorus to the praise of their Almighty Creator. They were present at the creation: “The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” They had seen many a planet fashioned between the palms of Jehovah and wheeled by His eternal hands through the infinitude of space. They had sung solemn songs over many a world which the Great One had created. We doubt not, they had often chanted, “Blessing and honor and glory and majesty and power and dominion and might be unto Him that sits on the Throne,” manifesting Himself in the work of creation. I doubt not, too, that their songs had gathered force through ages. As when first created, their first breath was song, so when they saw God create new worlds then their song received another note. They rose a little higher in the gamut of adoration.

But this time, when they saw God stoop from His throne and become a Babe, hanging upon a woman’s breast, they lifted their notes higher still—and reaching to the uttermost stretch of angelic music—they gained the highest notes of the Divine scale of praise and they sung, “Glory to God in the highest,” for higher in goodness they felt God could not go. Thus their highest praise they gave to Him in the highest act of His godhead. If it is true that there is a hierarchy of angels, rising tier upon tier in magnificence and dignity—if the Apostle teaches us that there are “angels and principalities and powers and thrones and dominions,” among these blessed inhabitants of the upper world—I can suppose that when the intelligence was first communicated to those angels that are to be found upon the outskirts of the heavenly world, when they looked down from Heaven and saw the newborn Babe, they sent the news backward to the place from where the miracle first proceeded, singing—

***“Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your downward flight to earth,
You who sing creation’s story,
Now proclaim Messiah’s birth.
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.”***

And as the message ran from rank to rank, at last the presence angels, those four cherubim that perpetually watch around the throne of God—those wheels with eyes—took up the strain and gathering up the song of all the inferior grades of angels, surmounted the Divine pinnacle of harmony with their own solemn chant of adoration upon which the entire host shouted, “The highest angels praise You”—“Glory to God in the highest.” Yes, there is no mortal that can ever dream how magnificent was that song. Then, note, if angels shouted before and when the world was made, their hallelujahs were more full, more strong, more magnificent—if not more hearty—when they saw Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary to be man’s redeemer—“Glory to God in the highest.”

What is the instructive lesson to be learned from this first syllable of the angels' song? Why this—that salvation is God's highest glory. He is glorified in every dew drop that twinkles in the morning sun. He is magnified in every wood flower that blossoms in the copse, although it lives to blush unseen and wave its sweetness in the forest air. God is glorified in every bird that warbles on the spray—in every lamb that skips the mead. Do not the fishes in the sea praise Him? From the tiny minnow to the huge leviathan, do not all creatures that swim the waters bless and praise His name? Do not all created things extol Him? Is there anything beneath the sky—save *man*—that does not glorify God?

Do not the stars exalt Him when they write His name upon the azure of Heaven in their golden letters? Does not the lightning adore Him when it flashes its brightness in arrows of light piercing the midnight darkness? Do not thunders extol Him when they roll like drums in the march of the God of armies? Do not all things exalt Him, from the least even to the greatest? But sing, sing, oh universe, till you have exhausted yourself—you can not afford a song so sweet as the song of Incarnation. Though creation may be a majestic organ of praise it cannot reach the compass of the golden canticle—Incarnation! There is more in that than in creation, more melody in Jesus in the manger than there is in worlds on worlds rolling their grandeur round the Throne of the Most High.

Pause, Christian, and consider this a minute. See how every attribute is here magnified. Lo, what *wisdom* is here. God becomes man that God may be Just and the Justifier of the ungodly. Lo, what *power*, for where is power so great as when it conceals power? What power, that Godhead should unrobe itself and become Man! Behold, what *love* is thus revealed to us when Jesus becomes a Man. Behold, what *faithfulness*! How many promises are this day kept? How many solemn obligations are this hour discharged? Tell me one attribute of God that is not manifest in Jesus and your ignorance shall be the reason why you have not seen it so. The whole of God is glorified in Christ. And though some part of the name of God is written in the universe, it is here best read—in Him who was the Son of Man and, yet, the Son of God.

But let me say one word here before I go away from this point. We must learn from this, that if salvation glorifies God, glorifies Him in the highest degree and makes the highest creatures praise Him, this one reflection may be added—that doctrine which glorifies *man* in salvation *cannot* be the Gospel. For salvation glorifies *God*. The angels were no Arminians—they sang, “Glory to God in the highest.” They believe in no doctrine which uncrowns Christ and puts the crown upon the head of mortals. They believe in no system of faith which makes salvation dependent upon the creature and which really gives the creature the praise. For what is it less

than for a man to save himself, if the whole dependence of salvation rests upon his own free will? No, my Brethren. There may be some preachers that delight to preach a doctrine that magnifies man. But in their Gospel angels have no delight. The only glad tidings that made the angels sing are those that put God first, God last, God midst and God without end—in the salvation of His creatures—and put the crown wholly and alone upon the head of Him that saves without a helper. “Glory to God in the highest,” is the angels’ song.

2. When they had sung this, they sang what they had never sung before. “Glory to God in the highest,” was an old, old song. They had sung that from before the foundations of the world. But, now, they sang as it were a new song before the Throne of God—for they added this stanza—“*on earth, peace.*” They did not sing that in the garden. There *was* peace there, it seemed a thing of course and scarce worth singing of. There was more than peace there. For there was glory to God there. But now man had fallen—and since the day when cherubim with fiery swords drove out the man there had been no peace on earth, save in the breast of some believers, who had obtained peace from the living fountain of this incarnation of Christ. Wars had raged from the ends of the world. Men had slaughtered one another, heaps on heaps. There had been wars within as well as wars without. Conscience had fought with man—Satan had tormented man with thoughts of sin.

There had been no peace on earth since Adam fell. But, now, when the newborn King made His appearance, the swaddling band with which He was wrapped up was the white flag of peace. That manger was the place where the treaty was signed, whereby warfare should be stopped between man’s conscience and himself, man’s conscience and his God. It was then, that day, the trumpet blew—“Sheathe the sword, oh man, sheathe the sword, oh conscience, for God is now at peace with man and man at peace with God.” Do you not feel, my Brethren, that the Gospel of God is peace to man? Where else can peace be found but in the message of Jesus? Go legalist, work for peace with toil and pain and you shall never find it. Go, you that trust in the Law—go to Sinai.

Look to the flames that Moses saw and shrink and tremble and despair—for peace is nowhere to be found, but in Him, of whom it is said, “This man shall be Peace.” And what a Peace it is, Beloved! It is peace like a river and righteousness like the waves of the sea. It is the peace of God that passes all understanding, which keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. This sacred peace between the pardoned soul and God the Pardoner. This marvelous connection between the sinner and His Judge—this was it that the angels sung when they said, “peace on earth.”

3. And then they wisely ended their song with a third note. They said, “Good will to man.” Philosophers have said that God has a good will toward man. But I never knew any man who derived much comfort from their philosophical assertion. Wise men have thought from what we have seen in creation that God had much good will toward man—or else His works would never have been so constructed for *their* comfort. But I never heard of any man who could risk his soul’s peace upon such a faint hope as that. But I have not only heard of thousands, but I know them who are quite sure that God has a good will towards men. And if you ask their reason, they will give a full and perfect answer. They say, He has good will toward man for He gave His Son. No greater proof of kindness between the Creator and His subjects possibly can be afforded than when the Creator gives His only begotten and well beloved Son to die.

Though the first note is God-like and though the second note is peaceful, this third note melts my heart the most. Some think of God as if He were a morose Being who hated all mankind. Some picture Him as if He were some abstract subsistence taking no interest in our affairs. Hark, God has “good will toward men.” You know what good will means? Well all that it means and more, God has to you, you sons and daughters of Adam. Swearer, you have cursed God. He has not fulfilled His curse on you. He has good will towards you, though you have no good will towards Him. Infidel, you have sinned high and hard against the Most High. He has said no hard things against you, for He has good will towards men. Poor sinner, you have broken His Laws. You are half afraid to come to the throne of His mercy lest He should spurn you—hear this and be comforted—God has good will towards men, so good a will that He has said and said it with an oath, too, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.”

So good a will moreover that He has even condescended to say, “Come, now, let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” And if you say, “Lord, how shall I know that You have this good will towards me,” He points to yonder manger and says, “Sinner, if I had not a good will towards you, would I have parted with My Son? If I had not good will towards the human race, would I have given up My Son to become one of that race that He might by so doing redeem them from death?” You that doubt the Master’s love, look to that circle of angels. See their blaze of glory—hear their song and let your doubts die away in that sweet music and be buried in a shroud of harmony.

He has good will to men. He is willing to pardon. He passes by iniquity, transgression and sin. And mark you, if Satan shall then add, “But

though God has good will, yet He cannot violate His justice, therefore His mercy may be ineffective and you may die”—then listen to that first note of the song, “Glory to God in the highest,” and reply to Satan and all his temptations, that when God shows good will to a penitent sinner, there is not only peace in the sinner’s heart, but it brings glory to every attribute of God and so He can be just and yet justify the sinner and glorify Himself!

I do not pretend to say that I have opened all the instructions contained in these three sentences, but I may perhaps direct you into a train of thought that may serve you for the week. I hope that all through the week you will have a truly merry Christmas by feeling the power of these words and knowing the unction of them. “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

II. Next, I have to present to you some EMOTIONAL THOUGHTS. Friends, does not this verse, this song of angels, stir your heart with happiness? When I read that and found the angels singing it, I thought to myself, “Then if the angels ushered in the Gospel’s great Head with singing, ought I not to preach with singing? And ought not my Hearers to live with singing? Ought not their hearts to be glad and their spirits to rejoice?” Well, I thought, there are some somber religionists who were born in a dark night in December that think a smile upon the face is wicked and believe that for a Christian to be glad and rejoice is to be inconsistent. Ah, I wish these gentlemen had seen the angels when they sang about Christ! For if angels sang about His birth, though it was no concern of theirs, certainly men ought to sing about it as long as they live—sing about it when they die and sing about it when they live in Heaven forever! I do long to see in the midst of the Church more of a singing Christianity. The last few years have been breeding in our midst a groaning and unbelieving Christianity. Now, I doubt not its sincerity, but I do doubt its healthy character. I say it may be true and real enough. God forbid I should say a word against the sincerity of those who practice it but it is a sickly religion.

Watts hit the mark when he said—

***“Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less.”***

It is designed to do away with some of our pleasures—but it gives us many more—to make up for what it takes away. It does not make them less. O you that see in Christ nothing but a subject to stimulate your doubts and make the tears run down your cheeks—O you that always say—

***“Lord, what a wretched land is this,
That yields us no supplies,”***

come here and see the angels! Do they tell their story with groans and sobs and sighs? Ah, no. They shout aloud, “Glory to God in the highest.” Now, imitate them my dear Brethren. If you are professors of religion, try always to have a cheerful carriage. Let others mourn. But—

**“Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?”**

Anoint your head and wash your face—appear not unto men to fast. Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say unto you rejoice. Specially this week be not ashamed to be glad. You need not think it a wicked thing to be happy. Penance and whipping and misery are no such very virtuous things, after all. The damned are miserable. Let the saved be happy. Why should you hold fellowship with the lost by feelings of perpetual mourning? Why not rather anticipate the joys of Heaven and begin to sing on earth that song which you will never need to end? The first emotion, then, that we ought to cherish in our hearts is the emotion of *joy and gladness*.

Well, what next? Another emotion is that of *confidence*. I am not sure that I am right in calling that an *emotion*, but still in me it is so much akin to it that I will venture to be wrong if I am so. Now, if when Christ came on this earth God had sent some black creature down from Heaven, (if there are such creatures there), to tell us, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.” And if with a frowning brow and a stammering tongue he delivered his message—if I had been there and heard it—I should have hesitated to believe him. I should have said, “You don’t look like the messenger that God would send—stammering fellow as you are—with such glad news as this.”

But when the angels came there was no doubting the truth of what they said, because it was quite certain that the angels believed it. They told it as if they did, for they told it with singing, with joy and gladness. If some friend, having heard that a legacy was left you and should come to you with a solemn countenance and a tongue like a funeral bell, saying, “Do you know So-and-So has left you £10,000?” Why, you would say, “Ah, I dare say,” and laugh in his face. But if your brother should suddenly burst into your room and exclaim, “I say, what do you think? You are a rich man, So-and-So has left you £10,000!” Why you would say, “I think it is very likely to be true, for he looks so happy over it.”

Well, when these angels came from Heaven they told the news just as if they believed it. And though I have often wickedly doubted my Lord’s good will, I think I never could have doubted it while I heard those angels singing. No, I should say, “The messengers themselves are proof of the truth, for it seems they have heard it from God’s lips. They have no doubt about it, for see how joyously they tell the news?” Now, poor Soul, you

that are afraid lest God should destroy you and you think that God will never have mercy upon you—look at the singing angels and doubt if you dare. Do not go to the synagogue of long-faced hypocrites to hear the minister who preaches with a nasal twang, with misery in his face, while he tells you that God has good will towards men.

I know you won't believe what he says, for he does not preach with joy in his countenance. He is telling you good news with a grunt and you are not likely to receive it. But go straightway to the plain where Bethlehem shepherds sat by night and when you hear the angels singing out the Gospel, by the grace of God upon you, you cannot help believing that they manifestly feel the preciousness of telling. Blessed Christmas that brings such creatures as angels to confirm our faith in God's good will to men!

III. I must now bring before you the third point. There are some PROPHETIC UTTERANCES contained in these words. The angels sang "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." But I look around and what do I see in the whole wide world? I do not see God honored. I see the heathen bowing down before their idols. I mark the Romanist casting himself before the rotten rags of his relics and the ugly figures of his images. I look about me and I see tyranny lording it over the bodies and souls of men. I see God forgotten. I see a worldly race pursuing mammon. I see a bloody race pursuing Moloch. I see ambition riding like Nimrod over the land, God forgotten, His name dishonored. And was *this* what the angels sang about? Is this what made them sing "Glory to God in the highest?" Ah, no. There are brighter days approaching. They sang "Peace on earth."

But I hear still the clarion of war. And the cannon's horrid roar—not yet have they turned the sword into a plowshare and the spear into a pruning hook! War still reigns. Is this all that the angels sang about? And while I see wars to the ends of the earth, am I to believe that this was all the angels expected? Ah, no, Brethren. The angels' song is big with prophecy—it travails in birth with glories. A few more years and he that lives them out shall see why angels sang. A few more years and He that will come shall come and will not tarry. Christ the Lord will come again and when He comes He shall cast the idols from their thrones. He shall dash down every fashion of heresy and every shape of idolatry. He shall reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway. He shall reign, when like a scroll, yonder blue heavens have passed away.

No strife shall vex Messiah's reign, no blood shall then be shed. They'll hang the useless helmet high and study war no more. The hour is approaching when the temple of Janus shall be shut forever and when cruel Mars shall be hooted from the earth. The day is coming when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, when the leopard shall lie down with the

kid—when the weaned child shall put his hand upon the cockatrice den and play with the asp. The hour approaches. The first streaks of the sunlight have made glad the age in which we live. Lo, He comes with trumpets and with clouds of glory! He shall come for whom we look with joyous expectation, whose coming shall be glory to His redeemed and confusion to His enemies. Ah, Brethren, when the angels sang this there was an echo through the long aisles of a glorious future. That echo was—

***“Hallelujah! Christ the Lord
God Omnipotent shall reign.”***

Yes, and doubtless the angels heard by faith the fullness of the song—

***“Hark! the song of jubilee
Loud as mighty thunders’ roar,
Or the fullness of the sea,
When it breaks upon the shore.”***

“Christ the Lord Omnipotent reigns.”

IV. Now I have one more lesson for you and I have done. That lesson is PRECEPTIVE. I wish everybody that keeps Christmas this year would keep it as the angels kept it. There are many persons who, when they talk about keeping Christmas, mean by that the cutting of the bands of their religion for one day in the year, as if Christ were the Lord of misrule, as if the birth of Christ should be celebrated like the orgies of Bacchus. There are some very religious people that on Christmas would never forget to go to Church in the morning. They believe Christmas to be nearly as holy as Sunday, for they reverence the tradition of the elders. Yet their way of spending the rest of the day is very remarkable—for if they see their way straight up stairs to their bed at night, it must be by accident! They would not consider they had kept Christmas in a proper manner if they did not verge on gluttony and drunkenness.

They are many who think Christmas cannot possibly be kept except there be a great shout of merriment and mirth in the house and added to that the boisterousness of sin. Now, my Brethren, although we, as successors of the Puritans, will not keep the day in any religious sense whatever, attaching nothing more to it than to any other day—believing that every day may be a Christmas for all we know and wishing to make every day Christmas if we can—yet we must try to set an example to others how to behave on that day. And especially since the angels gave glory to God. Let us do the same.

Once more the angels said, “Peace to men.” Let us labor if we can to make peace next Christmas day. Now, old gentleman, you won’t take your son in—he has offended you. Fetch him at Christmas. “Peace on earth.” You know that is a Christmas carol. Make peace in your family. Now, Brother, you have made a vow that you will never speak to your brother

again. Go after him and say, “Oh, my dear fellow, let not this day’s sun go down upon our wrath.” Fetch him in and give him your hand.

Now, Mr. Tradesman, you have an opponent in trade and you have said some very hard words about him lately. If you do not make the matter up today, or tomorrow, or as soon as you can, yet do it on that day. That is the way to keep Christmas—peace on earth and glory to God. And oh, if you have anything on your conscience, anything that prevents your having peace of mind—keep your Christmas in your chamber, praying to God to give you peace. For it is peace on earth, mind you, peace in yourself, peace with yourself, peace with your fellow men, peace with your God. And do not think you have well celebrated that day till you can say, “O God—

***With the world, myself and You
Wherever I sleep at peace will be. ”***

And when the Lord Jesus has become your Peace, remember, there is another thing, *good will* towards men. Do not try to keep Christmas without keeping good will towards men. You are a gentleman and have servants. Well, try and set their chimneys on fire with a large piece of good, substantial beef for them. If you are men of wealth, you have poor in your neighborhood. Find something wherewith to clothe the naked and feed the hungry and make glad the mourner. Remember, it is good will towards *men*. Try, if you can, to show them good will at this special season. And if you will do that, the poor will say with me—indeed, they wish there were six Christmases in the year.

Let each one of us go from this place determined that if we are angry all the year round, this next week shall be an exception. That if we have snarled at everybody last year, this Christmas time we will strive to be kindly affectionate to others. And if we have lived all this year at enmity with God, I pray that by His Spirit He may this week give us peace with Him. And then, indeed, my Brothers and Sisters, it will be the merriest Christmas we ever had in all our lives. You are going home to your father and mother, young men—many of you are going from your shops to your homes.

You remember what I preached on last Christmas time. Go home to your friends and tell them what the Lord has done for your soul and that will make a blessed round of stories at the Christmas fire. If you will each of you tell your parents how the Lord met with you in the house of prayer—how, when you left home, you were a happy, wild blade—but have now come back to love your mother’s God and read your father’s Bible—oh, what a happy Christmas that will make! What more shall I say? May God give you peace with yourselves. May He give you good will towards all

your friends, your enemies and your neighbors. And may He give you grace to give glory to God in the highest.

I will say no more, except at the close of this sermon to wish everyone of you, when the day shall come, the happiest Christmas you ever had in your lives—

***“Now with angels round the throne,
Cherubim and seraphim,
And the Church, which still is one,
Let us swell the solemn hymn.
Glory to the great I AM!
Glory to the Victim Lamb.
Blessing, honor, glory, might,
And dominion infinite,
To the Father of our Lord,
To the Spirit and the Word;
As it was all worlds before,
Is and shall be evermore.”***

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A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM NO. 2915

[The accompanying Sermon is substantially the same as I preached on the Sunday evening before Christmas day. Some of my members expressed their regret that the reporter was not present. I am not myself aware that there is any novelty except in the arrangement. As for the Truths of God, themselves, they are the simple old facts in which the saints of all generations rejoice. Of course it is not in my power to reproduce the exact words I then employed, but, with just the differences between the effusion of one's pen and the utterance of one's tongue, I now publish it and pray God to acknowledge it with His gracious blessing.—C. H. S.]

(Notwithstanding the above note, which is in Mr. Spurgeon's handwriting on the manuscript of the sermon, the publishers cannot find any trace of its publication. They are very glad to be able to issue it just 50 years after it was preached).

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1904.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 24, 1854.**

***“Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us.”
Luke 2:15.***

NOT to Bethlehem *as it now is*, but to Bethlehem *as it once was*, I would lead your meditation this evening.

Were you to visit the site of that ancient city of Judah *as it is at present*, you would find little enough to edify your hearts. About six miles south of Jerusalem, on the slope of a hill, lies a small, irregular village, never at any time considerable either in its extent or because of the wealth of its inhabitants. The only building worthy of notice is a convent. Should your fancy paint, as you approach it, a courtyard, a stable, or a manger, you would be sorely disappointed on your arrival! Tawdry decorations are all that would greet your eyes—rather adapted to obliterate than to preserve the sacred interest with which a Christian would regard the place. You might walk upon the marble floor of a chapel and gaze on walls bedecked with pictures and studded with the fantastic dolls and other nicknacks which are usually found in Roman Catholic places of worship. Within a small grotto you might observe the exact spot that superstition has assigned to the nativity of our Lord. There a star, com-

posed of silver and precious stones, surrounded by golden lamps, might remind you, but merely as a parody, of the simple story of the Evangelists. Truly, Bethlehem was always little, if not the least, among the thousands of Judah—and only famous for its historic associations.

So, Beloved, “let us now go to Bethlehem” *as it was*—let us, if possible, bring the wondrous story of that “Child born,” that “Son given,” down to our own times. Imagine the event to be occurring just now. I will try to paint the picture for you with vivid colors, that you may apprehend afresh the great Truth of God and be impressed, as you ought to be, with the facts concerning the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I propose now to make A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM and I need five companions to render the visit instructive. So I would have, first, *an aged Jew*. Next, *an ancient Gentile*. Then, *a convicted sinner*. Next, *a young Believer*. And, last of all, *an advanced Christian*. Their remarks can scarcely fail to please and profit us. Afterwards I should like to take a *whole family* to the manger, let them all look at the Divine Infant and hear what each one has to say about Him.

I. To begin, then, I WOULD GO TO BETHLEHEM WITH AN AGED JEW.

Come on, my venerable, long-bearded Brother—you are an Israelite, indeed, for your name is Simeon. Do you see the Baby “wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger”? Yes, he does and, overpowered by the sight, he clasps the Child in his arms and exclaims, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation.” “Here,” says this faithful son of Abraham, “is the fulfillment of a thousand prophecies and promises! The hope, the expectation and the joy of my noble ancestry! Here is the Antitype of all those mystic symbols and typical offerings enjoined in the Laws of Moses. You, O Son of the Highest, are Abraham’s promised Seed, the Shiloh whose coming Jacob foretold, great David’s greater Son and Israel’s rightful King! Our Prophets did herald your coming in each prophetic page. Our bards vied with one another who should chant Your praise in sweetest stanzas! And now, O happy hour—these poor dim eyes do greet Your beauteous form! It is enough—and more than enough—O God! I ask not that I may live any longer on earth!” So speaks the aged Jew and, as he speaks, I mark the rapturous smile that lights up every feature of his face and listen to the deep, mellow tones of his tremulous voice. As he gazes on the tender Baby, I hear him quote Isaiah’s words, “He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant” and then, as he glances aside at the virgin-mother, descendant of the royal house of David, he quickly looks back to the sinless Baby and says, “A root out of a dry ground.” Farewell, venerable Jew, your talk sounds sweet in my ears—may the day soon dawn when all your brethren shall return to their fatherland and there confess our Jesus as their Messiah and their King!

II. My next companion shall be AN ANCIENT GENTILE.

He is an intelligent man. Do not ask me any questions concerning his creed. Deeply versed in the works of God in Nature, he has glimmering, flickering Light of God enough to detect the moral darkness by which he

is surrounded, albeit the Truth of the Gospel has not yet found an entrance into his heart. Call him a skeptic, from the heathen point of view, if you please, but his is not a willful perversion of the heart, it is rather that transition state of the mind wherein false hopes are rejected, but the true hope has not yet been espoused. This Gentile is staying at Jerusalem and we walk and talk together as we bend our steps toward Bethlehem. He has told me what pleasure he feels in reading the Jewish Scriptures and how he has often longed for the dawn of that day which their seers predict. Now we enter the house—a star shines brightly in the sky and hovers over the stable—we look at the Child and my comrade exclaims in ecstasy, “a Light to lighten the Gentiles!” “Fair Child of promise,” he says, “Your birth shall be a joy to all people! Prince of Peace, Yours shall be a peaceful reign! Kings shall bring presents to You; all nations shall serve You. The poor shall rejoice in Your advent, for justice shall be done to them by You. And oppressors shall tremble at Your coming, for judgment upon them shall be pronounced by Your lips.”

Then sweetly did he speak of the hopes which had bloomed in that birth-chamber. He looked as if, in that same hour, he saw the application of many an ancient promise with the letter of which he was already acquainted, to the wonderful Child he there saw. It was refreshing to hear that entire quote from the evangelical Prophet, words like these, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; *and a little child shall lead them.*”

As I bid adieu to this friend, you must allow me to offer you one or two of my own reflections. When God, in His anger, hid His face from the house of Jacob, He lifted up the Light of His Countenance on the Gentiles. When the fruitful land became a desert, the wilderness, at the same time, began to blossom as the garden of the Lord. Moses had anticipated both of these events and the Inspired Prophets had foreseen one as much as the other. The heart of the Jewish people made gross, the heaviness of their eyes and the dullness of their ears are not more striking as an exact fulfillment of Divine Judgment, than the extreme susceptibility of the Gentile mind to receive the evidence of our Lord’s Messiahship and to embrace His Gospel! Thus had Jehovah said, fifteen hundred years before, “I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people. I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.” Marvel not, then, but admire the crisis in history when Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to say to the Jews who rejected the Gospel, “*Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*”

I have consulted the map and looked with intense emotion at the route which Paul and Barnabas took on their first missionary journey. Antioch, the city from which they went forth, is situated directly North of Jerusalem—and there, in not very unequal proportions, they could find both Jews and Gentiles. “To the Jew first,” was according to the Divine Injunction and, on their own nation rejecting the Grace of God, lo, they turned to the Gentiles with a result immediately following that greatly cheered them, for the Gentiles heard with gladness and glorified the Word of the Lord! As you follow the various journeys of the Apostle Paul, you will see

that his course was ever Northward, or, rather, in a North-Westerly direction—and so the tidings of the Gospel traveled on until the Church of the Redeemed found a central point in our highly-favored island!

I think I hear some of you say, “We are not antiquarian enough to appreciate the society of your two venerable companions.” Well then, Beloved, the three that follow shall be drawn from among yourselves—and it may be that you will discover your own thoughts expressed in the sketches I am about to add.

III. Next in order is THE AWAKENED SINNER.

Come here, my Sister, I am glad to see you and I shall have much pleasure in your company to Bethlehem. Why do you start back? Do not be afraid! There is nothing to terrify you here. Come in! Come in! With trembling apprehension my Sister advances to the rough crib where the young Child lies. She looks as if she feared to rejoice and is beyond measure astonished at herself that she does not faint. She says to me, “And is this, Sir, really and truly the great Mystery of godliness? Do I, in that manger, behold ‘God manifest in the flesh’? I expected to see something very different.” Looking into her face, I clearly perceived that she could scarcely believe for joy. A humble, but not uninteresting visitor to the birthplace of my Lord is this trembling penitent. I wish I could have many like her out of this congregation tonight. You would see how Mystery is dissolved in mercy! No flaming sword turning every way obstructs your entrance. No ticket of admission is demanded by a surly menial at the door. No favor is shown to rank or title—you may go freely in to see the noblest Child of woman born in the humblest cot wherein infants ever nestled! Nor does a visible tiara of light encircle His brow. Too humble, I assure you, for the fancy of the poet to describe, or the pencil of the artist to sketch—like a poor man’s child, he is wrapped in swaddling clothes and cradled in a manger. It needs faith to believe what the eyes of sense never could discern as you look upon “the Prince of Life” in such humble guise!

IV. My fourth companion is A YOUNG BELIEVER.

Well, my Brother, you and I have often had sweet communion together concerning the things of the Kingdom. “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us.” I mark the sacred cheerfulness of my young friend’s countenance as he approaches the Incarnate Mystery! Often have I heard him discussing curious doctrinal subtleties, but now, with calmness of spirit, he looks on the face of the Divine Child and says, “Truth is sprung out of the earth, for a woman has brought forth her Son and righteousness has looked down from Heaven, for God has, of a truth, revealed Himself in that Baby.” He looks so wistfully at the young Child, as if a fresh spring of holy gratitude had been opened in his heart. “No vision, no imagination, no myth here,” he says, “but a real partaker of our flesh and blood! He has not taken on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. Heaven and earth have united to make us blessed. Might and weakness have joined hands here!”

He pauses to worship, then speaks again, "In what a small, weak, slender Tabernacle do You, O glorious God, now deign to dwell! Surely, mercy and truth have here met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other! O Jesus, Savior, You are Mercy itself—the tender mercy of our God is embodied in You. You are the Truth—the very Truth which the Prophets longed to see and into which the angels desire to look—the Truth my soul so long sought for, but never found till I beheld Your face. Once I thought that the Truth was hidden in some profound treatise, or in some learned book, but now I know that it is revealed in You, O Jesus, my Kinsman, yet Your Father's equal! And, sweet Baby, You are also Righteousness—the only righteousness that God can accept. What condescension, yet what patience! Ah, dear Child, how still You lie! I wonder that, conscious of your Divine Power, you can thus endure the weary, lingering hours of Infancy with humility so strange, so rare! I think if You had stood by me and watched over me in my infant weakness, that would have been a service that I could well admire, but 'tis past imagination's utmost stretch to realize what it must be for You to be thus feeble, thus helpless, thus needing to be fed and waited upon by an earthly mother! For The Wonderful, The Mighty God to stoop thus, is humility profound!"

So spoke the young Believer and I liked his speech very much, for I saw in him how faith could work by love and how the end of controversy and argument is reached at Bethlehem, for "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

V. Now I will go to Bethlehem with AN ADVANCED CHRISTIAN, such an one as Paul the Aged, or John the Divine—no, rather with such an one as I might find among the circle of my own Church members!

Calm, peaceful, kind and gracious, he seems as if his training in the school of Christ and the sacred anointing of the Holy Spirit have made him like a child, himself—his character is ripening and his fitness for the Kingdom of Heaven is becoming more apparent. Tears glistened in the old man's eyes as he looked with expressive fondness on that "Infant of Eternal Days." He spoke not much and what he said was not exactly like what any of my other companions had spoken. It was his manner to quote short sentences, with great exactness, from the Word of God. He uttered them slowly, pondered them deeply and there was much spiritual unction in the accent with which he spoke. I will just mention a few of the profitable sentences that he uttered. First he said, "No man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even *the Son of Man which is in Heaven.*" He really appeared to see more in that passage than I had ever seen there. Jesus, the Son of Man, in Heaven even while He was on earth! Then he looked at the Child and said, "The same was in the beginning with God." After that, he uttered these three short sentences in succession, "In the beginning was the Word—"all things were made by Him"—"and the Word was made flesh." He looked as if he realized what a great mystery it was that our Lord Jesus first made all things and afterwards was Himself "made flesh." Then he reverently bent

his knee, clasped his hands and exclaimed, "My Father's gift—'Behold, what manner of love!'"

As we retire from that manger and stable, that aged Christian puts his hand on my shoulder and says, "Young man, I have often been to Bethlehem. It was a much-loved haunt of mine before you were born. And there is one sweet lesson I have learned there which I should like to pass on to you. The Infinite became finite. The Almighty consented to become weak. He that upheld all things by the word of His power, willingly became helpless. He that spoke all worlds into existence, resigned for a while even the power of speech! In all these things, He fulfilled the will of His Father, so be not you afraid, nor surprised with any amazement if you should be dealt with in like manner, for His Father is also your Father. You who have reveled in the ancient settlements of the Everlasting Covenant, may yet have to hang feebly on the mercies of the hour. You have leaned on your Savior's breast at His Table, but you may presently be so weak that you must rely on the nursing of a woman. Your tongue has been touched as with a coal from the heavenly altar, but your lips may yet be sealed as are those of an infant. If you should sink still deeper in humiliation, you will never reach the depth to which Jesus descended in this one act of His condescension." "True, true," I replied, "my young Brother hinted at the wondrous condescension of the Son of God. You have explained it to me more fully."

Thus, Beloved, I have endeavored to carry out my purpose of going to Bethlehem with five separate companions—all representative persons. Alas that some of you are not represented by any one of these characters! "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?" Care you not for this blessed Nativity which marked of old, "the fullness of time"? If you die without a knowledge of this Mystery, your lives will indeed be a fearful blank and your eternal portion will be truly terrible!

VI. Give me your earnest attention a little longer while I try to change the line of meditation. It may please God that while I attempt to CONDUCT A WHOLE FAMILY TO BETHLEHEM, some hearts which have thus far resisted all my appeals may yet yield to the Lord Jesus Christ!

A familiar picture will serve my purpose. Imagine this to be Christmas Eve and that a Christian father has all his household gathered with him around the fire. Desirous of blending instruction with pleasure, he proposes that "the birth of Christ" shall be the subject of their conversation—that every one of the children shall say something about it and he will preach them a short sermon on each of their remarks. He calls Mary, their servant, into the room. And when all are comfortably seated they commence.

1. After a simple sketch of the facts, the father turns to his youngest boy and asks, "What have you to say, Willy?" The little fellow, who is just old enough to go to the Sunday school, repeats two lines that he has learned to sing there—many of you, no doubt, know them—

***"Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior,
Once became a Child like me."***

“Good, my dear,” says the father—“once became a child like me.” Yes. Jesus was born into the world as other little babies are born. He was as little, as delicate, as weak as other infants and needed to be nursed as they do—

**“Almighty God became a Man,
A Baby like others seen—
As small in size, and weak of frame,
As babies have always been.
From thence He grew an Infant mild,
By fair and due degrees
And then became a bigger Child,
And sat on Mary’s knee.
‘At first held up for need of strength,
In time alone He ran.
Then grew a Boy. A Lad—at length
A Youth—at last, a Man.’**

“It is wrong to draw pictures of the little Jesus and then say that they are like Him. Wicked idolaters do that. But we ought to think of Jesus Christ as made in all things like unto His brethren. There was never a thing in which He was not like us, except that He had no sin. He used to eat, drink, sleep, wake, laugh, cry and hold onto His mother, just as other children do. So it is quite right for you, Willy, to say, ‘once became a Child like me.’”

2. “Now, John,” said the father, addressing a lad rather older, “what have you to say?” “Well, father,” said John, “if Jesus Christ was like us in some things, I do not think He could have had so many comforts as we have—not such a nice nursery, nor such a snug bed. Was He not disturbed by the horses, and cows, and camels? It seems to me shocking that He had to live in a stable.”

“That is a very proper remark, John,” said his father. “We ought all of us to think how our blessed Lord cast in His lot with the poor. When those Wise Men came from the East, I daresay they were surprised, at first, to find that Jesus was a poor man’s Child. Yet they fell down and worshipped Him, they opened their treasury and presented to Him very costly gifts—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Ah, when the Son of God made that great stoop from Heaven to earth, He passed the glittering palaces of kings and the marble halls of the rich and the noble—to take up His abode in the lodgings of poverty. Still, He was ‘born King of the Jews.’ Now, John, did you ever read of a child being *born a king* before? Of course you never did—children have been born princes and heirs to a throne—but no other than Jesus was ever born a King. The poverty of our Savior’s circumstances is like a foil which sets off the glorious dignity of His Person. You have read of good kings, such as David, Hezekiah and Josiah, yet, if they had not been kings, we would never have heard of them. But it was quite otherwise with Jesus Christ. He was possessed of more true greatness in a stable than any other king ever possessed in a palace! But do not imagine it was only in His Childhood that Jesus was the Kinsman of the poor. When He grew up to be a Man, He said, ‘The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’ Do you know, my children, that our com-

forts were purchased at the expense of His sufferings? 'He became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich.' We ought, therefore, to thank and praise the blessed Jesus every time we remember how much worse off He was in this world than we are."

3. "It is your turn now," said the father, as he looked at his little daughter—an intelligent girl who was just beginning to be of some assistance to her mother in the discharge of her daily domestic duties. Poor girl, she modestly hung down her head, for she remembered, just then, how frequently little acts of carelessness had exposed her to tender but faithful rebukes from her parents. At last she said, "Oh, Father, how good Jesus Christ was! He never did anything wrong." "Very true, my Love," the father replied. "It is a sweet subject for meditation that you suggest. His Nature was sinless, His thoughts were pure, His heart was transparent and all His actions just and right. You have read of the lambs which Moses, in the Law, commanded the Jews to offer in sacrifice to God. They were all to be without spot or blemish—and if there had been one taint of impurity in the Child that was born of Mary, He could never have been our Savior. Sometimes we think naughty thoughts and nobody knows it but God. And, sometimes, we do what is evil, but we are not found out. It was not so with the meek and lowly Savior—He never had even one fault! His delight was in the Law of the Lord and in that Law did He meditate day and night. Even when we do not commit any positive sin, we often forget to do our duty, but Jesus never did. He was like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season. He never disappointed any hopes that were set upon Him."

"There now," said the father, "we have already had three beautiful thoughts—Jesus Christ took our Nature, He condescended to be very poor and He was without sin."

4. There was, in the room, a big boy who had just come home from boarding school to spend his Christmas holidays, so his father turned to this son and said, "Fred, we must hear your remark next." Very short, very significant was Master Fred's response—"that Child had a wonderful mind."

"Indeed He had," said the father, "and it would be well for all of us if that mind were in us which was also in Christ Jesus. His mind was Infinite, for He took part in the eternal counsels of God. But I would rather suggest to you another line of thought—'In Him was Light.' The mind of Jesus was like light for its clearness and purity. We often see things through a misleading medium. We form wrong impressions which we find it trouble enough afterwards to correct. But Jesus was of quick understanding to discern between good and evil. His mind was never warped by prejudice. He saw things just as they are. Never had He to borrow other people's eyes—and the ideas hatched in other people's brains never guided His judgment. He had light in Himself and that light was the life of men, so capable was He of always instructing the ignorant and guiding their feet in the paths of peace. His heart was likewise pure and that has more to do with the development of the mind and the improvement of the understanding than we are apt to suppose. No corrupt

imagination ever tarnished the brightness of His vision. He was always in harmony with God and always felt good-will toward man. You might well say, Fred, that He had a wonderful mind.”

5. The children having each made some observation, the father next addressed Mary, the servant. “Do not be timid,” he said, “but speak out and let us know your thoughts.” “I was just a-thinking, Sir,” said Mary, “how humble it was of Him to take upon Himself the form of a Servant.” “Right, Mary, quite right. And it is always profitable to consider how Jesus came down to our low estate. We may well be reconciled to any ‘lot’ which Jesus voluntarily chose for Himself. But there is more in your remark, as applicable to Bethlehem and the Nativity, than you perhaps imagined, for, according to Dr. Kitto’s account of the inn, or *Caravanserai*, it was the *servant’s place* that the holy family occupied. Imagine now a square pile of strong and lofty walls, built of brick upon a basement of stone with one great archway entrance. These walls enclose a large open area with a well in the middle. In the center is an inner quadrangle consisting of a raised platform on all four sides covered with a kind of piazza. And then, in the wall behind, there are small doors leading to the little cells which form the lodgings. Such we may suppose to have been the ‘inn’ in which there was ‘no room’ for Mary and Joseph. Now for a description of the stable. It is formed of a covered avenue between the back wall of the lodging apartments and the outer wall of the whole building—thus it is on a level with the court and three or four feet below the raised platform. The side walls of those cells, in the inner quadrangle, projecting behind into the courtyard, form recesses, or stalls, which servants and muleteers used for shelter in bad weather. Joseph and Mary seem to have found a retreat in one of these. There, it is supposed, the Infant Jesus was born. And if it is so, how literally true is it that He took on Him the form of a Servant and occupied the servant’s apartment!”

6. Once more the father seeks a fresh text and, looking at his wife, he says, “My Dear, you have taken a quiet interest in our conversations this evening. Let us now hear your reflection. I am sure you can say something we shall all be pleased to hear.” The mother looked absorbed in thought. She appeared to have a vivid picture of the whole scene before her and her eyes kindled as if she could actually see the little Darling lying in the manger. She spoke most naturally and most maternally, too. “What a lovely Child! And yet,” she added with a deep sigh, “He who is thus fairer than the children of men in His cradle, after a few short years was so overwhelmed with anxiety, suffering and anguish, that His visage was more marred than that of any other man! And His form more than that of the sons of men.”

A pensive sadness stole over every countenance as that godly mother offered her reflections. Woman’s tenderness seemed to be sanctified by Divine Grace in her heart and to give forth its richest fragrance. The father presently broke the stillness as he said, “Ah, my Love, you have spoken best of all! His heart was broken with reproach! That humble birth was but the prelude to a life still more humble and a death even

more abased! Your feelings, my Love, are most precious evidence of your close relationship to Him—

***“A faithful friend of grief partakes;
But union can be none
Betwixt a heart that melts like wax
And hearts as hard as stone.
Betwixt a head diffusing blood
And members sound and whole,
Betwixt an agonizing God
And an unfeeling soul.”***

7. “To close up now,” said the father, glancing round with animated expression upon his household, “I suppose you will expect a few words from me. Much as I like your mother’s observations, I think it would be hardly right, on such an auspicious day, to finish with anything melancholy and sad. You know that fathers are generally most thoughtful about the prospects of their children. I can look at you boys and think, ‘Never mind if you have a few hardships so long as you can struggle successfully against them.’ Well now, I have been picturing to myself the manger, the Baby that lay in it, and Mary, His mother watching lovingly over Him. And I’ll tell you what I thought. Those little hands will one day grasp the scepter of universal empire! Those little arms will one day grapple with the monster, ‘Death,’ and destroy it! Those little feet shall tread on the serpent’s neck and crush that old deceiver’s head! Yes, and that little tongue which has not yet learned to articulate a word shall, before long, pour from His sweet lips such streams of eloquence as shall fertilize the minds of the whole human race and infuse His teaching into the literature of the world! And again, a little while, and that tongue shall pronounce the judgments of Heaven on the destinies of all mankind!

“We have all thought it wonderful that the God of Glory should stoop so low, but we shall one day think it more wonderful that the Man of Sorrows should be exalted so high! Earth could find no place too base for Him—Heaven will scarcely find a place lofty enough for Him! If there is just this one thing to be said about Jesus Christ, He is ‘the same yesterday, and today, and forever.’ We may change with circumstances—Jesus never did and never will! When we look at Him in the manger, we may say, ‘He is The Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God.’ And when we see Him exalted to His Father’s right hand, we may exclaim, ‘Behold the Man!’—

***“His human heart He still retains
Though enthroned in highest bliss
And feels each tempted member’s pains,
For our affliction’s His.”***

So closed the series of observations by the various members of a Christian family around the Christmas fire. The father said it was time to retire. And he bade them all, ‘good night.’” And as the father said, so say I, “Good night and God bless you all!” Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 2:1-19.**

[Remember, the Exposition was *before* the sermon.]

We will now read the story of our Savior's birth as it is recorded in the Gospel according to Luke.

Verses 1-6. *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the City of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.* Little did any idea enter into Caesar's head that he was accomplishing the purpose of God by bringing Mary to Bethlehem at that particular time so that her Child might be born there! But God can accomplish the purpose of His Providence and of His Grace in any way that He pleases! And although Caesar is not aware of all that is involved in his action, his decree which he intends to simply be a means of registering his subjects and of filling his coffers, is to be overruled by God for the fulfillment of the prophecy uttered centuries before the event happened—that Christ must be born at Bethlehem! It may seem to some of you a strange thing that there should be an imperial edict issued from Rome which should have an important influence upon the place of birth of the Child, yet I do not doubt that in God's esteem, the whole of the great Roman Empire was of very small account in comparison with His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! And today the thrones and dominions of the mightiest monarchs are only like the small cogs of the wheels of Divine Providence where the welfare of even the least of the Lord's people is concerned. He reckons not events according to their apparent importance—the standard of the sanctuary is a very different measure from that which worldlings use. When any purpose of God is to be accomplished, all other things will be subordinated to it!

6, 7. *And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.* Now has heavenly Glory wedded earthly poverty and, henceforth, let no man dare to despise the poor and needy since the Son of the Highest is born in a stable and cradled in a manger! How low the King of Glory stoops, and how gloriously He lifts up the lowly to share His Glory!

8, 9. *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sorely afraid.* For such is the condition, even of gracious souls, that the near approach of the Divine Glory begets in them trembling and alarm! Oh, how wondrously changed shall we be when we are able to bear even the glories of Heaven! Have you ever thought of this, dear Friends? The beloved Apostle John saw Christ in His Glory and he wrote, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet, as dead." And these shepherds,

even at the sight of “the angel of the Lord,” “were sorely afraid.” You and I, Beloved, must undergo a marvelous change before we shall be able to be at Home with God in His Glory—but that change shall, through His abundant Grace, take place before long!

10-12. *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; You shall find the Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.* “This shall be a sign unto you,” said the angel to the shepherds—and this is the ensign of the Christ of God even unto this day. There are some who are constantly bringing discredit upon religion by their pompous ritual and gorgeous ceremonies buried beneath the weight of their sensuous worship! But the living Christ is still found in simple, lowly guise, “wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

13. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.* They had heard the heavenly herald’s proclamation and hurried down to join him in publishing the glad tidings! They could not bear that only one angel should announce the birth of the Christ, so, “suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.”

13-19. *Praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said, one to another, Let us now go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.* Mary laid these things up in store and pondered them, giving them their due weight and value. Oh, that we did the same with every Truth of God that we learn!

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

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

END OF VOLUME 50

HOLY WORK FOR CHRISTMAS

NO. 666

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”
Luke 2:17-20.

EVERY season has its own proper fruit—apples for autumn, holly berries for Christmas. The earth brings forth according to the period of the year and with man there is a time for every purpose under Heaven. At this season the world is engaged in congratulating itself and in expressing its complimentary wishes for the good of its citizens. Let me suggest extra and more solid work for Christians. As we think, today, of the birth of the Savior, let us aspire after a fresh birth of the Savior in our *hearts*—that as He is already “formed in us the hope of glory,” we may be “renewed in the spirit of our minds”—that we may go again to the Bethlehem of our spiritual nativity and do our first works, enjoy our first loves and feast with Jesus as we did in the holy, happy, heavenly days of our espousals.

Let us go to Jesus with something of that youthful freshness and excessive delight which was so manifest in us when we looked to Him at first. Let Him be crowned anew by us, for He is still adorned with the dew of His youth and remains “the same yesterday, today and forever.” The citizens of Durham, though they dwell not far from the Scotch border, and consequently in the olden times were frequently liable to be attacked, were exempted from the toils of war because there was a cathedral within their walls and they were set aside to the bishop’s service, being called in the olden times by the name of “holy work-folk.”

Now, we citizens of the New Jerusalem, having the Lord Jesus in our midst, may well excuse ourselves from the ordinary ways of celebrating this season. And considering ourselves to be “holy work-folk,” we may keep it, after a different sort from other men, in holy contemplation and in blessed service of that gracious God whose unspeakable gift the new-born King is to us.

I selected this text this morning because it seemed to indicate to me four ways of serving God, four methods of executing holy work and exercising Christian thought. Each of the verses sets before us a different way of sacred service. Some, it appears, published abroad the news, told to others what they had seen and heard. Some wondered with a holy marveling and astonishment. One, at least, according to the third verse, pondered, meditated, thought upon these things. And others, in the fourth place, glorified God and gave Him praise. I know not which of these four

did God the best service, but I think if we could combine all these mental emotions and outward exercises we should be sure to praise God after a most godly and acceptable fashion.

I. To begin then, in the first place, we find that some celebrated the Savior's birth by PUBLISHING ABROAD what they had heard and seen. And truly we may say of them that they had something to rehearse in men's ears well worth the telling! That for which Prophets and kings had waited long had at last arrived and arrived to them! They had found out the answer to the perpetual riddle. They might have run through the streets with the ancient philosopher, crying, "Eureka! Eureka!" for their discovery was far superior to his.

They had found out no solution to a mechanical problem or metaphysical dilemma. Their discovery was second to none ever made by men in real value, since it has been like the leaves of the Tree of Life to heal the nations and a river of Water of Life to make glad the city of God! They had seen angels! They had heard them sing a song all strange and new. They had seen more than angels—they had beheld the angel's King, the Angel of the Covenant whom we delight in! They had heard the music of Heaven, and when near that manger, the ear of their faith had heard the music of earth's hope, a mystic harmony which should ring all down the ages—the sweet melody of hearts attuned to praise the Lord and the glorious swell of the holy joy of God and man rejoicing in glad accord.

They had seen God Incarnate—such a sight that he who gazes on it must feel his tongue unloosed—unless, indeed, an unspeakable astonishment should make him dumb! Be silent when their eyes had seen such a vision? Impossible! To the first person they met outside that lowly stable door they began to tell their matchless tale and they wearied not till night-fall, crying, "Come and worship! Come and worship Christ, the new-born King!" As for us, Beloved, have we also not something to relate which demands utterance? If we talk of Jesus, who can blame us? This, indeed, might make the tongue of him that sleeps to move—the mystery of God Incarnate, for our sake *bleeding* and *dying*—that we might neither bleed nor die! God Incarnate descending that we might ascend! Wrapped in swaddling cloths that we might be unwrapped of the grave clothes of corruption!

Here is such a story, so profitable to all hearers that he who repeats it the most often does best, and he who speaks the least has most reason to accuse himself for sinful silence. They had something to tell and that something had in it the inimitable blending which is the secret sign and royal march of Divine authorship—a peerless marrying of sublimity and simplicity! Angels singing—singing to shepherds! Heaven bright with glory! Bright at midnight! God! A Babe!! The Infinite! An Infant of a span long!! The Ancient of Days! Born of a woman!! What more simple than the inn, the manger, a carpenter, a carpenter's wife, a child?

What more sublime than a "multitude of the heavenly host" waking the midnight with their joyous song and God Himself in human flesh made manifest? A child is but an ordinary sight—but what a marvel to see that Word which was "in the beginning with God, tabernacling among us that we might behold His Glory"—the Glory as of the only Begotten of the Fa-

ther, full of Grace and Truth? Brethren, we have a tale to tell, as simple as sublime. What simpler?—"Believe and live." What more sublime?—"Was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself!" A system of salvation so wonderful that angelic minds cannot but adore as they meditate upon it. And yet so simple that the children in the temple may fitly hymn its virtues as they sing. "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord."

What a splendid combining of the sublime and the simple have we in the great Atonement offered by the Incarnate Savior! Oh make known to all men this saving Truth of God! The shepherds need no excuse for making everywhere the announcement of the Savior's birth, for what they told they first received from Heaven! Their news was not muttered in their ears by Sybilline oracles, nor brought to light by philosophic research. It was not conceived in poetry nor found as treasure trove among the volumes of the ancient. It was revealed to them by that notable Gospel preacher who led the angelic host and testified, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

When Heaven entrusts a man with a merciful Revelation, he is bound to deliver the good tidings to others. What? Keep that a secret whose utterance Eternal Mercy makes to charm the midnight air? To what purpose were angels sent if the message were not to be spread abroad? According to the teaching of our own beloved Lord we must not be silent, for He bids us, "What you hear in secret, that reveal you in public. And what I tell you in the ear in closets, that proclaim you upon the housetops." Beloved, you have heard a voice from Heaven—you twice-born men, begotten again unto a lively hope—you have heard the Spirit of God bearing witness of God's Truth with you and teaching you of heavenly things. You, then, must keep this Christmas by telling to your fellow men what God's own holy Spirit has seen fit to reveal to you!

But though the shepherds told what they *heard* from Heaven, remember that they spoke of what they had *seen* below. They had, by observation, made those Truths of God most surely their own which had first been spoken to them by Revelation. No man can speak of the things of God with any success until the doctrine which he finds in the Bible, he finds, also, in his heart. We must bring down the mystery and make it plain by *knowing*, and by the *teaching* of the Holy Spirit its practical power on the heart and conscience. My Brethren, the Gospel which we preach is most surely revealed to us by the Lord. But, moreover, our hearts have tried and proved, have grasped, have felt, have realized its truth and power!

If we have not been able to understand its heights and depths, yet we have felt its mystic power upon our heart and spirit. It has revealed sin to us plainly. It has revealed to us our pardon. It has killed the reigning power of sin. It has given us Christ to reign over us and the Holy Spirit to dwell within our bodies as in a temple. Now we must speak! I do not urge any of you to speak of Jesus who merely know the Word as you find it in the Bible—*your* teaching can have but little power. But I do speak earnestly to you who know its mighty influence upon the *heart*, who have not only heard of the Babe but have seen Him in the manger.

I speak to those who have taken Him up in your arms and received Him as being born to you, a Savior to you—Christ the Anointed—Jesus, the Savior from sin, for *you*. Beloved, can you do otherwise than speak of the things which you have seen and heard? God has made you to taste and to handle of this good Word of Life and you must not, you *dare* not hold your peace! You *must* tell friends and neighbors what you have felt within.

These were shepherds, unlettered men. I will warrant you they could not read in a book. There is no probability that they even knew a single letter. They were shepherds, but they preached right well. And, my Brethren, whatever some may think, preaching is not to be confined to those learned gentlemen who have taken their degrees at Oxford or at Cambridge, or at any college or university. It is true that learning need not be an impediment to Grace and may be a fitting weapon in a gracious hand. But often the Grace of God has glorified itself by the plain clear way in which unlettered men have understood the Gospel and have proclaimed it.

I would not mind asking the whole world to find a Master of Arts now living who has brought more souls to Christ Jesus than Richard Weaver. If the whole bench of bishops have done a tenth as much in the way of soul-winning as that one man, it is more than most of us give them credit for. Let us give to our God all the Glory, but still let us not deny the fact that this sinner saved, with the brogue of the coal miner still about him, fresh from the coal pit, tells the story of the Cross, by God's Grace, in such a way that Right Reverend Fathers in God might humbly sit at his feet to learn the way to reach the heart and melt the stubborn soul!

It is true an uneducated Brother is not fitted for all work—he has his own sphere—but he is quite able to tell of what he has seen and heard. And so it strikes me, is every man in a measure. If you have seen Jesus and heard His saving voice. If you have received Truth as from the Lord. If you have felt its tremendous power as coming from God to you, and if you have experienced its might upon your own spirit—why you can surely tell out what God has written within! If you cannot get beyond that into the deeper mysteries, into the more knotty points, well, well, there are some who can, and so you need not be uneasy. But you can at least reveal the first and foundational Truths and they are by far the most important!

If you cannot speak in the pulpit. If as yet your cheek would mantle with a blush and your tongue would refuse to do her office in the presence of many, there are your children! You are not ashamed to speak before them! There is the little cluster round the hearth on Christmas night. There is the little congregation in the workshop. There is a little audience somewhere to whom you might tell out of Jesus' love to lost ones. Do not get beyond what you know. Do not plunge into what you have not experienced—for if you do, you will be out of your depth—and then very soon you will be floundering and making confusion worse confounded. Go as far as you know. And since you know yourself to be a sinner—and Jesus a Savior, and a great one, too—talk about those two matters and good will come of it! Beloved, each one, in his own position, tell what you have heard and seen! Publish that abroad among the sons of men.

But were the shepherds authorized? It is a great thing to be authorized! Unauthorized ministers are most shameful intruders! Unordained men who are not in the Apostolic succession entering the pulpit—very horrible—very horrible indeed! The Puseyite mind utterly fails to fathom the depth of horror which is contained in the idea of an unauthorized man preaching and a man out of the Apostolic succession *daring* to teach the way of salvation! To me this horror seems very much like a schoolboy's fright at a hobgoblin which his fears had conjured up. I think if I saw a man slip through the ice into a cold grave and I could rescue him from drowning it would not be so very horrible to me to be the means of saving him, though I may not be employed by the Royal Humane Society.

I imagine if I saw a fire and heard a poor woman scream at an upper window and likely to be burned alive, if I should wheel the fire escape up to the window and preserve her life, it would not be so very dreadful a matter though I might not belong to the regular Fire Brigade. If a company of brave volunteers should chase an enemy out of their own county, I do not know that it would be anything so shocking although a whole army of mercenaries might be neglecting their work in obedience to some venerable military rubric which rendered them incapable of effective service. But mark you, the shepherds and others like them are in the Apostolic succession and they are authorized by Divine ordinance—for every man who hears the Gospel is authorized to tell it to others.

Do you want authority? Here it is in strong confirmation from Holy Writ—"Let him that hears say, Come"—that is, let every man who truly hears the Gospel bid others come to drink of the Water of Life. This is all the warrant you require for preaching the Gospel according to your ability. It is not every man who has ability to preach the Word. And it is not every man that we should like to *hear* preach it in the great congregation, for if all were mouth, what a great vacuum the Church would be! Yet every Christian in some method should deliver the glad tidings. Our wise God takes care that liberty of prophesying shall not run to riot, for He does not give efficient pastoral and ministerial gifts to every many. Yet every man, according to his gifts, let him minister! Every one of you, though not in the pulpit, yet in the pew, in the workshop—somewhere, anywhere, everywhere—make known the savor of the Lord Jesus. And let this be your authority—"Let him that hears, say, Come."

I never thought of asking any authority for crying, "Fire!" When I saw a house burning, I never dreamed of seeking any authority for doing my best to rescue a poor perishing fellow man. Nor do I mean to seek it now! All the authority you want, any of you, is not the authority which can stream from prelates decorated with long sleeves—but the authority which comes directly from the great Head of the Church who gives authority to every one of those who hear the Gospel to teach every man, his fellow, saying, "Know the Lord." Here, dear Brethren, is one way for you to keep a right holy, and in some sense, a right merry Christmas!

Imitate these humble men, of whom it is said, "When they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child."

II. We set before you, now, another mode of keeping Christmas by HOLY WONDER, ADMIRATION, AND ADORATION. “And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.” We shall have little to say of those persons who merely wondered and did nothing more. Many are set a wondering by the Gospel. They are content to hear it, pleased to hear it—though not, to them, in itself something new—yet there are new ways of putting it and they are glad to be refreshed with the variety. The preacher’s voice is to them as the sound of one that gives a goodly tune upon an instrument. They are glad to listen.

They are not skeptics. They do not cavil. They raise no difficulties. They just say to themselves, “It is an excellent Gospel. It is a wonderful plan of salvation. Here is most astonishing love, most extraordinary condescension.” Sometimes they marvel that these things should be told them by shepherds. They can hardly understand how unlearned and ignorant men should speak of these things! And they marvel how such things should ever get into these shepherds’ heads—where they learned them, how it is that they seem so earnest about them—what kind of *operation* they must have passed through to be able to speak as they do!

But after holding up their hands and opening their mouths for about nine days, the wonder subsides and they go their way and think no more about it. There are many of you who are set to wondering whenever you see a work of God in your district. You hear of somebody converted who was a very extraordinary sinner and you say, “It is very wonderful!” There is a revival. You happen to be present at one of the meetings when the Spirit of God is working gloriously—you say, “Well, this is a singular thing! Very astonishing!” Even the newspapers can afford a corner, at times, for very great and extraordinary works of God the Holy Spirit! But then all emotion ends—it is all wondering and nothing more.

Now, I trust it will not be so with any of us—that we shall not think of the Savior and of the doctrines of the Gospel which He came to preach simply with amazement and astonishment—for this will work us but little good. On the other hand, there is another mode of wondering which is akin to *adoration*, if it is not adoration, itself. I think it would be very difficult to draw a line between holy wonder and real worship. When the soul is overwhelmed with the majesty of God’s Glory, though it may not express itself in song, or even utter its voice with bowed head in humble prayer, yet it silently adores.

I am inclined to think that the astonishment which sometimes seizes upon the human intellect at the remembrance of God’s greatness and goodness is, perhaps, the purest form of adoration which ever rises from mortal men to the Throne of the Most High. This kind of wonder I recommend to those of you who, from the quietness and solitariness of your lives, are scarcely able to imitate the shepherds in telling out the tale to others—you can at least fill up the circle of the worshippers before the Throne by wondering at what God has done! Let me suggest to you that holy wonder at what God has done should be very natural to you. That God should consider His fallen creature, man—and instead of sweeping him away with the besom of destruction—should devise a wonderful

scheme for his redemption and that He should, Himself, undertake to be man's Redeemer and to pay his ransom price, is, indeed, marvelous!

Probably it is most marvelous to you in its relation to yourself, that you should be redeemed by blood! That God should forsake the thrones and royalties above to suffer ignominiously below for you! If you know yourself you can never see any adequate motive or reason in your own flesh for such a deed as this. "Why such love to me?" you will say. What should you and I say, if David, sitting in his house, could only say, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me up to now?"

Had we been the most meritorious of individuals and had unceasingly kept the Lord's commands we could not have deserved such a priceless gift as Incarnation! But, Sinners, offenders who revolted and went from God further and further, what shall we say of this Incarnate God dying for us? "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us." Let your soul lose itself in wonder, for wonder, dear Friends, is in this way a very practical emotion! Holy wonder will lead you to grateful *worship*! Being astonished at what God has done, you will pour out your soul with astonishment at the foot of the golden Throne with the song, "Blessing and honor and glory and majesty and power and dominion and might be unto Him who sits on the Throne and does these great things for me."

Filled with this wonder it will cause you a godly watchfulness. You will be afraid to sin against such love as this! Feeling the Presence of the mighty God in the gift of His dear Son, you will take off your shoes because the place where you stand is holy ground. You will be moved at the same time to a glorious hope! If Jesus has given Himself to you. If He has done this marvelous thing on your behalf, you will feel that Heaven itself is not too great for your expectation and that the rivers of pleasure at God's right hand are not too sweet or too deep for you to drink! Who can be astonished at anything when he has once been astonished at the Manger and the Cross?

What is there wonderful left after one has seen the Savior? The nine wonders of the world? Why, you may put them all into a nutcracker and a child's art can excel them all! This one wonder is not the wonder of earth only, but of Heaven and earth and even Hell itself! It is not the wonder of the olden time, but the wonder of ALL time and the wonder of *eternity*. They who see human wonders a few times finally cease to be astonished. The noblest pile that architect ever raised finally fails to impress the onlooker—but not so this marvelous temple of Incarnate Deity! The more we look the more we are astonished! The more we become accustomed to it, the more we have a sense of its surpassing splendor of love and Grace!

There is more of God, let us say, to be seen in the Manger and the Cross, than in the sparkling stars above, the rolling deep below, the towering mountain, the teeming valleys, the abodes of life, or the abyss of death! Let us, then, spend some choice hours of this festive season in holy wonder—such as will produce gratitude, worship, love and confidence.

III. A third manner of holy work, namely, HER HEART PONDERING AND PRESERVING, you will find in the next verse. One at least and let us hope there were others, or at any rate let us ourselves be the others—one kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. She wondered—she

did more—she *pondered*. You will observe there was an exercise on the part of this blessed woman of the three great parts of her being—her *memory*—she kept all these things. Her *affections*—she kept them in her heart. Her intellect—she pondered them, considered them, weighed them, turned them over—so that memory, affection and understanding were all exercised about these things.

We delight to see this in Mary, but we are not at all surprised when we recollect that she was, in some sense, the most concerned of all on earth—for it was of her that Jesus Christ had been born. Those who come nearest to Jesus and enter the most closely into fellowship with Him will be sure to be the most engrossed with Him. Certain persons are best esteemed at a distance, but not the Savior! When you shall have known Him to the very fullest, then shall you love Him with the love which passes knowledge. You shall comprehend the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of His love. And when you shall do so, then your own love shall swell beyond all length and breadth, all height and depth.

The birth most concerned Mary and therefore she was the most impressed with it. Note the way in which her concern was shown—she was a woman and the Divine Grace which shines best in the female is not boldness—that belongs to the masculine mind. Affectionate modesty is a feminine beauty, and from now we do not read so much of her telling abroad as pondering *within*. No doubt she had her circle and her word to speak in it, but for the most part she, like another Mary, sat still in the house. She worked, but her work was most directly for Him, her heart's joy and delight.

Like other children, the holy Child needed care, which only a mother's hand and heart could exercise. She was, therefore, engrossed with Him. O blessed engrossment! Sweet engagement! Count not that to be unacceptable service which occupies itself rather with *Jesus* than with His disciples or His wandering sheep. That woman who broke the alabaster box and poured the ointment upon our Jesus Himself was faulted by Judas. And even the rest of the disciples thought that the poor had lost a benefit, but “she has worked a good work on Me” was the Savior's answer. I desire to bring you to this thought—if during this season you retiring, quiet ones, cannot speak to others, or have no desirable opportunity or suitable gift for that work—you may sit still with Jesus and honor Him in peace.

Mary took the Lord in her arms. Oh that you may bear Him in yours! She executed works directly for His Person—imitate her! You can love Him, bless Him, praise Him, study Him, ponder Him, comprehend His Character, study the types that set Him forth and imitate His life! And in this way, though your worship will not blaze forth among the sons of men and scarcely benefit them as some other forms of work, yet it will both benefit you and be acceptable to your Lord. Beloved, remember what you have heard of Christ and what He has done for you! Make your heart the golden cup to hold the rich remembrances of His past loving-kindness! Make it a pot of manna to preserve the heavenly bread on which saints have fed in days gone by!

Let your memory treasure up everything about Christ which you have either heard, or felt, or known! And then let your fond affections hold Him

fast forevermore. Love Him! Pour out that alabaster box of your heart, and let all the precious ointment of your affections come streaming on His feet. If you cannot do it with joy, do it sorrowfully! Wash His feet with tears, wipe them with the hairs of your head—but do love Him—love the blessed Son of God, your ever tender Friend. Let your intellect be exercised concerning the Lord Jesus. Turn over and over by meditation what you read. Do not be loiter men—do not stop at the surface—dive into the depths!

Be not as the swallow which touches the brook with her wing, but as the fish which penetrates the lowest wave. Drink deep draughts of love! Do not sip and away—but dwell at the well as Isaac did at the well Lahai-roi. Abide with your Lord—let Him not be to you as a wayfaring man that tarries for a night, but constrain Him, saying, “Abide with us, for the day is far spent.” Hold Him and do not let Him go! The word “ponder,” as you know, means to weigh. Make ready the scales of judgment. Oh, but where are the scales that can weigh the Lord Christ? “He takes up the isles as a very little thing”—who shall take Him up? “He weighs the mountains in scales.” In what scales shall we weigh Him?

Be it so, if your understanding cannot comprehend, let your affections apprehend. And if your spirit cannot compass the Lord Jesus in the arms of its understanding, let it embrace Him in the arms of your affection. Oh, Beloved, here is blessed Christmas work for you, if, like Mary, you lay up all these things in your heart and ponder upon them!

IV. The last piece of holy Christmas work is to come. “The shepherds returned,” we read in the twentieth verse, “GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.” Returned to what? Returned to business to look after the lambs and sheep again! Then if we desire to glorify God we need not give up our business. Some people get the notion into their heads that the only way in which they can live for God is by becoming ministers, missionaries, or Bible women.

Alas, how many of us would be shut out from any opportunity of magnifying the Most High if this were the case? The shepherds went back to the sheep pens glorifying and praising God! Beloved, it is not *office*, it is *earnestness*! It is not position, it is Divine Grace which will enable us to glorify God! God is most surely glorified in that cobbler’s stall where the godly worker, as he plies the awl, sings of the Savior’s love! Yes, *glorified* far more than in many a cathedral where official religiousness performs its scanty duties.

The name of Jesus is glorified by yonder carter as he drives his horse and blesses his God, or speaks to his fellow laborer by the roadside as much as by yonder Divine who, throughout the country like Boanerges, is thundering out the Gospel! God is glorified by our abiding in our vocation. Take care you do not fall out of the path of duty by leaving your calling, and take care you do not dishonor your profession while in it! Think not much of yourselves, but do not think too little of your *callings*. There is no trade which is not sanctified by the Gospel. If you turn to the Bible, you will find the most menial forms of labor have been in some way or other

connected either with the most daring deeds of faith, or else with persons whose lives have been otherwise illustrious.

Keep to your calling, Brother, keep to your calling! Whatever God has made you, when He calls you, abide in that, unless you are quite sure—mind that—*unless you are quite sure* that He calls you to something else. The shepherds glorified God though they went to their trade. They glorified God though they were shepherds. As we remarked, they were not men of learning. So far from having an extensive library full of books, it is probable they could not read a word. Yet they glorified God. This takes away all excuse for you good people who say, “I am no scholar. I never had any education. I never went even to a Sunday school.” Ah, but if your heart is right, you can glorify God!

Never mind, Sarah. Do not be cast down because you know so little. Learn more if you can, but make good use of what you do know. Never mind, John! It is, indeed, a pity that you should have had to toil so early, as not to have acquired even the rudiments of knowledge—but do not think that you cannot glorify God! If you would praise God, live a holy life! You can do that by His Grace, at any rate, without scholarship. If you would do good to others, be good yourself. And that is a way which is as open to the most illiterate as it is to the best taught! Be of good courage! Shepherds glorified God and so may you!

Remember there is one thing in which they had a preference over the wise men. The wise men wanted a *star* to lead them. The shepherds did not. The wise men went wrong even with a star—they stumbled into *Jerusalem*. The shepherds went straight away to Bethlehem. Simple minds sometimes find a glorified Christ where learned heads, much puzzled with their lore, miss Him. A good doctor used to say, “Lo, these simpletons have entered into the kingdom, while we learned men have been fumbling for the latch.” It is often so. And so, you simple minds, be comforted and glad!

The way in which these shepherds honored God is worth noticing. They did it by *praising* Him. Let us think more of sacred song than we sometimes do. When the song is bursting in full chorus from the thousands in this house, it is but a noise in the ear of some men—but inasmuch as many true hearts, touched with the love of Jesus, are keeping pace with their tongues—it is not a mere noise in *God’s* esteem! There is a sweet music in it that makes glad His ear. What is the great ultimatum of all Christian effort? When I stood here the other morning preaching the Gospel, my mind was fully exercised with the winning of souls. But I seemed, while preaching, to get beyond that. I thought, Well, that is not the chief end after all—the chief end is to glorify God and even the saving of sinners is sought by the right-minded as the means to that end!

Then it struck me all of a sudden, “If in Psalm singing and hymn singing we do really glorify God, we are doing more than in the preaching because we are not then in the *means*—we are close upon the great *end* itself.” If we praise God with heart and tongue we glorify Him in the surest possible manner—we are really glorifying Him then! “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me,” says the Lord. Sing, then, my Brethren! Sing not only when you are together, but sing alone! Cheer your labor with Psalms and hymns

and spiritual songs. Make glad the family with sacred music! We sing too little, I am sure, yet the revival of religion has always been attended with the revival of Christian Psalmody.

Luther's translations of the Psalms were of as much service as Luther's discussions and controversies. And the hymns of Charles Wesley and Cennick and Toplady and Newton and Cowper aided as much in the quickening of spiritual life in England as the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield. We need more singing! Sing more and murmur less! Sing more and slander less! Sing more and cavil less! Sing more and mourn less! God grant us today, as these shepherds did, to glorify God by praising Him.

I have not quite done with them. What was the subject of their praise? It appears that they praised God for what they had *heard*. If we think of it, there is good reason for blessing God every time we hear a Gospel sermon. What would souls in Hell give if they could hear the Gospel once more and be on terms in which salvation Grace might come to them? What would dying men give whose tune is all but over if they could once more come to the House of God and have another warning and another invitation? My Brethren, what would *you* give, sometimes, when you are shut up by sickness and cannot meet with the great congregation—when your heart and your flesh cry out for the living God?

Well, praise God for what you have *heard*! You have heard the faults of the preacher—let *him* mourn them. You have heard his Master's message! Do you bless God for that? Scarcely will you ever hear a sermon which may not make you sing if you are in a right frame of mind. George Herbert says, "Praying is the end of preaching." So it is, but praising is its end, too. Praise God that you hear there is a Savior! Praise God that you hear that the plan of salvation is very simple! Praise God that you have a Savior for your own soul! Praise God that you are pardoned, that you are saved! Praise Him for what you have heard!

But observe, they also praised God for what they had *seen*. Look at the twentieth verse—"heard and seen." There is the sweetest music—what we have *experienced*, what we have *felt* within, what we have made our *own*—the things that we have made touching the King! Mere hearing may make some music, but the soul of song must come from seeing with the eye of faith! And, dear Friends, you who have seen with that God-given eyesight—I pray you, let not your tongues be steeped in sinful silence! Speak loudly to the praise of Sovereign Grace!

One point for which they praised God was the agreement between what they had heard and what they had seen. Observe the last sentence. "As it was told unto them." Have you not found the Gospel to be in yourselves just what the Bible said it would be? Jesus said He would give you Grace—have you not had it? He promised you rest—have you not received it? He said that you should have joy and comfort and life through believing in Him—have you not had all these? Are not His ways ways of pleasantness and His paths, paths of peace? Surely you can say with the queen of Sheba, "The half has not been told me."

I have found Christ more sweet than His servants could set Him forth as being. I looked upon the likeness as they painted it, but it was a mere

daub as compared with Himself—the King in His beauty! I have heard of the goodly land, but oh, it flows with milk and honey more richly and sweetly than men were ever able to tell me in their best trim for speech. Surely what we have seen keeps pace with what we have heard! Let us, then, glorify and praise God for what He has done.

This word to those who are not yet converted and I have done. I do not think you can begin at the seventeenth verse, but I wish you would begin at the eighteenth. You cannot begin at the seventeenth—you cannot tell to others what you have not felt. Do not try it. Neither teach in the Sunday school, nor attempt to preach if you are not converted. Unto the wicked, God says, “What have *you* to do to declare My statutes?” But I would to God you would begin with the eighteenth verse—wondering! Wondering that you are *spared*—wondering that you are out of Hell—wondering that still does His good Spirit strive with the chief of sinners! Wonder that this morning the Gospel should have a word for you after all your rejections of it and sins against God!

I should like you to begin there because then I should have good hope that you would go on to the next verse and change the first letter and so go from wondering to *pondering*. Oh Sinner, I wish you would ponder the doctrines of the Cross. Think of your sin, God’s wrath, judgment, Hell, your Savior’s blood, God’s love, forgiveness, acceptance, Heaven—think on these things! Go from wondering to pondering!

And then I would to God you could go on to the next verse, from pondering to *glorifying*. Take Christ! Look to Him! Trust Him! Then sing, “I am forgiven,” and go your way a *believing* sinner and therefore a *saved* sinner, washed in the blood, and clean! Then go back, after that, to the seventeenth verse and begin to tell others.

But as for you Christians who are saved, I want you to begin this very afternoon at the seventeenth—

**“Then will I tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior I have found!
I’ll point to Your redeeming blood,
And say—‘Behold, the way to God!’ ”**

Then when the day is over, get up to your chambers and wonder, admire and adore! Spend half an hour also like Mary in pondering and treasuring up the day’s work and the day’s hearing in your hearts and then close all with that which never must close—go on tonight, tomorrow and all the days of your life, glorifying and praising God for all the things that you have seen and heard!

May the Master bless you for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 2:1-20.

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

SIMEON

NO. 659

**A SERMON PREACHED
BY C. H. SPURGEON**

***“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And the same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him.”
Luke 2:25.***

WHAT a biography of a man! How short and yet how complete! We have seen biographies so wordy, full one half is nonsense and much of the other half too dull to be worth reading. We have seen large volumes spun out of men's letters. Writing desks have been broken open and private diaries exposed to the world. Nowadays if a man is a little celebrated, his signature, the house in which he was born, the place where he dines and everything else is thought worthy of public notice. So soon as he is departed this life he is embalmed in huge folios, the profit of which rests mainly, I believe, with the publishers and not with the readers.

Short biographies, which give a concise and exact account of the whole man, are the best. What do we care about what Simeon did—where he was born, where he was married, what street he used to walk through, or what colored coat he wore? We have a very concise account of his history and that is enough. His “name was Simeon.” He lived “in Jerusalem.” “The same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” Beloved, that is enough of a biography for any one of us. If, when we die, so much as this can be said of us—our name. Our business, “waiting for the Consolation of Israel.” Our character, “just and devout.” Our companionship, having the Holy Spirit upon us—that will be sufficient to hand us down, not to time, but to eternity memorable among the just and estimable among all them that are sanctified!

Pause awhile, I beseech you, and contemplate Simeon's character. The Holy Spirit thought it worthy of notice since He put a, “behold,” in the sentence! “Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.” He does not say, “Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was King Herod.” He does not say, “Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem who was High Priest.” He says, “Behold!”—turn aside here, for the sight is so rare you may never see such a thing again so long as you live! Here is a perfect marvel—“Behold,” there was one man in Jerusalem who was “just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him.”

His character is summed up in two words—“just and devout.” “Just”—that is his character before men. “Devout”—that is his character before God. He was “just.” Was he a father? He did not provoke his children to anger, lest they should be discouraged. Was he a master? He gave unto his servants that which was just and equal, knowing that he also had his Master in Heaven. Was he a citizen? He rendered obedience unto the pow-

ers that then were, submitting himself to the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake.

Was he a merchant? He overreached in no transaction, but providing things honest in the sight of all men, he honored God in his common business habits. Was he a servant? Then he did not render eye-service, as a man-pleaser, but in singleness of heart he served the Lord. If, as is very probable, he was one of the teachers of the Jews, then he was faithful. He spoke what he knew to be the Word of God although it might not be for his gain. And he would not, like the other shepherds, turn aside to speak error for the sake of filthy lucre. Before men he was just.

But that is only half a good man's character. There are many who say, "I am just and upright. I never robbed a man in my life. I pay twenty shillings in the pound. And if anybody can find fault with my character, let him speak. Am I not just?" But as for their religion, such a one will say, "I do not care about it. I think it is cant." Sir, you have only one feature of a good man and that the smaller.

You do good towards man, but not towards God! You do not rob your fellow, but you rob your Maker! "Will a man rob God?" Yes, and think far less of it than he would if he robbed man. He who robs man is called a villain. He who robs God is often called a gentleman. Simeon had both features of a Christian. He was a "just man," and he was also "devout." Mark, it does not say he was a just man and *religious*. A man may be very religious and yet he may not be *devout*. Religion, you know, as the term is used, consists very much in *outward* observances. Godliness and devotion consist in the *inward* life and action arising from the inner spring of true consecration.

It does not say here that Simeon was a religious man, for that he might have been and yet have been a Pharisee, a hypocrite, a mere professor. But no, he was a "devout" man. He valued the "outward and visible sign," but he possessed the "inward and spiritual Grace." Therefore he is called "a just man and devout." "Behold!" says the Holy Spirit! "Behold!" for it is a rarity! Come here, you Christians of the present day! Many of you are just, but you are not *devout*! And some of you pretend to be devout, but you are not just. The just and the devout *together* make up the perfection of the godly man. Simeon was "a just man and devout."

But now, leaving the character of Simeon as a man, we shall endeavor to expound his blessed hope as a Believer. To this end we ask your attention, first, to the expectation—he was "waiting for the Consolation of Israel." Secondly, the fulfillment—that which he waited for, he saw. And when he found Jesus, he said, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace." And thirdly, the explanation of that fulfillment, or how it is that the Lord Jesus is the Consolation of Israel.

I. First, then, SIMEON'S EXPECTATION. He was "waiting for the Consolation of Israel." This was the position of all the saints of God, from the first promise, even to the time of Simeon. Poor old Simeon had now become grey-headed. It is very possible that he had passed the usual period allotted to man's life, but he did not wish to die! He wished for "the Consolation of Israel." He did not wish that the tabernacle of his body might be dissolved, but he did hope that through the chinks of that old battered tabernacle of his he might be able to see the Lord!

Like the hoary-headed Christian of our times, he did not desire to die, but he did desire to “be with Christ, which was far better.” All the saints have waited for Jesus. Our mother Eve waited for the coming of Christ. When her first son was born, she said, “I have gotten a man from the Lord.” True, she was mistaken in what she said—it was Cain and not Jesus. But by her mistake we see that she cherished the blessed hope. That Hebrew Patriarch who took his son, his only son, to offer him for a burnt offering, expected the Messiah and well did he express his faith when he said, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb.”

He who once had a stone for his pillow, the trees for his curtains, the Heaven for his canopy and the cold ground for his bed, expected the coming of Jesus, for he said on his deathbed—“Until Shiloh comes.” The Lawgiver of Israel who was “king in Jeshurun,” spoke of him, for Moses said, “A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me: Him shall you hear.” David celebrated Him in many a Prophetic song—the Anointed of God, the King of Israel. Him to whom all kings shall bow and all nations call Him blessed.” How frequently does he in his Psalms sing about “my Lord”? “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit You at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.”

But need we stop to tell you of Isaiah, who spoke of His passion and “saw His Glory”? Or of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah, Malachi and of all the rest of the Prophets who stood with their eyes strained, looking through the dim mists of futurity, until the weeks of prophecy should be fulfilled—until the sacred day should arrive, when Jesus Christ should come in the flesh? They were all waiting for the Consolation of Israel! And, now, good old Simeon, standing on the verge of the period when Christ would come—with expectant eyes looked out for Him!

Every morning he went up to the temple, saying to himself, “Perhaps He will come today.” Each night when he went home he bent his knee and said, “O Lord, come quickly! Even so, come quickly!” And yet, that morning he went to the Temple, little thinking, perhaps, the hour was at hand when he should see his Lord there! But there He was, brought in the arms of His mother, a little Babe. And Simeon knew Him!

“Lord,” he said, “now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your Salvation.” “Oh,” cries one, “but we cannot wait for the Savior now!” No, Beloved, in one sense we cannot for He is come already! The poor Jews are waiting for Him. They will wait in vain now for His *first* coming, that having passed already. Waiting for the Messiah was a virtue in Simeon’s day—it is the *infidelity* of the Jews now since the Messiah is come. Still there is a high sense in which the Christian ought to be every day waiting for the Consolation of Israel.

I am very pleased to see that the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ is gaining ground everywhere. I find that the most spiritual men in every place are “looking for,” as well as “hastening unto,” the coming of our Lord and Savior. I marvel that the belief is not universal, for it is so perfectly Scriptural. We are, we trust, some of us, in the same posture as Simeon. We have climbed the staircase of the Christian virtues from where we look for that blessed hope, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, if we do not believe in the Second Coming, every Christian waits for the Consolation of Israel at times when he misses the sweet consoling experience.

I speak to some of you, perhaps, who are feeling that you have lost the light of the Lord's face lately. You have not seen His blessed countenance. You have not heard His love-speaking voice. You have not listened to the tender accents of His lips, and you are longing for Him. You are, like Simeon, waiting for the Consolation of Israel. He will come—though He tarries, He will come. Christ does not leave His people entirely. Though He hides His face, He will come again! The child says the swallows are dead because they skim the purple sea. Wait, O Child, and the swallows shall come back again!

The foolish one thinks that the sun has died out because he is hidden behind the clouds. Stop for a little season and the sun shall come again and you shall know that he was brewing behind dark clouds the April shower, mother to the sweet May flowers! Jesus is gone for a little while—but He will come again! Christian! Be waiting for the Consolation of Israel! I hope, too, I have in this place some poor seeking sinner who is waiting for the like Consolation. Sinner! You will not have to wait forever! It is very seldom Christ Jesus keeps poor sinners waiting long. Sometimes He does. He answers them not a word, but then it is to try their faith. Though He keeps them waiting, He will not send them away empty. He will be sure to give them mercies, sooner or later. "Though the promise tarries, wait for it," and you shall find it yet, to your soul's salvation.

Child of God! Has not your Father come to you yet? Cry for Him! Cry for Him! Your Father will come! Nothing fetches the parent to the child, like the child's cry. Cry, Little One, cry, you who have but little faith! "Ah, but," you say, "I am too weak to cry." Did you ever notice that the little one sometimes cries so very low that when you are sitting in the parlor with its mother, you do not hear it? Up she goes! There is the dear child crying upstairs. And off she goes! *She* can hear it, though *you* cannot—because it is her child that cries.

Cry, Little One! Let your prayers go up to Heaven. Though your minister does not hear it—though Unbelief says no one can hear it—there is a God in Heaven who knows the cry of the penitent! He "heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds." Sweet posture! To be waiting for the Consolation of Israel!

II. This brings us to the second point—THE FULFILMENT OF THIS EXPECTATION. Did Simeon wait in vain? Ah, no! He waited for consolation and he had the consolation for which he waited. Oh, I can picture Simeon's frame! How altered it was that morning! He went, probably, an old man limping up to the Temple, his face sad with disappointment, his eyes dark with distress because he had not found that for which he looked. He wanted to see and could not see. He desired to know and he did not know.

Sometimes, in his unbelieving moments, he thought that, like the Prophets and kings, he should wait long and seek, but never find. Do you not think you see him, when he held the Babe in his arms? Why, the old man did not then need his staff to lean on—down it went and both his arms grasped the Child! He may have trembled a little, but the mother of Jesus was not afraid to trust her Child to him. How young he felt! As young as when ten years ago he walked with light steps through the streets of Jerusalem!

Scarcely in Heaven did old Simeon feel more happy than he did at that moment when he clasped the Babe in his arms! Do you not think you see him? Joy is flashing from his eyes! His lips speak sonnets which burst out like the chorus of immortals, when he says, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your Salvation." Ask now! Was he disappointed in the object of his search? Was Jesus equal to his expectations, "the Consolation of Israel"? We answer, Yes! We dare any person here, or in the wide world, to deny what we now assert—there is certainly sweet and blessed consolation in Jesus for all the people of God!

I do not know whether any have ever been fools enough to say the Gospel is not comforting. I do not think they have. Most of them have said, "It is a very good religion for old women and imbeciles, for sick people—those on deathbeds." The worst of men admit that religion is a very comfortable thing. Or if they do not admit it, they have the lesson to learn. Come, deist or skeptic, whichever you are, let me point you to Believers in the time of persecution. Look upon that face of Stephen, already lighted up with Heaven's own Glory while they are stoning him!

Let me bring you down through the ages of the rack and the wheel, the times of stocks and inquisitions. Let me tell you of martyrs who clapped their hands in the flames and while their limbs were burning at the stake could yet sing a carol, as if it were Christmas Day in their hearts, though it was Ash Day to their bodies! How often you find those who are foremost in suffering, foremost in joy! When men laid iron chains on their arms, God put golden chains of honor on their necks.

When men heaped reproaches on their names, God heaped comforts on their souls. The peace cry, like the blood cry, let it never be hushed! The Christian race, by our martyrs and confessors, show the wide, wide world that there is a joy in religion that can quench the flame, snatch torture from the rack, the torment from the wheel! It can sing in prison! It can laugh cheerfully in the stocks and make our free and unimprisoned hearts burst through the bars of the dungeon and fly upwards, chanting Psalms to our God! Behold the Consolation of Israel!

But the infidel replies, "These are excitable moments. At such times persons are stimulated beyond their natural strength. Your examples are not fair." Come here, Unbeliever, and let me show you Christians in ordinary life—not martyrs, not confessors, not men with blood-red crowns on their brows—but common men like yourself. See that husband? He has just returned from the funeral of his wife. Do you mark his countenance? He says, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Could you do that? See that mother? Her child lies dead. And looking on it she says, "He has done all things well. It is hard to part with him, but I will resign him to my God." Could you do that, Infidel? See yonder merchant? Ruin has overtaken him—he is reduced to poverty. Mark how he lifts his hands to Heaven and cries, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines. The labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat. The flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Could you do the like, Infidel? No, you could not. But there is consolation in Jesus Christ. I am half ashamed of some of you, my Brethren, who do not bear trouble well because you are not an honor to your religion as you ought to be. You should learn, if possible, to say, like Job—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "Alas," you say, "it is easy enough for you to tell us so, but not quite so easy to practice." I grant you that! But then it is the glory of the Gospel that makes us do things that are not easy. If it is a hard thing, so much the more honor to God—so much the more virtue in the Scriptures—that by their blessed influence and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, they enable us to bear trials under which others sink.

But a little while ago I heard of an ungodly man who had a pious wife. They had but one daughter, a fair and lovely thing. She was laid on a bed of sickness—the father and mother stood beside the bed. The solemn moment came when she must die. The father leaned over and put his arm round her and wept hot tears upon his child's white brow. The mother stood there too, weeping her very soul away. The moment that child was dead, the father began to tear his hair and curse himself in his despair! Misery had got hold upon him. But as he looked towards the foot of the bed, there stood his wife. She was not raving, she was not cursing.

She wiped her eyes and said, "I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me." The unbeliever's heart for a moment rose in anger, for he imagined that she was a stoic. But the tears flowed down her cheeks, too. He saw that though she was a weak and feeble woman, she could bear sorrow better than he could and he threw his arms round her neck and said, "Ah, Wife, I have often laughed at your religion. I will do so no more! There is much blessedness in this resignation. Would God that I had it, too!" "Yes," she might have answered, "I have the Consolation of Israel." There is—hear it, you despisers and wonder and perish!—there is consolation in Jesus Christ!

That dear Sister, whom I mentioned at the beginning of this service, was one of the noblest pictures of resignation I have ever seen. When I went to see her I could only describe her position like this—she was sitting on the banks of the Jordan, singing, with her feet in the water, longing to cross the river. "Ah, Pastor," she said, when I came in, "how you have fed my soul and made my young days come over again. I did not think the Lord would give me such blessed seasons just before He took me Home. But now I must bid you good-by, for I am going up to my Jesus and I shall be with Him forever."

I shall not forget how calm she looked! Ah, it is sweet to see a Christian die! It is the noblest thing on earth—the dismissal of a saint from his labor to his reward! From his conflicts to his triumphs! The gorgeous pageantry of princes is as nothing. The glory of the setting sun is not to be compared with the heavenly light which illumine the soul as it fades from the organs of bodily sense to be ushered into the august Presence of the Lord! When dear Haliburton died, he said, "I am afraid I shall not be able to bear another testimony to my Master, but in order to show you that I am peaceful and still resting on Christ, I will hold my hands up." And just before he died, he held both his hands up and clapped them together, though he could not speak!

Have you ever read of the deathbed of Payson? I cannot describe it to you. It was like the flight of a seraph. John Knox, that brave old fellow, when he came to die, sat up in his bed and said, "Now the hour of my dissolution is come. I have longed for it many a day, and I shall be with my Lord in a few moments." Then he fell back on his bed and died. We have many others of whom I might tell you. Such as that blessed Janeway, who said, "O that I had lips to tell you a thousandth part of that which I now feel! You will never know the worth of Jesus till you come to your deathbed and then you will find Him a blessed Christ, when you need Him most."

O Unbeliever, stand where death is at work! And if you love not the righteous in their life, you will say, none the less, like Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his." Such is our holy religion—a sweet and blessed consolation!

III. And this brings us to the third point which is THE EXPLANATION OF THIS FACT—to show to all men and to show to you, especially, that there is consolation and to explain how it is.

In the first place, there is consolation in the doctrines of the Bible. I like a doctrinal religion. I do not believe in the statement of some people that they have no creed. A man says, for instance, "I am not a Calvinist and I am not an Arminian. I am not a Baptist, I am not a Presbyterian, I am not an Independent." He says he is liberal. But this is only the license he claims for his own habit of disagreeing with everybody. He is one of that sort of people whom we generally find to be the most bigoted and least tolerant of others.

He follows *himself*. And so belongs to the smallest denomination in the world! I do not believe that charity consists in giving up our denominational distinctions. I think there is a "more excellent way." Even those who despise not faith, though they almost sacrifice it to their benevolence, will sometimes say, "Well, I don't belong to any of your sects and parties." There was a body of men once who came out from all branches of the Christian Church with the hope that everybody else of true heart would follow them. The result, however, has been that they have only made another denomination, distinct alike in doctrine and discipline.

I believe in creeds if they are based on Scripture. They may not secure unity of sentiment, but on the whole they promote it, for they serve as landmarks and show us the points at which many turn aside. Every man must have a creed if he believes anything. The greater certainty he feels that it is true, the greater his own satisfaction. In doubts, darkness and distrust, there can be no consolation. The vague fancies of the skeptic, as he muses over images and apprehensions too shapeless and airy to be incorporated into any creed may please for awhile, but it is the pleasure of a dream.

I believe that there is consolation for Israel in the substance of faith and the evidence of things not seen. Ideas are too ethereal to lay hold of. The anchor we have is sure and steadfast. I thank God that the faith I have received can be molded into a creed and can be explained with words so simple that the common people can understand it and be comforted by it. Then look at the doctrines themselves—the doctrines of the Bible. What well-springs of consolation they are! How consolatory the doctrine of election to the Israel of God! To some men it is repulsive. But show me the

gracious soul that has come to put his trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel—"Chosen in Christ," will be a sweet stanza in his song of praise!

To think that before the hills were formed, or the channels of the sea were scooped out, God loved *me*! That from everlasting to everlasting His mercy is upon His people! Is not that a consolation? You who do not believe in election, go and fish in other waters—but in this great sea there are mighty fishes. If you could come here, you would find rich consolation. Or come again to the sweet doctrine of redemption. What consolation is there, Beloved, to know that you are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ! Not the mock redemption taught by some people, which pretends that the ransom is paid, but the souls that are ransomed may, notwithstanding, be lost. No, no! A *positive* redemption which is effectual for all those for whom it is made.

Oh, to think that Christ has so purchased you with His blood that you cannot be lost! Is there not consolation in that doctrine—the doctrine of redemption? Think, again, of the doctrine of atonement—that Christ Jesus has borne all your sins in His own body on the Cross—that He has put away your sins by the sacrifice of Himself! There is nothing like believing in full Atonement—that all our sins are washed away and carried into the depths of the sea. Is there not consolation there? What do you say, Worldling, if you could know yourself to be elect of God the Father? If you could believe yourself redeemed by His only begotten Son? If you knew that for your sins there was a complete ransom paid—would not that be a consolation to you?

Perhaps you answer, "No." That is because you are a natural man and do not discern *spiritual* things. The spiritual man will reply, "Consolation? Yes, sweet as honey to these lips! Yes, sweeter than the honeycomb to my heart are those precious doctrines of the Grace of God." Let us pass on to consolatory promises. Oh, how sweet to the soul in distress are the promises of Jesus! For every condition there is a promise! For every sorrow there is a cordial! For every wound there is a balm! For every disease there is a medicine. If we turn to the Bible, there are promises for all cases.

Now let me appeal to you, my Friends. Have you not felt how consoling the promises are to you in seasons of adversity and hours of anguish? Do you not remember some occasion when your spirits were so broken down that you felt as if you never could have struggled through your woes and sorrows had not some sweet and precious Word of God come to your help? Minister of the Gospel, do you not remember how often you have feared that your message would be of no effect? But you have heard your Master whisper, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Sunday school Teacher, have not you said, "I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing"? And have you not then heard Jesus say, "My Word shall not return unto Me void"? Mourner, you have lost a near relation, have you not heard Jesus then say, "All things work together for good"? Softly wipe that tear away, O Widow—would not your heart have broken if it had not been for the assurance, "Your Maker is your husband"? Fatherless child, what would have become of you if you had not turned to the consoling promise, "Leave your fatherless children and let your widows trust in Me"?

But why need I tell you, Christian, that there are consoling promises in the Bible? You know there are! I would not sell a leaf of the Bible for a world, nor would I change a promise of it for stars made of gold—

**“Holy Bible, book Divine,
Precious treasure! You are mine.”**

No such comfort can I find as what I derive from you! You are Heaven on earth to me, blessed Bible! Verily, if we wait for Christ, we shall find that in His Gospel there is consolation for Israel. Not only have we consolatory promises and consolatory doctrines, but we have consolatory influences in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. There are times, my Friends, when all the promises in the world are of no use to us—when all the doctrines in the world would be of no avail unless we had a hand to apply them to us.

There lies a poor man. He has been wounded in battle. In yonder hospital there is a bundle of liniment. The blood is flowing. He has lost an arm. He has lost a leg. There are plenty at the hospital who can bind up his wounds and plenty of medicines for all that he now suffers. But what use are they? He may lie forlorn on the battlefield and die unless there is someone to bring the ambulance to carry him to the place—he cannot reach it himself. He lifts himself up on that one remaining arm, but he falls down faint. The blood is flowing freely and his strength is ebbing with it. Oh, then it is not the liniment he cares for! It is not the ointment—it is someone who can bring those things to him! Yes, and if the remedies were all put there by his side, it may be he is so faint and sick that he can do nothing for his own relief.

Now, in the Christian religion there is something more than prescriptions for our comfort. There is One, even the Spirit of Truth, who takes of the things of Jesus and applies them to us. Think not that Christ has merely put joys within our reach that we may get them for ourselves! He comes and puts the joys inside our hearts! The poor, sick, way-worn pilgrim not only finds there is something to strengthen him to walk, but he is borne on eagles' wings! Christ does not merely help him to walk, but carries him and says, “I will bind up your wounds. I will come to you Myself.”

O poor Soul, is not this joy for you? You have been often told by your minister to believe in Christ, but you say you cannot. You have often been invited to come to Jesus, but you feel you cannot come. Yes, but the best of the Gospel is that when a sinner *cannot come* to Christ, Christ can come to him! When the poor soul feels that it cannot get near Christ, Christ will be sure to draw him. O Christian, if you are, tonight, laboring under deep distresses, your Father does not give you promises and then leave you! The promises He has written in the Word He will engrave on your heart. He will manifest His love to you and by His blessed Spirit, which blows like the wind, take away your cares and troubles.

Be it known unto you, O Mourner, that it is God's prerogative to wipe every tear from the eyes of His people. I shall never forget hearing John Gough say, in his glowing manner—“Wipe away tears? That is *God's prerogative*. And yet,” said he, “*I have done it when the drunkard has been reclaimed and the tears of a wife have been wiped from her cheeks.*” O Beloved, it is a blessed thing to wipe others' tears away! But “Lo, these things works God oftentimes with men.” He not only gives you the hand-

kerchief, but wipes your eyes for you! He not only gives you the sweet wine, but holds it to your lips and pours it into your mouth!

The good Samaritan did not say, "Here is the wine and here is the oil for you." What did he do? He poured in the oil and the wine. He did not say, "Now, mount the beast"—but he set him on it and took him to the inn. Glorious Gospel, that provides such things for poor lost ones—comes after us when we cannot come after it—brings us Grace when we cannot win Grace! Here is Grace in the giving as well as the gift! Happy people, to be thus blessed of God! Simeon "waited for the Consolation of Israel," and he found it. May you find it, too!

Two short addresses to two sorts of people, and then we shall be done. To you, you followers of Jesus, let me speak. I have one thing to ask of you. With such a Father who loves you—with such a Savior who has given Himself for you and does give Himself to you—with such a good Spirit to abide with you, instruct you and comfort you—with such a Gospel—what now bows you down? What is meant by those wrinkled brows? What is meant by those flowing tears? What is meant by those aching hearts? What is meant by that melancholy carriage?

"What do they mean?" you say! "Why, I have troubles." But, Brother, have you forgotten the exhortation of the Lord? "Cast your burden on the Lord. He will sustain you." "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Do, Brethren, do try to be as glad as you can. Rejoice forevermore! A cheerful Christian recommends religion. We usually look in the window of a tradesman's shop to see what he sells. And persons very frequently look into our faces to ascertain what are the thoughts of our heart. Alas, that they should see any of us looking habitually sad.

Some persons think that sour faces and somber garments are fitting emblems of sanctity. They would count it wicked to laugh, or if they were to do such a thing as smile in chapel they would think that they had committed an unpardonable sin, though I never saw any law against that yet. All that is in us should bless His holy name, from the most playful fancy to the most sublime reverie. You need not emulate those who, to appear righteous, disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Let me beg of you, Christian, when you fast, to be of a cheerful countenance! Appear not unto men to fast. Be ever so sad, try and keep your sadness to yourself. Do not let people hear you murmur, lest they should say, "Look at that Christian, he is weak as we are."

You have heard the old fiction that Jesus Christ never laughed or smiled. It was brought forward at a friend's, where I was once staying. There was a little child in the room, who when she heard it, ran up to her father and said, "Papa, that gentleman did not tell the truth." Of course everyone looked at her and waited for her explanation. "I know that Jesus did, Papa," she added, "for the little children loved Him. And I don't think they would have loved Him if He had never smiled. Did not He say, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me,' and He took them up in His arms and gave them His blessing?"

Do you think any good Christian could take up a little child without smiling? And if he did not smile, do you think the child would go to him? Jesus Christ *did* smile. A cheerful face wins honor to religion! A cheerful deportment glorifies God, for He has said, "Let the saints be joyful in

glory. Let them sing aloud upon their beds: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." Be joyful, Christians! Be joyful!—

***"Why should the children of a King,
Go mourning all their days?"***

And now, before I close, let me appeal to those who have not this consolation. Men and Brethren, give heed. For Israel there is consolation. But for you—what is to become of some of you who have not this consolation at all? Worldly Men, from where do you draw your bliss? From the polluted ditches of a filthy world? Soon, alas, will they be emptied! And what will you do then? I see a Christian. There he is! He has been drinking all his life out of the river that makes glad the city of our God. And when he gets to Heaven, he goes to the same stream. He drinks and says, "This water is from the same fountain that I drank on earth. I drink the same bliss, but draw it nearer the fountain-head than I did before."

But I think I see you who have been drinking out of the black, dark, filthy reservoirs of earth, and when *you* get into eternity, you say, "Where is the stream at which I once slaked my thirst?" You look and it is gone! Suppose you are a drunkard. Drunkenness was your happiness on earth. Will you be drunk in Hell? There it would afford you no gratification. Here the theater was your pastime—will you find a theater in Hell? The songs of foolish lasciviousness were here your delight—will you find such songs in eternity? Will you be able to sing them amidst unutterable burnings?

Can you hum those lascivious notes when you are drinking the fearful gall of eternal woe? Oh, surely, no!

The things in which you once trusted and found your peace and comfort will have gone forever! Oh, what is your happiness tonight, my Friends? Is it a happiness that will last? Is it a joy that will endure? Or are you holding in your hand an apple of Sodom and saying, "It is fair, it is passing fair," when you know that you only look on it now, but will have to eat it in eternity? See the man who has that apple in his hand—he puts it to his mouth—he has to masticate it in eternity. And it is ashes—ashes on his lips—ashes between his teeth—ashes in his jaws—ashes forever—ashes that shall go into his blood and make each vein a road for the hot feet of pain to travel! His heart is an abode of misery and his whole frame a den of loathsomeness!

Ah, if you have not this Consolation of Israel, do you know what you must have? You must have eternal torment! I have often remarked that the most wicked men hold the doctrine that there is no torment for the body in Hell. Riding some time ago in a railway carriage with a man who seemed to have no idea of religion, he said, "I'm as cold as the devil," and repeated the observation several times. I said to him, "He's not at all cold, Sir." "I suppose you are a believer in Hell, then?" he replied. "Yes, I am," I said, "because I am a believer in the Bible." "I don't think there is any fire for the body, I don't. I think it is the conscience—remorse of conscience, dismay and despair and such like—I don't think it has anything to do with the body," he said.

And strange enough, many other ungodly men with whom I have spoken on the subject all seem to be partial to the Hell that only deals with the *conscience*. The reason is this. They do not feel for their *soul*. They are natural men who have a natural care about their body, but they think that so long as their body gets off, they will not care for Hell at all. Hear

this, then, you ungodly men and women! You care not for the torture of the soul. Hear this—and let there be no metaphor or figure! Hear it, for I speak God's plain language!

For the body, too, there is a Hell. It is not merely your soul that is to be tortured. What do you care for conscience? What do you care for memory? What do you care for imagination? Hear this, then, Drunkard! Hear this, man of Pleasure! That body which you pamper shall lie in pain! It was not a figure which Christ used when He said, "In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

It was a *tongue*, Sir! It was a *flame*, Sir. It was not a metaphorical tongue and it was not a metaphorical flame! It was not metaphorical water that he wanted. Real, positive, actual flames tormented the body of that rich Dives in Hell! Ah, wicked man, those very hands of yours that now grasp the wine cup shall grasp the cup of your damnation! The feet that carry you to the theater shall lie in brimstone forever! The eyes that look on the spectacles of lust—it is no figure, Sir—those same eyes shall see murderous spectacles of misery! The same head which has oftentimes here throbbled with headache, shall there beat with pains you have not yet felt!

Your heart, for which you care so little, shall become an emporium of miseries where demons shall empty the scalding boilers of woe. It is not fiction! Read the Bible and make a fiction of it if you can. There is a fire which knows no abatement, a worm which never dies, a flame unquenchable! As you go down those stairs, think there is a Hell. It is no fiction. Let the old doctrine stand out once more, that God has prepared Tophet of old. The pile thereof is wood and much smoke—the breath of the Lord, like a flame of fire, does kindle it.

There is a Hell! O that you would flee from it! O that by Divine Grace you would escape it! Sodom was no figure—that was real hail of fire from Heaven. "Hurry," said the angel, "hurry!" and put his hand behind the timely-warned fugitive. Man! I am come as an angel from Heaven to you tonight and I would put my hand upon your shoulder and cry, "Hurry! Hurry! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain! Hurry to the mountain lest you be consumed!"

If you know your need of a Savior, come and trust Him! If you feel your need of salvation, come and have it, for it is said, "Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." None are excluded but those who exclude themselves. None are taken in but those whom Divine Grace takes in through the sovereign mercy of our God. May God receive you in His arms! May sinners be delivered from the pit! May those find Him who never yet have sought the Consolation of Israel!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I ask your prayers, that God may bless this sermon to the souls of men.

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“YOUR SALVATION”

NO. 1417

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 2, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord,
now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word:
for my eyes have seen Your salvation.”
Luke 2:28-30.***

LAST Lord’s-day morning [No. 1416, *The Faithful Saying*] we used the broad axe to clear the forest of self-righteousness—one after another human hopes were made to fall, for the axe was laid at the root of the trees. Now let us cultivate the clearing and sow the good seed! We might have had for our slogan, then, “The Lord of Hosts has purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.” We tried to sweep away every vestige of anything like self-trust as we showed that Christ Jesus came to save men as sinners and that only as *sinners* could they have any part or lot in Him. Our Lord gave Himself for our sins, but He never gave Himself for our righteousness! We bore witness that human goodness is a mere fiction and that it is rather a hindrance than a help to the work of salvation, since it opposes itself to the grand principle of Grace by which, alone, men can be saved. So far our work has been to root out, to pull down, to destroy and to throw down. And we hope it has been done very thoroughly.

But there is a time to build up as well as a time to break down. And as we showed on the former occasion where salvation is not and cannot be, so today let us, by the help of God’s Spirit, endeavor to point out where salvation really is—so that those who have learned to look away from themselves may now be taught to look to Christ! May the Holy Spirit grant us this desire of our heart and may thousands, by this sermon, find salvation!

Observe that Simeon found Christ in the Temple, being conducted there by the Holy Spirit. There was an ancient promise, “The Lord whom You seek shall suddenly come to His Temple,” and this probably drew the holy man to the courts of the Lord. But the Lord might have come and Simeon might not have been there. Or the good old man might have been occupied in some other court of the holy place. But, being led of the Spirit, he came to the appointed spot at the very time when the mother of Christ was bringing the Baby in her arms to do for Him according to the Law. In this, Simeon is an instance of the Truth of God that they find Christ who are led by the Spirit and they, alone. No man ever comes to Christ by his own wit and wisdom, nor by his own unprompted will—he, only, who is drawn of the Spirit comes unto Christ.

We must submit ourselves to Divine teaching and Divine drawing, or else Christ may come in His Temple, but we shall not perceive Him. I, therefore, would earnestly remark at the outset of this discourse, how necessary it is that we should submit ourselves to the movements of the Holy Spirit upon our souls. Let me rather say what a privilege it is to be moved by the Spirit and how gladly we should welcome His Divine influences. Beloved Hearer, as you love your soul, be very tender towards the Holy Spirit and prize even the least spark of His Divine fire. Quench not the Spirit, neither grieve Him. Prize the love of the Spirit and pray to feel His power. When He comes upon you to convict you of sin, be plastic in His hand! Yield to His teaching and humbly confess the faults and follies of which He convicts you.

When He comes to lead you gently to the Savior, be not as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, but gladly follow where He draws, according to the prayer of the spouse in the song, “Draw me, we will run after You.” All your hope of finding Christ, dear seeking Friend, lies in the Spirit of God illuminating your understanding, constraining your will and quickening your affections—therefore never vex Him, but be ever ready to obey His faintest monition. The wind blows where it wills and when you feel its breath, be glad to spread your wings that you may be borne upward by its power.

Simeon, being thus led of the Spirit, came where Christ was, but mark how quick the old man’s eyes were to see Him! How should He know that this Baby in swaddling clothes was the Lord’s Christ? Doubtless there were many others in the temple who saw Joseph and Mary and the priest, but they thought that nothing was to be seen but a young peasant woman and her husband bringing their poor offering to redeem their first-born child. The frequenters of the Temple passed to and fro and felt no interest in so common a scene—but the watching eyes of Simeon had no sooner lighted upon the infant Person of our Divine Lord than at once they were held spellbound and filled with tears of joy! The aged saint went immediately to the mother, took up the Baby in his arms and without hesitation said, “Mine eyes have seen Your salvation.”

Those who have been looking and longing for Christ are usually the first to perceive Him! This man had been waiting for the consolation of Israel and in the process he had gained discernment so that when Jesus appeared he knew Him at once. O Soul, if you are longing for Christ, you will know when He is near you, even as the thirsting harts of the desert scent the waters from afar. If you have an intense hunger after the Lord Jesus, you will not need to be told which is bread—you will not be deceived by a stone, for your hunger will instruct you. In this case an instinct springs out of an appetite, discernment grows out of desire—if you long for Christ, you will not readily be deceived by false teachers, for you will know what your soul craves after and will not be content with anything else!

As soon as a truly awakened soul sees Jesus, though it is but the beginnings of Him, it recognizes Him! It recognizes the hem of His garment

and the print of His feet. Though the Lord is seen only as an Infant and the heart's idea of Him is very incomplete, yet He is perceived to be The Incomparable One and the soul cries out, "He is all my salvation and all my desire." May we thus be taught by the Spirit of God and thus made to long for Christ—and we shall have a quickness of eye to perceive Him and to see infinitely more in Him than this blind world has ever dreamed! From Simeon we shall try to learn this morning. Should not the aged teach us wisdom?

Three things appear to me to be worthy of our attentive observation. First, that Christ *is* salvation, for that is the pith and marrow of Simeon's song—"My eyes have seen Your salvation." Secondly, that Christ is to be taken up into the arms and looked upon. And thirdly, that when He is thus treated, Christ has a wonderful effect upon the soul. May we be led to try all this for ourselves. Personal testing is far better than mere hearing. I may preach to you and it may end in nothing, but if you will now come and take my Lord in your arms, an eternity of good will come of it! O taste and see that the Lord is good!

I. In the first place we learn from Simeon that CHRIST IS SALVATION. He is a Savior, for so the angels sang—"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." But He is more than a Savior—He is salvation itself! Moses sang, "He also has become my salvation." David said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation," and Isaiah exclaimed, "Behold, God is my salvation." It is well to see salvation in the work, life and death of Christ, but we must never forget that the *essence* of it lies in His Person—He *Himself* is salvation!

Then he took Him up in his arms and said, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." This was before our Lord had begun to preach or to teach, or to suffer for our sins—as a Baby He was God's salvation! The Gospel loses very much of its sweetness when the Person of Christ is placed in the background and treated as if it were a mere myth, or as if it were quite a secondary consideration. Why, this is the choicest dainty of the feast! It is the most substantial food whereon the saints are nourished—His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed! Everything about our Lord is saving, but He, Himself, is *salvation*. His teaching, His example, His love, His tenderness, His sufferings, His Glory—all help us—but it is His own glorious self which puts efficacy into them! Had He not been Man, He could not have died! And had He not been God, His dying could not have availed for our redemption!

We are bid to come, not to His *work*, but to *Him*—"Come unto *Me*, all you that labor and are heavy laden." To Him we come and our heart can say, "He only is my rock and my salvation." Let us pursue this theme by saying of our Lord that He is the *only* salvation. Simeon had not found another. We are told of that aged saint, that he was just and devout—and assuredly if any man could have seen salvation by the Law, Simeon would have seen it! Just towards man, devout towards God, he had hit upon the true balance of a perfect character! But he had not seen salvation in his own character! He looked for it to the Lord's Christ. Neither to his honest

actions before his fellow men, nor to his secret prayers and communing with God did Simeon turn for eternal life, otherwise he would not have been looking for a salvation which he had already found—nor would he, at the sight of Jesus, have rapturously exclaimed, “My eyes have seen Your salvation.”

Not in yourself, O Simeon! Not in all that you had done, or felt, or said had you seen salvation! But there in the Baby you did behold it with supreme delight! Simeon, too, had been very familiar with the courts of the Lord’s House. He was one of those who almost *lived* in the temple. Sacrifices were seen by him every morning and every evening and upon all high festivals. But in the blood of bullocks and lambs he had never seen salvation. Frequently did he gaze upon the instructive types and symbolic ordinances of the Law. But as he looked on them he saw only shadows and still watched for the Substance. Never over the morning lamb, or the paschal supper, had Simeon said, “My eyes have seen Your salvation”—that exclamation was never uttered till he had seen Christ Himself!

Beloved, salvation is *not* to be found in ordinances nor in sacraments! God forbid we should say, when we have seen a Baptism, or the imitation of it, “We yield You hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it has pleased You to regenerate this infant with Your Holy Spirit, to receive him for Your own child by adoption and to incorporate him in Your holy Church.” There are some who wickedly talk so, though we can hardly imagine that they believe what they say! It is in vain to show them their folly—they are wedded to it—but let us pray, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” God forbid we should talk about salvation in connection with the Lord’s Supper as the superstitious do, who seem to regard it as a passport to Paradise and, therefore, press it upon the dying! Truly we may, in the Lord’s Supper, eat and drink condemnation to ourselves unless we discern the Lord’s body.

It is in the Lord Himself that there is salvation and in none other—not even in the outward ordinances of God’s ordaining is salvation to be found, for the Lord has not placed it there. See Jesus and you have seen salvation! And the only salvation! The most moral life and the most attentive remembrance of sacred ceremonies will land you short of the salvation of your soul unless you see Jesus and take Him to be your All in All. We must all learn to sing that song which Isaiah has recorded in his 12th chapter—“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.”

According to Simeon’s song, the Lord Jesus is God’s salvation. Dwell on that little word, “Your.” “My eyes have seen *Your* salvation.” In the Person of Christ we see the salvation which God had of old covenanted to bestow upon His people—the salvation which, in due season, the Lord had prepared before the face of all people—a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of His people Israel. The promised, predestinated and prepared salvation of God is Christ Jesus! This is the salvation of which the Prophets spoke, to which all the symbols pointed—the salvation which was hidden

from ages and from generations that it might shine forth like the sun upon this favored dispensation. It is a salvation devised and provided by God which manifests and glorifies God! It is a salvation which is Godlike, being both just and gracious! It is great beyond conception! In a word, it is God's salvation.

O Beloved, think much of Christ because the Lord God Almighty ordained Him for you and gives Him to you! God gave up His own Son for you, even His well-beloved Son! And He Himself, by the Holy Spirit, has revealed Him to you and in you, teaching you to know Him, to trust Him, to love Him and to follow Him! Therefore value Jesus beyond all price as God's own salvation! God Himself accepts Christ in our place and makes Him our salvation—will we not accept Him? God Himself does rest in Christ—will we not rest in Him? God smells a sweet savor in the Sacrifice which Christ has offered—will we not also rejoice and eat the peace offering and be glad before the Lord? Are any of you seeking salvation at this moment? I pray you do not think of inventing a savior of your own, but are willing to take God's salvation! And when you ask what and who that salvation is, our only answer must be—Christ is the salvation of God!

If you have seen Jesus by the eyes of faith, your eyes have seen God's salvation! You are saved, saved on the spot, saved forever! Jesus is Heaven's balm for earth's wounds, God's remedy for man's diseases! Do not put away this priceless gift of infinite mercy. Receive it heartily—receive it at once! Jesus is set before you, take Him up in your arms! When Simeon said, "My eyes have seen Your salvation," he must have meant that in that little Baby he saw salvation set forth in its essence. Can you bring yourselves, now, in fancy and in faith, which may, for once, work together, into the courts of the Temple? Can you see Mary with the little Christ in her arms? Look upon Him and take Him up and put yourself into Simeon's place and say, "My eyes have seen Your salvation."

This little child is salvation and yet how can it be? By the light of Scripture we can understand what else would seem incredible. For here is, first, God in human flesh! The Divine Nature in mysterious union with the human! Behold, He who is now in your arms as an Infant is also the Infinite God! Feeble as He is as to His humanity, He is Omnipotent as to His Deity! He is at once the Son of Man and the Son of God! Herein is man's salvation! When we think of the fact that God came down to our low estate and espoused our nature, we are sure that He means nothing but good to man and we are ready to burst out with Simeon's joyous exclamation and cry, "My eyes have seen Your salvation!" We are sure that man will be lifted up to Heaven now that Heaven has come down to man!

Our Lord was not merely a Child, but a *poor* Child. He was so poor that His mother, when she had to redeem Him, could not bring a lamb, which was the sacrifice for all who could afford it. She presented the poorer offering, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons, and so she came as a poor woman and He was presented to the Lord as a poor woman's Child. Herein lies, also, rich comfort for lowly hearts. And as they think of it, each one may say, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." When I think of

the Prince of Glory and the Lord of angels stooping so low as this, that a poor woman bears Him in her arms and calls Him her Baby, surely there must be salvation for the lowest, the poorest and the most sunken! When the all-glorious Lord, in order to be Incarnate, is born a Baby, born of a poor woman and publicly acknowledged as a poor woman’s child, we feel sure that He will receive the poorest and most despised when they seek His face! Yes, Jesus, the son of the carpenter, means salvation to carpenters and all others of lowly rank!

But why has Mary brought Him to the Temple? She has brought Him to redeem Him. He was her firstborn and therefore He must be redeemed. Was He then under the Law? Yes, for our sakes He was under the Law and He who redeemed us had to be, Himself, redeemed! When I think of the 12 and sixpence, or thereabouts, which His mother paid as redemption money, what a contrast rises before me! He has redeemed us unto God by His *blood* and yet, as Mary’s firstborn, a price was paid in silver for Him. “A good price that I was priced at of them.” Now, because our Lord Jesus came under the Law and obeyed its precepts, we see salvation in Him. When God Himself, Incarnate, came under the Law so as to have redemption money paid for Him, we understand it all, for it is written, “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

This wondrous stoop of Deity to lowly humanity and this marvelous honoring of the Law in our nature by One who is Immanuel, God With Us, has brought salvation to our fallen race! Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, for Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ—that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith! But, to my mind, Simeon did not only see salvation represented in its Essence, but his faith saw salvation *guaranteed* by the appearance of the wondrous Child. Incarnation is the beginning of Substitution and the commencement of Substitution is the guarantee of the completion and the continuance of it! Our Lord would not have taken upon Himself the nature of the seed of Abraham if He had not intended to do so effectually to redeem and deliver them. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He, also, Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

Be you sure of this, that He will not commence to battle with Satan and then leave the conflict before the enemy is destroyed! In that Baby, Simeon did well to see all the work of saving men, for the appearing of the Lord in our flesh and blood was the sure pledge of it! He saw, there, a perfect obedience presented to God, for the Baby was brought under the Law at the very outset and its redemption money was paid—a sure sign that to the end the Incarnate God would say, “Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.” No jot or tittle of the Law would Christ omit, since even as a Baby He was both circumcised and presented in the Temple according to the Law. Simeon, I doubt not, saw in the presentation of Christ in the

temple, a foreshadowing of His death on the Cross. The time would come when He must be brought to the altar and no redemption would be offered for Him, for He, Himself, must be the price for His people.

Simeon saw, as he gazed upon the Child, the agony and bloody sweat, the Cross and passion, for he knew that the Incarnate God would not shrink from anything which He had undertaken. That fair and lovely face, the most beautiful probably that human eye ever rested upon—Simeon could, by faith, see it more marred than that of any man while, in our place, He suffered the wrath of God. Simeon was so well instructed that his faith saw the Child, in due time, dead—dead because the Law had carried out its penalty and the Sin-Bearer had been made to die. And he could see the Resurrection, too. As he saw the Child carried home by the rejoicing mother, because He had been redeemed, he foresaw the hour when Jesus should return unto the Father, having accomplished eternal redemption for all His people! He saw in that Child both Light and Glory and he felt deep peace suffuse his mind at the sight and, therefore, I feel sure that he saw in the Infant Christ the pledge and assurance of that perfected work which closed with, “It is finished.”

Bethlehem ensures Gethsemane and Calvary, for the Christ of God will not fail nor be discouraged, but having put forth His hand, He will finish the work which His Father gave Him to do. So then, Beloved, if you see Christ, you have seen the sum and total of His work. His Person is so intimately connected with all that He has done that He bears within Himself all its virtue and efficacy—and by a *look* at Him we receive the result of all that He has accomplished! Trust Jesus as born in our nature, as living a life of holiness, as dying a sacrificial death, as buried, as risen, as interceding and as, by-and-by, to return, and you have salvation! Jesus anywhere, Jesus everywhere is salvation! Those who have only a contracted view of Him and behold Him rather in His Infancy than in His Glory have, nevertheless, seen His salvation!

Come, then, you trembling, tottering, timorous ones and see salvation secured by a Savior who exactly suits your weakness! Even a feeble old man can lift a baby! Come in your feebleness and embrace the Savior in whose condescending littleness salvation lies secure! I might say many things here, but I prefer just to keep to that one point, that Jesus Christ is the *whole* of salvation. Simeon did not say, “My eyes have seen a *part* of Your salvation.” No, but the whole of it. Christ bought, by His blood, all that was necessary for our redemption! And having bought it, He brought it down to us, descending to seek and to save the lost. He came on earth to proclaim salvation and to let all men know that it is treasured up in Him. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.”

As He contains salvation so does He dispense it, for He is exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins. As He dispenses it, so out of His fullness has He made all of us to receive Grace for Grace. Because He draws us to Himself, we have come and are coming to Him perpetually. In Him we have our life preserved and by Him our steps are upheld. Because He lives, we, also, live—He is made of God unto us wis-

dom and sanctification. Christ has salvation within Himself and he that gets Him has complete salvation. "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." Brothers and Sisters, you are saved from the ruin of the Fall if you have Christ! The second Adam has repaired the ruins of the first. Brothers and Sisters, you are saved from the guilt of sin if you have Christ, for your sin is yours no longer—it is not imputed to you—"The Lord has laid on *Him* the iniquity of us all."

Brothers and Sisters, you are delivered from the power of original sin if you have Christ for, behold, the new-born life within you shall be in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life! Christ has entered into you and He will bind the strong-armed man and cast him out. In having Christ, my Brethren, you have obtained victory over the world, the flesh and the devil—for this is the victory which overcomes all these—even our faith! Go forward and grasp what is already your own. Yes, and when death comes, it shall not be death to *you*, for he that lives and believes in Him shall never die! You shall be more than a conqueror in this thing, also—therefore be not in bondage through fear of death! You have salvation in every aspect of it and every form of it as soon as you have obtained Christ.

Very commonplace teaching, perhaps, you think. Yes, let it be commonplace! Let it be the bread you live upon, the air you breathe. I beseech you never forget that the whole of salvation is in Christ! Do not expect to find a portion of it in yourselves, nor in outward ordinances, nor in the works of the Law, nor in priestcraft, nor anywhere else—the body of salvation is Christ and all its substance is in Him. Do you object to this? Then let me ask you, in what point is Christ deficient? What more do you need? Do you need penances? Has He not already suffered all that Justice requires? What do you need? Would you toil to gain the kingdom of Heaven? Lo, He has opened it to all Believers by a toil which covered Him with bloody sweat! What more is required? Washing? There is the fountain filled with blood. Clothing? There is the robe of spotless righteousness. Medicine? Truly with His stripes we are healed!

Think of *anything* that can be required to make a man perfect and you will find it all in Christ. "For you are complete in Him." "Christ is all." Suppose, Beloved, that our Lord Jesus were not perfect as a Savior, what then? Could any of us make up the deficiency? What is there of ours that we could bring to Him? If His robe of righteousness were not finished, would any of our filthy rags be fit to be joined to His cloth of gold? If that fountain were not full and efficacious for cleansing, what would you pour into it? What could you contribute but your own pollution? What help could that be? Dream of yoking a gnat with an archangel and then imagine that you can help your Lord in the work of salvation! Shall a creeping worm be needed to complete the work of Him who made the world? What wild nonsense is this! Must the Son of God be helped by sinners dead in sin? O Friends, if Jesus is not able to save you from first to last, you are lost, for neither yourself, nor priest, nor pope can bring anything to the

Lord but dross and dung—and shall this be added to that most fine gold tried in the fire with which Christ redeems the souls of men?

At this moment I speak personally of my own confidence—I have no hope of being saved if Jesus is not the whole of my salvation. I trust Him *in* everything and *for* everything and I solemnly warn any here who are trusting a little in Christ and also somewhat in themselves, that their hope will be vain! Jesus must be everything or nothing! If we take Christ we must take the whole of Christ. There must be no picking and choosing. We must have all of Christ and He must be all our salvation and all our desire. What hinders? Surely we delight to do this at once!

II. We leave our first head for you to think upon and turn to the second. CHRIST IS TO BE TAKEN UP INTO OUR ARMS AND TO BE LOOKED AT. I am quite sure that when Simeon took Christ up into his arms, although that was a physical action, yet there was a *spiritual* action underneath it. It was in his *heart* that he took up our Lord. And when his natural eyes saw Christ, he beheld Him also with the eyes of his soul—of this we are sure, for if the mere sight of Christ with his *eyes* had been so pleasing to Simeon, he would have said, “Lord, let Your servant never go away, for my eyes have seen Your salvation. Let me, therefore, stay here and always see Him.”

But the sight was spiritual and, therefore, he, though he had known Christ after the flesh, did not desire to know Him any more—but was willing to depart to the realm of pure spirits—for which that sight had prepared him. Now, will you try and picture Simeon taking up Christ that you may do the same? He no sooner saw Him than, asking nobody’s leave, he lifted up the blessed Baby in his arms! That was a grasp of faith and its meaning was, “He is mine! I take Him to be my salvation.” For himself he embraced the Incarnate Lord and he was not ashamed to avow his faith in the courts of the Lord’s House in the midst of Jerusalem! It had been revealed to him that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Christ and now he openly acknowledges that this was the Christ, the Consolation of Israel!

Dear Hearers, can you not put forth your arms, this morning, and take up my Lord to be your own forever? There is nobody to forbid you—no, many are *inviting* you! Take Him, now, and be happy. Does your heart say, “Yes, He shall be mine”? Then delay not to claim Him! What a mercy it is that Jesus could be taken up in the arms and salvation thus be held in men’s hands! He that in the beginning was with God and is, indeed, God Himself, nevertheless can be taken up in the arms of faith! A whole Christ can be held in an old man’s feeble arms! O that other aged men would come and take Him! Yes, and young men and women, too! Would God that thousands of every age and sex would now confess the Lord Jesus to be their salvation! God help you so to do at once!

Simeon held that Baby in the grasp of love as well as of faith, for I am sure the old man pressed the Baby to his bosom and looked most fondly upon Him as he said, “My eyes have seen Your salvation.” He could not have held Him out at arm’s length—that would have been impossible in

such a case—but he felt that he at last saw the dearest Object of his desires and so he clasped Him to his bosom! Come, let us, one by one, do the same. "My Jesus, my Salvation, You are all mine and I love You. The Heaven of heavens cannot contain You and yet I hold You! You fill all worlds and yet I have You, all my own, the beloved of my soul forever." What an armful that aged saint had obtained! Did ever human arms hold a burden more precious, a treasure more desirable? Come, then, Brothers and Sisters, and say, "Christ shall be mine this morning, all mine and forever mine! By faith I take Him to be my very own." God help you, by His Holy Spirit, to give your Lord such an embrace.

While Simeon was thus holding the child in his arms, he gazed upon Him with intense delight. I know he did, for he said, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." With what wondering pleasure and reverence he looked into that dear face and marked those altogether lovely features. Doubtless he looked and looked, and looked, and looked and looked again! He could scarcely bear to lift his eyes. So must *you* do with Christ. First, take Him to be yours and then let your eyes be riveted upon Him. Never let your thoughts forsake this choicest of all subjects for godly meditation! Think much of Him who is the whole of your salvation and embrace Him in that respect.

Alas, there are some Christians who never think of Jesus in that way. There is a certain creed which tells you you may be saved today and lost tomorrow! No Believer has obtained eternal salvation according to that theory, but only a temporary and *possible* salvation. On that theory there is no seeing the whole of God's salvation as soon as you see Jesus—you only see a bare hope of it. But we know that whoever believes in Jesus is saved and, therefore, we assert that Christ is salvation and He that has Him is saved! Christ's words are, "I give unto My sheep *eternal* life and they shall *never* perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." And he who knows the meaning of these words rejoices that he has the whole of salvation in his arms and he may look at it as long as he lives and never cease to look, for it is worthy of life-long admiration!

I like the thought of Simeon being an old man and taking the Infant Jesus in his arms. I have a hope that one of these days, by God's mercy, this poor old world of ours, which has come to her dotage and decay, may be led, by Sovereign Grace, to embrace Jesus the ever new! Then will the Millennium dawn and the world may then pray for the last conflagration to end her sorrowful history, saying, "Now let this globe depart in peace, for it has seen Your salvation." But, to drop all figurative speech, it is a great blessing to the aged man to have Jesus in his arms. Though he shall be compelled by the infirmities of age to ask with Barzillai, "Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink?" Yet he shall find great sweetness in the Bread of Heaven and the name of Jesus shall be as wine on the lees well refined. If, through age and infirmity, he can hear no more the voice of singing men and singing women, he that has Christ, has music in his heart forever!

In old age Solomon tells us that the grasshopper is a burden, but this Child is none. Then the sun, the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, but this Child gives light to all who see Him. Then the keepers of the house tremble, but they are strengthened as they hold the Lord! Then they that look out of the windows are darkened, but they are bright when they gaze upon the Savior. The doors are shut in the streets, but no door shuts out the Lord Jesus! The voice of the bird awakens the light sleeper, but no sound shall break the repose of those who rest in Jesus. With the aged, desire fails, but not with the aged *saint*, for he sees in Christ Jesus all his desires fulfilled! And though man goes to his long home, he that has the holy Child Jesus to go with him may even long for the journey, saying, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace." Mourners may go about the streets of earth, but he who has seen in Christ the salvation of God ascends to other streets where sorrow and sighing are fled away. Thrice blessed old age which thus renews its youth with Christ Jesus!

III. That brings us to our last point, upon which we have no time for more than a few words. WHEN CHRIST IS TAKEN UP INTO THE ARMS AND LOOKED UPON, HE HAS A WONDERFUL EFFECT. Notice the case before us. First, waiting is ended. Simeon had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, but he could now say, "Lord, what do I wait for?" We, too, had been waiting, wishing, longing and pining—but when we found our Lord, we no longer waited, but we could each one say—"I need nothing, I wish for nothing, I long for nothing, I pine for nothing. 'My eyes have seen Your salvation.'" Now, also, Simeon was excited to praise the Lord. He took Him up in his arms and blessed God. None can bless God like those who have Christ in their arms! I do not know that Simeon had ever been a poet before, but he began to pour out his swan song, his last, sweetest and, perhaps, his only hymn. Every line is full of exultation and delight!

Simeon soon had a song in his mouth when he had Christ in his arms! Then shall the tongue of the dumb sing! The very stones would cry out if a man could see God's salvation and yet be silent. Those who could never speak six words before have grown eloquent when Christ Jesus has been their theme. He is my God and I will praise Him! He is my father's God and I will extol Him. And now that he has seen the Lord's Christ, notice the effect upon Simeon's eyes. He desires to close them upon all else. I have heard of some who have looked on the sun unadvisedly till they could not see anything else—but this I know—he who looks on Christ becomes blind to all rival attractions! If these eyes have once seen the salvation of God, it looks like sacrilege to set them upon the base things of time and sense! Let the gate be closed through which Jesus has entered—it seems profane to allow a single object belonging to this traitorous world to enter our mind by eye-gate any more!

Having eaten the white bread of Heaven, we want no more of the husks of earth! Having had a glimpse of the Incarnate God, what more is there to see? Simeon's eyes had seen Christ and what then? Why, now they were prepared to look on death! He had been told he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ and now he is ready to see his final hour

and all of gloom which may attend his departure. He says, “Lord, now let Your servant depart.” He regards it not as dying, but as going from the present scene to a more glorious country! If you have ever looked Christ in the face, the king of terrors has lost his terror and, instead of being a king, has become your servant! We may well long for the time when we shall have done with earth and be shut in with our Beloved! The proverb is, “See Naples and die,” but we may much improve upon it, and say, “See Christ and never die,” but be quite content to depart and to be with Him!

Lastly, that sight, of course, had made Simeon’s eyes ready to behold the Glory of God. I suppose if we could be taken up just as we are into Heaven—if we were unrenewed men and women—we should not be able to see the Glory of God for lack of spiritual eyes. We must first look at Christ—and when our eyes have been brightened and strengthened by the splendors of Incarnate Deity, they will be fitted to behold the King Himself as He sits upon His Throne! At any rate, when some of us have had a sight of Christ, we have wondered what more we could see in Heaven. When Solomon’s Song has come to be our everyday talk and the Beloved has made us to feel that His left hand is under our head while His right hand embraces us, we have almost thought we would not give a pin change earth for Heaven—for whether in the body or out of the body we could not tell—but this we knew, we could sing, “My Beloved is mine and I am His. He feeds among the lilies.”

If your soul once comes there and if the Lord helps you to continue there, then dying will be nothing more than crossing the threshold and going from the doorstep of the King’s palace to the interior of its halls! Some Believers dwell in the suburbs of the Celestial City and little will be their change when, in a little while, they shall enter the central golden streets where the sun shall no more go down, neither shall the Lord withdraw Himself! The Lord give you to find all your salvation in Christ! And may He teach you a great deal more than these poor stammering lips can ever tell you. May Christ Jesus our Lord be every day more near and dear to me and to you. To Him be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

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“NUNC DIMITTIS”

NO. 1014

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 15, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

**“Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according
to Your Word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation.”
Luke 2:29, 30.**

Blessed were you, O Simeon, for flesh and blood had not revealed this to you—neither had it enabled you so cheerfully to bid the world farewell. The flesh clings to the earth—it is dust, and owes allegiance to the ground out of which it was taken. It loathes to part from mother earth. Even old age, with its infirmities, does not make men really willing to depart out of this world. By nature we hold to life with a terrible tenacity—and even when we sigh over the evils of life, and repine concerning its ills, and fancy that we wish ourselves away, it is probable that our readiness to depart lies only upon the surface—down deep in our hearts we have no will to go.

Flesh and blood had not revealed to Simeon that he saw God’s salvation in that Babe which he took out of the arms of Mary and embraced with eager joy. God’s Grace had taught him that this was the Savior, and God’s Grace at the same time loosened the cords which bound him to earth and made him feel the attractions of the better land. Blessed is that man who has received from Divine Grace a meekness for Heaven and a willingness to depart to that better land—let him magnify the Lord who has worked so great a work in him!

As Paul says, “Thanks be unto the Father who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Certainly none of us were meet by nature—not even Simeon—the fitness of the venerable man was all the handiwork of God, and so, also, was his anxiety to obtain the inheritance for which God had prepared him. I trust, Brethren, while we consider this morning the preparedness of the saints for Heaven, and turn over in our mind those reflections which will make us ready to depart, God’s Holy Spirit, sent forth from the Father, may make us also willing to leave these mortal shores, and launch upon the eternal sea at the bidding of our Father God.

We shall note, this morning, first, that *every Believer may be assured of departing in peace*. But that, secondly, *some Believers feel a special readiness to depart now*—“Now let You Your servant depart in peace.” And, thirdly, that *there are words of encouragement to produce in us the like readiness*—“according to Your Word.” There are words of Holy Writ which afford richest consolation in prospect of departure.

I. First, then, let us start with the great general principle which is full of comfort, namely, this, that **EVERY BELIEVER MAY BE ASSURED OF ULTIMATELY DEPARTING IN PEACE**. This is no privilege peculiar to

Simeon. It is common to *all* the saints, since the grounds upon which this privilege rests are not monopolized by Simeon, but belong to us all. Observe, first, that *all the saints have seen God's salvation*, therefore, they should all depart in peace. It is true, we cannot take up the infant Christ into our arms, but He is "formed in us, the hope of Glory."

It is true, we cannot look upon Him with these mortal eyes, but we have seen Him with those eyes immortal which death cannot dim—the eyes of our own spirit which have been opened by God's Holy Spirit. A sight of Christ with the natural eye is not saving, for thousands saw Him and then cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." After all, it was in Simeon's case the spiritual eye that saw, the eye of faith that truly beheld the Christ of God. For there were others in the temple who saw the Babe.

There was the priest who performed the act of circumcision and the other officials who gathered round the group. But I do not know that any of them saw God's salvation. They saw the little innocent Child that was brought there by its parents, but they saw nothing remarkable in Him. Perhaps Simeon and Anna, alone, of all those who were in the temple, saw with the inward eye the real Anointed of God revealed as a feeble Infant. So, though you and I miss the outward sight of Christ, we need not regret it—it is but secondary as a privilege. If with the inner sight we have seen the Incarnate God, and accepted Him as our salvation, we are blessed with holy Simeon.

Abraham saw Christ's day before it dawned, and even thus, after it has passed, we see it! And with faithful Abraham we are glad. We have looked unto Him, and we are lightened. We have beheld the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world. In the "despised and rejected of men" we have seen the anointed Savior. In the crucified and buried One, who afterwards rose again, and ascended into Glory we have seen salvation—full, free, finished. Why, therefore, should we think ourselves less favored than Simeon? From like causes like results shall spring—we shall depart in peace—for we have seen God's salvation.

Moreover, *Believers already enjoy peace as much as ever Simeon did*. No man can depart in peace who has not lived in peace. But he who has attained peace in life shall possess peace in death, and an eternity of peace after death. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus has bequeathed us peace, saying, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." "For He is our peace," and, "the fruit of the Spirit is peace." We are reconciled unto God by the death of His Son. Whatever peace flowed in the heart of Simeon, I am sure it was not of a more Divine nature than that which dwells in the bosom of every true Believer. If sin is pardoned, the quarrel is ended. If the Atonement is made, then is peace established—a peace covenanted to endure forever.

We are now led in the paths of peace. We walk the King's highway, of which it is written, "no lion shall be there." We are led beside the still waters, and made to lie down in green pastures. We feel no slavish fear of God, though He is "a consuming fire" even to us. We tremble no longer to approach into His Presence, who deigns to be our Father. The precious blood upon the Mercy Seat has made it a safe place for us to resort at all

times. Boldness has taken the place of trembling. The Throne of God is our rejoicing, though once it was our terror—

***“Once ’twas a seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flames.
Our God appeared ‘a consuming fire,’
And vengeance was His name.”***

Therefore, Brethren, having peace with God, we may be sure that we shall “depart in peace.” We need not fear that the God of all consolation, who has already enriched us in communion with Himself, and peace in Christ Jesus, will desert us at the last. He will help us to sing a sweet swan song, and our tabernacle shall be gently taken down, to be rebuilt more enduringly in the fair country beyond Jordan.

Furthermore, we may rest assured of the same peace as that which Simeon possessed, since we are, if true Believers, equally *God’s servants*. The text says, “Lord, now let You *Your servant* depart in peace.” But, in this case, one servant cannot claim a privilege above the rest of the household. The same position towards God, the same reward from God. Simeon, a servant. You also, my Brothers and Sisters, a servant. He who says to Simeon, “depart in peace,” will say also the same to you!

The Lord is always very considerate towards his old servants and takes care of them when their strength fails. The Amalekite of old had a servant who was an Egyptian, and when he fell sick he left him. He would have perished if David had not had compassion on him. But our God is no Amalekite slave owner. Neither does He cast off His worn-out servants. “Even to your old age I am He. And even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear. Even I will carry, and will deliver you.”

David felt this, for he prayed to God, and said, “Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.” If you have been clothed in your Lord’s livery of Grace, and taught to obey His will, He will never leave you, nor forsake you. He will not sell you into the hands of your adversary, nor suffer your soul to perish. A true master counts it a part of his duty to protect his servants, and our great Lord and Prince will show Himself strong on behalf of the very least of all His followers, and will bring them, every one, into the rest which remains for His people.

Do you really serve God? Remember, “his servants you are to whom you obey.” Are you taught of the Spirit to obey the Commandments of love? Do you strive to walk in holiness? If so, do not fear death! It shall have no terrors to you. All the servants of God shall depart in peace. There is also another reflection which strengthens our conviction that all Believers shall depart in peace, namely this—that up till now *all things in their experience have been according to God’s Word*. Simeon’s basis of hope for a peaceful departure was “according to Your Word.” And, surely, no Scripture is of private interpretation, or to be reserved for one Believer to the exclusion of the rest!

The promises of God, which are, “Yes and amen in Christ Jesus,” are sure to *all* the seed—not to some of the children is the promise made—but all the Grace-born are heirs. There are not special promises hedged round and set apart for Simeon and a few saints of old time—but with all who are in Christ, their federal Head, the Covenant is made—and stands “or-

dered in all things and sure.” If, then, Simeon, as a Believer in the Lord, had a promise that he should depart in peace, I also have a like promise if I am in Christ.

What God has said in His Word Simeon lays hold of, and none can tell him not to. But if, with the same Grace-given faith, I also grasp it for myself, who shall challenge *my* right? God will not violate His promise to one of His people any more than to another, and consequently, when our turn shall come to gather up our feet in the bed and to resign our spirit, some precious passage in sacred writ shall be as a rod and a staff to us that we may fear no evil. These four considerations, gathered out of the text itself, may give fourfold certainty to the assurance that every Believer, at the hour of his departure, shall possess peace.

For a moment, review attentively the words of the aged saint—they have much instruction in them. Every Believer shall in death depart in the same sense as Simeon did. The word here used is suggestive and encouraging—it may be applied either to escape from confinement, or to deliverance from toil. The Christian man in the present state is like a bird in a cage—his body imprisons his soul. His spirit, it is true, ranges Heaven and earth, and laughs at the limits of matter, space, and time. But for all that, the flesh is a poor scabbard unworthy of the glittering soul, a mean cottage unfit for a princely spirit, a clog, a burden, and a fetter.

When we would watch and pray, we find, full often, that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. “We that are in this body do groan.” The fact is, we are caged birds. But the day comes when the great Master shall open the cage door and release His prisoners! We need not dread the act of unfastening the door, for it will give to our soul the liberty for which it only pines. And then, with the wings of a dove covered with silver, and its feathers with yellow gold—though aforetime it had a lien among the pots—it will soar into its native air, singing all the way with a rapture beyond imagination!

Simeon looked upon dying as a mode of being let loose—a deliverance out of durance vile, an escape from captivity, a release from bondage. The like redemption shall be dealt unto us. How often does my soul feel like an unhatched chick shut up within a narrow shell in darkness and discomfort! The life within labors hard to chip and break the shell, to know a little more of the great universe of Truth, and see in clearer light the Infinite of Divine love. Oh, happy day when the shell shall be broken, and the soul, complete in the image of Christ, shall enter into the freedom for which she is preparing!

We look for that, and we shall have it. God, who gave us to aspire to holiness and spirituality and likeness to Himself, never implanted those aspirations in us out of mockery. He meant to gratify these holy longings, or else He would not have excited them. Before long we, like Simeon, shall depart—that is, we shall be set free to go in peace. I said that the word meant also a release from toil. It is as though Simeon had been standing at the table of his Master like a servant waiting on his Lord.

You know the parable in which Christ says that the master does not first bid his servant sit down and eat bread, but commands him thus, “Gird yourself and serve me.” See then, Simeon stands yonder, girt and

serving his Master. But by-and-by, when the Master sees fit, He turns round and says to Simeon, "Now you may depart and take your own meat, your work is done." Or, we may use another simile, and picture Simeon sitting at the King's gate, like Mordecai, ready for any errand which may be appointed him. But at length his time of attendance expires and the great monarch bids him depart in peace. Or, yet again, we may view him as a reaper toiling amid the harvest beneath a burning sun, parched with thirst and wearied with labor, and lo, the great Boaz comes into the field, and, having saluted his servant, says to him, "You have fulfilled like an hireling your day: take you your wage, and depart in peace."

The like shall happen to all true servants of Christ. They shall rest from their labors where no weariness shall vex them, "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." They shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and enjoy the rest which remains for them. There is much of comfortable thought if we meditate upon this. But, note the words again. You perceive that the departure of the child of God is *appointed* of the Lord. "Now *let You Your* servant depart." The servant must not depart from his labor without his Masters permission, else would he be a runaway, dishonest to his position. The good servant dares not stir till his Master says, "Depart in peace."

Simeon was content to wait till he received permission to depart, and it becomes us all to acquiesce cheerfully in the Lord's appointment, whether He lengthens or shortens our life. It is certain that without the Lord's will no power can remove us. No wind from the wilderness shall drive our souls into the land of darkness. No fiends with horrid clamor can drag us down to the abyss beneath. No destruction that is wasting at noonday, or pestilence waiting in darkness, can cut short our mortal career. We shall not die till God shall say to us, "My child, depart from the field of service, and the straitness of this, your tabernacle, and enter into rest."

Till God commands us, we *cannot* die, and when He bids us go, it shall be sweet for us to leave this world. Note, further, that the words before us clearly show that the Believer's departure is attended with *a renewal of this Divine benediction*. "Depart in peace," says God. It is a farewell such as we give to a friend—it is a benediction such as Aaron, the priest of God, might pronounce over a suppliant whose sacrifice was accepted. Eli said unto Hannah, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant you your petition that you have asked of Him."

Around the sinner's deathbed the tempest thickens and he hears the rumblings of the eternal storm—his soul is driven away—either amid the thunder of curses, loud and deep, or else in the dread calm which evermore forebodes the hurricane. "Depart, you cursed," is the horrible sound which is in his ears. But, not so the righteous. He feels the Father's hand of benediction on his head, and underneath him are the everlasting arms! The best wine with him is kept to the last. At eventide it is light. And, as his sun is going down, it grows more glorious, and lights up all the surroundings with a celestial glow, where bystanders wonder, and exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

That pilgrim sets out upon a happy journey to whom Jehovah says, "Depart in peace." This is a sole finger laid upon the closing eyelid by a

tender father, and it ensures a happy waking, where eyes are never wet with tears. I cannot detain you longer over these words—suffice it to add that whatever belonged to Simeon in this benediction must not be regarded as peculiar to him, alone, but as, in their measure, the possession of all Believers. “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord.”

II. But now, secondly, we remind you that SOME BELIEVERS ARE CONSCIOUS OF A SPECIAL READINESS TO DEPART IN PEACE. When do they feel this? Answer—first, *when their Graces are vigorous*. All the Graces are in all Christians, but they are not all there in the same proportion, nor are they at all times in the same degree of strength. In certain Believers *faith* is strong and active. Now, when faith becomes “the evidence of things not seen,” and, “the substance of things hoped for,” then the soul is sure to say, “Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace.”

Faith brings the clusters of Eshcol into the desert and makes the tribes long for the land that flows with milk and honey. When the old Gauls had drunk of the wines of Italy, they said, “Let us cross the Alps and take possession of the vineyards, which yield such generous draughts.” So, when faith makes us realize the joys of Heaven, then it is that our soul stands waiting on the wing, watching for the signal from the Glory land.

The same is true of the Grace of *hope*, for Hope peers into the things invisible. She brings near to us the golden gates of the Eternal City. Like Moses, our hope climbs to the top of Pisgah, and beholds the Canaan of the true Israel. Moses had a delightful vision of the promised land when he gazed from Nebo’s brow, and saw it all from Dan to Beersheba—so also Hope drinks in the charming prospect of the goodly land and Lebanon, and then she exclaims exultingly, “Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace.”

Heaven realized and anticipated by hope renders the thought of departure most precious to the heart. And the like, also, is the effect of the Grace of love upon us. Love puts the heart, like a sacrifice, on the altar, and then she fetches heavenly fire, and kindles it. And, as soon as ever the heart begins to burn and glow like a sacrifice, what is the consequence? Why, it ascends like pillars of smoke up to the Throne of God. It is the very instinct of Love to draw us nearer to the person whom we love. And, when love towards God pervades the soul, then the spirit cries, “Make haste, my Beloved, be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of separation.” Perfect Love, casting out all fear, cries, “Up, and away.”—

**“Let me be with You where You are,
My Savior my eternal rest!
Then only will this longing heart
Be fully and forever blessed.”**

I might thus mention all the Graces, but suffer one of them to suffice! One which is often overlooked, but is priceless as the gold of Ophir—it is the Grace of *humility*. Is it strange that the lower a man sinks in his own esteem the higher does he rise before his God? Is it not written, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven”? Simeon had no conceit of his own importance in the world, else he would have said,

"Lord, let me stay, and be an Apostle. Surely I shall be needed at this juncture to lend my aid in the auspicious era which has just commenced?"

But no, he felt himself so little, so inconsiderable, that now that he had attained his heart's wish and seen God's salvation, he was willing to depart in peace. Humility, by making us lie low helps us to think highly of God, and, consequently, to desire much to be with God. O to have our Graces always flourishing, for then shall we always be ready to depart, and willing to be offered up! Lack of Grace entangles us—but to abound in Divine Grace is to live in the suburbs of the New Jerusalem.

Another time, when Believers are thus ready to go, is *when their assurance is clear*. It is not always so with even the most mature Christians, and some true saints have not yet attained to assurance. They are truly saved, and possess a genuine faith, but as assurance is the cream of faith, the milk has not stood long enough to produce the cream. They have not yet come to the flower of assurance, for their faith is but a tender plant. Give a man assurance of Heaven and he will be eager to enjoy it!

While he doubts his own security, he wants to linger here. He is like the Psalmist when he asked that God would permit him to recover his strength before he went from here and was no more. Some things were not yet in order with David, and he would stay awhile till they were. But, when the ship is all loaded, the crew on board, and the anchor heaved, the favoring breeze is desired that the boat may speed on its voyage. When a man is prepared for his journey, ready to depart, he does not care to linger long in these misty valleys, but pants for the sunny summits of the mount of God whereon stands the palace of the Great King.

Let a man know that he is resting upon the precious blood of Christ. Let him by diligent self-examination perceive in himself the marks of regeneration. And by the witness of his own spirit and the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with his own spirit, let him be certified that he is born of God, and the natural consequence will be that he will say, "Now let me loose from all things here below and let me enter into the rest which is assuredly my own." O you that have lost your assurance by negligent living, by falling into sin, or by some other form of backsliding, I do not wonder that you hug the world—for you are afraid you have no other portion!

But with those who read their titles clear to mansions in the skies it will be otherwise. They will not ask to linger in this place of banishment, but will sing in their hearts, as we did just now—

***"Jerusalem my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy and peace and you?"***

Beloved, saints feel most their readiness to go when *their communion with Christ is near and sweet*. When Christ hides Himself we are afraid to talk of dying, or of Heaven. But when He only shows Himself through the lattices, and we can see those eyes which are "as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk and fitly set." When our own soul melts even at that hazy sight of Him, as through a glass darkly. Oh then we

gladly would be at Home, and our soul cries out for the day when her eyes shall see the King in His beauty, in the land that is very far off.

Have you never felt the heavenly homesickness? Have you never pined for the home-bringing? Surely, when your heart has been full of the Bridegroom's beauty, and your soul has been ravished with His dear and ever precious love, you have said—"When shall the day break, and the shadows flee away? Why are His chariots so long in coming?" You have swooned, as it were, with love-sickness for your precious Savior, thirsting to see Him as He is, and to be like He. The world is black when Christ is fair. It is a poor heap of ashes when He is altogether lovely to us. When a precious Christ is manifested to our spirits, we feel that we could see Jesus and die.

Put out these eyes, there is nothing more for them to see when they have seen *HIM*. "Black sun," said Rutherford, "black moon, black stars, but inconceivably bright and glorious Lord Jesus." How often did that devout man write words of this sort—"Oh if I had to swim through seven Hells to reach Him, if He would but say to me, like Peter, 'Come unto Me,' I would go unto Him not only on the sea, but on the boiling floods of Hell, if I might but reach Him, and come to Him." I will pause here and give you his own words—

"I profess to you I have no rest, I have no ease, till I am over head and ears in love's ocean. If Christ's love (that fountain of delight) were laid as open to me as I would wish, oh, how I would drink, and drink abundantly! I half call His absence cruel. And the mask and veil on Christ's face a cruel covering that hides such a fair, fair face from a sick soul. I dare not upbraid Him, but His absence is a mountain of iron upon my heavy heart. Oh, when shall we meet? Oh, how long is it to the dawning of the marriage day? O sweet Lord Jesus, take wide steps. O my Lord, come over the mountains at one stride! O my Beloved, be like a roe, or a young hart on the mountains of separation. Oh, if He would fold the heavens together like an old cloak, and shovel time and days out of the way, and make ready in haste the Lamb's wife for her Husband! Since He looked upon me my heart is not mine. He has run away to Heaven with it."

When these strong throes, these ardent pangs of insatiable desire come upon a soul that is fully saturated with Christ's love through having been made to lean its head upon His bosom, and to receive the kisses of His mouth—*then* is the time when the soul says—"Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace."

So again, Beloved, saints have drawn their anchor up and spread their sails when they have been *made to hold loosely all there is in this world*. And that is generally when they hold fastest to the world to come. To many this world is very sweet, very fair, but God puts bitters into the cup of His children. When their nest is soft, He fills it with thorns to make them long to fly. Alas, that it should be so, but some of God's servants seem as if they had made up their minds to find a rest beneath the moon! They are moon-struck who hope to do so. All the houses in this plague-stricken land are worm-eaten and let in the rain and wind—my soul longs to find a rest among the ivory palaces of Your land, O Immanuel!

Brethren, it often happens that the loss of dear friends, or the treachery of those we trusted, or bodily sickness, or depression of spirit may help to unloose the holdfasts which enchain us to this life. And then we are enabled to say with David in one of the most precious little Psalms in the whole Book, the 131st, "I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother, my soul is even as a weaned child." I have often thought that if David had said, "my soul is even as a weaning child," it would have been far more like most of God's people. But to be weaned, quite weaned from the world, to turn away from her consolations altogether—this it is which makes us cry, "Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace." Even as the Psalmist, when he said, "And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You."

Again, saints are willing to depart when their work is almost done. This will not be the case with many here present, perhaps, but it was so with Simeon. Good old man! He had been very constant in his devotions, but on this occasion he came into the temple, and there, it is said, he took the Child in his arms and blessed God. Once more he delivered his soul of its adoration—once more he blended his praise with the songs of angels. When he had done that, he openly confessed his faith—another important work of every Believer—for he said, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." He bore public testimony to the Child Jesus, and declared that He should be "a light to lighten the Gentiles."

Having done that, he bestowed his fatherly benediction upon the Child's parents, Joseph and His mother. He blessed them, and said unto Mary, "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." Now, we read that David, after he had served his generation, fell on sleep. It is time for man to sleep when his life's work is finished. Simeon felt he had done all—he had blessed God. He had declared his faith. He had borne testimony to Christ. He had bestowed his benediction upon godly people. And so he said, "Now, Lord, let You Your servant depart in peace."

Ah, Christian people, you will never be willing to go if you are idle. You lazy lie-a-beds, who do little or nothing for Christ! You sluggish servants, whose garden is overgrown with weeds! No wonder that you do not want to see your Master! Your sluggishness accuses you, and makes you cowards. Only he who has put out his talents to good interest will be willing to render an account of his stewardship. But when a man feels, without claiming any merit, that he has fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith, then will he rejoice in the crown which is laid up for him in Heaven, and he will long to wear it!

Throw your strength into the Lord's work, dear Brothers and Sisters—all your strength! Spare none of your powers—let body, soul, and spirit be entirely consecrated to God and used at their utmost stretch. Get through your day's work, for the sooner you complete it, and have fulfilled like an hireling your day, the more near and sweet shall be the time when the shadows lengthen, and God shall say to you, as a faithful servant, "Depart in peace!" One other matter, I think, helps to make saints willing to go, and that is *when they see or foresee the prosperity of the Church of God.*

Good old Simeon saw that Christ was to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the Glory of His people Israel. And therefore, he said, "Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace." I have known many a godly deacon who has seen a Church wither and decay, its ministry become unprofitable, and its membership become divided. The dear old man has poured out his soul in agony before God, and when at last the Lord has sent a man to seek the good of Israel, and the Church has been built up, he has been overjoyed, and he has said, "now let You Your servant depart in peace."

It must have reconciled John Knox to die when he had seen the Reformation safely planted throughout all Scotland. It made dear old Latimer, as he stood on the firewood, feel happy when he could say, "Courage, Brother, we shall this day light such a candle in England as shall never be blown out." "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," Yes, that we do, and we vehemently desire her prosperity! And if we can see Christ glorified, error defeated, the Truth of God established, sinners saved, and saints sanctified, our spirit feels she has all she wishes!

Like dying David, when we have said, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory," we can fall back upon the pillows and die, for our prayers, like those of David, the son of Jesse, are ended. Let us pray for this peace and this prosperity, and when we see it come, it shall bring calm and rest to our spirits so that we shall be *willing* to depart in peace.

III. I shall call your attention now, for a little while, to the third point that THERE ARE WORDS TO ENCOURAGE US TO THE LIKE READINESS TO DEPART. "*According to Your Word.*" Now let us go to the Bible and take from it seven choice Words—all calculated to cheer our hearts in the prospect of departure. The first is Psalm 23:4—"Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and your staff they comfort me." "We walk"—the Christian does not quicken his pace when he dies. He walked before, and he is not afraid of death, so he calmly walks on. It is a walk through a "shadow." There is no substance in death, it is only a shade. Who needs fear a shadow?

It is not a lonely walk—"You are with me." Neither is it a walk that need cause us terror. "I will fear no evil"—not only is there no evil, but no fear shall cloud my dying hours. It shall be a departure full of comfort—"Your rod and Your staff"—a duplicate means shall give us a fullness of consolation. "Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." Take another text, and so follow the direction, "*According to your Word.*" Psalm 37:37—"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." If we are perfect, that is, sincere. If we are upright, that is, honest in heart. Our end, then, assuredly is peace.

Take another Word, Psalm 116:15—"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." It is no ordinary thing for a saint to die. It is a spectacle which the eyes of God are delighted with! As king's delight in their pearls and diamonds, and count them precious, so the deathbeds of the saints are God's precious things. Take another, Isaiah 57:2—"He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." Here is an entrance into peace for the saint—*rest* on his dying

bed, *rest* for his body in the grave, *rest* for his spirit in the bosom of his Lord, and a walking in his uprightness in the immortality above! “According to Your Word.”

Oh, what force there is in these few syllables! When you can preach the Word of God you must prevail. Nothing has such marrow and fatness in it as a text of Scripture. It has a force of comfort all its own. Consider also 1 Corinthians 3:22—“For all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or *death*, or things present, or things to come. All are yours.” Now, if death is yours, there can be no sort of reason why you should be afraid of that which is made over to you as a part of your *inheritance*.

Take the fifteenth chapter and fifty-fourth verse of the same Epistle—“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin. And the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

With such a text we need not fear to depart. And so that other Word, the seventh we shall quote, and in that number *seven* dwells perfection of testimony. Revelation 4:13—“And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from now on: yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors. And their works do follow them.” Now, I dare say, many of you have said, “I wish I had a Word from God, just like Simeon had, to cheer me in my dying moments.” You have it before you—here are *seven* that I have read to you, most sure Words of Testimony, unto which you do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place. These promises belong to all Believers in our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Fear not, then, be not afraid, but rather say, “Now let You Your servant depart in peace.”

I have done the sermon, but we must put a rider to it. Just a word or two to those of you who cannot die in peace because you are not Believers in Christ—you have never seen God’s salvation, neither are you God’s servants. I must deal with you as I have dealt with the saints. I have given them texts of Scripture, for the text says, “according to Your Word.” And I will give you also two passages of Scripture, which will show you those who may *not* hope to depart in peace.

The first one is negative—it shows who *cannot* enter Heaven, and, consequently, who cannot depart in peace. 1 Corinthians 6:9—“Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” The unjust, the oppressive, cheats, rogues, “the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” I will read these words. I need not explain them, but let everyone here who comes under their lash submit to God’s Word. “Be not deceived: neither fornicators”—plenty of them in London—“nor idolaters”—and you need not worship a god of wood and stone to be idolaters. Worship anything *but* God and you are an idolater.

“Nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards”—alas, some of these come to this house regularly—“nor revilers,” that is, backbiters, cavilers, tale-

bearers, swearers and such like, “nor extortioners”—you fine twenty-percent gentlemen! You who grind poor borrowers with usurious interest. None of you shall inherit the kingdom of God, not *one* of you! If you come within this list, except God renew your hearts and change you, the holy gates of Heaven are shut in your face!

Now, take another text, of a positive character, from the Book of Revelation 21:7—“He that overcomes shall inherit all things. And I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But the fearful,”—that means the cowardly, those that are ashamed of Christ, those that dare not suffer for Christ’s sake, those who believe everything, and nothing, and so deny the Truth because they cannot endure to be persecuted—“the fearful and unbelieving”—that is those who do not trust a Savior—“and the abominable”—and they are not scarce, some among the poor are abominable, and there are Right Honorables who ought to be called Right Abominables—yes, and greater than that, too, whose vices make them abominable to the nation!

And “murderers”—“he that hates his brother is a murderer.” And “whoremongers and sorcerers”—“those who have or pretend to have dealings with devils and spirits, your spirit rappers, the whole batch of them—“and idolaters, and all liars,” and these swarm everywhere, they lie in print, and they lie with the voice—“all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Now, these are not words of mine, but the Words of God. And if they condemn you, you are condemned! But, if you are condemned, fly to Jesus! Repent and be converted, as says the Gospel, and forgiveness shall be yours, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Luke 1:46-55; 1:67-75; 2:25-35.**

Our usual Penny Almanac is now ready, and we hope it will be as much approved of as its predecessors have been. We have also, with no small labor, written an Almanac for the walls, which is called John Ploughman’s Sheet Almanac. Our friends tells us that it will have an unprecedented sale, and we only hope it may, but not to the detriment of the older one. They are quite distinct things, and very different in all respects, except that they are by the same author, cost the same price—one penny—and can be had of the same publishers, Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster.—C.H.S.

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

SIMEON'S SWAN SONG

NO. 2293

**INTENDED FOR READING, ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 29, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word:
for my eyes have seen Your salvation.”
Luke 2:29, 30.*

IF we are believers in Christ, we shall one day use words like these. Perhaps not just at present and yet, possibly, sooner than some of us think, we shall gather up our feet in our bed and we shall say with all composure, “Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word.”

See what death is to the Believer. It is only a departure! It is a departure after a day of service. “Lord, now let You Your servant depart. My day's work is done. Let me now go Home.” With us who believe it will be a departure to a higher service, for we shall still be the Lord's servants even when we depart from this present sphere of labor. We shall go to do yet higher and more perfect work in the nearer Presence of our Master. “His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face.” Death to the Believer is only a departure from one form of service to another.

And, note, that it is a departing “in peace.” We are at peace with God. We have—

***“Peace! Perfect peace! In this dark world of sin,
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within!”***

As many as have believed in Jesus, have entered into rest. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” We have joy and peace in believing and, as we live in peace, we shall also die in peace. We shall remain in peace and we shall depart in peace. A deep and holy calm will fill up our dying moments—

***“It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus call to Heaven's perfect peace!”***

We shall be able to say, perhaps, when we come to die, what a dear friend of mine once said to me, when I went in to see him on his dying bed. A part of his affliction consisted in total blindness from what they call the breaking of the eye-strings. Sitting up, although he could not see me, he moved his hand and said—

“And when you see my eye-strings break,

***How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul!"***

So will it be with us—we shall depart in peace. To the Believer, death is not a thing to be dreaded—he even asks for it, “Lord, now *let You, permit You, Your servant to depart in peace. Grant it as a gift, vouchsafe it as a favor.*” Death to the sinner is a curse, but to the Believer it is a form of benediction, it is the gate of life. To the sinner, it is a chain dragging him down to the unutterable darkness of Hell, but to the saint, it is a chariot of fire bearing him aloft to the Heaven of light and love!

Note, also, that Simeon said, “Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, *according to Your word.*” Did you not notice, in our reading, what Luke says about Simeon in the 26th verse? “It was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” The prophecy had been fulfilled! He had seen the Lord’s Anointed. There was nothing more for him to desire upon earth, so he said, “Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation.” The reason for Simeon’s holy calm, the cause of his finding death to be nothing but a departure out of this world, lies in this fact, that he could say, “My eyes have seen Your salvation.” It is of that blessed fact that I am going to talk tonight as the Spirit shall help me.

I do not suppose that everybody here can say, “Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace.” Some of you would not depart in peace if death came to you as you now are. Dear Friend, if you are not prepared for death and judgment, you had better pray, “Lord, let me stay here till I have found peace with You; and then let me depart in peace whenever You will.”

I shall at this time take the innermost sense of the text, dwelling upon these words of Simeon, “My eyes have seen Your salvation.” There were others who had seen the Baby Christ with their natural eyes, but Simeon had seen, in the Babe, Christ, the salvation of God, not with his outward eyes, but with the inward perceptions of his spirit! I hope that many here present can say that they have seen, and do see, in Christ, God’s salvation, and their salvation given to them of God. If so, I am sure that they feel ready to live, or ready to die. But if it is not so with any of you—if you cannot say, “My eyes have seen Your salvation,” you cannot pray, “Lord, let Your servant depart in peace.”

What, then, do these words mean, “My eyes have seen Your salvation”? I will try to explain their meaning in my discourse tonight and, when I have finished, I think you will see that there are these five things included in this utterance of old Simeon. First, here is *clear perception*. Next, *per-*

fect satisfaction. Then, happy unbinding. Then, dauntless courage. And finally, joyful appropriation.

I. The first thing for us to notice in Simeon's swan song is CLEAR PERCEPTION—"My eyes have seen Your salvation."

Some people are very hazy in their religion—they "see men as trees walking." They see things as we see them in London in a fog. That is to say, we do not see them clearly; we cannot see them distinctly; and yet we do see them after a fashion. The fault with a great many Christians, nowadays, is that they have only just light enough to see things as in a mist—they have not discerned clearly the sharply-cut image of the Truth of God. But Simeon could say, not, "I *think* I see the salvation of God in Christ. I *hope* I do. *Perhaps* I do—he could say, "My eyes *have seen* Your salvation." Oh, happy are you, my dear Friends, tonight, if you can distinctly and clearly see in Christ Jesus, the salvation of God!

True, Christ was but a Baby then. And Simeon could easily hold Him in his arms, yet his faith could see everlasting salvation, infinite salvation within God Incarnate! God has come into our world and has taken upon Himself our nature. He that was born at Bethlehem was "very God of very God." He that trod the acres of Palestine, as He went about doing good, was the same who "was in the beginning with God," without whom was not anything made that was made. Christ is God. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God," but it is equally true that "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."—

***"It is my sweetest comfort, Lord,
And will forever be,
To muse upon the gracious truth
Of Your Humanity.
Forever God, forever Man,
My Jesus shall endure.
And fixed on Him, my hope remains
Eternally secure."***

Now, this Christ took upon Himself the sins of all His people. "Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And sin, being laid on Christ, it remained no more on those from whom He took it! He bore it that they might not bear it! He suffered the consequences of their sin that they might never suffer those consequences! Jesus made an Atonement to the Justice of God—He vindicated and honored the perfect Law of the Most High. When I see Christ on the Cross, Christ in the tomb, Christ risen from the dead, Christ at the right hand of God, I understand that He took away my sin. He died. He was buried. He came forth from the grave, having destroyed my sin and put it away—and He has gone into the heavens as my Representative,

to take possession of the right hand of God for me, that I in Him and with Him may sit there forever and ever!

To me, Christ's Sacrifice is a business transaction as clear and straight as mathematics could make it. I care not that men decry what they call "the mercantile theory of the Atonement." I hold no "theory" of the Atonement! I believe that the Substitution of Christ for His people is the Atonement for their sins. And that there is no other Atonement—*but that all else is theory!* This is to me so clear, so true, so definite, that I can venture to say with Simeon, when I have seen Christ, especially Christ crucified, Christ glorified, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." Clear perception, then, is the first meaning of Simeon's words.

You young people who have come to believe in Christ, get clear perceptions as to how Christ is God's salvation. Do not mix and muddle things up, as so many do, but accept Christ as your Substitute, as "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Believe that on the Cross He paid your debt, discharged your liability—and bought you with a price—so that you are His, and His forever and ever. You will never have peace in death—I do not see how you are to have solid rest in life—without a sharp, crisp, clearly-cut idea of how Christ is the salvation of God! The bulk of people do not see it and they, therefore, miss the comfort of it. The comfort of a man, immersed in debt, is assured if he has a friend who bears his burden and pays his debt for him—then he feels that he is clear of all his former liabilities. I declare, before the living God, that I know of no solid comfort for my heart, tonight, but this—the chastisement of my peace was upon Him, and with His stripes I am healed! May you get a clear perception of this great Truth of God, now!

II. But, next, when Simeon could say, "My eyes have seen Your salvation," he had PERFECT SATISFACTION in Christ.

You observe, he takes Christ up in his arms, and says, "My eyes have seen," not, "a *part* of Your salvation," but "*Your salvation.*" He is not looking to anything else for salvation, but only to that Man-Child, seeing all that that Man-Child will do, and bear, and suffer—recognizing in Him the two Natures, the Divine and the Human—and as he clasps Him to his breast, he says, "My eyes have seen Your salvation. It is enough, I have here all that I need. Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation."

Beloved Friends, have you ever done with Christ what old Simeon did? "He took Him up in his arms, and blessed God." All that you need to save you, lies in Him! I have known the Lord, now, for some 40 years, or thereabouts. When I first came to Him, I came as a sinner, without any works of my own which I could trust, or any experience upon which I could rely. And I just rested my whole weight upon the finished work of Christ. Now, after 40 years of service, and nearly 40 years of preaching the Gospel,

have I any works of my own to add to what Christ has done? I abhor the thought of such a thing! Have I even the weight of a pin's head that I dare put into the scale with my Lord's merits? Accursed be the idea! More than ever do I sing—

“Nothing save Jesus would I know,”

and nowhere would I rest but in Him alone!

Now, dear Christian Friends, I know you understand this, that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior, that He is all your salvation and all your desire. And yet, perhaps, you are tempted at times to think that you must *be* this, or you must *do* that, or you must *feel* the other, or else Christ is of no effect to you. Think not so, but rest wholly and alone on Christ! Say, “I rest in Him, whether I am a saint or a sinner; whether I have bright frames or dark frames; whether I am useful, or whether I am defeated in my service, I have no more to trust in when I rejoice in the Light of God's Countenance than I have when I walk in darkness, and see no light. Christ is everything to me at all times—a winter Christ and a summer Christ—all my Light when I have no other, and all my Light when I have every other light.”—

***“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness!
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name!
On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand!”***

God bring you to this, that you may say, “I have seen Christ, my eyes have seen God's salvation. I am perfectly satisfied. I need nothing else.” Does a man pluck me by the sleeve, and say, “I will tell you something worth hearing”? My good Fellow, go and tell it to somebody who wants to hear it, for I do not! I have heard all the news I need when I have heard of *eternal salvation* by Jesus Christ!

III. Now, thirdly, notice that there is in Simeon's words, “My eyes have seen Your salvation,” a kind of HAPPY UNBINDING. The man has been, as it were, bound. But He says, “Lord, now let You Your servant *depart in peace*. Every fetter is now broken. I have seen Your salvation, Lord, I am not tied to life, nor tied to home, nor tied to comfort, nor tied even to Your Temple. Now, Lord, I can go anywhere, departing in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.”

Is not that a grand utterance of old Simeon? The most of us are tied in one way or another and we find it hard to cut ourselves loose. With many of us, the first part of our life is often spent in tying ourselves down to this world and, by-and-by, we feel that we are too much tied, bound, hampered, hindered—and we cry out, “How shall we get free?” The only way to get free is to get Christ! “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.” If you take Christ in your arms and say, with Simeon, “My eyes

have seen Your salvation,” you can then say, “Everyone else and everything else may now go.”—

**“Yes, should You take them all away,
Yet will I not repine;
Before they were possessed by me,
They were entirely Thine”**

And, as You have given me Christ, You may do what You will with me as to other things! Where Christ is not valued, gold becomes an idol. Where Christ is not prized, health becomes an idol. Where Christ is not loved, learning and fame become idols. Where Christ is not first and foremost, even personal beauty may become an idol. But when Christ becomes our All in All, because our eyes have seen His salvation, then the idols fall! Dagon is broken! We are emancipated and we can say concerning all these things, “Yes, whether you come or whether you go, you are not lords of the house—you are but comers and goers unto me henceforth and forever, for a clear conception that Christ is God’s salvation and a full grasp of Him as *mine*, have set my Spirit free from every fetter that before held me in captivity.”

IV. I must not pause here, because I want you to notice how being able to say, “My eyes have seen Your salvation,” gives to a man DAUNTLESS COURAGE.

He who has once seen Christ as God’s salvation is not afraid to see death. “Now,” he says, “I can look death in the face without dread, for I have seen God’s salvation.” He is not afraid of that tremendous Judgment Seat which will be set in the clouds of Heaven, for He who will sit upon that Judgment Seat is God’s salvation to us who believe! The man who is “looking unto Jesus” is not afraid of the day when the earth will rock and reel, and everything based upon it will shake to its destruction. He is not afraid of the star called Wormwood, nor of seeing Heaven and earth on a blaze. “My eyes have seen Your salvation,” he says, and he bears this glorious vision about with him wherever he goes. It is more to him than any earthly charm could be! It is more powerful than the most potent charm of the mystic or the magician. Such a man is safe! He must be safe—his eyes have seen God’s salvation!

If you would have a courage of the truest kind that needs no stimulus of drink, and no excitement of the noise of trumpet and of drum—the calm courage that can suffer pain, that can bear rebuke, that can endure slander, that can stand alone, that could stand foot to foot with the infernal fiend, himself, and yet not be afraid. If you would have such courage as that, I say, you must get Christ in your arms, for then shall you say with Simeon, “Lord, come what may, I have nothing to fear, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.”—

**“Fearless of Hell and ghastly death,
I’d break through every foe!**

***The wings of love, and arms of faith,
Should bear me conqueror through.***

V. I will not detain you much longer, for the time is well near spent, but I would say this one more thing, He who lays hold on Christ, makes a JOYFUL APPROPRIATION of Him. His sight of Christ, his clear apprehension of what Christ is, is accompanied by a personal appropriation of Christ to himself.

This is the matter that puzzles many. I have, during the past week, talked with several people who have heard from me concerning the way of salvation and the preciousness of Christ. And the question of many of these enquirers has been this, "How can we get hold of Christ? We believe that all you say about Him is true. Christ is God's salvation, but how can we take Him to be ours? You seem to treat Christ as if He were yours beyond all question. How can we learn to do the same?"

My answer is, when you once know how the Savior saves, and how He is God's salvation, trust Him to save you! That trust grips Him, holds Him—and if you can hold Him—He is yours. We have certain rights of property extant among us and a man may have to bring his title deeds to prove that a house is really his own. But in the Kingdom of Grace, the only title deed you need is that you have hold of Christ. May I take Him, then, without any right? Yes, taking Christ gives you the right to take Him! "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." There is a piece of bread on yonder table. I mean to have it for my own. It will be of no use for you to dispute with me about the matter, for I shall put it beyond all dispute. How? I shall take that bread in my hand. Well, you can wrench it from me. I shall do more than that—I shall eat it! I shall digest it—it will become a part of my own being! You will not get it away from me, then—and I do not care if you go to the law with me to try to get it! Possession is more than nine points of the law in such a case as that. Digestion and assimilation will be ten points of the law, certainly! Now, it is just so with Christ. Poor Soul, take Him; believe Him; trust Him; appropriate Him! Trust Him more, and more, and more! The more the devil tries to take Him from you, trust Him the more. Plunge yourself deeper and deeper, still, into this sea of salvation, and trust Christ still more.

Perhaps someone says, "But how may I know at first that I have a right to trust Christ?" You have a right to trust Christ because you are *commanded* to do it. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Make a dash for this great blessing! Take Christ, tonight, regardless, for, though it should seem like robbery to you to take Him, yet if you once have Him, He will never be taken away from you! Make a dash for Christ, I say, tonight, and take Him, saying, "I believe Him. I trust Him. I rest myself on Him."

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but if you trust Christ, you shall never be ashamed! There was never a man yet who dared trust Christ and yet found that Christ was not equal to his need, or that He did not fully supply all his needs.

Simeon took Christ up in his arms. Somebody might have said, "Old man, what have you to do with the new-born King? Old man, you may be just and devout, but dare you handle the Incarnate God? Dare you fondle Him upon whose shoulders God has laid the key of His Kingdom, whose name is called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace? Dare you touch *Him*?" Yes, He dares do it! He takes Him up in his arms. He clasps Him to his heart. He rejoices over Him. He is ready to die with delight, now that he has found Christ! Come, poor troubled ones, come tonight and take Christ into your arms! And you, dear saints of God, who have done this long ago, do it again! Take Him right up into your arms, as though He were still a Babe. Take Him to your heart and say, "He is everything to me—my Love, my Hope, my brother—this blessed Incarnate God who loved me and gave Himself for me." If you can do this, it shall be well with you *now*, it shall be well with you in *death*, it shall be well with you throughout eternity!

Have I among my hearers any who are postponing this all-important business, putting it off till a more convenient season? Let me tell them something that ought to warn them of the risk they are running. Once upon a time the Prince of Darkness said to the evil spirits under his command, "I want to see which of you can be my best servant. The Gospel is being preached in various places and many persons are hearing it. And I am afraid that my kingdom will suffer loss. Unless something can be done, I fear that many will desert from under the black flag and enlist under the standard of Jesus of Nazareth. I would gladly prevent this—which of you will help me? Then up rose one who said, "I will go forth and say that the Bible is not true, that Christ is not God, and that what is preached is not the Truth of God." But the great Prince of the Pit answered him, "You will not serve my turn just now. There are a few places where you will be very useful, but the most of those who are listening to this Word will laugh at you and drive you back. You smell too much of the place where you go on my errands. You cannot do what I need now."

Up stood another of the evil throng and said, "Let me go and I will bring forth certain new views of truth and various fresh doctrines, and with these I will turn aside the thoughts of men from the old faith." But the Prince of the power of the air replied, "You, too, are a good servant of mine, and you stand me in good stead at other times, but just now you are not the one for the task I propose." Then out spoke one who said, "O Prince of Darkness, I think I am your good soldier on this occasion. Here am I, send me." "And what will you do?" said Beelzebub, "What will you

do?” “I will go forth and tell the people that the warnings of the preacher are true and the voice of the Gospel is the voice of God! I will not awaken and arouse them by any sort of opposition, but I will tell them that there is time enough, by-and-by, to attend to these things. I will bid them wait a little longer and bide their time. I will put this word into the mouth of each one, that he may say to the preacher, ‘Go your way, for this time. When I have a convenient season, I will call for you.’”

Then the grim master of the Pit smiled and said, “Go your way, my faithful servant, you are he that shall carry out my purpose right thoroughly, and so shall you foil the preacher—and the Word of God that he utters shall fall to the ground.” Is there not a message here for someone who is listening to my words?

“My eyes have seen Your salvation.” How I wish that I could make some here who do not know it, understand how simple is the way of salvation! You are a sinner, guilty and condemned! Christ becomes a Man, takes your sins, suffers in *your place*. You accept Him to stand for you. You permit Him, by your faith, to be accepted as your Substitute, and His pains are put down instead of yours, and you are “accepted in the Beloved,” and saved in Him. Oh, if you could but do this—and you may do it tonight before you leave this place, and I hope you will—if you do this, whether you are old or young, there will come to you a heart full of benediction for life, and the best of all preparations for death! Truly happy shall you be if you can say, “My eyes have seen Your salvation.”

I seem as if I did not need to see anything else, after having seen Christ as God's salvation! There is a story told of Muslims, who often are very fanatical, and do very strange and horrible things in their fanaticism. But they have been known to go to Mecca, to see the tomb of their prophet, and when they have seen his tomb, they have taken a hot steel and have drawn it across their eyes, that they might never see anything else—that indeed they might die with the view of the false prophet's tomb as their last sight!

Now, that is not what we do, but still, we would act in the spirit of it. “My eyes have seen Your salvation.” People say, “See Naples and die.” They mean that it is so lovely that when you have seen it, there is nothing more to see. See Christ, and what else is there to see? Now, whether you sail over the blue sea beneath a bluer sky, or dive into the deeps of this murky atmosphere—whether you are in a palace or in a dungeon, sick or full of bounding health—all these are items of small consequence, if your eyes have seen God's salvation, for God has blessed you as only God can bless you! Go and live in peace and go and die in peace—and praise the name of Him who gave you such a Savior to see, and the power to see Him! The Lord bless you, Beloved! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
LUKE 2:21-38.

Verse 21. *And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb.* Although the old Law ends with Christ, it is very instructive to notice that He came under the Law and conformed to all its appointments. Jesus, therefore, had to be circumcised. In Him the Law was fulfilled in every point, even to the jots and tittles—nothing was omitted. Behold how perfect is the righteousness which He worked out for His people!

22. *And when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.* Everything was done that was required by the Jewish Law, you see. “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” “Being found in fashion as a Man,” and a Man under the Jewish Law—Jesus and His parents were obedient to all its requirements.

23, 24. *(As it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every male that opened the womb shall be called holy to the Lord); and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.* This proves the poverty of our Lord's parents. If they had been able to bring a costlier sacrifice, they would have done so. The Law required the offering of a lamb for a burnt offering, but there was a gracious provision in the case of the poor mother—“If she is not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.” Even in the case of a working woman, the birth of her first-born son required from her a sacrifice; but it might be of the smallest kind—“A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” Think of your Lord, Himself, redeemed by a sacrifice, a pair of doves offered in His place! What a wonderful coming down to our condition and position was this!

25. *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout.* He blended in his character his duty to man and his duty to God—“he was just and devout.”

25. *Waiting for the consolation of Israel.* His devotion was not that of a blind devotee. He had eyes of expectation! He was expecting the Messiah to come, who is, “the consolation of Israel.”

25, 26. *And the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the*

Lord's Christ. That which the Holy Spirit reveals will assuredly come to pass, as it did in the experience of old Simeon.

27. *And He came by the Spirit into the Temple.* Men who have the Spirit will be led by the Spirit. Simeon came into the Temple at the right moment. Just when a young man was entering, with his wife and new-born Child, "He came by the Spirit into the Temple."

27, 28. *And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the Law, then took he Him up in his arms.* He came in, I say, at the right time! Did ever anybody who was *not* led by the Spirit, find Christ? Somebody has come in here tonight and he does not know why he has come—he has been led here by the Spirit that he may see Jesus, and may have such a sight of Him as shall be his salvation! God grant that it may be proved that many an aged Simeon has traveled here this Sabbath night, led by the Spirit for this purpose, to find the Savior in His own house!

28, 32. *And blessed God, and said, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Your people Israel.* Simeon had studied the ancient prophecies to good purpose and he perceived from them that "the Lord's Christ" would be "a Light to lighten the Gentiles" as well as "the Glory of" God's ancient people, "Israel."

33. *And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.* We may be very near to Christ and yet know very little about Him. Joseph and the virgin mother did not understand "those things which were spoken of Him." One wonders it was so after all that had been revealed to them—we marvel that they marveled!

34. *And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary, His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.* Do you understand that? Whenever Christ comes to a man, there is first a fall—and a rising again afterwards. You never knew the Lord aright if He did not first give you a fall! He pulls us down from our pride and self-sufficiency and then He lifts us up to a position of eternal safety! He is "set" for this purpose! This is the great design of Christ's coming—"This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel."

34. *And for a sign which shall be spoken against.* Christ and His Gospel will always be spoken against. If you know a gospel which is approved by the age and patronized by the learned, that gospel is a lie! You may be sure of that. But if it is spoken against, if it is slandered, if it is called absurd, unscientific, and I know not what, all that is in its favor!

35. *(Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also).* This favored woman had the greatest smart to go with her great honor. She saw the suffering and anguish of her Son and, the nearer you are to Christ, the

more of sorrow it will cost you, sorrow which you may be well content to bear. You know how it is put in that hymn of which many of us are very fond—

***“If I find Him, if I follow,
What His recompense here?
Many a labor, many a sorrow,
Many a tear.”***

Yet, I say again, you may be well content to bear it all for His sake, for you remember what the next verse of the hymn is—

***“If I still hold closely to Him,
What has He at last?
Sorrow vanquished, labor ended,
Jordan past.”***

35. *That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.* Christ and His Cross are the revealers of the thoughts of men's hearts. Men's hearts can conceal their thoughts until Christ's Cross comes near—then the old enmity rises up, the heart rebels—and we see what is *really* in men's hearts.

36, 37. *And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fasts and prayers night and day.* It would have been a pity for Christ to have been received in the Temple only by a man. There must be a woman there, too, to join in Simeon's swan song, and to unite her testimony with his.

38. *And she coming in that instant.*—God knows how to time what we call our accidental walks—“She coming in that instant.”—

38. *Gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.* So that the song of Simeon was sweetened by the voice of Anna—and they both rejoiced in God their Savior! And their joy was shared by “all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” May many of us have a share in that same joy as, by faith, we lovingly gaze upon “the Lord's Christ.”

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CHRIST SEEN AS GOD'S SALVATION NO. 3177

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1909.

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

*"My eyes have seen Your Salvation."
Luke 2:30.*

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are #1417, Volume 24—
"YOUR SALVATION" and #2293, Volume 39—
SIMEON'S SWAN SONG—Read/download the entire sermons,
free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .]

THOUSANDS of times that song of Simeon has been sung by careless, thoughtless persons, but surely it is one of those songs that ought never to come except from *believing lips*. To make it merely a part of a liturgy and for shamelessly living men to say, "*My eyes have seen Your Salvation*," must be an atrocious sin before God! Let all who have ventured to use such words as these without having thought of their meaning, confess their sin before God and ask that He would make those words to be true which have up to now been so frivolously uttered and that before they close their eyes in death, they *may* see God's Salvation!

I. I shall, first of all, TAKE THE TEXT AS IT DROPS FROM SIMEON'S LIPS and follow his leading.

We will start with Simeon's main idea. He came into the Temple. He saw there a little Babe and he recognized, in that newly-born Child, Jesus the promised Savior! And as he took up that Savior into his arms, he said, "Mine eyes have seen"—what? "Your Salvation," God's Salvation—not only the Worker of the Salvation, but the Salvation itself! From which I gather that wherever we see Jesus, we see God's Salvation, Wherever our eyes spiritually light upon the Christ of God, there we see God's Salvation! Whether in Bethlehem's manger, or on Calvary's Cross, or on yonder Throne of Glory from which He shall judge the quick and the dead—wherever we see Him, we see the Salvation of God!

Let me then take your thoughts along the history of our Savior for a few moments. Far back into the ages, when as yet this world and sun and moon were not created—when God dwelt alone—then, in the foreknowledge of God, it was apparent that man would sin—that elect men, beloved of God, would fall in the common ruin. Then came the grand debate, the mighty question to be only solved by the supreme Intellect of Heaven, "How can sinners be reconciled to God?" And the Covenant was made, that ancient Covenant of which David sang, "ordered in all things and sure." Jesus, the Second Person of the blessed Godhead, entered in-

to Covenant with His Father, that in the fullness of time, He would stand in the sinner's place and pay the sinner's debt—that He would head up in Himself as many as the Father gave Him and become the second and restoring Adam to them, though, through the first and falling Adam, they, with others, had been destroyed. Then, when the Covenant was signed and the Divine parties to that grand transaction struck hands and ratified the bond, my eyes, as they look into that vast eternity and, with holy curiosity, desire to scan that council chamber—my eyes perceive God's Salvation in the Person of Jesus Christ!

This was all that could have been seen by faith, even after the world had been created and man had fallen, until that day when the fullness of time was come—when Jesus Christ, who had covenanted to save His people, came to perform the work. Oh, the grandeur of that day when angels came in haste to sing that the Babe was born in Bethlehem! Ah, Simeon! What you see there is not merely a Babe—a little Child hanging upon a woman's breast—it is the Word Incarnate, the *Logos*, without whom was not anything made that is made! He that spoke and it was done, lies there! He that said, "Light be," and light was—the Word that was with God when He balanced the clouds and when He fixed the sockets of the universe, even He is there in the Person of that Child! The Son of Mary is also the Son of God! And whenever you, Beloved, look to God Incarnate and understand that wondrous mystery, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and men chosen of Him beheld His Glory, "the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth"—then when you see God in human flesh, you see God's Salvation!

Follow with the eyes of your love that Babe when He had become a Man. See Him, in the obedience of 30 years to His reputed father, handling the saw and the hammer in the carpenter's shop of Joseph. "Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself." See Him in the three years of His most blessed ministry! What work was crowded into those years! How did the zeal of God's house eat Him up! The dews fell upon Him in the night when He kept the sheep of God in the wilderness and on the mountain's brow shepherded them in His midnight prayers. Oftentimes the sweat fell from Him in that daily service which, as the Servant of servants, He rendered to all His brethren. None toiled as He did—none so arduously, none so perfectly, none so willingly, none with so complete a bending of His whole faculties to His all-absorbing work! Behold the righteousness of the saints—this work of Christ is making a robe in which the saints shall be arrayed. His active obedience renders unto God a recompense for our breaches of His holy Law. In Christ, the actively-obedient, you see God's Salvation!

But oh, let your eyes swim with tears as you follow Him from His active to His passive obedience. I stayed midway in a verse just now, "Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself"—as you go on, you read—"and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." There He is in yonder garden among the olives! Do you hear His sighs,

His deep-fetched groans? Do you mark the sweat drops of His blood as they fall upon the earth? He is pleading, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." But it is not possible. Do you see Him hurried away with the felon's kiss still upon His cheek—hurried away by traitorous hands to Caiaphas—hurried to Pilate and Herod, one after the other, scorned and scoffed everywhere? He, whose visage is bright as the morning when the sun arises, and whose Countenance is like Lebanon, comely as the cedars—He it is that they make nothing of, and laugh and scoff at! Into His face, which angels look on with hushed awe, they cast their accursed spittle! They buffet Him and cry, "Hail King of the Jews." They mock His royalty with a crown of thorns and His priesthood by binding His eyes and saying, "Who is it that struck You?" Remember that He who is in this shame is God's Salvation! He is made lower than earth's basest menials that He might lift us higher than Heaven's brightest seraphs! He came down from where He was in Heaven's excellency to all this depth of shame—that out of all our shame He might lift us up to the supernal excellency!

Then, at length, it comes to a climax and the patient Sufferer gives His hands to the iron and His feet to the nails. They lift Him up—He must die a felon's death! Outside the camp He must suffer. Made sin for us, He cannot be in the congregation. He must be numbered with the transgressors! Behold Him dying in bodily pains not to be readily described! But, the worst was this—God, to whom good men look for succor when they die, refused Him help! Jehovah, who never did forsake the virtuous, forsook Him, the most virtuous of all! He who is our castle and high tower, our rampart and defense in our extremity, hid as it were, His face from Him—and that bitterest of all cries, which contains in it as much grief as all the shrieks of the damned in Hell, went up, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" There He was, the forsaken One. Yet He was God's Salvation, for He was—

***"Bearing, that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire"—***

enduring to be cast away from Heaven that we, base as we are, might be enfolded in the Divine bosom and loved with the Divine affection!

Nor is this all. On the third day, He who on the Cross had conquered, rose to claim the victory. Behold Him! He is God's Salvation as He rises from the tomb. Where is your sting, O Death? Where is your victory, boastful Grave? Jehovah Jesus has saved us from death! He has risen from the sepulcher. Behold Him as He ascends! Let not your eyes be too dazzled with the Glory. He rides in solemn pomp up to Heaven's gate. Your ears can even now catch the echoes of that song, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." He that enters there has saved us and has gone to receive gifts for men. His entrance there is the entrance of all His people, for He is their Representative and takes possession of Heaven on

their behalf. Being there for us, we are saved! His Presence on the Throne is the Presence of God's Salvation!

If time did not fail me, I would like to pursue the story and point you to Him, looking still like a lamb that has been slain, pleading with His never ceasing, ever-prevalent intercession. I would like to bid your faith anticipate the day when He shall come again, with no sin-offering, but unto salvation, when you and I, seeing Him, shall see God's Salvation—when our bodies shall be perfected, no more to be weak and suffering, but made like His glorious body! Our Brothers and Sisters that have gone before us, who at this moment sleep in their silent tombs among the purple heather, or in the crowded cemetery, or in the chill vault—they, also, shall hear the sound of His Second Advent when the herald blast shall bid the world know that the Lord has come and—

***“From beds of dust and silent clay
To realms of everlasting day”—***

they shall wing their triumphant way, for Jesus Christ shall be to them, as to us, God's Salvation! That was Simeon's idea, I think. I have but hammered out his ingot of gold a little to show you that where Jesus is, there is the Salvation of God.

II. And now, in the second place, we shall TAKE SOME LEAVES OUT OF OUR OWN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

The text says, *“My eyes have seen Your Salvation.”* Simeon must not be allowed the monopoly of these words. I claim them, *“My eyes have seen Your Salvation.”* Brothers and Sisters, many of you can, in a spiritual sense, use the same language as the Patriarch about to depart uses. You too, can say, *“My eyes have seen Your Salvation.”* Will you turn over the book of your life awhile as I turn over mine?

Well, we need not read those early pages, the pages of our estate of sin. Drop tears and blot them out! Dear hand of Jesus stained with blood, wipe down each one of them and blot them out forever! But what is this first bright page? It is the page where we began to live, *the page that records our spiritual birth.* And I think we shall find written somewhere across it, *“This day my eyes beheld God's Salvation.”* Well do I remember that day! I had looked here and looked there. This was my question—I have offended God, how can He forgive me? It was no use to tell me God was merciful—I had an answer for that—*“God is just.”* It availed nothing to say, *“Sin is little,”* I knew better! It was heavy to me—what must it do to Him? The question I wanted to have answered was—How can God in justice pass by my iniquities? Then did I learn, as in a moment, this sweet story which has been my delight to tell in various forms a thousand times—that Jesus came and said, *“I will be the sinner's Surety. I will stand in his place of curse and ruin and will bear for him the penalty of pain—for him I will even bear death.”* I learned that if I looked to Jesus—just looked, that was all—that if I simply trusted in Jesus, I would be saved! I looked and, happy day, my eyes saw God's Salvation! That blessed Doctrine of Substitution, that simple command, *“Believe*

and live”—that was the glass through which my soul looked and saw God's Salvation!

But if I remember rightly, a little further on—in my case it was not above a week after I had seen my sin forgiven, I felt myself in another difficulty. *I found I could not do what I would.* My will now was never to sin again, but I did sin. I willed to be holy, but I was not what I would be. I groaned and cried, “Where is salvation from this evil heart of mine, from this corruption of my nature?” And I remember well going to the same place where I had heard of the Savior and hearing the minister declare that if any man felt in himself the evil nature, he was not saved. “Ah,” I thought, “I know better than that!” I could not be persuaded of that, for I knew I was saved as I had looked to Christ, but I did find that I was where Paul was when he said, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” I seemed, then, to say to myself, “My will is so fickle, how can I hold on? My power is so feeble, how can I stand against sin?”

Ah, and well do I remember the day when I could say in a more emphatic sense than before, “My eyes have seen Your Salvation.” For, as I searched the Word, *I perceived that as many as believed in Christ had eternal life* and *eternal life* is not a life that lasts a little while—it is what it is said to be—*everlasting life*. Then I perceived in the Word that against this everlasting life the old body of sin and death would struggle, but that it was written that the new life was a living and incorruptible Seed “which lives and abides forever.” And I discovered the Apostle's words, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” It was a grand discovery when I perceived that the life God had given me could not die any more than God could! That it was a beam from Himself! That He had made me a partaker of that Divine Nature since I had escaped the corruption that was in the world through lust. That the Spirit of the Most High was given to the Believer to dwell in him and to be with him forever! And that He who began the work had declared that He would carry it on and perfect it unto the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

When I learned those Truths of God, I felt as if I had not seen God's Salvation before. I had seen so little of it the first time—enough to make me leap for joy, it is true—but on the second discovery, I beheld that *He who redeemed me from the guilt of sin would quite as certainly redeem me from the power of sin!* That He who set me on the rock would keep me there! That He who put me on the road to Heaven had said about all His servants, “I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” That was a glorious discovery! None of your two penny-halfpenny salvations that some people profess to have, that only last for a day or two, or a few weeks at most and then depart—in Christ today and out of Christ tomorrow! Christ has pardoned their sin and yet they think He has not given them salvation! But to know that “the gifts and

calling of God are without repentance.” That He has said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be *saved*.” That “the righteous also shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” That the Word of Christ stands sure, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands”—this is to see God's Salvation in a broader light! I pray that every hearer who has seen Christ may go on to see more of Christ till he has seen his full security in the Person of the Well-Beloved!

But further on, (and it was with me a long time later), when I had discovered that the Christ who saved me from the guilt was also pledged to save me from the *power of sin*—then I found afresh that He was God's Salvation! I discovered partly through thought and partly through the clear testimony of the written Word, that every soul that believes in Christ, believes in Christ because God *made Him believe in Christ!* That concerning that soul there was a purpose made by God that that soul should be a Believer—and that purpose was made from all eternity, and that purpose once made could never be changed! It was like the mountains of brass which could never be moved. I say that the salvation of the Believer in Christ did not rest on his own will, but on God's will! That the purpose that saved him was not his own purpose, even as it is written, “it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” Why, I remember that was as good a discovery to me as the very first one that I made! It was almost like another conversion! I had been up to the ankles in the Water of Life before, but now I was up to my very neck! And what could I say but this—

***“I'm a monument of Grace,
A sinner saved by blood!
The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God.
And in His sacred bosom see
Eternal thoughts of love to me”?***

Here it is that “my eyes have seen God's Salvation”—seen the source of it, the secret springs of it, the eternity of it, the immutability of it and the Divinity of it! I pray that every burdened child of God may also get to see that. Then will he indeed sing for joy of heart!

Probably, dear Brothers and Sisters, we have not all gone further than that, if as far, but it is a very blessed thing when we are led to see another Truth of God, namely, that *every quickened Believer is one with Jesus Christ*. “We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” The Christ in Heaven is the same Christ who is here on earth in all of His saved ones—they are all parts of Him. There is a vital union subsisting between them so that whatever Christ is, they are. They were one with Him of old, they were one in the grave, one when He rose, one when He triumphed over His foes and they are at this day one with Him as—

***“Now in Heaven He takes His seat,
While seraphs sing all Hell's defeat.”***

Every Believer is as much one with Christ as the finger is one with the body. If I lost my finger, I would not be a perfect man as to my body. And if Christ lost the meanest member of His body, it would be *a part of Christ* that would be lost—and Christ would not be a perfect Christ! We are one with Jesus by indissoluble, vital union—and if your soul perceives that, you will clap your hands and say to the Father—“I have indeed seen Your Salvation, for now I see that I am in Heaven.” He “has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” We are saved and glorified in Christ Jesus as our Representative and Covenant Head!

Not even yet have I exhausted this theme! And I only pray that you and I may go on to know yet more and more the heights and depths of God's Salvation! I was thinking just now before I began to preach that if ever you and I should be permitted to look down upon the world of misery—if in some future state we should ever gaze into that land of darkness and despair where sinners cast away from God are suffering the due reward of their sins—if our eyes should ever see their agonies and our ears should ever hear their cries of despair, we would, among other things, say, “My God, I never knew before how great Your Salvation is, for I also should have been there, but for Your mercy. Until I saw something of what Hell is, I could not tell how much I owed You. I could not say that in its heights and depths my eyes had seen Your Salvation.”

And, Brothers and Sisters, (to put a better, a more pleasing light upon it)—

**“When I stand before the Throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own”**

—when I shall see Him—and see Him I shall, for I can say with Job, “Whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” When you and I shall cast our crowns at His feet, when we shall raise our voices with all the white-robed throng in the everlasting hallelujahs, then we shall say, “My God, my Father, ‘My eyes have seen Your Salvation.’”

III. Time fails me, so I must pass on to spend a few minutes in a third portion of my topic. It is this—THERE ARE SOME HERE WHO HAVE NEVER SEEN GOD'S SALVATION.

The Gospel is hid from them. And if it is hid, it is not hid because we have used hard words to hide it. “If our Gospel is hid, it is hid from them who are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not.” Blind Sinner, do you desire to see the Salvation of God? “Ah,” you say, “If I know my own heart, I do.” Why, then, can you not see it, Man? It is very plain. Ah, I see, your eyes are sealed up!

The first seal I see on your eyes, like a fixed scale, (and oh, I wish I could take it off of you), is this—*you do not even believe that you need any salvation.* The man who does not believe he needs saving, of course will never see God's Salvation! In your heart you say, “I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” But my poor Friend, be

persuaded to take God's opinion of you, which is much nearer the truth than yours. You are naked, blind, poor and miserable! You are lost, ruined and condemned, as it is written, "He that believes not is condemned already." Is that scale gone?

Now I see another, (I wish that I could take that off, too), and that is, you know you are blind, but *you say*, "*I must try and save myself.*" This is a very thick scale. You will never see while that is on your eyes! Do you not notice how Simeon put it—not, "My eyes have seen *my own salvation*," but, "My eyes have seen *Your Salvation*," that is, God's Salvation, the Lord's salvation! Let me tell you, poor Man, if ever you are saved, your salvation must be God's in the beginning, God's in the carrying on and God's in the concluding! No salvation will ever serve your turn but one which is Divine from top to bottom! If Nature's fingers could nimbly spin a garment that should cover human nakedness, it would be of no use. All that Nature spins, God must unravel before a soul can be clothed in the righteousness of Christ! It is not your doings, Man—it is Christ's doings that must save you! Not your tears, but Christ's blood! Not your feelings, not anything in you or from you! Listen you who have an ear to hear it—"Salvation is of the Lord"—from first to last!

If that scale shall come off your eyes, I know that you will say, "Now I begin to see enough to know that I cannot see. I have just enough light to discover the darkness I am in. I see that none can save me but God. He must do it—but will He save me? Will He save me?" Lend me your finger, Man. Do you see? No, you do not, but there is the hem of Jesus' garment—touch that with your finger and you shall be restored to sight at once! I mean this—Jesus died to save such as you are—trust Him and you are saved! You are saved completely and at once! A physician who was under some concern of soul, asked his patient, who was a godly man, "Can you explain to me what faith is?" "Yes," said his godly patient, "I can let you see it very soon if God will let you see it. It is like this—I am very ill, I cannot help myself, I do not attempt to do it, I have confidence in you—I put myself into your care, I take what medicine you send me—I do what you bid me. That is faith. You must trust yourself in the hands of Christ like that." That is it. When you, my dear Friend, wholly and entirely trust yourself in the hands of Christ—then your eyes have seen God's Salvation!

I have no time for more. I wish I had. But I want to say this final word to everyone who has seen God's Salvation. Perhaps one of you is poor. Well, go home tonight saying, "I am poor, but my eyes have seen Your Salvation." One of you, perhaps, is in suffering. Then say, "I feel ill. Never mind, my eyes have seen Your Salvation." And perhaps there are some warnings and intimations that make another of you think you will soon be called to die. Consumption is undermining your constitution—never mind, don't fret—your eyes have seen God's Salvation! How much better to die in an attic or in a ditch and see God's Salvation, than be carried in the most pompous manner to your grave a soul that knows nothing of

God and of the Savior! O you that are much tried and much troubled, bear up, bear up! Your sorrow will not last much longer! When you and I get to Heaven, as I trust we shall, as I *know* we shall if we are resting on the Atonement of Christ, these troubles by the way will only be matter for us to talk of, and to say to one another, "How graciously the Lord has upheld us in His Providence, and how wonderfully He has brought us through every trial! Even in my poverty, my eyes saw His Salvation. In my sickness and in my death, I did but see it all the more clearly because of the clouds and darkness that were round about me!" God bless you, dear Friends! I earnestly pray that you may all see God's Salvation! May He hear the prayer, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 2:1-40.**

Verses 1-9. *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sorely afraid.* These men were probably poor and illiterate, but that did not hinder God from revealing Himself to them, nor prevent the coming of His Son to them! They were engaged in their ordinary calling, "keeping watch over their flocks by night," when this great blessing came to them. Seldom does such a blessing as this come to idlers. It was not while they were gadding abroad and wasting their time, but while they kept watch over their flocks that "the angel of the Lord came upon them." First one angel led the way and then a multitude of the heavenly host followed and these poor men, perhaps troubled with the common superstition of the Jews that the appearance of God, or any supernatural visitation, would always be followed by death, "were sorely afraid."

10, 11. *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. The anointed Savior has full power to save, for He "is Christ the Lord" and,*

therefore, He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

12. *And this shall be a sign unto you—You shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.* [See Sermons #1026, Volume 17—JOY BORN AT BETHLEHEM and #1330, Volume 22—THE GREAT BIRTHDAY—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Not in marble halls, wrapped in purple and fine linen and welcomed by the great and mighty of earth! No, this greatest of all princes is born amid the poverty of our ordinary manhood! He is One chosen out of the people, the people's Savior—and a manger receives the people's King.

13. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.* They could not stay behind! The news spread through Heaven that an angel had gone to announce the birth of Christ and the others flew through the pearly gates and hastened to overtake the herald—and reached him just as he had concluded his message—"Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host." These cohorts of the Lord came riding post haste, Praising God.

13-17. *And saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said, one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. And they came with haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child.* Good news is not to be kept to ourselves. When we have ascertained its truth we are to tell it to others, and we are especially to tell the goodness of salvation! Tell it, O you who know it in your own hearts by blessed experience! Tell it, though it will sometimes be with broken accents in the feebleness of your flesh, yet even then tell it in the ardor of your heart's affection and God will bless your testimony—and others will learn the Good News through you.

18, 19. *And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them.* Weighed them, estimated them at their right value.

19. *In her heart.* The best of coffers to lay up anything in is the heart! Happy are those who, like Mary, store up the things of Christ, not in their brain, though that would make them orthodox—but in their heart—for that will bring them salvation!

20-24. *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord; (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord) and to offer a sacri-*

*fi*ce according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons. Our Savior put Himself under the Law for our sakes and in every jot and tittle He observed it. So we are delivered from its dominion, for if Christ has fulfilled the Law on our account, it has no more claim upon us. "You are not under the Law, but under Grace."

25. *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.* [See Sermon #659, Volume 11—SIMEON—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *And the same man was just and devout.* This combination makes up a complete character—"just" towards man—"devout" towards God. There are many who think they are just, but their justness does not extend to their fellow creatures, and they forget the claims of the Most High upon them. On the other hand, I have known men who have pretended to a vast amount of devotion, but who have never been just. Such persons are hypocrites, as the others are robbers of God! But he who is just and devout—just towards man and devout towards God—has the character of a true man! Such was Simeon, "just and devout."

25-29. *Waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the Temple: and when the parents brought in the Child, Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the Law, then he took Him up in his arms and blessed God, and said, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word.* You see, dear Friends, he was not afraid to die and he knew that he could not die until he had seen the Messiah! Some of us, if we had a Revelation that on the occurrence of a certain event, we would die, might be filled with alarm or anxiety! But it is not so with holy Simeon—he rather longs to depart in peace. He looks upon the coming of "the Lord's Christ" with great joy because now he knows the battle of life for him will soon be over and that he will enter into his victory!

30-34. *For my eyes have seen Your Salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of the people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him. And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary, His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.* [See Sermon #907, Volume 15—CHRIST—THE RISE AND FALL OF MANY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] There were many who fell through their offenses against Jesus, but blessed be His name, there are still many who rise through Him, rise first to newness of life on earth and afterwards to resurrection life in Glory! Jesus is set for both—He must be to one the savor of death unto death, and to another He must be the savor of life unto life.

34. *And for a sign which shall be spoken against.* How true has this been! The Cross has been to many a stumbling block, and to the worldly wise it has been foolishness. And so will it be to the world's end!

35. *(Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul, also).* Great privileges often involve great troubles. Mary was highly favored and truly blessed among women, yet no woman ever had greater sorrow than she had!

35. *That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.* Christ's death revealed the thoughts of many hearts. It revealed the thoughts in the heart of Pilate, that he loved popularity better than the Truth of God. It revealed the thoughts of the heart of Judas, that he loved gold better than he loved his Master. It revealed the thoughts in the heart of Caiaphas, that he would keep to old customs rather than to the right. It revealed the thoughts in the hearts of the disciples and showed what poor timid, trembling hearts they had. Peter's impulsive spirit, too, was revealed in all its weakness by the death of the Savior. The Cross is the great touchstone! Wherever it goes, it tests and tries us—even as the crucible tries the metal that is put into it—and lets us know what manner of men we are. Do you love Christ? Do you glory in His Cross? Then it is well with you. But do you despise the Cross? Do you set up your own righteousness in opposition to it? Are you depending upon anything beside Jesus Christ and Him crucified? Then His Cross reveals you to be self-righteous and dead in trespasses and sins! Our Savior was not only to be received by men, but He was to be welcomed by women also, so now we read.

36-40. *And there was one Anna, a Prophetess, the daughter of Phanael, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about 84 years, which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant, gave thanks, likewise, unto the Lord, and spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. And when they had performed all things according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the Child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the Grace of God was upon Him.*

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

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

END OF VOLUME 55

CHRIST, THE GLORY OF HIS PEOPLE

NO. 826

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"A light to lighten the Gentiles,
and the Glory of Your people Israel."
Luke 2:32.*

WE must read this passage literally, for so Simeon intended it. The Lord Jesus Christ, though once despised and rejected by His own countrymen, is the great honor and splendor of God's people, Israel. It is reckoned an honor to a nation when eminent persons are born of its stock and lineage—but Israel can claim the palm above all lands, for she can say that our Lord sprang out of Judah.

Put together all the heroic and famous names of Greece and Rome—add all the literary splendors of Germany and the flashing beauties of France. Combine with these the blazing fame of Milton and Shakespeare, of Bacon and of Newton in our own land—and all countries put together cannot compass so great a glory of manhood as can the nation of the Jews, for they can claim not so much Moses, and David, and the Prophets, as Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

If mention is made of Egypt and Babylon, or Philistia and Tyre, saying, "This man was born there," the answer shall be concerning Zion, "The Son of Man was born in her." It ill behooves us ever to speak slightly of the Jew. It ill behooves the Christian Church to despond concerning the conversion of the seed of Israel, or to be so indifferent as she sometimes is as to the conversion of Israel. Brethren, the day will come when the veil shall be taken from the eyes, and the hardness from the heart, and Abraham's sons shall behold the true Messiah and accept Him as their Glory and their All.

In that day, after the long time of winter, how bright the summer will be! If their casting away brought the Gentiles so much blessing, what will their gathering together be but life from the dead! After so long an alienation, how ravishing and delightful will be the reconciliation between the Bridegroom and His ancient spouse! How will the earth ring with joy and every river in Judea's land flow to the tune of Heaven's own music, when Jesus and the Jew shall be reconciled, and He shall be, as He is prophesied to be, the Glory of His people Israel!—

*"The hymn shall yet in Zion swell
That sounds Messiah's praise,
And Your loved name, Immanuel!
As once in ancient days.
For Israel yet shall own her King,*

**For her salvation waits,
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing
With praise in all her gates.
Hasten, O Lord, these promised days,
When Israel shall rejoice,
And Jew and Gentile join in praise,
With one united voice.”**

It would have been wrong to use the text as I am going to use it if I had not first given you its primary meaning. We have no right to use texts for other purposes without, first of all, giving the literal meaning, and saying, “Such-and-such is originally the mind of the Holy Spirit.” It is doubtless the mind of the Spirit speaking here by Simeon, that the Lord Jesus shall be a Light to lighten the once darkened Gentiles, but peculiarly the Glory of the Jewish nation. We shall now employ the *natural* Israel as a type of the Lord’s elect ones, and surely there is no straining of the text when we say that Jesus Christ is the Glory of the *spiritual* seed, the *redeemed* people, who stand to the Lord *actually* where Israel of old stood in the *type*.

Jesus Christ is the Glory of His people, His spiritual people Israel. And why, with evident propriety, may the saints of God be compared to Israel? Surely because God has made a Covenant with *them* as He did with Jacob. Jacob at the foot of the ladder saw a way which led from earth to Heaven. We at the foot of the Cross have beheld the same vision. We see a way from our poor fallen estate up to all the glories of the place where Jehovah dwells. That night a Covenant was made with Jacob. And between God and our own souls—in the Person of the Lord Jesus—there is a blessed compact made which shall stand secure though earth’s old columns bow.

He will be our God, and we shall be His people. He has made with us a Covenant ordered in all things and sure. This is the great fountain of all our mercies, the ground of all our hopes. Our Covenant God is the delight of our inmost souls, our castle and high tower, our sun and our shield—

**“He by Himself has sworn.
I on His oath depend.
I shall, on eagles’ wings upborne,
To Heaven ascend:
I shall behold His face,
I shall His power adore,
And sing the wonders of His grace
Forevermore.”**

We may be compared with Israel, again, because if we are the children of God we have learned to wrestle with the angel and prevail. It is one mark of the heir of Heaven that he understands the value of secret prayer, and that he exercises himself in it—that is to him as stern a reality as wrestling is to the athlete when he seeks to hurl his antagonist to the ground. Not a mumbling of words, but a marshalling of all the powers of manhood to come into contest—loving, blessed contest—with God Himself! Well may they be called prevailing princes who are so. Dear Friend, if you are a man of secret prevailing supplication, why need you doubt that you are one of the Lord’s Israels?

It may be that you have another likeness to Israel in the fact that you are much tried. It is not so sure a token of salvation as some would make it out to be, but yet it is written, "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God." Poor Israel said, "All these things are against me," when one after another his beloved children were taken from him and famine was in the land. Perhaps you may be tempted to say the same, and in this you have a likeness to Jacob—from which I could wish you to escape, for it were better far if, taking all these evils as they come, you could believe the heavenly declaration, "All things work together for good, to them that love God."

Faith must be tried. God had one Son without sin but He never had a son without the rod. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." I hope we shall be like Jacob always in our faith, for though he may have distrusted occasionally, yet he was a man of giant faith and has a place in that roll call of heroes in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He blessed the sons of Joseph, leaning upon his staff, and gave commandment concerning the taking away of his bones. He was not content to allow his body to rest in Egypt—he looked for the promised land and there, there only, would he have his aged body laid in the grave—as if in death he would take possession of the heritage which the Lord had promised to him and to his seed forever.

May you and I have a faith that cannot be satisfied with all the green plains of Goshen, nor the granaries of Egypt, but which longs for the better state—the promised land—which to the eyes of our body may be invisible, but which to the eye of our faith is clearly revealed! Now, the true Israel, which is spiritually the Church of Christ, *are* said, according to the text, to be the Lord's people. "The glory of Your people Israel." Briefly let me remind you, my fellow Believers, of the ties which make us the Lord's. Are we not His, tonight, by His eternal choice? "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth."

The eternal Father has selected us from among the ruins of the Fall and given us into the hands of Christ that we may be His portion, His bride, His jewels, "according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." We are Christ's, next, by redemption. He has redeemed us from among men by a special and *particular redemption* which is peculiar to ourselves. A price has been paid for us—an *effectual* price, which will not permit, for a moment, that the objects so purchased shall ever be lost. "You are not your own, you are bought with a price." The saints are redeemed from among men. Thus are you Christ's by double bonds—the gift of the Father and the purchase of His own blood. The Father gave you to Jesus and none shall pluck you out of His almighty hands!

You are His, too, this night, by *conquest*. Admit it. He has struggled with your sins and overcome them. The Spirit of the living God has taken you, as it were, like a lamb from the jaws of the lion. You were led captives by Satan, but Christ met the devil and overcame him in a terrific duel, and you, the once willing captives of the powers of Darkness, are now

Christ's portion made free and blessed! You are now the possession of your Conqueror, for He took you out of the hand of the enemy with His sword and with His bow. You *belong* to Christ as the spoil which He has won from death and Hell.

You are His, again, by the voluntary dedication of yourselves to Him. Come, Beloved, is it not so? Will you not confess—

**“ ‘Tis done! the great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine!
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine”?**

If you feel aright, you will confess that there is not a drop of blood in your veins which does not belong to Jesus, nor a hair on your head which is not His. All the Isle of Man now belongs to Jesus, and you will count it foul scorn that sin should have a lodge within the territories which belong to your liege Lord and Master! From within the triple kingdom of your spirit, soul, and body, you will, to the best of your power, hunt out every rebel against the dominion of your Lord Jesus. You are His tonight, you know you are! You rejoice to confess the blessed impeachment and are willing, before men, angels, and devils, to renew the dedication of yourselves to Him.

And, once again, you are His in conjugal bonds—married to Him as chaste virgins. His unbounded love espoused you before time began and it has not diminished. He claims you as His own bride, and you call Him the Husband of your souls, and delight to have it so. More than that, you are His in vital union as the members belong to the head. You are in personal, vital, actual *communion* with the Son of God! You are thus His in the fullest and most absolute sense. Oh, you will not start back from being altogether His, but come closer and closer to a full surrender and desire to feel more powerfully the fact that you are Christ's people, wholly belonging to Him—not in part, not held by a kind of mortgage—but Christ's freehold, Christ's absolute property!

You bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus and desire to be His, now, and His, world without end. Now, it is to such as these, who are like Israel, and who belong to Christ, that the text shall be addressed tonight. Jesus Christ is the Glory of such. We will pause a moment, and then let us plunge into the center of the text.

I. When we say that Christ is our Glory, we mean that **WE GET ALL THE GLORY WE HAVE THROUGH HIM.** Some men go to schools for glory, others to the camps of war. In all kinds of places men have sought after honor, but the Believer says that Christ is the mine in which he digs for this gold—Christ is the sea in which he fishes for this pearl—he gives up all other searches and looks for Glory in Jesus and nowhere else.

Now, Beloved, we find our adorable Lord to be our Glory tonight, but in what respects? Well, we have the glory, first, of election—of being chosen by God out of the rest of mankind—to be a separated people before which imperial pomp grows pale! And this comes to us altogether through Jesus

Christ. "According as He has chosen us in Him from before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy."

Our next glory is that we are redeemed. It is no small honor for a man to know that God loved Him so well that He gave a price so costly that all Heaven and earth could not match it with another—that He gave His only begotten Son that we might be redeemed. Now, Beloved, we are not redeemed except through Jesus Christ. And if it is our glory that we are emancipated today—that our fetters are all broken, that we are the Lord's freemen—we know with what a price we gained this liberty, for we were not free-born. Yes, the glory of the Lord's freeman must be only in the Lord Jesus, who is the Son, who by His blood makes as free, indeed.

It is the glory of a Christian that he is adopted, that he is a son of God—but this, again, is only through Jesus Christ. We are joint heirs with Christ. We have no relation except through His standing at the top of the page in the family register. He is a Son, and we become the many brethren, but only because He condescended to take upon Him our nature and become the first-born among us. Brothers and Sisters, it is a great joy to know, and a great glory to say, "I am justified." We can stand upright tonight and say, "Who shall lay anything to my charge? Before the court of King's Bench of Heaven, before the Chancery of the universe, who dare condemn me?"

To be pardoned and accepted of God is a matchless privilege. Now, no man can claim justification of a truth except through Jesus Christ, for here is the top and the bottom of a man's justification—that the righteousness of Christ has been given to him, and that the blood of Christ has washed him. "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that has risen again; who sits at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Remember this, my Brethren—we are accepted, but we are accepted *in the Beloved*—and we are justified, but we are justified *in His righteousness*. We are a people dear to God, and near unto Him, but all this lies in Jesus Christ. We are comely with the comeliness which He puts upon us, and secure in God's sight because we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

One part of the Christian's glory, and for my part one which I sigh for more and more, is the glory of sanctification. It is a great glory to have a new heart and a right spirit and to pant after holiness, but this also comes by the same royal road—for we are sanctified through the *blood of Jesus*—which the Holy Spirit applies to us. There is not a particle of true sanctity in all the world which does not spring from the Cross! Everything which makes us like Christ first comes from Christ, *not* from the works of the Law, nor from the strivings of the flesh, nor the teachings of philosophy—but altogether—

***"From the water and the blood
From the riven side which flowed."***

If we glory, then, in sanctification, we dare not glory except in Christ Jesus, whose blood has made us priests and kings unto God.

And, Brothers and Sisters, it is a great glory to a man to know that he is safe. I love our Arminian friends very heartily, but I should not like to be one of them, myself, for they have such a precarious salvation that they do not know whether it will ultimately save them or not. It will save them *if* they are faithful, but ah, that unhappy thought is the one dangerous link in the chain—and I dare not trust *my* poor unfaithful soul to such a frail support. They are traveling in a carriage, the axles of which may break before they reach their journey's end! I bless God I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day.

But if a man knows himself, by faith, to be saved, his knowledge is baseless presumption if he rests his safety anywhere but on the immovable rock of the finished work of Jesus Christ! He who can say, "Yes, I trust Christ to save me not only today, or tomorrow for He has worked out for me an *everlasting* salvation. I believe that He will be with me and own my name at the bar of judgment"—such a man knows that he is resting only in Jesus, and then his glory as to his safety is a glory in Christ, and in Christ alone.

Thus I might continue showing you that there is not a single treasure which a Christian possesses which does not come to him but through Christ. He has nothing in which he can glory but what he is sweetly compelled to say of it, "I gained this in the market of Calvary. I found this in the mines of a Savior's suffering. All this came to me through my bleeding, buried, risen, coming Lord, and He shall have the glory of it as long as I live."

II. There is a second meaning to the text, namely this—WE SEE A GLORY IN CHRIST which swallows up all other glories as the sun's light conceals the light of the stars. True Believers see Glory, first, in Christ's Person. They are often overwhelmed as they contemplate His Godhead and His Manhood Divinely blended. All His attributes strike them as glorious. They cannot think of His Character as He manifested it while here below, or as it is revealed before the Throne above, without falling into raptures of adoring wonder, love, and praise.

If others tell them of the glory of such-and-such philanthropists and able men, the saints reply, "We have perceived no glory anywhere comparable with that which gleams in the Character of Christ." Oh, how deeply was Rutherford in love with his sweet, unutterably sweet Lord Jesus! Would to God I were as far gone as he in that heavenly union, communion, and rapture! What expressions he uses! How deep he dips his pen! How glowingly he writes and yet he never exaggerates. It is impossible! Christ is too lovely for us ever to say a word that shall approach half-way to the fullness of His unspeakable excellence and boundless worth! Much less need we ever fear lest we shoot with a bow that shall pass the mark. No, Beloved, our Lord's Person is the admiration of the highest intellects that God has ever made, and though angels have been educated in the great science of Christ Crucified these many years, yet—

"The first-born sons of light

***Desire in vain its depths to see!
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, the breadth, the height.”***

Incarnate God is yet beyond them, and still, instead of being wearied with their pursuit, they are students yet, sitting at the feet of the Church of God that there may be made known among principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God! Oh, you shall never see anything so glorious as the Person of the Beloved if your eyes are but once favored to gaze upon Him and your heads but once permitted to lean upon His loving bosom! Brethren, the moon is a blot, and the sun a burnt-out coal compared with our Immanuel!

The saints see a great Glory in the sufferings of Christ. When a base world turns away from the Despised and Rejected, it is then that the regenerate heart clings fastest to Him. Oh, how Divinely the scarlet of His blood becomes Him! Was ever Caesar's purple half so glorious? He is bright in Heaven. Be You worshipped forever, Sun of our souls! But if there is a place where, above all others, we would kiss His feet and wash them with our tears, and love Him best of all, it is Calvary's Cross. How our hearts burn when we think of His bearing the load of guilt for us—groaning, sweating, bleeding and painfully yielding up His life!

A root out of a dry ground He may be to this blind-eyed world, but to us, Beloved, who have been admitted into the mystery of His inmost heart—all over glorious is our precious Lord—a miracle of love, the astonishment of earth, the marvel of Heaven, the All in All of our souls! If there were time, we might say that He has been glorious to us in His Resurrection, especially since He has taught us to rise with Him in newness of life—glorious in His Ascension, now that He is sitting at the right hand of the Father—especially now that we have been raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him.

He is glorious in His intercession. What a comfort it is to us to think that our name is on one of the stones of that glorious breastplate! He is glorious, too, in His second advent. We expect Him to come soon. It is earth's highest hope, the Church's most fervent prayer! Come quickly Lord Jesus! To see You we would gladly give up the sight of everything beneath the stars. To see the King in His beauty come riding through the streets! To behold Him with the rainbow wreath and robes of storm! Yes, to have one glimpse of that Great White Throne, though it were but a distance—and to hear Him say one word—was a kind of everlasting Heaven! But for once to have seen Him! But for once to have heard Him!

It might make men content to bear a thousand trials but for once, with heart, and eye, and soul, to drink a full draught of the Glory of Christ. Brethren, our soul fires as we proceed, and we long to praise and sing—

***“King of kings! Let earth adore Him,
High on His exalted throne!
Fall, you nations, fall before Him,
And His righteous scepter own:
All the glory
Be to Him, and Him alone!”***

But we must not stop, nor need we tarry. It is enough to have proved it to every Christian heart, though, indeed, it needed no proof, that Jesus Christ is the Glory of His people Israel, in the sense that they shall glory in Him.

III. In the third place, the text is true in the sense that WE GIVE GLORY TO HIM. Alas! Alas! It makes a Christian's blood boil to see glory given in a professed place of worship, yes, and in a professed Protestant Church, too, to a pack of scamps who call themselves "priests"! I would not call them by such a name if they were honest enough to go off to the Church of Rome, where they ought to be—but having the impudent effrontery to attempt to palm themselves off in this country of ours for what they are not, I know of no words bad enough for them!

What reverence or respect is to be paid to those gentry inside those brass gates, around the thing they call an altar? I suppose those gates enclose a sort of holy place into which the poor laity must not go! If these priests had their way, we should have to go down and lick the soles of their feet as our benighted forefathers aforesaid bowed before the hirelings of Rome! Does it not make a man feel, when you see pictures of his holiness and the cardinals, and so on, scattering their benedictions at the Vatican, or at St. Peter's, while admiring crowds fall down and worship them, that it were infinitely better to bow to Satan himself?

We give glory unto *God*, but not a particle of glory to anything in the shape of a man, or an angel, either. Have I not stood and seen the crowds by hundreds fall down and worship images and dressed-up dolls? I have seen them worship bones and old teeth! I have seen them worship a skeleton dressed out in modern costume—said to be the skeleton of a saint! And I have marveled how we could, in this 19th century, find people so infatuated as to think that such idolatry was pleasing to the most high God! We, Brethren, the people of God who know Christ, can give no glory to this rubbish, but turn away from it with horror! Our glory must be given to Christ, and to Christ, alone.

Now, here is the touchstone to try your religion by. When you pray, to whom do you pray? *Through* whom do you pray? When you sing, for whom is the song meant? When you preach, to whose honor do you preach? To whom do you intend to do service? When you go out among the poor. When you distribute alms. When you scatter your tracts. When you talk about the Gospel—for whom do you do all this? For, as the Lord lives, if you do it for *yourselves*, or for *any* besides the Lord Jesus, you do not know what the vitality of godliness is! Christ and Christ only must be the grand Object of the Christian! The promotion of His Glory must be that for which we are willing to live, and for which, if needs be, we would be prepared to die.

Oh, down, down, down, with everything else—but up, up, up, with the Cross of Christ! Down with your baptism, and your masses, and your sacraments! Down with your priestcraft, and your rituals, and your liturgies! Down with your fine music and your pomp, and your robes, and your garments, and all your ceremonies! But up, up, up, with the doctrine of

the naked Cross, and the expiring Savior! Let the voice ring throughout the whole world, "Look unto Me and live!" There is *life* in a look at the Crucified One! There is life in simple confidence in Him—but there is life *nowhere else*. God send to His Church an undying passion to promote the Savior's Glory, an invincible, unconquerable pang of desire and longing that by any means King Jesus may have His own, and may reign throughout these realms! In this sense, then, Jesus is and must be the Glory of His people.

IV. But there is another sense, namely, FROM JESUS IS REFLECTED ALL THE GLORY WHICH IS PUT UPON HIS PEOPLE. Whatever glory they have—and they have much in the eyes of angels and much honor in the eyes of discerning men—it is *always* the reflection of the Savior's Glory. I know some holy men and women for whom I cannot but feel the deepest and keenest respect, but the reason is because they have so much of my Master about them. I think I would travel many miles to talk with some of them because their speech is always so full of Him and they live so near to Him.

If you take down some of the old books of the Puritans, and others, I know which you will love the best if you love Christ. Why, those that talk of Him! And when you get into the middle of the chapter where some holy man of God is extolling Him, then you will say, "He being dead yet speaks, and speaks just that to which my ear would listen." If there should ever be any glory about you, young man, it will have to come through your having much of Christ in you! Believe me, the true path to glory for a Christian is never to try to excel in literary attainments apart from Jesus!

He may lawfully try for that in subservience to the higher aim—still, that must not be his glory as a Christian. It never ought to be the glory of the Christian that he is a good business man—he should be a good business man, but still that is not to be the *object* of his glory. If you make anything to be your glory except Christ, God will prepare a worm to eat the root of it, for He will have you—if you are His, He will have you chaste to Himself—and you shall never have anything to glory in but Christ.

You know, Beloved, this is a trying point with many of us, for I am afraid that sometimes we even get to glory in our ministry—and if we do, it will be all over with our usefulness. We must glory in Jesus, and not in our ministry, "Oh," said those disciples as they came back, with excited hearts—"Lord, Lord, even devils are subject to us." "Ah," said Jesus, "Nevertheless, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven." *There* is the point. You must come back to that—rejoicing in your own *personal salvation* through the precious blood of Jesus Christ!

You must rejoice in Him, and then you will think thus: "Well, even if my ministry should not prosper, though I hope it will, yet if I have glorified Christ it shall be enough reward for me. If He is lifted one inch higher, it does not matter if I am trod like mire in the streets. If His dear name is but made illustrious, I will be nothing. If no one shall ever lisp my name with approbation, then so be it! Let Your servant be a dog and let him be

buried and forgotten so long as King Jesus wears the crown, and men cry, 'Long live the King!'"

Oh, this is the Christian's great desire—that he may win Christ! And this it is which gives glory to him and makes him esteemed of God to have lived with an unselfish passion for Jesus gleaming in his breast—to have lived with so heavenly a brightness shining from his brow, and glittering through his entire life! Thus the true glory of every Christian is His Master's, and comes from Him.

V. But now once more. The text may be read in this sense—Christ is the Glory of His people, that is to say, **THEY EXPECT GLORY WHEN HE COMES.** "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He is." Our glory is laid up. We are not wearing our Sunday clothes yet. All this is but the weekday garb, and it is very dusty and commonplace. And with many, the poor body is getting very worn out, too. You may well—

***"Long for evening to undress
That you may rest with God,"***

for when you wake up, what a bright suit will be ready for you! Oh, such garments of glory and beauty that you will scarcely know yourselves in them! You will not be like your present selves, you will be like Christ—

***"Since Jesus is mine
I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay.
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing
Since Jesus to Glory through death led the way."***

When you follow Jesus in resurrection, what glory! But we must not begin to speak of that, for we should never leave off at all if we began to talk about that glory—the glory of perfection, the glory of being delivered from sin, the glory of conquest, having trod Satan under our feet! The glory of eternal rest, the glory of infinite security, the glory of being like Christ, the glory of being in the light and brightness of God, standing, like Milton's angel, in the very sun itself!

If you want to know what Heaven is, you can spell it in five letters! And when you put the five letters together they sound like this—JESUS! That is Heaven! It is all the Heaven the angels round the Throne desire to know. They want nothing better than this—to see His face, to behold His Glory—and to dwell in it world without end!

VI. Thus far have we been led into many precious Truths of God—we have now done with the *doctrinal* part of the text, but we must prolong our meditation two or three minutes to speak a little upon **THE PRACTICAL DRIFT OF THE SUBJECT.**

We have just two or three things to say. We would give a word of warning to those of you who seek your glory anywhere else, because as surely as you do so—even if you meet with honor for a time—you will lose it. It is always ill to put your treasure where it will be stolen from you. Now, suppose you seek your glory in your learning. Well, well, well! Let the sexton take up your skull after you have been dead a little while and what learning will there be in it? What show of wisdom will be found in it when it is

resolved into a little impalpable brown powder? What will your science, and your mathematics, and your classics do for you in death and judgment?

Suppose you seek your glory in fame, and become the favorite of the nation as a great soldier. When the grave-digger rattles your old bones about, what will that signify? You will have great fame, you say, and men will talk about you. Well, will that stop the worms from eating you? Will it give you a single moment's repose, if you are found in Hell, to know that there are those on earth who say that you were a famous man? Great men in Hell look very small! Great men in the pit have to suffer as well as others—yes, they endure more of anguish because they were so great and had so many responsibilities.

When you wake up in the Day of Judgment, you graspers of earthly honors will get to reaching for your glory, and trying to find it, you will be like the sleeper who dreamed that he had much gold. He was gathering it up by handfuls, but when he woke he was in a narrow attic in the abode of poverty, and as penniless as when he fell asleep. Ah yes, if you seek your glory anywhere on earth you will lose it, even if for awhile you win it.

But he who has his glory in Christ, when he opens his eyes in the next world will see Christ, and so behold his glory safe and firmly entailed upon Him! "There," says he, "is my treasure and I have it, have it forever." This is security which no bolts, and iron safes, and Chubb's locks can ever give you! Do but put your treasures into Christ and they are all safe! Even infernal pickpockets shall not be able to take Christ from you! If you win Christ and put your treasure in Him, you are secure! God grant, Brothers and Sisters, that we may be wise for eternity, for all other wisdom is but folly.

Another word, and that is a word of rebuke. There are some preachers we know of, and I suppose there will always be some of the form, who preach, preach, preach, but they never preach what is Israel's Glory. They talk of *anything* but Christ! Oh, how often have I heard the complaint from Christian people, "Sir, our minister is a talented man. He is, on the whole, a sound man doctrinally and he preaches to us a great deal *about* the Gospel. But oh, we wish he would preach the Gospel, not preach *about* it, but preach the thing itself! O that he would preach Christ!"

The best sermons are the sermons which are fullest of Christ! A sermon without Christ is an awful, a horrible thing! It is an empty well! It is a cloud without rain! It is a tree twice dead, plucked by the roots! It is an abominable thing to give men stones for bread and scorpions for eggs, and yet they do so who preach not Jesus! A sermon without Christ? As well talk of a loaf of bread without any flour in it! How can it feed the soul? Men die and perish because Christ is not there, and yet His glorious Gospel is the easiest thing to preach, and the sweetest thing to preach—there is variety in it, there is more attractiveness in it than in all the world besides!

And yet so many will gad abroad and make their heads ache, and turn over those heavy volumes to get something which shall be nothing better

than a big stone to roll at the month of the sepulcher, and shut in Christ as though He were still dead! O Brothers, let us, if we cannot blow the silver trumpet, blow the ram's horn—but let the blast always be Christ, Christ, Christ! Always let us make the walls ring with the dear name of the exalted Savior, and let us tell men that there is salvation in no other, but that there is salvation *and* life for them in Jesus—life for them *now*, life for every soul that looks to Jesus—depending, alone, in *Him*!

Dear teachers in the school, continue always telling the children about Jesus! Dear Friends who work in any way for the Lord's Glory, here is your one topic! The old proverb is, "Cobbler, stick to your last," so, Christian, "Stick to your text," and let the text be Jesus Christ! Let no glitter or show tempt you away from that. This cool snow of Lebanon—be not taken away to drink of the tepid streams that mock the thirsty soul. This gold of Ophir—there is none like it—seek no other! This is the grandest pasture to wander in—this glorious subject—Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Let Him be preached, since HE is the GLORY of Israel!

There are some of you to whom I have a last word to say, and that is, some of you love Jesus Christ but you are ashamed to say so. Now, since He is the Glory of His people Israel, I shall be afraid of you and *for* you if you do not make Him your Glory. Instead of being ashamed to confess Him and His cause, why, surely you will count it to be your shame that you are ashamed, and you will come forward and say, "Yes, I cast in my lot with His people. He is such a blessed Christ. I will never turn my back on Him. If He will but have me, here I am. Put my name down in the Church roll—by all means let me be baptized as He was! Let me come to His Table and let me do this in remembrance of Him. He is a dear Lord, and I should not like it to be thought that I was ashamed of Him."

I shall not press it on you, because a word is enough for a heart that is tender. And if you truly love Him, you will not need any drawing forward. You will say, "Oh, may He only keep me and make me faithful. I am all too glad to have the opportunity of saying that I am on His side—for Him I am resolved to live, and if need be, by His Grace, for Him I would be resolved to die."

Do not put it off, then. Come and see the elders of the Church. They will be glad to see you upon the matter, that is to say, if you belong to Christ. If you do not, do not profess to be what you are not! Mind you, do not come forward and say you are Christ's if you are not! To you who are not His, let me say, Jesus is to be had for the asking. If you seek Him, He will be found of you. Go not to your rest tonight till you have said, "Lord, you are the Glory of Your people. Be my Glory! Give me Yourself! Help me to trust You." And after you have done that, then trust Him, and God bless you, for His own name's sake. Amen.

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CHRIST—THE FALL AND RISE OF MANY NO. 907

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 26, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

[I thank God most devoutly that I am permitted, once again, to appear in my place among you. It is always a most painful deprivation to me when I am unable to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath to my beloved congregation. I earnestly pray that this long affliction may be for my spiritual growth and that you may all profit by that which my Lord has taught me in the School of the Cross. I beseech you, my dear fellow Helpers, ask of God, as a great favor, that now, upon my return to my accustomed work, a double blessing may rest upon all that is done—that those already saved may be more active and the conversions in our midst may be more numerous. So may God grant it and His shall be the praise.]

***“And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary His mother,
Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising
again of many in Israel; and for a sign
which shall be spoken against.”
Luke 2:34.***

THIS text has within it a profound deep meaning, but I shall not attempt to fathom it. There was a company hired a few months ago for attempting to recover ingots of gold and bars of silver, supposedly lying at the bottom of the sea in a Spanish galleon which sunk some centuries back. My ship is not fitted with the necessary machinery for obtaining gold from mysterious deeps, and I have, moreover, great question as to whether the attempt might not be more dangerous than profitable, for many who vary into the awful depths of predestination have lost themselves. And many more have become unprofitable to the Church and to the world.

My ship is but a little fishing boat whose business it is to fish for the souls of men. My gifts fit me only to be such a coasting vessel as may carry corn from port to port to feed those who hunger for satisfying bread. I shall not, therefore, attempt to enter into the sublime mystery which is contained in this text as to the Divine appointment of Christ to be the occasion of the falling and rising of many souls. I believe in that doctrine, however, though I cannot expound it. I tremblingly believe in Peter's words concerning those who stumble at the Word of God, being disobedient, “whereunto also they were appointed.” But I say again, though believing the doctrine of predestination in all its length and breadth because I see it revealed in the Word of God, yet as I cannot see any practical result

that might come out of a discussion of that subject this morning, I shall leave it for other minds and tongues.

Rather would I conduct you to the practical Truth of God which lies in the text. The great practical doctrine before us is this—that wherever Jesus Christ comes, with whomever He may come in contact—He is never without influence, never inoperative—but in every case a weighty result is produced. There is about the holy Child Jesus a power which is always in operation. He is not set to be an unobserved, inactive, slumbering Personage in the midst of Israel, but He is set for the falling or for the rising of the many to whom He is known. Never does a man hear the Gospel but he either rises or falls under that hearing! There is never a proclamation of Jesus Christ (and this is the *spiritual* coming forth of Christ Himself) which leaves men precisely where they were—the Gospel is sure to have some effect upon those who hear it.

Moreover, the text informs us that mankind, when they understand the message and work of Christ, do not regard them with indifference. When they hear the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, they either take it joyfully in their arms with Simeon, or else it becomes to them a sign that shall be spoken against. He that is not with Christ is against Him and He that gathers not with Him scatters abroad. Where Christ is, no man remains neutral—he decides either *for* Christ or *against* Him. Given a mind that understands the Gospel, you have before you, also, a mind that either stumbles at this stumbling-stone, being scandalized thereby, or else you have a mind that rejoices in a foundation upon which it delights to build all its hopes for time and for eternity.

Observe, then, the two sides of the Truth! Jesus is always working upon men with marked effect—and on the other hand, man treating the Lord Jesus with warmth either of affection or opposition—an action and a reaction being evermore produced. Why is this, do you think? Is it not, first, because of the energy which dwells in the Lord's Christ and in the Gospel which now represents Him among men? The Gospel is all life and energy. Like leaven it heaves and ferments with inward energy. It cannot rest till it leavens all around it. It may be compared to salt which must permeate, penetrate and season that which is subject to its influence. Paul compares the preaching of Christ to a sweet-smelling savor.

Now, you cannot say to a perfume, "Be quiet! Do not load the air with sweets. Do not affect men's nostrils." It cannot do otherwise—the fragrance must fill the chamber. Even so, Christ must be a savor, either of life unto life, or of death unto death—but a savor He must be wherever He comes! It is no more possible for you to restrain the working of the Gospel than to forbid the action of fire. Stand before the fire—it shall warm and comfort you. But thrust your hand into it—it will burn you. Keep that fire in its proper place, it shall yield you abundant service. Cast forth the fire-brand, it shall consume your house—it shall devour all that comes in con-

tact with it. You cannot say to fire, “Restrain your consuming energy.” It must work because it is fire.

And so with yonder sun. Though clouds may hide it from our sight at this moment, yet forever does it pour forth, as from a furnace mouth, its heat and light. Nor could it cease to burn and shine unless it ceased to be a sun. As long as it is a sun it must permeate surrounding space with its influence and splendor. Do you wonder that the Sun of Righteousness is of yet more Divine energy? Do you marvel that the blaze of His Glory blinds His enemies, or His warmth of love dries the tears of His friends? In every case there is a distinct result and a manifest effect! Never does the Gospel return void—it prospers even in that for which the Lord has sent it. Jesus in the Gospel cannot cease to work. “My Father works and therefore I work.”

The Father, in Providence, pauses not, nor does the Son cease from the work of Divine Grace. Moreover, let it be remembered that Jesus Christ and His Gospel are matters of such prime importance to mankind that from this cause, also, there must always be an effect produced by Christ. Consider other matters that are of prime importance to humanity and my meaning will be clear. Here is the air, I breathe it. What then? Why, I live! I cannot breathe it without obtaining this grand result. The lungs receive the air—the blood is supplied with oxygen—life is sustained. Suppose I refuse to breathe the air, what then? Will there be any remarkable effect produced? Shall I be sickly? Shall I be a little faint? Shall I be somewhat less energetic? No, I must die! Breathing, I live. Refusing to breathe, I die. So the Lord Jesus is as necessary to our souls as the atmosphere to our bodies.

If we receive Christ Jesus we live. We cannot receive Him without living by Him. If we will not receive Him, we must die. It is unavoidable that it should be so. You cannot reject the Savior and be a *little* damaged. There is no alternative but that you utterly perish. Take another article of human necessity, bread. You shall eat bread, it shall nourish you, it shall provide for you the material of flesh and sinew, nerve and bone. Refuse to eat it and you take your life from you. You may, if you will, try to impose upon others, but, whether watched or unwatched, you shall die if you will not eat. It is so ordained by wise decree that there is no living without food—let but the space of time be long enough and death must be inevitable to those who will not eat.

So is it with Christ who is the Bread sent down from Heaven. Receive Him—you have all that your soul needs to sustain it and drive away its hunger. Reject Him and there is neither in Heaven nor in earth anything that can supply your soul’s lack. I might instance the water that we drink, or, indeed, anything else that is not a matter of luxury or of artificial need, but which is absolutely necessary to human life. All such things become operative for good or ill, according as you accept them or reject them. So must it necessarily be with Christ. We may add that the position in which

Jesus Christ meets man makes it inevitable that He must have an effect upon them. I shall not speak of the heathen who never hear of Him, nor of our unhappy heathen around us who *will not* hear of Him.

But concerning you who have heard of Christ, I assert that in your case the Lord Jesus has met with you on occasions where to accept or to refuse was to make a crisis in your being. He was right in your way. It was one Sunday evening when the Holy Spirit was with the preacher. Or it was one day when your father had just been buried. Or, Woman, it was one night when your dear babe had just been taken from your bosom and laid upon the bed of death. You may readily recall the occasion. Christ came right in your way and you could not go around Him—you must either, that night, stumble over Him, make Him to be to yourself a rock of offense—or you must then and there build on Him and accept Him as your soul's confidence.

I believe that such a time of decision comes to all hearers of the Word who have at all intelligently heard it. And when the Holy Spirit enables us from that time forth to take the Redeemer to be the ground of our soul's confidence, oh, what a joy it is! But if we are left to ourselves to reject Christ, we shall not have rejected Him without a strain upon conscience—without having done violence to everything good and true. We shall not have stumbled at Christ without knowing that we were stumbling at the noblest gift of God—at the greatest token of the Father's love—stumbling at the only thing which could deliver us from the wrath to come and ensure us an eternity of joy. Thus, you see, because Christ comes to us at the important crisis of our life, He, therefore, cannot be indifferent to us.

He must make us either to fall or rise.

Once again, let me observe that the Lord Jesus was appointed for this very thing—so says the text—He “was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” It was for this very end He came. See the farmer take the fan. You observe the heap of mingled wheat and chaff lying on the floor. He begins to move the fan to and fro till he has created a breeze of wind. What happens? The chaff flies to the further end of the threshing floor and there it lies by itself. The wheat, more weighty, remains purified and cleansed, a golden heap of grain. Such is the preaching of the Gospel! Such is Christ! He is the Separator of those who will perish from those who shall be saved. The fan discerns and discovers. It reveals the worthless and manifests the precious. Thus has Christ the fan in His hand!

Or, take another metaphor, which we find in the Prophets, “Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap.” You see the refiner's fire? Notice how it burns and blazes. Now, it turns to a white heat—you cannot bear to look on it. What has happened? Why the dross is divided from the silver and the alloy from the gold. The refiner's fire separates the precious from the vile. And so the Gospel reveals the elect of God and leaves to hardness of heart the finally impenitent. Where it is preached, the men

who accept it are precious ones of God, His elect, His chosen! The men who reject it are the reprobate silver. So shall men call them, for God has rejected them.

Mark too, the fuller's soap. The fuller takes his soap and, exercising his craft upon yonder piece of linen marked with many stains and colors, you see how these foul things fly before the soap and the fair fabric remains. Both spots and linen feel the power of the soap. So does the Gospel take the polluted fabric of humanity and cleanse it—the filth departs and flies before it and the fair linen remains. Such are the saints of God—when the Gospel comes to them they are purified, thereby—while the wicked, as foul spots, are driven away in their wickedness. Thus I have shown you that it is not possible for Christ to come anywhere without working some result. I would impress upon each of you that it is not possible for Christ to come to *you* without effecting a result in *you*.

I beseech you never fall into the error of those who assert that unbelief is no sin and that to reject Christ is no fault of yours. The whole tenor of Holy Scripture is contradictory to that most erroneous opinion. I know of hardly anything more likely to lull the conscience to sleep than that delusion. Depend upon it, the Gospel will be a savor of death unto death to you if it is not a savor of life unto life to you. If you believe not, you are condemned already. Why? Hear the voice of God: "He that believes on Him is not condemned. But he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, (above all other condemnations), that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

You are in a solemn position, this morning, in listening to the Gospel of Christ. You cannot go out of this House without a mark being made upon you which shall remain there evermore either for your good or for your ill. Christ must operate upon your souls. He is set either for your fall or for your rising again.

Having thus set forth the great Truth of God of the text, I purpose with as much brevity as shall be possible to answer one or two questions.

I. The first is this, **WHO ARE THOSE THAT FALL BY CHRIST?** In Christ's day the question was not difficult to answer. Those that fell by Christ, were, first of all, *the holders of tradition*. There were certain persons who always pleaded, "It was said by them of old time." They quoted some saying of Rabbi Ben this, or Rabbi Ben that—and these famous sayings were practically exalted above the written Word of God—often so as to take the very meaning out of the Decalogue itself and make the traditions of men a higher authority than the Commandments of God.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ laid the axe at the root of this evil tree, for often and often did He say, "It is said by them of old time, but I say unto you." He denounced their making void the Law of God through their traditions. He took a broom and relentlessly swept away the old cobwebs of

what the fathers did and what the ancients said and placed the everlasting, “it is written,” above the authority of antiquity. Much such work is there for Him to do in this, our day, when the use of “Sacraments,” and the custom of the orthodox churches and I know not what else of venerable rubbish profane the House of God! And, my Brothers and Sisters, He will surely do it and tradition will yet again fall before the Ever-living Word.

There fell, also by our Lord’s hand *the externalists*. These men made much of washing their hands before they ate bread. They thought it a great thing to make broad the borders of their garments. They were peculiarly attentive to their phylacteries. They carefully used strainers to keep flies from getting into their wine, lest unclean animals should touch their lips. But the Master in His ministry made short work of them. You blind fools, said He, you strain at gnats and you swallow camels! How He held up to scorn their long prayers and vain pretences, their tithing of cumin and their devouring of widows’ houses! Never could they forget the simile of the cup and platter, washed outside but foul within, nor that of the whitewashed sepulcher, so fair to the eye and yet so full of rottenness. “Woe unto you,” said He, “Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.”

And with that word He swept away the whole empire of externalism and made men see the vanity of outward religiousness while the heart is unrenewed. How forcible are those words, “Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.” The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but joy in the Holy Spirit. O for an hour of our Lord’s Presence to lash the formalism of today! But be of good cheer, His Gospel will do it yet. The Master, at the same time, made to fall all the *self-righteous*. They conceived in themselves that they were righteous and they despised others. What a fall He gave to such when He told that famous parable of the Pharisee and the Publican who went up to the temple to pray! How that proud man, who thanked God he was not as other men, went to his house without peace—while the humble sinner, who confessed himself unworthy to lift his eyes to Heaven—went to his house justified of God!

Oh, it was a grand sweep the Master made of self-righteousness in the days of His flesh! Why, one would think that where Christ was, the Pharisee must have half-wished to pull off their phylacteries and hide the broad border of their garments! Small matter for their pride was it to stand away and profess to be better than other men, while Jesus of Nazareth tore off the mask and revealed the heart! Jesus our Lord was also the fall of *the wiseacres* of His day. There were the lawyers. They knew every point. They could discern in a moment what should be and what should not be according to the fathers. And they had a way of reading every precept of Moses so as to make it mean just whatever you might please, according to the depth of your purse.

Then there were the Scribes—what diligent students they had been! They knew how many letters there were in the whole Law and which was the middle letter and which the middle word. They knew the size and length of each book and they had written notes, matchless for wisdom, upon every passage. And they were expert in muddling the sense of every passage and making the words mean what they were never intended to teach. Diligent students of the letter these doctors of divinity, these Scribes of Christ's day, and yet He nonplussed them with a question so simple that a child should be able to answer—"David in your Law called the Messiah, Lord. How is He then his Son?" They could not reply to Him. And if they had been able, with all their wisdom, to answer that one question, yet could He have asked them many more by which their ignorance would have been discovered.

He was their fall, as He will be at this day the fall of all the boastfully wise, for, "He takes the wise in their own craftiness." But if our Lord was thus the fall of those who were externally religious, who were self-righteous, who were merely orthodox—He was also the fall of the *broad* Church as well as of the high Church. What a fall He gave the Sadducees! These were your broad churchmen. They professed to believe the Law of Moses, but robbed it of its supernatural element. And yet they continued in the then established Church. Of course they did! Why should not the national Sanhedrim be of the most comprehensive character? Yet these skeptics declared that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit!

When our Lord came into the arena against them, their famous story of the woman with the seven husbands was snapped like a wooden sword and the point of an irresistible weapon was set at their breasts as Jesus asked them whether the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was the God of the dead or of the living! Our great Leader's triumph over the skeptical faction was as complete as that achieved over the ritualistic band—to each He gave a crushing fall! If it is easy to answer the question, Who fell by Christ in His lifetime? It is not difficult to answer the enquiry, Who falls by Christ today? Why, very much the same sort of people as fell by Him then! If any of you are trusting in the *externals* of religion. If you are strangers to the inner *spiritual* life. If you are depending upon your confirmation, your baptism, your reception of the sacrament, or anything of *ceremony*, assuredly Christ will be the fall of you!

Hear His own words, "You must be born again." "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Though you may receive the baptism of Christ and the supper of Christ as often as you will, without His Spirit, you are lost! If there are any here who are confident in their own excellence. If you are hoping to enter Heaven because you have never done any great harm and have, on the whole, been very good people—amiable, and kind and generous—Christ will be the fall of you! Continuing as you are now, His Gospel condemns you thoroughly. For what says that Gospel? "By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified." Why,

then, should you hope to be justified, in the teeth of what Christ, by His Inspired Apostle, has declared? Christ is the death of self-righteousness and you will most assuredly perish, if self is your reliance.

Some will tell you that human nature is not at all so bad as it is said to be in Scripture—there are some fine points about man which only need opportunities of development. Ah, but if man were not fallen, why did he need a Savior? If man were not hopelessly fallen, why need God have come down from Heaven to take upon Himself human flesh to redeem man? You who praise up human nature are robbing Christ of Glory to crown a dying rebel! And rest assured that such robbery will be your ruin unless repented of. There are others who say let man do his best and he will, no doubt, be accepted of God. They hope that there is enough of strength in man to enable him to force his way to that which is desired of him.

If so, why that bleeding Sacrifice? What necessity for Calvary's groans and death-pangs? The Sacrifice of Christ is the death of all hopes of self-salvation. If you could save yourself, it were monstrous that Christ should come to save you! I tell you if you hold to self-reliance, Christ's Cross will be the fall of you! It will be a condemning witness against you! Moreover, Jesus is the fall of all who rely upon priests, or who profess to be priests. When the Son of God has appeared as the Priest of fallen humanity, oh, how dare you, you curs and dogs who yelp at the heels of Antichrist, to claim to be what Jesus, alone, is! How dare you take upon yourselves to stand at the altar when He is there! Now that the Sun of Righteousness has risen, we cannot, *dare* not, trust in such mere blots of darkness as you are!

All persons who are self-contented. All those who are lofty in mind—to these Christ will assuredly give a dreadful fall. "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be laid low." Every look of pride will He abase, for He is set for the fall of all those, whether in Israel or among the Gentiles, who exalt themselves in the face of the Lord of Hosts. Judge you, Sirs, whether He will be your fall! You can readily tell. He that is down need fear no fall! But he that is on high may tremble lest the Child who was born in Bethlehem should be his fall.

II. But I must pass on. Another and a happier question suggests itself. To WHOM WILL THE LORD JESUS BE A RISING AGAIN? He will be a rising again to those who have fallen. Do you confess, "I have fallen"? Do you acknowledge, "I possess a fallen nature"? Do you lament you have fallen into sin? O my Brothers and Sisters, He will be your rising! He cannot uplift those who are not brought low. But if you have fallen and are conscious of it this day, He is set to be the rising again of such as you are.

Again, are you conscious of being down? There cannot be a lifting to those who are up—there cannot be healing to those who are not sick. Christ came not for so preposterous a purpose as to be the Savior of those who are already safe. Are you sick? He was set to heal such as you are.

Are you down? Then the more desperate your fall, the deeper your sense of degradation, the more I will rejoice! If you call yourself the chief of sinners, I shall but be the more thankful. And if you feel yourself past all hope, I shall congratulate you as a prisoner of Hope, for He came to be the rising again of such as you are! Clearly to everybody's common sense the rising is not for those who are already up, but for those who are in need of raising. They shall rise in Him!

Note, again, those that rise in Him are those who are now *willing* to rise in Him. He saves none while they are unwilling, but He makes men willing in the day of His power. Are you willing this day to rise in Christ? That gracious will came from God! That will is an indication that Jesus is set to raise you up. Never did a soul cling to Christ with earnest will to rise and find that Christ did leave it to perish! Only lay hold of the hem of His garment and He will lift you up to His own Glory! We have heard of drowning men who have clutched at others who could barely save themselves, but could not support another and have therefore been compelled to throw off those who clung to them. But you may cling to Christ without fear! He is an almighty swimmer and will bear to land every soul that lays hold on Him.

Trembling Believer in Jesus the Redeemer, you shall rise from your poverty to sit among princes! You shall rise from the dunghill of your sins to reign with angels! You shall rise from your spiritual death to newness of life! You shall rise from the shame of your sin to the honor of perfection! You shall rise to be children of God, educated and trained for a better world! You shall rise to dwell in the many mansions of your Father's house! You shall rise to oneness with Christ and shall enter into His joy, triumphing with Him!

But all this is not for those who have a high esteem of themselves, but for those who lament their own unworthiness and sinfulness. He still has a frown for the haughty and a smile for the lowly. "He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent empty away."

III. Another matter shall occupy us for a moment. Some of the best critics of modern times differ entirely from the older expositors and think that the, "and," here used is conjunctive and not disjunctive. That is to say, that the two words describe but one character, whereas, older commentators and, as I believe, rightly, interpret the words of two classes of persons. However, let us include that other sense in our exposition. This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel—that is to say there are some who shall both fall and rise again in Christ—to whom Christ shall give such a fall as they never had before and such a rise as shall be to their eternal resurrection.

Let me give you a picture. You remember Jacob and the angel wrestling at night? Did you ever, yourself, experience what it was to wrestle with Christ? I do remember when He met me and entered into gracious conflict

with my rebellious spirit. I stood erect in pride and as good as told Him that I had no need of a Savior. But He wrestled with me and would not let me go. I stood foot sure, as I imagined, on the Law, but what a fall He gave me when He revealed its *spiritual* nature and proved me guilty at every point! Then I thought I had firm footing with one foot on the Law and the other upon His Grace—imagining that partly by the mercy of God and partly by my own endeavors I might be saved. But what a fall was *there* when I learned that if salvation was of works, it could not be of Grace—and if it was of Grace it could not be of works—the two could not be mixed together.

Then I said I would hope in the performance of the duties which the Gospel inculcates—I thought I had power to do this—I would repent and believe and so win Heaven. But what a fall I had and how each bone seemed broken when He declared to me, “without Me, you can do nothing. No man can come unto Me, except the Father who has sent Me draw him”! Do you remember, Brothers and Sisters, when you lay before Christ and the Gospel, all broken and bruised, till there was no life in you except the life that could suffer pain and even that you questioned, for you feared you did not suffer enough pain? You felt you were not penitent enough, nor believing enough and that you could not make yourself anything other than you were. You were hopeless and helpless.

Ah, this is how Christ saves souls! He gives them a fall first and afterwards He makes them rise. You cannot fill the vessel till it is empty. There must be room made for mercy by the pouring out of human merit. You cannot clothe the man who is clothed already, or feed him who has no hunger. It is the hungry soul that is filled. It is the naked soul that is clothed. It is the fallen one that is lifted up. But this fall which Jesus gives us is a blessed fall! He never did throw a man down without lifting him up afterwards. “I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal”—these are the attributes of Jehovah Jesus. The text says after the fall shall come the rising again. I have explained what that is and I hope you understand it.

If you this day are enabled to lay hold of Jesus Christ by simply trusting Him, you are already raised up through Him. He who trusts Christ is forgiven. He is accepted. He is saved—and low as you may have fallen in your own esteem through the fall which the Truth of God has given you, you may rise just as high in the union that you have with Christ, for you are accepted in the Beloved! And there is, therefore, now no condemnation to you. Heaven is your sure portion! You shall be with Christ where He is!

IV. We shall conclude with a few words upon the last part of the text. The text tells us that the Lord Jesus is, “A SIGN THAT SHALL BE SPOKEN AGAINST.” *What is He a sign of?* The Lord Jesus Christ is a remarkable sign and the only sign I know of that was ever spoken against. He is a sign of *Divine love*. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” There never was such a sign of God’s love to man as when God gave His own Son for him. Now there have been many other signs of God’s love

and men have not spoken against *them*. The rainbow was in some respects a sign of His love—that He would no more destroy the world with a flood.

The sun is a sign of God's love to man and so is the moon. He makes the sun to shine by day and the moon by night, for His mercy endures forever. A fruitful harvest, a flowing stream, a refreshing wind—the common mercies of life—these are all signs of God's benevolence. Nobody speaks against *them*! But the grandest sign of benevolence on God's part was when He spared not His own Son! But listen to the babble, the noise and confusion of tongues, like the voices of many waters, as the nations cry, "This is the heir, let us kill Him." "Away with Him! Away with such a Fellow from the earth! It is not fit that He should live"! Oh, prodigy of human malice! God reaches the climax of benevolence and man exhibits the climax of deadly hate! The greatest gift provokes the greatest hostility and the loftiest sign brings forth the most virulent opposition!

Christ was a sign of *Divine justice*. A bleeding Savior. The Son of God deserted by His Father. The thunderbolts of vengeance finding a target in the Person of the Well-Beloved—herein is justice revealed most fully! I hear not that other signs of vengeance have been spoken against. Men have trembled, but have not railed. Sodom and Gomorrah, with bowed head, confessed the justice of their doom. Egypt, engulfed in the Red Sea, says nothing of it. None of her records contain a single blasphemy against Jehovah for having swept away the nation's chivalry. The judgments of God, as a rule, strikes men dumb with awe! But this, which was the greatest display of Divine hatred of sin, where the Son of God was made to descend into the lowest depths as our Substitute—this provokes, today, man's uttermost wrath! Know you not how many are continually railing at the Cross? The Crucified is still abhorred! How matchless is the perversity of human nature that when God displays His justice most, but blends it sweetly with His love, the sign is everywhere spoken against!

Let me close where much more might be said, by observing that Christ was the sign of *man's communion with God and of God's fellowship with man*. None ought to have spoken against *that*. It ought to be man's greatest joy that there is a ladder that reaches from earth to Heaven—that there is a connecting bridge between creature and Creator. But man does not want to be near his God, and therefore he rails at the means provided for communion! Christ is the sign of *the elect seed*. He is the woman's Seed, the Head of the covenanted people and this is, perhaps, the main ground of opposition—for the serpent must always hate the Seed of the woman. God has put an enmity between them. Jesus is the representative of the holy, the new-born, the spiritual. He is the sign of the elect of God, and therefore, as soon as the carnal mind that knows not God, nor loves Him, perceives Christ and His Gospel, it at once stirs up the depth of its malevolence to put Christ down if it is possible.

Brothers and Sisters, they shall never put Him down! They may speak against the Gospel, but here is our joy—that Christ will raise up His people and will certainly give the fall to His enemies. It is one of the proven facts of Providence that no lie is immortal. Never be afraid that any error can long be dominant. The Ark of the Lord can never fall before Dagon—but Dagon must fall down before the Lord's Ark. Have patience, have patience! The victory is as sure as it is slow. You may complain that the Ritualists gather force. Have patience! The Lord shall laugh them to scorn. The Lord shall have them in derision. You may say that the doubters as to the truth of God's Word are gathering in strength. But wait with patience—skepticism shall have its overthrow. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."

The Lord God has declared the decree and the decree shall stand. Be of good cheer, for all is well! Inasmuch as you have risen in Him, be not dismayed though the sign is spoken against. In patience possess your souls, for the day shall come when He will ease Him of His adversaries, when the loftiest foe shall be hurled to the ground—for He shall dash them in pieces, He shall rule them with a rod of iron—He shall break them like a potter's vessel. O come you who want to be on His side, you who would be safe! "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

Come, you tremblers, cower down beneath the wings of your Savior who says today, as He did in the days of His flesh, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not!" Refuse Him not, lest He be unto you a swift flying eagle that scents the prey from afar and descends with terrible vengeance to tear in pieces and to destroy!

The Lord grant that the Child Jesus may be set for your rising again and for a sign in which your souls shall delight, for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 2.

END OF VOLUME 15

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SUPPOSING HIM TO HAVE BEEN IN THE COMPANY NO. 1724

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 3, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Supposing Him to have been in the company.”
Luke 2:44.***

ALL who were present on the occasion are sure to remember our meditation upon, “Supposing Him to Be the Gardener” [Sermon #1699, Volume 29.] Although it was only supposition and evidently a mistake, yet it yielded us most profitable thought. Here is another supposition, again a mistake—a mistake which yielded a good deal of sorrow to those who made it—and yet in the hands of God’s Spirit, it may bring forth profitable instruction to us as we think it over.

I. We will begin our discourse by saying THAT THIS WAS A MOST NATURAL SUPPOSITION. That the Child, Jesus, should have been in the company returning to Nazareth was a most likely thing. When the Jews came up from their different allotments, once each year to Jerusalem, they formed family groups at their first starting and then, as they got a little on the road, these groups combined and made larger bands. And as the roads approached to Jerusalem, the people gathered into great caravans—thus they went up to the House of God in company. It must have been a delightful season, especially if they sang those “Psalms of degrees” which are supposed to have been written for such pilgrims. What with prayer, praise, holy conversation and with the prospect of meeting together in Jerusalem, they must have been happy bands of pilgrims!

It was natural enough then, when all was over at Jerusalem, the Child, Jesus, should return home. His parents knew that when they were ready to return, He would be ready to go with them. But failing to meet with them, they figured He would join the company with which He came and so go back to Nazareth. His parents did not expect to find Him wandering alone—they looked for Him in the company. Jesus was a child who loved society. He was not stoical and thus selfishly self-contained—and He was not sullen, avoiding society. He did not affect singularity. In the highest sense, He was singular, for He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” but throughout His life He never aimed at singularity either in dress, food, speech, or behavior.

He grew up to be a Man among men, mixing with them, even at weddings and funerals—no man was more truly human than the Man, Christ Jesus. It is to be believed that as a Child He was like other children in all things but sin. Even as a Man, He was like other men in all but evil. Jesus was not one whose company would be shunned because of His ill manners—rather would it be *courted* because of the sweetness of His disposition. He would not make Himself disagreeable and then crown

that disagreeableness by stealing away from those whom He had vexed. They knew the sweetness of their dear Child's Character and the sociableness of His disposition and, therefore, they supposed Him to have been in the company.

This supposition would even more readily occur to us, knowing what we know about Him, which is more than His parents knew. For we know that of old His delights were with the sons of men. We know that He often came among men in angel form before His Incarnation and that when He came into the world He came seeking men. As a Man, He never seemed happier than when He was in the midst of His disciples, or surrounded by publicans and sinners, or feeding famishing crowds. He was so great a lover of mankind that He loved to be "in the company." Living and working in such a city as this, with all its millions, the burden is enough to break one's heart as we consider the city's sins, its irreligion, its neglect of God. It is sweet to hope that He who loved to be "in the company," when He was here, will certainly come and bless these throngs of men!

If ever a physician was needed, it is in this vast hospital. If ever a shepherd was needed, it is among these perishing sheep. Jesus has such a love to the sons of men and such a wish to gather them to Himself, that even now His redeeming work is done! He is still always with us. He has been lifted up and now He draws all men to Himself and, therefore, we expect to find Him in the center of these throngs. Those who go into the dense masses of humanity may expect this same Jesus to be with them in full power to save. Rescue the perishing and He will be in the company! It was a most natural supposition because of the sweetness and friendliness of His temper, that His parents would find Jesus in the company.

They never suspected that He would be found in any wrong place. No thought ever crossed their minds that He would be found in any haunt of vice, or in any assembly of vanity, though such could have been found in Jerusalem. We expect to meet our Lord and the throng of perishing men and women, seeking and saving them—but we know that we shall not find Him among those who find pleasure in noisy laughter and lawless mirth. We never look for Jesus in the theater or the drinking saloon—it would be profanity to suppose Him there!

We never look for Him where a question of morals might be raised, for He is undefiled. We expect to find Him where His people meet for worship. We look for Him where honest men are laboring hard for their daily bread, or where they are suffering His Father's will, but we never dream of His being found where the world, the flesh and the devil hold supreme control. Let His example be followed by us! Let us never go where our Master would not have gone. There are some places where we cannot suppose Him to have been—in those places let it not be supposable that *we* can be! Let us go only where we can remain in fellowship with our Divine Master and where we should be happy to be found if He were suddenly to come in His kingdom.

Let us judge of where we may go by enquiring, "Would Jesus have gone there?" and if He would not have gone, let our feet refuse to carry us that way.

II. But, secondly, THIS SUPPOSITION BROUGHT THEM GREAT SORROW, from which I gather that we ought, with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, to leave nothing as a matter of supposition. By supposing Him to have been in the company, they were made to miss Him and to seek Him, sorrowing for three days. Why did they lose sight of Him at all? Why did they not abide with Him? We may not blame them, for He did not—but, at any rate, they fell into days and nights of trouble by *supposing* something about Him. Do not suppose anything about Jesus at all. Do not suppose anything about His Character, His doctrines or His work—go in for certainty on such points.

I have heard of a German who evolved a camel out of his own inner consciousness. What kind of a camel it was, I do not know—but many persons evolve a Christ out of their own imaginations. Do not do it! If you do this, you will make yourselves a Christ nothing like Jesus—it will be a mere image—a false Christ, an idol Christ. No human thought could ever have invented our Savior! We put it to all those who doubt the Inspiration of the four Evangelists—would they kindly write us a fifth gospel? Could they even *suggest* another action of Jesus which would fit into the rest and be of the same order? They cannot do it!

The whole conception of Jesus is original and Divine. It is not possible that the most ingenious fancy can add anything to the life of Christ which would square with that which is recorded. If you chance to read the Prot Evangelism, or the Gospel of the Infancy which are spurious narratives of the Childhood of Jesus, you will throw them into the fire and say at once, "These do not fit in with the records of the true Evangelists. These stories are ludicrously unlike the Child, Jesus." In fact, all the books which pretend to be a part of the canon will be detected and rejected at once by the simplest reader who is thoroughly versed in the four Evangelists. Do not, therefore, suppose anything concerning Jesus, but read the Word of God and see what is revealed about Him.

Never clip the King's coin, but accept it as it is minted in all its purity and preciousness. Add not to the perfect Word of God, lest plagues be added to you. What the Holy Spirit has written concerning the Man, Christ Jesus, the everlasting Son of God, receive humbly and do not import suppositions into your theology. This has been the cause of the division of the Church into sects—the bones of contention have not been revealed Truths of God, but imagined fictions! I may invent one theory and another man, another, and we shall each fight for his theory. An hypothesis is set up and supported by the *letter* of Scripture, though not by the *spirit* of it—and straightway men begin to differ, dispute and divide. Let us lay aside all suppositions, for these things will only bring us sorrow in the end. Let us believe in the real Jesus as He is revealed in the Scriptures and as the Holy Spirit graciously enables us to behold Him in the glass of the Word of God. "Supposing Him to have been in the company." This supposition caused Jesus' parents great sorrow.

Again, I say, Beloved, do not take anything about Jesus at haphazard and perhaps. Let this Truth apply to your personal dealing with Him, as, for instance, do not *suppose* Him to be in your hearts. Do not *suppose* that because you were baptized in infancy you are, therefore, in Christ and Christ in you. That is a dangerous supposition! Do not say, “But I have been baptized as a professed Believer and, therefore, Jesus is in my heart.” The inward Grace is not tied to the outward sign! Water Baptism does not convey the Spirit of God. Blessed are they who, having the Spirit, can use the ordinance to their profit, but do not suppose that the Grace of God is tied to any outward rite.

Do not say, “I have eaten at the communion table and, therefore, Jesus is in my heart.” You may eat and drink at His table and yet never know Him—and He may never know you. Outward ceremonies convey no Grace to graceless persons. Do not take it for granted that because you are admitted into a Christian Church, and are generally accepted as being a Believer, that, therefore, you must be so. I dread lest any of you should think your Church membership to be a certificate of salvation! It was not given to you with that view—we judged favorably of your conduct and profession—but we could not read your heart! Do not even *suppose* that Grace must necessarily be in your souls because you have been professing Christians for a great many years, for the lapse of the will does not turn falsehood into truth!

It is difficult to know how long hypocrisy can be kept up, or how far a man may be self-deceived. It is even possible that he may die with his eyes blinded through the exceeding deceitfulness of sin. Do not suppose that Jesus is in your heart because you are an elder, or a deacon, or a pastor! I will not make any supposition in my own case, for woe is unto me if, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway! Such things have happened—Judas was one of the Twelve. Men have been sweet of voice and yet bitter of heart—they have been taught in the Word of God as to the letter, but they have not known the power of the everlasting Spirit—and so they have perished!

Verily, I say unto you, in Christ’s name, unless the Spirit of God actually rests upon each one of us *personally*, it will be all in vain for us to suppose that He is in our hearts because of professions and ordinances, for the supposition may be a damning falsehood and may lull us into a fatal slumber. How terrible to be taken out to execution with our eyes bandaged by a supposition! Again, dear Friends, do not ever suppose that Christ is in our assemblies because we meet in this house. Do not go up to a place of worship and think Jesus is sure to be there. He may not have been there for many a day! Is it not sad that out of the tens of thousands of assemblies held on this day there will be many in which Jesus will not be present—for His Gospel will not be preached, or if preached—it will not be set forth in the living power of the Holy Spirit! Christ is not present where He is not honored.

All your architecture, all your millinery, all your music, all your learning, all your eloquence are of small account. Jesus may be absent when all these things are present in profusion. And then your public worship

will only be the magnificent funeral of religion, but the life of God will be far away! It brings great sorrow in the long run to a Church if they take it for granted that Jesus must be among them. Our question every Sunday morning ought to be, "What do you think, will He come to the feast?" If He does not come to the feast, it will be the mockery of a festival, but no bread will be on the table for hungry souls. We must have our Lord in our company or we will break our hearts over His absence! We desire His Presence even in the smallest Prayer Meeting and in our minor gatherings when we meet to consult as to His work. If He awakens us by His Spirit and reveals to us that He was not in our former meetings, we will seek Him sorrowing, as His father and mother did.

Once more, let us not take it for granted that the Lord Jesus is necessarily with us in our Christian labors. Do we not, too often, go out to do good without special prayer, imagining that Jesus must surely be with us as a matter of course? Perhaps we thus conclude because He has been with us so long, or because we feel ourselves fully equipped for the occasion, or because we do not even think whether He is with us or not. This is perilous! If Jesus is not with us, we toil all the night and we take nothing. But if Jesus is with us, He teaches us how to cast the net and a great multitude of fish are taken! If Jesus is not with us, we are like Samson when his hair was shorn—he went out as at other times thinking to smite the Philistines hip and thigh, as he had done before, but as Watts puts it, he—

***“Shook his vain limbs with vast surprise,
Made feeble fight and lost his eyes.”***

So shall we be defeated if we imagine that we can succeed without fresh Divine assistance—the fact being that we ought to seek the Lord in prayer before the smallest Christian engagement—and then we may reap in it the most important result of our lives. You are going to see a poor bedridden old woman. Do not attempt to comfort this King's daughter without first seeking the Presence of "the Consolation of Israel." You are going to teach your Sunday school class this afternoon. You have done it so many times that you eat your lunch and walk off to the school scarcely thinking enough about what you are doing to breathe a prayer for your Lord's help! Is this right? Can you afford to waste one single Sunday afternoon, or one opportunity to speak for Jesus? And yet, it *will* be wasted if He is not with you.

Some of your children may be dead before next Sunday, or never come to the class again! Go not, even *once*, without your Lord. Do not sit down to teach as if you had Jesus at your command and were sure that of necessity He must succeed your endeavors! He will withdraw from us if we fall into a careless, prayerless habit. Why was He not with His mother that day? Truly He had to be about the business of His heavenly Father, but why did He permit His human mother to miss Him? Was it not because she needed to be taught, as well as the rest of us, the value of His company? Perhaps if we never missed Him, we might not know how sweet He is!

I can picture Mary, when she had lost the dear Child, weeping floods of tears. Then she began to understand what old Simeon meant when he

said, "Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own heart, also." The sword was piercing her heart, even then, to prepare her for three other days in which she would mourn Him as dead with still bitterer grief. See how she enquired everywhere, "Have you seen Him?" She reminds me of the spouse in the Song, "Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?" I think I see her going through the streets and saying, at the close of the day, "I sought Him, but I found Him not." Everywhere the same question, "Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?" But she gets no tidings of Him. Peace is all unknown to her till she finds Him.

But, oh, how precious He was in her eyes when, at last, she discovered Him in the Temple! How careful she was of Him afterwards. How happy to think that no harm had come to her dear charge! If you and I ever lose the society of Christ in our service, we will go to Him, and cry, "My Lord, do not leave me again! What a fool I am if You are not my wisdom! How weak I am if You are not my strength! How worse than silent I am if You are not my mouth to me! How heartless is all my talk and how flat it falls upon the hearer's ears, if You are not the spirit and the life of all my speaking!" Oh, if all our preaching and teaching were in the power of the Presence of our Divine Master, how different it would be!

Do then, learn the lesson, Brothers and Sisters, as I desire to learn it for myself, that we must not take *anything* for granted about Jesus. We must make sure work concerning eternal things, for if these are allowed to slip, where are we? Grasp the Truth of God and know that it is the Truth of God! Never be satisfied with "ifs," and "buts," and, "I hope so," and, "I trust so," but make sure of Christ! If you are not sure about the health of your body, yet be sure about your being in Christ and so healthy in soul! If you are not sure about the solvency of your firm; if you are not sure about the deeds of your estate; if you are not sure about your marriage, yet at least be sure that you have Jesus within your heart! If you have *any* doubt, today, give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids until the Holy Spirit, Himself, has sealed upon your spirit the certainty that Jesus is yours! Thus have I used the supposition in two ways.

III. Now for a third lesson—THE SUPPOSITION made by these two good people MAY INSTRUCT US. Let us use it as this, then, and turn to, "Supposing Him to have been in the company." I speak now to children who are hearing this sermon. This is for you. Jesus was about 12 years old and you are of much the same age. Suppose He had been in the company returning to Nazareth—how would He have behaved Himself? Think of Jesus as an example for yourselves. I am sure, when the whole company sang a Psalm, that bright-eyed Boy would have been among the sweetest singers! He would have sung most heartily the praises of God, His Father! There would have been no inattention or weariness in Him when God was to be praised. You would have numbered the Holy Child among the most devout worshippers.

Therefore, dear children, whenever you come in among God's people, give your whole hearts to the worship—pray with us and sing with us—and endeavor to drink in the Truth of God which is spoken, for so will

you be like the holy Jesus. Let all boys and girls pray that among God's people they may behave as Jesus would have done. I feel persuaded that Jesus would have been found in that company listening to those who talked of holy things! Especially would He have been eager to hear explanations of what He had seen in the Temple.

When the conversation turned upon the Paschal lamb, how that dear Child, who was "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," would have listened to it! I think I see His sweet face turned towards those who spoke of the sprinkled blood. He would surely have said, "What do you mean by this ordinance?" He would have been anxious to share with the grown-up people all the solemn thoughts of the day. So whenever you come up to the House of God, try and learn all that you can from all the teaching of God's Word. Seek good company and learn by it. Have a deaf ear to those who speak wickedly, but always be ready to listen to everything about your God, your Savior, your faith and the Heaven where you hope to dwell.

I feel sure, also, that if He had been in the company going home, He would have been the most obliging, helpful, pleasing child in all the company—if anybody had needed to have a burden carried, this Boy of 12 would have been the first to offer! As far as His strength allowed, if any kindly deed could be done, He would be first in doing it. He grew in favor both with God and men because He laid Himself out to be everybody's *servant*. Mary's Son won the love of all around, for He was so unselfish, kind, gentle and willing. He did all that He could to make others happy and blessed are those boys and girls who learn this lesson well. Oh, children, you will be happy if you live to make others happy! Act thus to your parents, brothers and sisters, friends and schoolfellows—and you will, in this, be like Jesus.

I am sure, also, that Jesus would not have done in that company as too many boys are apt to do. He would not have been mischievous, noisy, annoying and disobedient—but He would have been a comfort and delight to all about Him. No doubt but He would have been the liveliest and most cheerful boy in the whole company, yet He would not have been rough, coarse, willful, or cruel. There would have been no quarreling where He was—His very Presence would have bred peace among all the children that were with Him. I should like you to think over all that Jesus would have done and would not have done. And then I should be glad to see you acting as He did. Take this little word home with you, dear children. Ask yourselves often, "What would Jesus do?" For what Jesus would have done is the best rule for you.

And now to you elder folks, "supposing Him to have been in the company," and you had been in the company, I will warrant there is not one father or mother but what would have been willing to care for Him. Every matron here says, "I would have taken Him under my wing." You say that honestly, do you not? You mean it, I am sure. Well, you have an opportunity of proving that you are sincere, for Jesus is *still* in our company. You can find Him in the form of the poor. If you would have watched over *Him*, relieve *their* needs—do it to the least of these, and you have

done it unto Him. You can find Jesus in the form of the sick—visit them. I wish more of God's people would addict themselves to calling upon the sick, visiting them in their homes and cheering them in their needs.

As you say you would have taken care of Jesus, prove it at once by remembering His Words, "I was sick and you visited Me." If you would have taken care of Jesus, you can show it by caring for the young, for every young child comes to us under the guardian care of Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." You that spend your leisure in seeking to bless the young are proving that if you had been in that company, you would have taken care of the Child, Jesus. Above all, consider the orphans! For, had He been in that company, He would have been practically an orphan, for He would have lost, for a while, both father and mother. Many among you have such fond maternal hearts that you would have said, "I must look after that bright, beautiful Boy who is now without parents. Evidently He has lost them. Come here Child, come here!"

You would have felt a joy to have kissed Him and folded Him to your bosom. Prove it by looking after orphan children wherever they are—and let each represent to you the Jesus of that day as He would have been had His parents' supposition been correct. Let us see that the love you feel to Jesus when you read your Bibles is not mere emotion or sentiment, but that practical principle lies at the back of it and affects your life and conduct. So far have we gone and I hope not altogether without profit. May the Spirit of God help us yet further.

IV. But now I change the line of our thought altogether for a little while. Forget the *Child* Jesus, now, and let me use the words concerning Jesus in the fullness of His power. SUPPOSING HIM TO BE IN OUR COMPANY IN ALL HIS GRACIOUS INFLUENCE, what then? Then, Brothers and Sisters, first, how happy will such company be! For with Christ known to be in their company, saints cannot but be glad! You may have seen a picture representing certain of the martyrs sitting together in prison. They are to be burned, by-and-by, and they are comforting each other. Now, supposing Him to have been in their company, as I doubt not He was, I could wish to have been there even at the price of sharing their burning—wouldn't you?

Or look, a few poor people met together in a cottage talking about Jesus, as people seldom do now—Jesus is there and their hearts are burning within them! How favored they are! If their hearts might otherwise have been sad, yet supposing Him to be in the company—how restful all the mourners become—how light every burden grows, how every aching heart rejoices, for in His Presence there is fullness of joy! Get but Christ into your family circle and it is a ring of delight! Supposing Jesus to be in the company, next how united His people will all become! Whenever Christian people fall out, it is because Jesus is not in their company. Whenever there is a lack of love; whenever there is a lack of forbearance; when people fall to fault-finding and quarrelling, one with the other, my heart says to me, "Supposing Him to have been in the company, they would not have acted so."

They would have looked at Him and straightway have forgiven one another! No, they would hardly have had need to forgive, for they would neither have given nor taken offense, and their hearts would have flowed together in one common stream. The sheep are scattered everywhere upon the hills till the Shepherd comes! They know His voice and they gather to Him! Jesus is the center and the source of unity and when we have Him reigning in His full glory in the midst of the Church, divisions and schisms will cease to be. "Supposing Him to have been in the company," how holy they would all grow! Sin dies as Jesus looks upon it and men's wayward passions yield to His sweet sway. How devout would all hearts be, "supposing Him to be in the company!"

What prayer there is and what praise! There is no hurrying over morning devotion, no falling asleep at the bedside at night when Jesus is in our company! Then our heart is praying all day long and we delight to pray together for His coming and His kingdom. How teachable we are, too, when Jesus is in the company, opening the Scriptures and opening our hearts—what sweet communion we enjoy. How souls go out to His soul and hearts to His heart—and how fine we knit together in the one Christ! How happy, how united, how holy is the company supposing Jesus to be in it! When Jesus is in the company how lively they all are! Why, in these warm mornings, some seem half inclined to fall asleep, even in the House of Prayer—"The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."

But when Jesus is in the company, the spirit triumphs over the flesh and we feel full of life, power and energy in the Divine service! When our hearts burn within us because of His Words, our bodies cannot freeze. When the soul is quickened by His Presence, then the whole man is awakened. As when the sun rises, his light wakes thousands of sleepers, though no voice is heard, so the smiles of Jesus awaken a sleeping Church and stir it to zeal and energy. If Jesus is in the company, how earnest we grow! How zealous for His Glory! How intent to win souls! I am afraid it is because Jesus is *not* in the company that we allow many sinners to go by us without a warning and we neglect fine opportunities for serving our Lord.

You have heard of holy Mr. Payson, the American Divine, a man who walked with God in his ministry. He was out one day with a brother minister who had to make a call at a lady's house and Payson went in with him. The lady pressed them both to stay to tea. She was not a Christian woman and Payson had other business and, therefore, he declined. But as she pressed him very earnestly, he sat down and invoked the Divine blessing which he did in terms so sweet and full of holy unction that he impressed everybody. The lady waited upon him with great attention and when he rose up to go, he said to her, "Madam, I thank you much for your great kindness to me, but how do you treat my Master?" A work of Grace was worked in that lady by the question—she was brought to Jesus and she opened her house for preaching—and a revival followed.

Now, if Jesus had not been with Payson, what had become of that woman? I fear that we go in and out among dying men and women and

we let them perish—yes, we let them be *damned* without an effort for their salvation—and all because we have not obeyed the voice which speaks to us as it did to Abraham, “I am God Almighty, walk before Me and be you perfect.” We shall never be perfected as the servants of God unless we walk in His conscious Presence. But if we walk before Him and He is with us, then shall we be earnest in the winning of souls. I am sure, dear Friends, that if Jesus is in the company, then we shall be confident and all doubts will vanish. How firmly shall we believe because we are living in fellowship with “the Truth”! How safely we shall be guarded against temptation, even as the sheep are safe from the wolf when the shepherd is near!

What blessed, heavenly lives shall we lead! Surely it will be a small change for us to rise from earth to Heaven if Jesus is always in the company, in the family, in the business, in our labors, recreations, in our joys and sorrows!

V. Lastly, I want to dwell, for just a minute, by way of touching the conscience, upon the reflection that JESUS HAS BEEN IN THE COMPANY—whether we have seen Him or not. I want you to look back upon what He has seen in your company supposing Him to have been there, when you were disputing the other night. Yes, a point of doctrine had come up and you differed over it. Did you not wax very warm, my Brother, even so as to grow red in the face? Did you not go away from that friend with whom you disputed almost hating him? You know you did! Supposing Jesus to have been in the company? He *was* there and He was grieved at the way in which you remembered His doctrine but forgot His spirit! Had you perceived His Presence, you would have put your argument much more sweetly, and you would have spoken, not for the sake of beating your friend in argument, but for the sake of instructing him and glorifying your Lord.

You know that you did not yield a point you ought to have yielded. You knew you were wrong at the time, but your friend pushed you hard and you said to yourself, “I will not give way though I see that he is right.” Although I suppose that we shall differ about many points till the Lord comes, yet when differences arise, they will present fair opportunities for holy charity and mutual edification and these will gladly be seized if Jesus is in the company. When next we argue, let each one say, “Jesus is in this company and, therefore, while we speak up for what we believe to be true, let us do it in a loving spirit.” Our arguments will not lose force by being steeped in love. Truth is never stronger than when it walks with charity.

Then, again, it may be that some little time ago certain of you were acting in such a way that no common observer could have seen any difference between you and worldlings. You were out in business, dealing with one who was trying to do his best for himself, and you were trying to do your best for *yourselves*. Do I blame you? Not for being prudent and circumspect—but I hope *you* will blame yourselves for going far beyond this. You did nothing which I may style dishonest—but did you not sail dreadfully near the wind? You stated something which I must not call a

lie, but still, it was not true as you meant it to be understood, was it? Businessmen too often aim at getting undue advantage of each other—it is “diamond cuts diamond,” and rather worse at times. If Christian men, in all their dealings, would suppose Jesus to be in the company, how it would change their manners!

Think of Jesus on this side of the counter along with you who sell, and on that side of the counter along with you who buy. You both need His Presence, for the buyer is generally quite as intent upon cheating as the seller! He wants the goods for less than they are worth and the seller, therefore, baits the hook for him. They are both deceivers but the blame is not all on *one*. When persons must have goods far below the price for which they can be produced, they must not marvel if they find that they are sold an inferior article which looks well enough but turns out to be worthless. Oh, that you Christian people would always suppose Jesus to be in your company! I can hardly imagine Judas cheating John with Jesus looking on—nor Philip trading hardly with the lad who had the barley loaves!

Should not our dealings among the sons of men be such as Jesus can approve? He is our Master and Lord—let us imitate Him and do nothing that we would be ashamed for Him to look upon. Do not accuse me of being personal this morning, for if you do, I will plead guilty! If the cap fits, you wear it! The other day you were in company and certain persons were talking profanely, or was it skepticism which they vented? And you, as Christ’s disciple, heard them and what did you do? Did you bear witness for the Truth of God? They made a joke—it was not very clean, but you laughed! Did you not? And, alas, you said nothing for your Lord! Yet He was in the company, seeing all! You had several opportunities, but you did not put in a word for Truth and holiness!

Now, supposing Jesus to have been in the company? I think He must have been sorely grieved. Surely your Lord must have thought, “What? All this said against Me and never a word in reply from him whom I redeemed with My own blood!” Was not this Peter, all over again, in his denials of his Lord? You did not deny Him with oaths and curses, but the same cowardly spirit ruled you! Oh, if you had but come out in your true colors! You do not know what an influence you might have had for good! If we set the Lord Jesus Christ always before us, should we not be brave to testify and quick to defend? Think, again, of those evenings when a few friends meet together—are they not often a waste of time? “Supposing Him to have been in the company,” as He really is, do you think the evenings should be spent as they frequently are?

Dr. Chalmers, a truly devout man, tells us that once, at a nobleman’s house, he spent an evening with various friends and talked over the question of the cause and cure of pauperism—a subject most suitable for conversation. An aged Highland chieftain among the company listened with great attention to the doctor, for Chalmers was master of the subject. Surely they had not spent the evening amiss. But in the night an unusual noise and a heavy groan were heard. The chieftain was dying. In a few minutes he was dead and Dr. Chalmers stood over him, the picture

of distress. "Alas," he cried, "had I known that my friend was within a few minutes of eternity, I would have preached to him and to you Christ Jesus and Him crucified."

With how much more reason may many Christians repent of their conversation! How bitterly may they look back upon wasted hours! Supposing Jesus to have been in the company, how often must He have been grieved by our frivolities! Do you not think that it is greatly to our discredit as Christian people that we should so often meet and so seldom pray? The happiest evenings that Christians spend are when they talk, even upon secular subjects, in a gracious manner, and do not fail to rise to holier themes—and mingle prayer and thanksgiving with their talk! Then when they retire, they feel that they have spent the evening as Jesus would approve. Did I not hear, the other day, of some Christian friend who was going to give up working for Christ? And of a dozen Christian friends who were going to break up and no more go on with their holy service for Jesus?

One was going to leave the Sunday school in which he had been for years! Another was going to allow a weak Church to break up and go to pieces, for he had grown tired of working under discouragements. Another said, "I have had my turn, let somebody else do the work." Supposing Jesus to have been in the company, do you think that such observations pleased Him? If Jesus were perceived among us, would any of us turn his back in the day of battle? No, Brothers and Sisters, since Jesus is with us, let us serve Him as long as we have any being! Remember John Newton's speech when they told him that he was too old to preach—the venerable man exclaimed "What? Should the old African blasphemer cease to preach while there is breath in his body? Never!"

Do not suffer any difficulty, or infirmity to prevent your persevering in the service of Jesus in some form or other. And when you feel as if you *must* leave the ranks, suppose Him to be in the company—and march on! Forward, Brethren! Jesus heads the way! Forward, for His Presence is victory! God bless you, dear Friends, and all this day may Jesus be in the company to make it a hallowed Sabbath to your souls. Amen.

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

A LOST CHRIST FOUND NO. 2611

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1857.**

*“But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances. And when they found Him not, they turned back, again, to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the Temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.”
Luke 2:44-46.*

WHAT a precious treasure must the child Jesus have been to His parents! You who have children whom you love, not merely because they are yours, but because you discover in them traits of character which are signs of Divine Grace, can tell, in some measure, how precious the Child Jesus must have been. Born to His mother in a miraculous manner, her heart was set upon Him and, after all the wonderful things that had been said about Him by the angel, by Simeon and by Anna, you cannot wonder that she expected much, although she really expected less than she received. When you think of the perils and troubles to which His parents were exposed for His sake, by the sword of Herod, the flight into Egypt and the cruelty of Archelaus, you cannot wonder that He was a very choice treasure to them, carefully tended and well guarded and protected. They had felt how terrible it would be to lose Him. They knew His worth—at least they guessed something of that inestimable value which must always be attached to the perfect Manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you not marvel, therefore, that they could have lost Him? It seems not a little amazing that they could have allowed Him to go away from them even for a minute! Trustworthy as He was, yet He must have been a Child so dear to their hearts, His company must have been so precious to them that one would have thought His mother could scarcely have spared Him from her side for a single moment. You would hardly have imagined that in the midst of such a crowd as was assembled at Jerusalem she would have left Him alone for an instant. Surely, you would say, she would tend that precious treasure perpetually. If she took her Child to places where she might lose Him, she would, with the utmost care, watch over Him until she brought Him back. And yet Mary lost her Son—lost Him in Jerusalem—and even went a day’s journey before she discovered her loss!

Do not be astonished, O Believer, do not be amazed at Mary losing her Son! You have a treasure quite as precious, for it is the same blessed Person! Jesus Christ is yours—not your Son, but your Brother—not your child, but your Friend. No, more—your Savior! Yours spiritually, yours by precious experience, yours by gracious donation of Himself to you and yours by happy communing which He has held with you in many seasons of sweet refreshment. Yet some of you have lost Him—lost His company—but He has not lost you! His loving heart is still immutably the same towards you. You who have lost Him, as you think of your former joys, can join with deep emphasis in Cowper's lines—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?
What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.”***

How is it you have lost Christ? One would have thought you would never have parted from Him. In such a wicked world as this, with Satan ever ready to rob you of Him, with ten thousand enemies trying to take Him away from you—with such a precious Savior whose Presence is so sweet, whose words are so melodious and whose company is so dear to you—one might have thought you would have watched Him every moment and never allowed Him to stray from you. But, alas, you have let Him go! Your Jesus has left you and you are seeking Him, and crying, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” And, possibly, you went many a day's journey before you discovered that you had lost Him. You thought He was still in your soul, when really He had gone from you and left you for a season, to let you find out your great need of Him that you might seek Him, again, with full purpose of heart.

To you, therefore, I address myself, for I think there is something in this narrative especially suitable for you. There is, first, *the loss of Christ*. Secondly, *the seeking after Christ*. And, thirdly, *the finding of Christ*.

I. First, I have something to say concerning THE LOSS OF CHRIST.

And I begin by saying that *souls, very dear and precious to the Redeemer, may yet lose the sensible enjoyment of His Presence*. His mother lost Him, His father lost Him. They were very dear to Him and He was very dear to them, yet they lost Him. Many of the Lord's beloved people have lost their Savior. Not lost Him wholly—that can never be—their substance is in them, even when they have lost their leaves. The holy Seed within them is the substance of their piety, but they have lost His visible Presence and yet they are dear to Him, as when, by faith, with Simeon, they took Him in their arms and kissed Him with the lips of ardent affection. The best of saints sometimes have to endure the hiding of God's Countenance and are made to walk through dark paths where they see not the shining of the sun. Shall I pause to give you instances? I might find you many such in God's Word, but instead, thereof, let me find them in your own hearts. Who among us, that has long known the Lord, has not had, sometimes, to mourn the absence of our Savior? Like the dove

that has lost its mate, inconsolable until it has returned, we have been sitting alone and pouring out our moans and groans. We have sung, in plaintive tones—

***“Return, O holy Dove, return
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made You mourn,
And drove You from my breast.”***

We have cried to Him to come back, but He has hidden His face from us, and covered Himself in the thick darkness, nor would He manifest Himself to us.

The first time that this great trouble surprises a true Christian, he usually draws this conclusion from it—“I am not the Lord’s child, or else I would always have the smile of His love.” It is a wrong conclusion! It is the logic of unbelief, it is a false logic, its conclusion is, therefore, untrue! A child does not always have its father’s smile, though it is a fondly loved one, and is greatly delighted in—it is the offspring of its father’s heart, very dear to him, sprung from his inmost soul as well as from his loins, yet it does not always have a smile, nor always a sweet word from him. There must be, sometimes, even in Christian families, sharp words from a wise parent’s loving lips. It is not, therefore, a fair inference that Christ has left the soul on which He is not smiling. Oh, conclude not, you distressed one, you who have lost the evidence of Grace and the comforting Presence of your Master! Conclude not that He has shut up His heart of compassion when He has seemed to close His eyes of love. “I sleep, but My heart wakes,” He says. “I shut My eyes upon you, but My heart is still loving you. I lift the rod and scourge you, but my heart, in its inmost recesses, has still your name inscribed upon it. I will not leave you, I will not forsake you, I have not cast you away. I have chastened you sorely, but I have not given you over unto death. The clouds have not quenched the sun, you shall yet see the light. I will yet shine upon you and once more will I manifest Myself to you.” The losing of the conscious realization of Christ’s Presence, the suspension of communion with Him is a very disagreeable and a very sad part of Christian experience, but let this be noted—it is often the experience of a true Christian and some of the very best and most highly favored of God’s children have had to suffer it.

Now please notice *where the parents of Jesus lost Him*. They lost Him at the feast at Jerusalem and if ever you lose the company of your Master, O Christian, you will most likely lose it at a feast! I never lost my Master’s company at a funeral—such a thing is more than possible at a wedding. I have never lost my Savior’s Presence in the house of mourning, by the bedside of the sick and dying—but I have sometimes felt suspension of fellowship with my Lord when the flute and the viol have been sounding in my ear and when joy and gladness ruled the hour. Our most happy moments are our most perilous ones! It is said that where the most beautiful cacti grow—the most glorious of flowers—there are to be found the most venomous of snakes and, truly, among our delights are to be found our dangers. As Cleopatra had an asp introduced to her in a basket of flowers, so have we many an asp brought to us in our joys. Take heed in the time of your joys, Believer—you are safer in your season of sorrow!

Storms afford the safest sailing for a Christian, calms are, for him, more terrible than whirlwinds. Deep waters know no rocks, shallow waters that gaily ripple are the perils of the sea of our life. Far out upon the ocean, where the horizon has its round ring and nothing is within sight, the ship is seldom in danger, but near the shore, when the white cliff gladdens the eyes of the mariner—there the pilot must look well to his helm! In your troubles, God is often especially with you, but He is not always with you in your joys. Job's sons learned that there were dangers in feasts—God's sons may not learn the same lesson in so terrible a manner—but they may learn it in a very grievous way. It would have been better for David to have been sick on his bed than to have been walking on his housetop enjoying the evening breeze. And it would be better for you to be cast into the fiery furnace of affliction, where you can be refined, than to be left to lie down in the meads of happiness, where you may have poison poured into your ear by a wily adversary. Beware of your joys! There is more fear of losing Christ at a feast than anywhere else. You are a young Christian and you are going out to a party this week—mind what you do! I will not say to you—Do not go. If you can ask God's blessing in going, go. But I do say to you—Take care, take care! Mind you, be careful! Reef your sails when you get there. Go as fast as you like when you are alone, but mind what you are doing when you are in the society of others. Take care, take care, take care, especially in mixed company!

And, ah, I am sorry to have to say—Take care, too, when you are in professedly Christian company, for what fine “Christian company” there is to be seen, sometimes. Christians that cannot find amusement enough for themselves, cannot talk about the Lord Jesus, cannot mention His name, cannot find pleasure enough in the things of Scripture, but must turn to other and meaner things to supply them with joy. Take heed of all doubtful company—there is little good to be gained in some of your gatherings. If you cannot spend your time in prayer and in seeking what Jesus said and did, you had better be at home. Christ is often lost at a feast—His Presence is often withdrawn from us when we get into company. Our Jesus loves seclusion—He will not strive, nor lift up His voice, nor cause it to be heard in the streets! He loves to dwell with His people in the privacy of the house. His message is, “Come, My people, enter into your chambers, and shut your door after you.” You will not lose your Master there. Have Him with you in your own household—you will not lose Him there! Walk with Him, alone, and you will not lose Him. I do not say—Have no feasts—

***“Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?”***

I will not say—Have no hours of gladness—you have a right to them. I will not say—Do not meet together—do so, your meeting may be profitable to each of you. But I do say—Take care what you do. Christ Jesus was lost at a feast by His mother and He may be lost by you unless you are very careful.

To young persons who are seriously inclined, yet not decided for God, let me solemnly say that evil company is a snare of the devil. Oh, how

many have been ruined by it! If Satan can but get you back to your old companions, he thinks it will be all right for him and that he will be sure to have you at last. Nothing will do for a man who has kept evil company but to leave it altogether. You cannot bear much of it—you had better give it up, altogether—then you will be entirely safe. Or else there will be first, one, and then another enticing you a little way back, and then a little further back until who can tell?—All those fair beginnings, as you thought them to be, may end by being blighted and destroyed by the blast of carnal, frothy conversation! The Lord deliver us from losing Jesus at a feast!

Observe, also, that Mary and Joseph lost Jesus for three days, from which I learn that *it is possible for a Believer to lose the company of his Master for a long time, and yet find Him, again, after all.* They did find Him after the three days and you, too, poor mourning Believer, will find your Savior again! There is a poor doubter yonder. He is sick at heart, for he has lost his Lord and he cannot find Him. Oh, how he has groaned and poured out his heart before God, but still no answer has come to his cry. He concludes, therefore, that he must perish! No, poor desponding one, the parents of Jesus found Him the third day, so seek Him once more! His absence is but temporary. It may be long, but the longest hiding of His face shall have an end. O poor, timid child, cry not at the eclipse—though it may last an hour, the sun's light is not quenched! O you poor Little-Faith, you may well sigh, but do not despair! If Jesus has left you for a while, He will yet return to you, you shall again behold His face, again bask in the sunshine of His love and know that He is yours and that you are His. If you have lost Him for months—yes, even for years, I had almost said—yet shall you find Him again! With your whole heart seek Him and He will be found of you—only give yourself up thoroughly to the search for Him and verily He will not entirely leave you, but you shall yet discover Him to your joy and gladness, and shall again be feasted with marrow and fatness. Three days was the Child Jesus lost, but yet He was found again by Joseph and Mary! So Christ may be for a long time, absent, and yet may the poor saint find comfort in Him once more.

II. Now I come to notice THE SEEKING AFTER CHRIST. The father and mother of Jesus sought Him and those who have lost Christ's Presence will do well to imitate their example.

Note, first, that *they sought Him very judiciously*, by which I mean that they sought Him in the right places. They went back to Jerusalem and sought Him. It was at Jerusalem they lost Him, so it was at Jerusalem that they might naturally expect to find Him. Tell me where you lost the company of Christ and I will tell you the most likely place for you to find Him again. Did you lose the company of Christ by forgetting prayers and becoming slack in your devotions? Have you lost Christ in the prayer closet? Then you will find Him there! Did you lose Christ through some sin? Then you will find Him in no other way but by the giving up of the sin and seeking, by the Holy Spirit, to mortify the member in which the lust dwells. Did you lose Christ by neglecting the Scriptures? Then you must find Christ in the Scriptures where you lost Him—you will find

Him. It is a true saying, "Look for a thing where you dropped it, it is there." So look for Christ where you lost Him, for He has not gone away. It is hard work to go back for Christ—John Bunyan tells us that the pilgrim found the piece of the road back to the arbor of ease—that journey back that he had to travel to find his roll under the settle—the hardest piece he had to go. Twenty miles on the road is easier to go than one mile back for the lost evidence. Take care, then, when you find your Master, to cling more closely to Him! But if you have lost Him, go back and seek Him where you lost Him.

And note, too, that *they sought Him among His kinsfolk and acquaintances*. And that is the right place for us, also, to find Him. If I am in distress of soul, where can I get relief? I saw a huge placard as I came along, just now, recommending persons who have the heartache to go to Charles Matthews to get it cured—I suppose, by seeing a play. Ah, they will go a long while, if it is *real* heartache, before they will get it taken away *there*. The theater is the place where they get the heartache, not where they lose it! People don't lose diseases, generally, where they catch them. If you catch a fever anywhere, I would not advise you to go to the same house to get rid of it. If you have the heartache through indulging in some sin, it is not by deeper draughts of sin that you can cure it! Drinking may stupefy and intoxicate you for a while, and make you forget it, but it is a bad thing to use intoxicating liquor instead of the real remedy. O you that have the heartache, you that have broken hearts, you that have troubles rolling over your heads—where can you expect to find Christ? Why, among His kinsfolk and acquaintances! Do not go to the giddy haunts of vice and sin—go not where there is revelry and mirth, but go where the disciples of Jesus are known to meet! Talk with His people, converse with those who have the most knowledge of His love and of His power to save. It is most likely that you will find your Savior among His kinsfolk and acquaintance—go not to the world to look for Him! Seek pearls where they lie deep down in the sea, but seek them not where such treasures never were discovered. Otherwise, you will go on a fool's errand in verity and truth.

Mark, again, that while they sought Jesus judiciously, they sought Him continuously. They did not look for Him just one day and then give up the search—but they kept on looking until they found Him. So, Christian, if you have lost the precious joy of communion with your Lord, keep on seeking it and do not stop your prayers until you have recovered it. Be not content with one dive into the depths after this pearl, but dive again and again, with untiring perseverance, until you discover it. And yet, again, we are told that they sought Him *sorrowfully*. Mary said to Jesus, "Your father and I have sought You sorrowing." I know this—no true Believer will ever lose the company of His Lord without sorrowing over his loss—it would be impossible! I have heard some of you say that you have not had fellowship with Christ lately, but if you make that confession with a smile on your face, I have grave doubts about your piety. True Christians think it their greatest grief to lose their Master's Presence—they do not talk of it lightly—it is their misery that they have not the Prince of Mercy with them! They perpetually need His company and if it

is withdrawn, even for an instant, they feel that the light of the sun is taken away from their eyes—

**“Tis Heaven to dwell in His embrace,
And nowhere else but there.”**

The parents of Jesus sought Him sorrowfully and we must do the same if we have lost Him. The best messengers to find Christ are the penitent tears of His saints. Tears act on Divine mercy like the magnet on the needle—the tears of the Christian find the heart of God. Go after your Master with wet eyes and He will soon come to you. There is a sacred connection between Christ and weeping eyes, for it is Christ’s office to wipe the mourner’s eyes. And whenever He sees you weeping, His fingers are eager to be wiping them. He *must* wipe them. He cannot bear to see the tears and, if He wipes them, He must come to you. So, the surest way to find Him is to seek Him sorrowing. There is nothing like a sorrowing prayer if we have lost our Lord. Prayers from a heart that is wrung with the rough hand of sorrow are the most acceptable in the ears of the God of Sabaoth. If you are sorrowing, O Christian, then seek on and believe that you are all the nearer to finding your Lord when your sorrows increase! Tears are the bilge-water of the soul—the eyes are the pumps and thus God keeps you floating till He brings you, again, into the haven of rest and peace! It is a blessed thing to be able to seek Christ, though it is sorrowfully.

III. Now I close by speaking concerning THE FINDING OF CHRIST. Mark, first, *where the lost Christ was found*. Do you know where His parents went to seek Him? When they went to Jerusalem, they asked all their kinsfolk and acquaintances, “Have you seen that dear lovely Child?” All knew Him, but they answered, “No, we have not seen Him.” I suppose they then went to the house of entertainment, the inn where they had stayed, and asked, “Is our Son here? Is our Child here—that fair-haired Boy, the most beautiful you ever saw?” “Ah,” the people would reply, “that is an old tale with women. Go away! We have not seen Him. He is not here.” Christ was not in the inn. There was not room for Him there when He was born and there was not likely to be room for Him to remain there afterwards. They did not go to the palace to seek Him—not inside it, at any rate. They were afraid of Herod, for if Herod had laid hold of Him, there would have been an end of Him. I daresay they thought that the dear Child had been attracted by the splendid buildings that decked Jerusalem with glory, and that He would be sure to be in the crowd, gazing at some of the great and grand structures, so they went through the principal streets, thinking, surely, He would be there. And when they asked the curious people from foreign countries who were investigating all the wonders of the city, if they had seen the Child, they most likely stared them in the face, for Christ Jesus is not always to be found with the curious in their research. There was a mountebank in the street and a number of children had gathered around him and the performance might be likely to attract Jesus, so His parents went there, but folly knew nothing about the holy Child Jesus.

At last, His mother thought that, possibly, He might be in the Temple. Yes, that was the place for Him! He was the King of the Temple, and a

king should be in his palace—and there they found Him, humbling the pride of the doctors! So learn from this, O Christian, that you will never find your Master where folly exhibits herself to gazing multitudes. You will never find Him where curious learning studies with deep research to discover everything that is wonderful and profound. You will never find Him where giddy mirth is gathered in the assemblies of the ungodly. But if you would find Christ, you must find Him in His Temple, in the house of prayer! It is here that He makes His glories known! It is here that He speaks to His children. Here are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David—

***“The King Himself comes near,
And feasts His saints today.
Here we may sit and see Him here,
And love, and praise, and pray.
One day amidst the place
Where my dear God has been,
Is sweeter than ten thousand days
Of pleasurable sin.”***

Sinner, if you seek Christ, seek Him where He is to be found! If you seek happiness, peace and mercy, go after Him where He goes. Lie down at the pool of Bethesda and if God has not yet quickened you, oh, that you might be brought to the pool of Siloam, to the gate of Divine Mercy, for it is here that Jesus Christ loves to resort and work the great wonders of His Grace! To the saints, I wish to say just this—Do not rest if you have lost the society of your Lord. Do not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids until you have had restored to you the communion that has been suspended. Do not live, oh, I beseech you, do not live—*live*, did I say?—it is *not* living—do not continue to merely *exist* in such a condition for another hour! If your fellowship with Christ is broken, run to your house, fall upon your knees and cry to Him to give you fresh manifestations of His love. It is dangerous to delay! O child of God, it is perilous to be without your Lord! This would be to make you like sheep without its shepherd, a tree without water at its roots, a sere leaf in the tempest, not bound to the Tree of Life. Oh, may Christ influence your heart, that you may first see your danger and then, with full purpose of heart, seek after Him who is waiting to be found of you! I beseech you, by your desire for usefulness and happiness. I beseech you, by the loveliness of Christ, by the fearful condition of being found out of fellowship with Him. I beseech you, by your own sorrow, which you have already suffered, and by the misery which will certainly increase unless you find Him! I beseech you rest not until you have found Christ, again, to the joy and gladness of your spirit!

And as for those of you who know not the Savior, what I have been saying is as nothing to you—you are careless about these all-important matters—but I beseech you, by Him that lives and was dead, by the solemnities of Hell, by the dread mysteries of eternity, by the bliss of Heaven and by the terrors of the Day of Judgment—I beseech you as a dying man speaking to dying men, if you have never found Christ, let these words ring in your ears—you are without God, without Christ, without hope and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel! Let me say

those words again, though they are like the tolling of a knell—*Without God, without Christ, without hope and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel!* Ponder over those two words, “Without Christ! Without Christ!” And if they do not stagger you, God help you! But if, my Hearer, they do cause you to start. If God shall make them break you up, then, Sinner, when He has broken you in pieces, remember that Christ Jesus is willing to save all those whom He has made willing to be saved! As certainly as you need Him, He wants you! Seek Him and you will find Him! Do but knock and the door of mercy shall be opened! Do but ask and you shall receive!

O awakened Sinner, here is Christ’s message to you! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Oh, that you would believe in Christ and be baptized! Oh, that God would help all of you who have nothing of your own, to give yourselves up to Christ and take Him to be your All-in-All! But, hardened Sinner, I send you away with those dreadful words which I repeated, just now, and I hope they will ring in your ears all the week—when you walk the streets, when you are on your bed, when you are at your meals—*without God, without Christ, without hope and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel.* And, therefore, *without Heaven!* Those who have the earnest of Heaven even now have a blessed “hope which makes not ashamed.” May that hope be given to you, my Hearers, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 57:10-21; 58:1-11.**

The Prophet has been giving a very terrible description of the sin of the nation. We need not read it all, but at last he says this—

Verse 10. *You are wearied in the greatness of your way.* “You are worn out with your own way. You have been so zealous in your rebellion against God that you have actually fatigued yourself in the pursuit of evil.” That is a true description of those who have worn themselves out in the ways of sin.

10. *Yet said you not, There is no hope: you have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved.* Though they had hunted for pleasure and had not found it, and had brought themselves into great distress, yet they would not give up the hope of, after all, succeeding in their rebellion. Oh, how obstinately are men set upon seeking satisfaction where it can never be found—namely, in the pursuit of sin! These people were still alive and they were content to be so, but they were not grieved although God had sorely chastened them.

11. *And of whom have you been afraid or feared, that you have lied and have not remembered Me?* “Me, your Maker, your Friend, to whom you owe your very soul, unless that soul shall go down into the Pit, ‘You have not remembered Me.’”

11. *Nor laid it to your heart; have not I held My peace even of old, and you do not fear Me?* When God is very long-suffering and lets men alone in their sin, then, often, they quite forget Him and have no fear of Him.

12. *I will declare your righteousness, and your works; for they shall not profit you.* If God once takes the self-righteous man's righteousness and explains what it really is, He will soon reveal to its owner that it is a mere delusion and sham that will not profit him at all.

13. *When you cry, let your companies deliver you.* "When sickness, depression of spirit and death, itself, shall come to you, and you begin to dread what is to follow, and cry to those who comforted you in your time of health, what will they be able to do for you?"

13. *But the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain.* All confidence in men shall be blown away as chaff is driven by the wind—but faith in God wins the day.

14, 15. *And shall say, Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of My people. For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* That is a wonderful verse! You notice that the prelude to it explains the greatness and the holiness of God and then, like an eagle swooping out of the sky even down to the earth, we find God coming from His high and lofty place to dwell with humble and contrite hearts! Not with the proud—not with you who think yourselves good and excellent—does God dwell, but with men who feel their sin and acknowledge it. With men who feel their unworthiness and confess it. I will read this verse again to impress it upon your memory. "Thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

16. *For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always angry: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.* See the tender meaning of God's message in this verse. He has been encouraging the guilty one and making him feel the enormity of his offenses and then He says, "I will not do that any more, lest I should crush him. He is too weak to bear any more punishment or reproof. Therefore I will not any longer afflict him, but I will turn to him in mercy, 'for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.'"

17. *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and smote him: I hid and was angry, and he went on forward in the way of his heart.* Here God shows that His chastening does not always produce a good result, for, sometimes, when men are tried on account of sin, they grow worse and worse. "I hid and was angry, and he went on forward in the way of his heart." What does God say of such a great sinner as that?

18. *I have seen his ways.* "I have seen that he goes from bad to worse when I afflict him. Now I will try another plan. 'I have seen his ways,'"

18, 19. *And will heal him: I will lead him, also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near, says the LORD; and I will heal him.* It is heart-melting to see the tenderness of God. "I will not further smite him, lest his spirit should fail before me. I will not continue to

strike him because I can see that he only goes farther away from Me, the more I chastise him. I will deal with him in abounding love. ‘I will heal him.’” I believe that there is many a sinner who runs away from God thinking that the Lord is his enemy and, as God pursues him, he does not dare look back. He thinks that it is the step of the Avenger that he hears, so he flees faster and farther away from God. But when he does venture to look back and sees that it is a loving Father’s face that is gazing upon him, oh, how he regrets his folly in running from Him! Then he throws himself into the arms of the God of Love and wonders how he could have been the enemy of this, His greatest Friend. May such a happy turn as that happen to some whom I am now addressing!

20, 21. *But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.* They may have the semblance of peace, or a false peace, but nothing which is worthy of being called peace.

Isaiah 58:1, 2. *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily.* There are many nominally religious people who are full of sin. They have an external religion which allows them to live in rebellion against God. And such people are not easily convinced of sin. Hence the Prophet is bid to lift up his voice like a trumpet. Yet, even if he does so, they will not hear him. There are none so deaf as those that will not hear—and these men do not wish to hear what God has to say to them “Yet they seek Me daily”

2. *And delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.* They are always in a place of worship if possible. They cannot have too many services and sermons, yet they have no heart towards God. O my dear Friends, let us always be afraid of merely external religiousness! Genuine conversion, real devotion to God, true communion with God—these are sure things—but mere outward religiousness is nothing but so much varnish and tinsel! It is, indeed, but the ghastly coffin of a soul that never was quickened unto spiritual life. This is the way these sham religionists talked about their religion.

3. *Why have we fasted, they say, and You see not? Why have we afflicted our soul, and You take no notice?* When God rejects a man’s religion, what must be the reason of it? Here is the explanation.

3. *Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors.* “You fast, but you make your workmen toil on! You determine that they shall not have one atom of their labor abated and you make an amusement of what you call a fast. ‘In the day of your fast you find pleasure.’”

4. *Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fiat of wickedness: you shall not fast as you do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.* The best sort of mere external religion will soon turn sour. If you do not worship the Lord in a right spirit, God will loathe the very form of your service! Why, you might, by hypocrisy, make even Prayer Meetings to be hateful in the sight of God! And the ordinances

may be made as abominable to God as the “mass” itself! You can soon degrade hearing sermons into mere listening to oratory and the Sabbath may easily become an object only of superstitious and formal observance. The heart—the heart is everything! If that is wrong, it sours the sweetest things under Heaven.

5. *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the LORD? Does God care only for the externals of worship? Is He satisfied with sackcloth and ashes, and the hanging down of the head like a bulrush?*

6. *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that to break every yoke? Yes, this is true fasting before God—not to demand your pound of flesh and declare that you will have it. Not to grind down the poor man to the last farthing, but, “to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free.”*

7. *Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh? That is the kind of fast that the Lord approves—to deny yourself that you may give to those who are in need!*

8, 9. *Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: then your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your reward. Then shall you call and the LORD shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger and speaking vanity. That is, if you shall take away all oppression, all wrong-doing to men, all talking of lies and speaking vanity, “Then shall your light break forth as the morning.”*

10, 11. *And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity and your darkness be as the new day: and the LORD shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. What promises God gives to those who consider the poor and needy round about them! But if you shut your ears to the cry of the distressed, God will shut His ears to your cry.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—709, 587, 242.

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TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE FIRST RECORDED WORDS OF JESUS NO. 1666

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

*“And when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said unto Him, Son, why have You thus dealt with us? Look, Your father and I have sought You sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that you sought Me? Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?”
Luke 2:48, 49.*

THESE words are very interesting because they are the first recorded utterances of our Divine Lord. No doubt He said much that was very admirable while yet a Child, but the Holy Spirit has not seen fit to record anything except these two questions, as if to teach us that childhood should be retiring and modest—a stage of preparation rather than of observation. We hear little of a Holy Child, for modesty is a precious part of its character. We ought, therefore, to give all the more earnest heed to these words because they stand at the very forefront of our Lord’s teaching and are, in some respects, the announcement of His whole life.

Spoken, as they were, at 12 years of age, we may regard them as the last words of His childhood and the first words of His youth. He is just passing away from the time in which He could be called a child into that in which He becomes, in the eastern clime, where men ripen faster than here, a young Man, a son of the Law, fit to sit among the doctors in the temple and to be instructed by them. The early days of youth are very perilous, for then it is that the rest of life is often shaped. Happy, indeed, is he who so early begins with God and chooses as his business the service of the Lord! If all our youth had the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, what evidence we should have that the Spirit of God had been working upon our children and was now about to speak through our youth!

I suppose that these words must have come into Luke’s Gospel through Mary, herself. How, otherwise, could the evangelist have known that, “they understood not the saying which He spoke unto them,” or that Mary, “kept all these sayings in her heart”? Mary evidently narrates the words of the Holy Child, words which she had pondered again and again. She treasured up for us the gems which dropped from Jesus’ lips. She tells us that this saying, simple though it seems to be, was not fully understood either by herself or by His reputed father, Joseph. And yet, mark you, we are told, expressly, that Mary, “kept all these sayings in her heart.”

When you cannot put a Truth of God into your understandings, yet lay it up in your affections. If there is anything in God’s Word which is exceedingly difficult, do not, therefore, reject it, but rather *preserve* it for future study. In a father’s talk with his child there must be a good deal that the child cannot fully comprehend. If he is a wise child, he will seize upon

the very thing he does not understand and treasure it for future use, expecting that light will spring out of it, by-and-by. Be not among those who say that they will limit their faith by their understanding! It is probable that you will have a narrow faith if it is so, or else you will have a wide conceit—for a proud conceit, alone, can make us believe that we are able to understand even one-tenth of what God has revealed!

No, I will go further! Although we may understand enough to be saved by the Truth, yet the full depth of the Truths of God are understood by no man and if, therefore, we make it the rule to limit our faith by our understanding, we shall have an extremely limited range of faith! No, let us treasure up these things! Let us highly prize these diamonds which can only be cut by diamonds! Let us not put them aside because they are difficult, for it may be one index of their genuineness that they are so. We are grateful that the Spirit of God has given us this first word of our Lord Jesus and we love it none the less because it is a deep word.

We are not surprised that even as a Child, the Son of God should give forth mysterious sayings. Do you wonder that there should be much in Scripture which you cannot comprehend, when even the first words of Christ, when He is yet a boy, is not understood? No, not understood by those who had nursed Him, who had lived with Him the whole 12 years and, consequently, knew His mode of speech and the peculiarities of His youthful language! If even Mary and Joseph did not understand, who am I, that I should forever be saying, “I must understand this or I will not receive it”? No, if we understand it not, yet will we keep all these sayings in our hearts, for we have this advantage—that the Holy Spirit is now given, by whose teaching we understand things which were hidden from the wisest saints of old!

Beloved Friends, how great and full of meaning was this first word which seems so simple! The longer you look into it, the more you will be astonished at its fullness. Only superficiality and ignorance will think it plain! The closest student will be the most astonished with the profundity of its meaning. Stier, to whom I am much indebted for thoughts upon this subject, calls this text, “the solitary flower out of the enclosed garden of thirty years.” What fragrance it exhales! It is a bud, but how lovely! It is not the utterance of His ripe manhood, but the question of His youth—yet this half-opened bud discovers delicious sweets and delightful colors worthy of our admiring meditation.

We might call these questions of Jesus the prophecy of His Character, and the program of His life. In this, our text, He set before His mother all that He came into the world to do—revealing His high and lofty Nature and disclosing His glorious errand! This verse is one of those which Luther would call His little Bibles, with the whole Gospel compressed into it. What if I compare it to the perfume of roses, of which a single drop might suffice to perfume nations and ages? It would not be possible to overrate these “beautiful words! Wonderful words! Wonderful words of life!” Who, then, am I that I should venture to take such a text? I do not take it with any prospect of being able to unveil all its meaning, but merely to let you see how unfathomable it is. Emmanuel, God With Us, speaks divinely

while yet in His youth! The words of THE WORD surpass all others! May the Spirit of God open them to us!

I shall handle the text thus—First, here is the Holy Child’s perception. Secondly, the Holy Child’s home. Thirdly, the Holy Child’s occupation, and fourthly, the Holy Child’s lesson to any of us who may be seeking Him.

I. Here we see THE HOLY CHILD’S PERCEPTION. Notice, first, that He evidently perceived most clearly His high relationship. Mary said, “Your father and I have sought You sorrowing.” The Child Jesus had been known to call Joseph His father, no doubt, and Joseph *was* His father in the common belief of those round about Him. We read in reference to our Lord even at 30 years of age these words—“Being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph.” The Holy Child does not deny it, but He looks over the head of Joseph and He brings before His mother’s mind another Father. “Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?”

He does not explain this saying, but it is evident enough that He remembered, then, the wonderful relationship which existed between His Humanity and the great God, for He was not conceived after the ordinary manner, but He had come into the world in such a fashion that it was said to Mary, “That Holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.” In a still higher sense and as a Divine Being, He claimed filial relationship with the Most High, but here, no doubt, He speaks as a Man, and as a Man He calls God, “My Father,” after a higher fashion than we can do because of His mysterious birth.

You notice that all through His life He never calls God, “Our Father,” although He bids *us* do so. We are children of the same family and when we pray we are to say, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” but our Lord Jesus has still a filial relationship more special than ours and, therefore, to God He says on His own account, “My Father.” He expressly claims this personal relationship for Himself and I am sure we do not grudge Him that relationship, for upon it our own relationship to the Father depends. Because He is the Son of the Highest, therefore we enter into the filial relationship with the Eternal One according to our capacity. Jesus the Child perceived that He was the Son of the Highest and with all the simplicity of childhood He declared the secret to His mother who already knew how true it was

Brothers and Sisters, this Holy Child’s perception should be an instruction to us. Do you and I often enough and clearly enough perceive that God is *our* Father, too? Do we not often act upon the hypothesis that we are *not* related to Him, or that we are orphans and that our Father in Heaven is dead? Do you not catch yourselves, sometimes, departing from under the influence of the spirit of adoption and getting into the spirit of independence—and of waywardness and sin? This will never do! Let us learn from this Blessed One that as He early perceived His high and eminent relationship to the Father, so ought we, also, even though we may be nothing more than children in Grace. We ought to know and to value beyond all expression our sonship with the great Father who is in Heaven. In truth this Truth of God should override every other and we should live

and move and act under the consciousness of our being the children of God. O Holy Spirit, teach us this!

This Holy Child, next, perceived the constraints of this relationship. He says, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" Write that, "MUST," in capital letters! It is the first appearing of an imperious, "must," which swayed the Savior all along. We find it written of Him that, "He must go through Samaria," and He Himself said, "I must preach the Kingdom of God." And again to Zaccheus, "I must abide in your house," and again, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders." "The Son of Man must be lifted up." "It behooved Christ to suffer." As a Son, He must learn obedience by the things which He suffered. This First-Born among many brethren must feel all the drawings of His Sonship—the sacred instincts of the holy Nature and, therefore, He must be about His Father's business.

Now, I put this to you again, for I need to be practical all along—Do you and I feel this Divine, "must," as we ought? Is necessity laid upon us, yes, *woe* laid upon us unless we serve our Divine Father? Do we ever feel a hungering and a thirsting after Him so that we must draw near to Him and must come to His House and approach His feet and must speak with Him and must hear His voice and must behold Him face to face? We are not truly subdued to the Son-Spirit unless it is so. But when our sonship shall have become our master idea, then shall this Divine necessity be felt by us, also, impelling us to seek our Father's face! As the sparks fly upward to the central fire, so must we draw near unto God, our Father and our All.

This Holy Child also perceived the forgetfulness of Mary and Joseph and He wondered. He sees that His mother and Joseph do not perceive His lofty birth and the necessities arising out of it—and He wonders. "How is it," He says, in a childlike way, "How is it that you sought Me? Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" He is astonished that they do not recognize His Sonship; that they do not perceive that God is His Father! Does not Mary remember the angel's word at the Annunciation? Did she not know how He was born and remember His mysterious relationship to God? Of course she did! But she was a woman and as a woman she had nursed this Child, and she had brought Him up and, therefore, she began to forget the mystery which surrounded Him, in the sweet familiarities with which she had been indulged! And so she has to be reminded of it by her Child's wonder that she should have forgotten that He was the Son of the Highest.

Have you those perceptions, dear children of God? Do you not often wonder why men do not know that you are a child of God? Have you sometimes spoken and they have smiled at you as if you were idiotic or fanatical, and you have thought to yourself, "What? Do they not know how a child of God should speak and how a child of God should act?" "Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not."—

***"Tis no surprising thing,
That we should be unknown!
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."***

The spiritual man is not understood, He is a wonder unto many. Marvel not, my Brothers and Sisters, if carnal men do not understand you. Yes, even your own Brothers and Sisters in Christ—those who love your Father—have, sometimes, been astonished at you when you have only been acting simply out of your own renewed heart.

Many Christians get so stilted that they are not like children at home. They act more like strangers or hired servants in the Father's house who have bread enough and to spare, but yet never can talk as the children do. Few let their hearts flow out with that holy fearlessness, that sweet familiarity which becomes a child of God. Why, if you and I went about the world under the full possession of this idea, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," I have no doubt we would act in such a way that the mass of professors would be amazed at us and we should be still more amazed at their amazement and astonished at their astonishment! If we only acted as our innermost nature would dictate to us, what manner of persons we would be!

So this Holy Child perceived His glorious Sonship, perceived the constraints of the Sonship working within Him and perceived that His parents did not comprehend His feelings. The Child Jesus began, also, to perceive that He, personally, had a work to do and so He said, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" He had been 12 years silent, but now the shadow of the Cross began to fall upon Him and He felt a little of the burden of His lifework. He perceives that He has not come here merely to work in a carpenter's shop, or to be a peasant child at Nazareth. He has come here to vindicate the honor of God, to redeem His people, to save them from their sins and to lead an army of blood-washed ones up to the Throne of the great Father above and, therefore, He declares that He has a higher occupation than Mary and Joseph can understand.

Yet He must go back to the home at Nazareth and, for 18 years He must do His Father's business by, as far as we read, doing nothing in the way of public ministry! He must do His Father's business by hearing the Father, in secret, so that when He comes out, He may say to His disciples, "All things which I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." So great a lesson had He to teach that He must spend another 18 years in learning it fully and God must open His ears and awaken Him morning by morning to hear as an instructed one, that afterwards He may come forth the Teacher of Israel, the Lord and Master of Apostles and evangelists!

Beloved, I come back to the practical point again. Have you, with your sonship, obtained a vivid perception of your call and your work? You have not redemption set before you to *accomplish*, but you have to make known that redemption far and wide! As God has given to Christ power over all flesh that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him, so has Jesus given *you* power over such-and-such flesh—and there are some in this world who never will receive eternal life except through you! It is appointed that from your lips they shall hear the Gospel! It is ordained in the Divine decree that through your instrumentality they shall be brought into the Kingdom of God! It is time that you and I, who per-

haps have reached 30, 40, 50 or 60 years, should now bestir ourselves and say, “Know you not that I must be up and doing my Father’s business?”

David had to wait till he heard the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees—do you not hear the sound of a going now? Are there not signs and indications that you must work the will of Him that sent you and must finish His work? The night comes wherein no man can work. Up, then, you children of God, and, following the Holy Child Jesus, begin to ask this question—“Know you not that I must be about my Father’s business?” These were the perceptions of this Holy Child. Oh that they may come strong upon us in our own smaller way! May we perceive that we are born of God! May we perceive the Spirit within us whereby we cry, “Abba, Father!” May we have a wonderment that others do not understand the calls and urgencies of our condition and may we have such a sense of our high calling as to proceed at once to fulfill it as God, the Holy Spirit, shall help us!

II. We shall now think of THE HOLY CHILD’S HOME. Here I am obliged to amend our version and I am certain that the correction is, itself, correct. I am all the more strengthened in this opinion because the Revised Version endorses the ALTERATION. This is how they read it—“Know you not that I must be *in My Father’s house?*” That may not be verbally exact, but it is the true sense. It should run thus, “Know you not that I must be *in My Father’s?*” There is no word for “house,” But in almost all languages, “house,” is understood. You know how we commonly say to one another, “I am going down to my father’s,” or, “I shall spend the evening at my brother’s.” Everybody knows that we mean “house,” and that is just how the Greek, here, runs. “Know you not that I must be *in My Father’s?*” It means, “house.”

That must be the first and primary meaning of it. The text says nothing of business, unless we understand it to be included as a matter of course, since we may be sure that Jesus would not be idle in His Father’s, for He said, “My Father works and I work.” Observe that the question of Mary was, “Why have You thus dealt with us? Behold Your father and I have sought You sorrowing.” The answer is, “Know you not that I must be *in My Father’s house?*” That is plainly a complete answer and therein strikes you as more natural than a reference to business. If Jesus had only said, “Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” it would not have been any guide to them as to where He would be, because all His life He *was* about His Father’s business.

But He was not always in the Temple. He was about His Father’s business when He sat by the well and talked to the woman of Samaria. And He was about His Father’s business when He trod the waves of the sea of Galilee. He might be anywhere and yet be about His Father’s *business*—but the natural answer to the question was, “How is it that you sought Me? Know you not that I must be *in My Father’s house?*” Let us read the passage thus, and see the child’s home. Where should Jesus be but in His Father’s dwelling place? I doubt not that with desire He had desired to eat that Passover when He should get to be 12 years old and be old enough to

go up to His Father's house! He looked upon the Temple as being, for the time, the residence of God where He manifested Himself in an unusual degree—and so this Holy Child looked upon those walls and courts with delight as His Father's house.

It seemed most natural to Him that when He reached the place He should stay there. He had never really been at home before. Nazareth was the place where He was brought up, but Jerusalem's Temple was on earth His true home. I picture to my mind how that blessed Child loved the place where His Father was worshipped! He would stand and gaze on the lambs and the bullocks that were slain in sacrifice, understanding much more about them, though a Child, than you or I do, though we are grown up. It must have been all wonderland to Him as a Child—I speak not of Him as God—it must have been all marvelous to Him and deeply interesting. When the Psalms went up, how He sang them with His sweet youthful voice! He said within Himself, "I must sing praises unto My Father." When the solemn prayers were uttered and He heard them, there were none so devout as He as He heard the people worship His Father in Heaven!

It is touching to think of Him, in His Father's palace—He was greater than the Temple and yet a youth! It was His Father's house in a special sense because in the Temple did everything speak of God's Glory and everything there was meant for God's worship. It was His Father's house, too, in the sense that there His Father's work went on. If it had not been for the sin which had turned aside the Rabbis and the priests from the faithful following of God, the Temple was the place out of which God's power went forth. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined." There, too, His Father's Truth was proclaimed and His ordinances were celebrated. The Temple was the center of the great Husbandman's farm—it was the homestead from which all the workers went forth to till the fields of Christ's own Father!

It was there, especially, to Him that His Father's name was taught. He speedily made His way away from the place of sacrifice to that of teaching—"sacrifice and offering You did not desire"—but away He went to the doctors. This thoughtful, spiritual Child wanted to know about everything sacred and so He took His place among the learners—and the teachers were astonished when this new, "Child of the Law," put to them questions which showed that He must have thought vastly more than any other person in the Temple! When these enquiries were answered, they were but the predecessors of a whole army of other questions, for He wanted to know more! They were amazed that such enquiries should come from a youthful mind. In return they put questions to the youth and He answered well, for He had a remarkable mind and His mother had taught Him the precious Word of God so that He had the Law and the Prophets at His fingertips. No doubt He quoted, in His answers, the sayings of Isaiah or of Jeremiah and utterly astounded the doctors as they perceived that He saw deep into the Holy Words.

Now, to be practical again, dear Friends, where should be our home as God's children but in our Father's house? Do you think we have enough of the child spirit about us to feel this? "Know you not that I must be in my

Father's house?" That house is His Church. Among the faithful He dwells. The saints of God are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Let me be often among His people, for I must be in my Father's house! Ought I not, must I not, shall I not, if I am, indeed, a child of God, love to be where God is worshipped? Will not the hymns of God's house charm me? Will not the prayers of God's people delight me? Shall I not be eager to be at the Prayer Meetings of the saints? Shall I not rejoice to join in their praise? Will not my soul be delighted to be at the Table of communion and everywhere else where God has appointed to be worshipped by His saints?

Shall I not love every place where God's work is going on? If I hear the Gospel preached, shall I not say, "Let me be there"? If there is tract distribution from house to house, shall I not say, "I, too, will take a district if I can"? If there is Sunday School work, shall I not cry, "Let me have a class according to my ability! Let me take a share in this holy enterprise"? "Know you not that I must be at my Father's? In my Father's work and in my Father's house engaged in all my Father's concerns?" Should not this compulsion, blessed and sweet and irresistible, continually be upon us? I must be where God is! If I am not with His people because I am detained by sickness, yet I must be in my Father's house! There are many mansions in that great house on earth as well as in Heaven—and we can be with God in the streets and in His house when working in the fields! But we *must* be in our Father's house—we cannot bear to be away from God. Loss of communion is loss of peace, loss of delight.

Oh, crave fellowship with God! Be covetous of it! Love everything that keeps you init! Hate everything that leads you from it! Rise early to commune with God, before the smoke of earth obscures the face of Heaven. Sit up late to commune with God while dews are falling all around. If you can do nothing else, deny yourself rest and wake in the night to commune with God your Father! Shall not a child love to speak with his Father and hear his Father speak to him? It must be so! It will be so! It cannot help being so with you if you feel the child-spirit strong within you as our blessed Lord and Master did when but 12 years of age!

III. Consider, thirdly, THE HOLY CHILD'S OCCUPATION. Although I object to its being the correct reading, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's *business*?"—yet we know that this Holy Child would not be in His Father's house as an idler. He would be sure to be in the Father's house in the sense of being one of the workers in it. Our Father's house is a business house and, therefore, we must be in our Father's business when we are at our Father's! That is the word. Though the translation which mentions business may be a questionable one, yet it is abundantly lawful to say that this Holy Child's occupation was to be about His Father's matters.

What, then, did He do? First, He spent His time in learning and enquiring. "How I pant to be doing good" says some young man. You are right, but you must not be impatient. Go among the teachers and learn a bit. You cannot *teach* yet, for you do not *know*—go and learn before you think of teaching! Hot spirits think that they are not serving God when they are

learning, but in this they err. Beloved, Mary at Jesus' feet was commended rather than Martha, cumbered with much service! "But," says one, "we ought not to be always *hearing* sermons." No, I do not know that any of you are. "We ought to get to work at once," cries another! Certainly you ought, after you have first learned what the work is! If everybody that is converted begins to teach, we shall soon have a mess of heresies and many raw and undigested dogmas taught which will rather do damage than good!

Run, messenger, run! The King's business requires haste! No, rather pause a little. Have you any tidings to tell? First learn your message and *then* run as fast as you please. There must be time for learning the message. If our blessed Lord waited 30 *years*, He is an example to eager persons who can scarcely wait 30 minutes! See how fast light things will travel! How eager are those to speak who know nothing! How swift to speak what they do not know and to testify what they have never seen! This comes not of wisdom, but is the untimely fruit of folly. I have heard it said that Dissenters do not go to their chapels for worship, but for hearing sermons. It is not true! But if it were, I beg to say that hearing sermons may be one of the most God-pleasing forms of worship out of Heaven, for in hearing the Gospel as it should be heard, every sacred passion is brought into play and every power of our renewed manhood is made to bow before the Majesty on high!

Faith by embracing the Promise, love by rejoicing in it, hope by expecting its fulfillment—all are *worship* when the theme is some gracious Word of the Most High! Thought, memory, understanding, emotion are all exercised. I do not know that I have ever worshipped God better than when I have heard a humble, simple-minded man tell out the story of the Cross and of his own conversion. With the tears running down my eyes I have heard the Gospel and adored the living God who has sent it among men! I have so seldom the privilege of hearing a sermon that when I do, it occasions an intense delight which I can scarcely describe—I then draw nearer to God than in any other exercise! I suppose it is so with you—at any rate, it would be so if the preaching were what it ought to be. True preaching begets worship.

This Holy Child was about His Father's business when He was simply asking questions and learning of the appointed teachers. In fact, we need to do more of this kind of business. We are meager, lean and weak, because we are frothing at the mouth with talking too much before we have drank in the Truth of God into our inmost souls. Remember, the good matter cannot come out of you if it has never gone *into* you—and if you have no time for receiving instruction, the matter which comes out of you will be of little worth. This Holy Child is about His Father's business, for He is engrossed in it. His whole heart is in the hearing and asking questions. There is a force, to my mind, in the Greek, which is lost in the translation, which drags in the word, "about." There is nothing parallel to it in the Greek, which is, "Know you not that I must be *in* my Father's?" The way to worship God is to get heartily *into* it. "Blessed is the man whose strength is *in* You; *in* whose heart are Your ways."

We say, sometimes, when preaching, “I felt that I got fairly into the subject,” and you, yourselves, know when the preacher is really getting into it. Often he is paddling about on the shore of his text and possibly he wades into it up to his ankles. But, oh, when he plunges into the “rivers to swim in,” then you have grand times! When the precious Truth of God has fairly carried him off his feet, you take a header, too, and swim likewise. Our Lord, when He went into the Temple, became engrossed with its worship and teaching—and that was His answer to Mary! He did as good as say, “Know you not that I was absorbed in My Father’s? I did not know you were gone. I forgot all about you. Know you not that My soul was in My Father’s? I was so taken up with what I was learning from the doctors and what I was seeing in the Temple that I could not but remain. Did you not know that? Did you not also become absorbed?”

He seems to think they might have been as interested as He and they *would* have been if they had borne the same relation to God as He did! It is natural that we should become engrossed in our worship. I should not wonder if, sometimes, we were a little rude to those who sat next to us, or moved about a little more than etiquette would suggest; or vented our feelings in involuntary expressions and became troublesome to those next us in the pews, so that they said, “What can be the matter with these people?” Friends, we have got into the holy engagement and we cannot quite govern ourselves! And we feel as if we could say to you, “Know you not that I must be in my Father’s work, worship and Truth?” We cannot be half-hearted! We are too happy for that. We are carried clean away. Do you not know that we cannot be proper and calm, for we must be all taken up with our holy service”?

Besides, the Holy Child declares that He was under a necessity to be in it. “Know you not that I must be in My Father’s?” He could not help Himself! Christ could never be a half-hearted pupil or a lukewarm worshipper. It was not possible for Him to be that! He must get absorbed in it; drawn right into the blessed whirlpool—He must be lost in it and give His whole thought and attention to it—and He tells His mother so. “Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” Other things did not interest the Holy Child—but this thing *absorbed* Him. You know the story of Alexander, that when the Persian ambassadors came to his father’s court, little Alexander asked them many questions, but they were not at all such as boys generally think of.

He did not ask them to describe to him the throne of ivory, nor the hanging gardens of Babylon, nor anything as to the gorgeous apparel of the king. He asked what weapons the Persians used in battle; in what form they marched and how far it was to their country, for the *boy* Alexander felt the *man* Alexander within him and he had presentiments that he was the man who would conquer Persia and show them another way of fighting that would make them turn their backs before him! It is a singular parallel to the case of the Child, Jesus, who is taken up with nothing but what is His Father’s because it was for Him to do His Father’s work and to live for His Father’s Glory—and to execute His Father’s purpose even to the last.

IV. Let us, lastly, learn THIS HOLY CHILD'S SPECIAL LESSON TO THOSE OF US WHO ARE SEEKERS. Do I address any children of God who have lost sight of Christ? It does happen at times that we miss the Holy Child and it happens most often when we are happy in company and so are taken off from Him. Mary and Joseph were, no doubt, delighted with the festival and so they forgot Jesus. You and I, when in God's house, may forget the Lord of the House. Did you ever lose Him at His own Table? Did you ever lose Him while engaged in His work? Have you ever missed Him even while you were busy with holy things? When you do, perhaps you will say to Him, "Lord, I have sought You long; I have been among Your kinsfolk; I have been to dear saints of God and spoken to them and have said, 'Have you seen Him whom my soul loves, for I have lost Him?'"

His answer is, "Why have you sought Me?" He is not lost to those who long for Him! Cannot you trust Him when He is away? He is all right even when you see Him not! Though He does not always smile, He loves us to the end. If you are not walking in the light of His Countenance, yet you are living in the love of His heart. Jesus sees you when you do not see Him—He has reasons for hiding Himself which are founded in wisdom. Mark, dearly beloved ones, if you and I need to find our Lord, we know where He is. Do we not? He is at His Father's. Let us go unto His Father's—let us go to our Father and His Father and let us speak with God and ask *Him* where Jesus is if we have lost His company. We may be sure that He is in His Father's work. We are sure of that.

Let us go to work for Him again. Do not let us say, "I feel so dull I cannot pray." Now is the time in which we must pray. "But I do not feel as if I could praise Him." Now is the time when you *must* praise Him and the praise will come while you are praising. At times we have no heart for holy exercises and the devil says, "Do not go." My dear Friend, be sure to go up to the assembly—go to get the heart for going! Have you begun not to care about Prayer Meetings? Are you going to stay away till you *do* care about them? Then you will die in indifference! Come and have another turn at them. Those who are most at them, love them best. Does Satan say, with regard to private prayer, "You have not the spirit of prayer. You must not pray"? Tell the devil you are going to pray for the spirit of prayer and that you will plead till you get it! It is a sign of sickness when you cannot pray and surely, then, you should go to the Physician.

If there is ever a time when a man should pray more than usual, it is when he feels dead and cold in the holy engagement—go and seek Jesus at the Father's and seek Him in the Father's work—and those of you who have lost communion with Him will find it again. When you take the Sunday school class, again, that you left because you said you had had enough of it. When you go again and preach at the street corner—you have not done that lately. When you begin, again, to be active in the Lord's service, then you will again meet with this Blessed One who is about His Father's business, whether you are or not!

One more word and that is to sinners who are seeking Christ. I would not say a word to discourage any who are seeking Jesus, but I should like

to get them far beyond the stage of seeking. Perhaps the Holy Spirit will help them to do so if I read Christ's words to them. "How is it that you sought ME?" Dear, dear! That is, indeed, a turning of things upside down! Our Lord Jesus has come into the world to seek and to save the lost—is it not an odd thing when those who are lost get to seeking Him? That is a reversal of all order! "How is it," He says, "that you sought Me?" Now, if I, this morning, am a poor, lost sinner and can honestly say I am seeking Christ, there must be some blunder somewhere! How can this be? How shall I make heads or tails of it? Here is a sheep seeking the shepherd! A lost piece of silver seeking its owner! How can this be?

It will all come right if you will just think of this—first, that Jesus Christ is not far away. He is in the Father's house. "Where is the Father's house?" Why, all around us! The great Father's house covers the whole world and all the stars! He lives everywhere! He dwells not in temples made with hands, like this Tabernacle, or yon cathedral—the Lord God is outside in the fields, in the streets—wherever you seek Him. Say not, Who shall climb to Heaven to find, Him, or dive into the deeps to bring Him up? "The Word is near you." Here is Christ in the midst of us! What are you looking for, man? Are you seeking for some spirit of the night, or specter of darkness? Jesus is near! Believe in Him!

Remember another thing, that Christ must be about His Father's business. And what is His Father's business? Why, to save sinners! This is His great Father's delight. He is glad to bring His prodigals home. Are you seeking Jesus as if He could not be found, as if it were hard to make Him hear and difficult to win His help? Why, He is busy in saving sinners! Jesus sits on Zion's hill—He still receives poor sinners! Be encouraged and do not go about among your kinsfolk seeking Him, nor with bitter tears and cries of despair look for Him as if He were hiding from you! He is not far from any one of us. He stands before you and He bids you trust Him! Look to Him and be saved! Do you look? You are saved! Go on your way rejoicing! God bless you. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 25-52.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—251, 260, 764.**

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CHRIST ABOUT HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS

NO. 122

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 15, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”
Luke 2:49.***

Behold then, how great an interest God the Father takes in the work of salvation! It is called, “His business.” And though Jesus Christ came to accomplish our redemption, came to set us a perfect example and to establish a way of salvation, yet He came not upon His own business but upon His Father’s business—His Father taking as much interest in the salvation of men as even He, Himself, did! The great heart of the Father was as full of love as the bleeding heart of the Son and the mind of the first Person of the Trinity was as tenderly affected towards His chosen as even the mind of Christ Jesus, our Substitute, our Surety and our All! It is His “Father’s business.” Behold, also, the condescension of the Son, that He should become the Servant of the Father, to do not His own business, but the Father’s business! See how He stoops to become a Child, subject to His mother. And mark how He stoops to become a Man, subject to God, His Father. He took upon Himself the nature of man and though He was the Son, equal in power with God, who “counted it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet He, “took upon Himself the form of a Servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” Learn, then, O Believer, to love all the Persons of the Divine Trinity alike! Remember that salvation is no more the work of One than of the Other. They all three agree in One and as in the Creation they all said, “Let Us make man,” so in salvation they all say, “Let Us save man.” And Each of them does so much of it that it is truly the work of Each and undividedly the work of All! Remember that notable passage of Isaiah the Prophet—“I will divide Him a portion with the great and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.” God divides and Christ divides. The triumph is God’s—the Father “divides for Him a portion with the great.” It is equally Christ’s—He “divides the spoil with the strong.” Set not one Person before the Other. Reverently adore them alike, for they are One—One in design, One in character and One in essence! And while they are truly Three, we may in adoration exclaim, “Unto the one God of Heaven and earth be Glory, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

But now I shall invite your attention, first, to *the spirit of the Savior*, as breathed in these words, “Did you not know that I must be about My Fa-

ther's business?" And then, secondly, I shall exhort the children of God with all the earnestness which I can command, with all the intensity of power which I can summon to the point to *labor after the same spirit*, that they, too, may say, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

I. First, then, note THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. It was a spirit of undivided consecration to the will of God, His Father. It was a spirit urged onward by an absolute necessity to serve God. Note the word, "must." "Did you not know that I *must*?" There is a something in Me which prevents Me from doing other work. I feel an all-controlling, overwhelming influence which compels Me at all times and in every place to be about My Father's business—the spirit of high, holy, entire, sincere, determined consecration in heart to God. "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

First, what was the impelling power which (as it were) forced Christ to be about His Father's business? And then, secondly, how did He do His Father's business and what was it?

1. What was the impelling power which made Christ say, "I must be about My Father's business"?

In the first place, it was the spirit of *obedience* which thoroughly possessed itself of His bosom. When He took upon Him the form of a Servant, He received the spirit of an obedient Servant, too. He became as perfect in the capacity of a Servant as He had ever been in that of a Ruler, though in that He had perfectly executed all His life. Beloved Believer! Do you not remember when you were first converted to God, when the young life of your new-born spirit was strong and active, how impetuously you desired to obey God and how intense was your eagerness to serve Him in some way or other? I can well remember how I could scarcely abide myself five minutes without doing something for Christ. If I walked the street, I must have a tract with me. If I went into a railway carriage, I must drop a tract out of the window. If I had a moment's leisure, I must be upon my knees or at my Bible. If I were in company, I must turn the subject of conversation to Christ that I might serve my Master! Alas, I must confess, much of that strength of purpose has departed from me, as I doubt not it has from many of you, who, with a greater prominence, have also received diminished zeal. It may be that in the young dawn of life we did imprudent things in order to serve the cause of Christ. But I say, give me back the time, again, with all its imprudence and with all its hastiness, if I might but have the same love to my Master, the same overwhelming influence in my spirit making me obey because it was a pleasure for me to obey God!

Now, Christ felt just the same way! He must do it. He must serve God. He must be obedient. He could not help it. The Spirit was in Him and would work just as the spirit of disobedience in the wicked impels them

to sin. Lust, sometimes, drags the sinner on to sin with a power so strong and mighty that he, poor man, can no more resist it than the sere leaf can resist the tempest! We had lusts so omnipotent that they had but to suggest and we were their willing slaves! We had habits so tyrannical that we could not break their chains. We were impelled to evil, like the straw in the whirlwind, or the chip in the whirlpool. We were hurried wherever our lusts would bear us—"drawn away and enticed." Now, in the new heart it is just the same, only in another direction—the spirit of obedience works in us, impelling us to serve our God so that when that spirit is unclogged and free, we may truly say, "We must be about our Father's business." We cannot help it!

2. But Christ had what few men have. He had another motive for this, another impelling cause. *He had a sacred call to the work which He had undertaken* and that sacred call forced Him on. You think, perhaps, it is fanatical to talk of sacred calls. But call it fanatical or not, this one thing I know—the belief in a special call to do a special work is like the arm of omnipotence to a man! Let a man believe that God has set him to do a particular work and you may sneer at him—what does he care? He would give as much for your sneer as he would for your smile and that is nothing at all—he believes God intends him to do the work! You say no—but he never asked you for your vote upon the question! He has received God's message, as he thinks, and he goes on and you cannot stop him! If he sits still for a little while, a spirit haunts him—he knows not what it is, but he is unhappy unless he engages in a business which he feels is the commission of his life! If he holds his tongue when God has commanded him to speak, the word is like fire in his bones—it burns its way out, until at last he says, with Elihu, "I am filled with matter. I am like a vessel that needs vent." I must speak, or burst—I cannot help it! Depend upon it, the men who have done the greatest work for our holy religion have been the men who had the special call to it. I no more doubt the call of Luther than I doubt the call of the Apostles and he did not doubt it either. One of the reasons why Luther did a thing was because other people did not like it.

When he was about to smite a blow at the Papacy by marrying a nun, all his friends said it was a fearful thing. Luther consulted them and did the deed, perhaps, all the sooner because they disapproved of it! A strange reason it may seem, that a man should do a thing because he was dissuaded from it, but he felt that it was his work to strike the Papacy right and left and for that he would give up everything, even the friendship of friends! His business, by night and by day, was to pray down the pope, to preach down the pope, to write down the pope and do it he must, though often in the roughest, coarsest manner, with iron gauntlets on his hands! It was his work—do it he must! You might have done what you pleased with Luther, even to the tearing out his tongue—

he would have taken his pen, dipped it in fire and written in burning words, the doom of Papacy! He could not help it, Heaven had forced him to the work! He had a special commission given him from on High and no man could stop him any more than he could stop the wind in its careening, or the tide in its motions!

Christ had a special work. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, the Lord has anointed Me to preach glad tidings to the poor." And He felt the effects of this anointing—the power of this impelling! And stop He must not, He could not, He dare not! "I must," He said, "be about My Father's business."

3. But once more, Christ had something which few of us can fully know. He had *a vow upon Him*—the vow to do the work from all eternity! He had become the Surety of the Covenant! He had sworn that He would execute His Father's business. He had taken a solemn oath that He would become Man. That He would pay the ransom price of all His Beloved ones. That He would come and do His Father's business, whatever that might be. "Lo, I come," He said, "In the volume of the Book, it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O God." Therefore, being faithful and true—the Covenant, the engagement, the suretyship, the sworn promise and the oath made Him say, "I must be about My Father's business." Whenever you make a vow, my dear Friends—and do that very seldom—take care that you keep it. Few should be the vows that men make, but they should always be sincerely kept. God asks no vow of us, but when His Spirit moves us to make a vow—and we may do so honestly if we make a vow in His strength—we are bound to keep it. And he that feels that he has made a vow, must then feel himself impelled to do the work which he has vowed to do. Let the difficulty be ever so great, if you have vowed to overcome it, do it! Let the mountain be ever so high, if you have made a vow to God that you will attempt it—scale its summit and never give it up! If the vow is a right one, God will help you to accomplish it. O you upon whom are the vows of the Lord, (and some of you have taken solemn vows upon you, by making a profession of religion), I beseech you, by the sacrament in which you dedicated yourself to your Lord and by that other sacrament in which you found communion with Jesus, to fulfill your vows and pay them daily, nightly, hourly, constantly, perpetually! And let these compel you to say, "I must be about my Father's business." These, I think, were the impelling motives which forced Christ on in His Heavenly labor.

II. Secondly. But now, what was His Father's business? I think it lay in three things—example, establishment, expiation.

1. One part of His Father's business was to send into the world a perfect *example for our imitation*. God had written different books of examples in the lives of the saints. One man was noted for one virtue and another for another. At last God determined that He would gather all His

works into one volume and give a condensation of all virtues in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now He determined to unite all the parts into one, to string all the pearls on one necklace and to make them all apparent around the neck of one single Person. The sculptor finds here a leg from some eminent master and there a hand from another mighty sculptor. Here he finds an eye and there a head full of majesty. He says within himself, "I will compound those glories, I will put them all together. Then it shall be the model man. I will make *the statue par excellence*, which shall stand first in beauty and shall be noted ever afterwards as the model of manhood." So said God, "There is Job—he has patience. There is Moses—he has meekness. There are those mighty ones who all have eminent virtues. I will take these, I will put them into one. And the Man, Christ Jesus, shall be the perfect model of future imitation." Now, I say, that all Christ's life He was endeavoring to do His Father's business in this matter. You never find Christ doing a thing which you may not imitate. You would scarcely think it necessary that He should be baptized. But lo, He goes to Jordan's stream and dives beneath the waves that He may be buried in Baptism unto death and may rise again—though He needed not to rise—into newness of life!

You see Him healing the sick, to teach us benevolence; rebuking hypocrisy to teach us boldness; enduring temptation to teach us hardness, wherewith, as good soldiers of Christ, we ought to war a good warfare! You see Him forgiving His enemies to teach us the Grace of meekness and of forbearance. You behold Him giving up his very life to teach us how we should surrender ourselves to God and give up ourselves for the good of others. Put Christ at the wedding—you may imitate Him. Yes, Sirs, and you might imitate Him, if you could, in turning water into wine, without a sin! Put Christ at a funeral. You may imitate Him—"Jesus wept." Put Him on the mountaintop. He shall be there alone in prayer and you may imitate Him. Put Him in the crowd. He shall speak so that if you could speak like He, you would speak well. Put Him with enemies. He shall so confound them that He shall be a model for you to copy! Put Him with friends and He shall be a "Friend who sticks closer than a brother," worthy of your imitation! Exalt Him, cry hosanna and you shall see Him riding upon a "colt, the foal of an ass," meek and lowly! Despise and spit upon Him, you shall see Him bearing contumely and contempt with the same evenness of spirit which characterized Him when He was exalted in the eyes of the world. Everywhere you may imitate Christ! Yes, Sirs and you may even imitate Him in that "the Son of Man came eating and drinking" and therein fulfilled what He determined to do—to pull down the vain Phariseeism of man which says that religion stands in meats and drinks, whereas, "Not that which goes into a man defiles a man but that which goes out of a man, that defiles the man." And that is wherein we should take heed to ourselves, lest the inner man be defiled.

Never once did He swerve from that bright true mirror of perfection. He was in everything as an Exemplar, always doing His Father's business!

2. And so in the matter that I have called establishment, that is the *establishment of a new dispensation*, that was His Father's business and therein Christ was always doing it. He went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Was He doing it, then? Ah, Sirs, He was, for it was necessary that He should be "a faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, for in that He, Himself, has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them who are tempted." When He speaks, you can see Him establishing His Word and when He puts the finger of silence to His lips, He is doing it as much, for then was fulfilled the prophecy, "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb." Does He work a miracle? Do the obedient winds hush their tumult at His voice? It is to establish the Gospel, by teaching us that He is Divine! Does He weep? It is to establish the Gospel, by teaching us that He is human! Does He gather the Apostles? It is that they may go abroad in every land, preaching the Word of God! Does He sit upon a well? It is that He may teach a woman and that she may teach the whole city of Samaria the way of salvation! He was always engaged in this work of Example and this work of establishment!

3. And ah, Beloved, when He came to the climax of His labor, when He came to the greatest toil of all, that which a thousand men could never have done—when He came to do the *great work of Expiation*, how thoroughly He did it—

***"View Him prostrate in the garden—
On the ground your Maker lies!
On the bloody tree behold Him—
Hear Him cry before he dies—
'IT IS FINISHED!'"***

And there you have proof that He was about His Father's business! It was His Father's business that made Him sweat great drops of blood. His Father's business plowed His back with many gory furrows. His Father's business pricked His temple with the crown of thorns. His Father's business made Him mocked and spit upon. His Father's business made Him go about bearing His Cross. His Father's business made Him despise the shame when, naked, He hung upon the tree. His Father's business made Him yield Himself to death, though He needed not to die if so He had pleased. His Father's business made Him tread the gloomy shades of Gehenna and descend into the abodes of death. His Father's business made Him preach to the spirits in prison. And His Father's business took Him up to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, still doing His Father's business! His Father's business makes Him plead day and night for Sion. The same business shall make Him come as the Judge of the quick and the dead, to divide the sheep from the goats. The same busi-

ness shall make Him gather together in one, all people who dwell on the face of the earth! Oh, glory to You, Jesus! You have done it! You have done Your Father's business well!

III. Thus, I have given you the example. Now, let me exhort you to IMITATE IT.

Tell me, if you can, why the religion of Christ is so very slow in spreading. Mohammed, an imposter, stood up in the streets to preach. He was hooted, stones were thrown at him. Within a month after, he had disciples. A few more years and he had a host behind him. Not a century had rolled away before a thousand scimitars flashed from their scabbards at the bidding of the caliphs! His religion overran nations like wild-fire and devoured kingdoms. But why? The followers of the prophet were entirely devoted to his cause. When that Muslim of old spurred his horse into the sea to ride across the straits of Gibraltar and then reined him up and said, "I would cross if Allah willed it!" There was something in it that told us why his religion was so strong. Ah, those warriors of that time were ready to die for their religion and, therefore, it spread. Can you tell me why Christianity spread so much in primitive times? It was because holy men "counted not their lives dear unto them," but were willing to "suffer the loss of all things" for Christ's sake. Paul traverses many countries. Peter ranges through many nations. Philip and the other Evangelists go through various countries, testifying to the Word of God. Sirs, I will tell you why our faith in these days spreads so little. Pardon me—it is because the professors of it do not believe it! Do not believe it? Yes! They believe it in the head, but not in the heart. We have not enough of true devotedness to the cause, or else, I am fully persuaded, God would bless Zion with a far greater increase!

How few there are who have given themselves fully to their religion! They take their religion, like my friend over there has taken that little farm of his. He has a farm of a thousand acres but he thinks he could increase his means, perhaps, by taking a little farm of a hundred acres or so a little way off. And he gives that to a rent-farmer and does not take much trouble about it, himself. It is not very likely he will have very fine farming, there, because he leaves it to somebody else. Just so with religion! Your great farm is your shop, your great aim is your worldly business. You like to keep religion as a snug investment at very small interest, indeed, which you intend to draw out when you get near death! But you do not want to live on it just now. You have enough profit from your own daily business and you do not need religion for everyday life. Sirs, the reason why your religion does not spread is because it has not got root enough in your hearts! How few there are of us who are ready to devote ourselves wholly, bodily and spiritually to the cause of the Gospel of Christ! And if you should attempt to do so, how many opponents you would meet with! Go into the Church Meeting and be a little earnest.

What will they say? Why, they will treat you just as David's brothers did, when David spoke about fighting Goliath. "Oh," they said, "because of the pride and the naughtiness of your heart, you have come to see the battle. Now, stand aside, do not think you can do anything—away with you!" And if you are in earnest, especially in the ministry, it is just the same. Your Brothers and Sisters pray every Sabbath—"Lord, send more laborers into the vineyard!" And if God should send them, they wish them safe out of their corner of it, at any rate. They may go anywhere else, but they must not come anywhere near them, for it might affect their congregation, it might stir them up a little! And people might think they did not labor quite earnestly enough! "Stand aside!" they say. But Brothers, do not mind about that. If you cannot bear to be huffed and trimmed, there is little good in you! If you cannot bear trimming, depend upon it, you cannot yet be well lit! Dare to go on against all the prudence of men and you will find them pat you on the shoulder, by-and-by, and call you, "dear Brother." Every man is helped to get up, when he is as high as he can be—if you are down, "keep him down," is the cry! But if you are getting up, you will never get help till you have done it, yourself. And then men will give you their help when you do not require it. However, your war-cry must be, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

Again, even the best of your friends, if you are truly zealous of God, will come to you and say—and very kindly, too—"Now, you must take a little more care of your constitution. Now, don't be doing so much. Don't, I beseech you!" Or if you are giving money away—"Now you must be a little more prudent. Take more care of your family. Really, you must not do so." Or if you are earnest in prayer, they will say—"There is no need of such enthusiasm as this—you know you can be religious and not too religious. You can be moderately so." And so you find both friends and enemies striving to hinder your consecration to Christ! Now, I like what old Rowland Hill said, when someone told him that he was "moderately religious." "Well then, you are irreligious, for a man that is moderately honest is a rogue for certain! And so the man that is moderately religious is irreligious." If religion is worth anything, it is worth everything! If it is anything, it is everything! Religion cannot go halves with anything else, it must be all. We must, if we are thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ, imitate Christ in this—the giving up of all to God—so that we can sincerely say—

***"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I could give Him all."***

I shall never forget the circumstance, when after I thought I had made a full consecration to Christ, a slanderous report against my character came to my ears. I fell on my knees and said, "Master, I will not keep

back even my character for You. If I must lose that, too, then let it go! It is the dearest thing I have, but it shall go. If, like my Master, they shall say I have a devil and am mad, or, like He I am a drunk and a wine-bibber, it is gone! Just grant me Grace to say, 'I have suffered the loss of all things. And I do count them but dross that I may win Christ!'" And you, Christian, will never get on well in serving God till you have given all to Him. That which you keep back will rot! If you reserve the least portion of your time, your property, or your talents and do not give all to Christ, you will find there will be a sore, a gangrene in it! Christ will bless you in all when you give all to Him. But what you keep from Him, He will curse and blight and ruin. He will have all of us, the whole of us, all we possess, or else He will never be satisfied.

And now let me answer one or two objections and I shall still stir you up, who make a profession of religion, to give up all you have to Christ. You say, "*Sir, I cannot do it. I am not in the right profession.*" Well, Sir, you spoke truly when you said that, for if there is a profession that will not allow us to give all to Christ, it is not a right profession and we ought not to follow it at all! "But," you say "how can I do it?" Well what are you? I do not care what you are. I assert it is possible for you to do all things in the name of God and so to give Glory to Christ. Do not think you need be a minister to dedicate yourself to Christ! Many a man has disgraced the pulpit and many a man has sanctified an anvil! Many a man has dishonored the cushion upon which he preached and many a man has consecrated the plow with which he has turned the soil! We ought in all our business, as well as in our sacred acts, to do all for Christ! Let me illustrate this. A merchant in America had devoted a large part of his money for the maintenance of the cause of Christ, and one said to him, "What a sacrifice you make every year." Said he, "Not so. I have a clerk—suppose I give that clerk fifty pounds to pay a schoolmaster and when he goes to the schoolmaster, he should say, 'Here is your salary, what a sacrifice it is to me to give you that!' 'Why,' the schoolmaster would say, 'Sir, it is not yours, it is no sacrifice at all to you.'" So said this good man, "I gave up all when I came to God. I became His steward and no longer head of the firm. I made God the head of the firm and I became the steward. And now when I distribute my wealth, I only distribute it as His paymaster—it is no sacrifice at all." If we talk of sacrifices we make a mistake. Ought not that to be the spirit of our religion? It should be made a sacrifice at first and then afterwards there should be a voluntary offering of all! "I keep my shop open," said one, "and earn money for God. I and my family live out of it—God allows us to do it. For as a minister lives by the Gospel, He allows me to live by my business and He permits me to provide a competence for old age but that is not my objective." "I sell these goods," said another, but the profit I get, God has. That which I require for my own food and raiment and for my household, that God gives back to me,

for He has said, bread shall be given me and water shall be sure. But the rest is God's, not mine. I do it all for God."

Now you do not understand that theory, do you? It is not business. No, Sirs, but if your hearts were right you would understand it, for it is God's Gospel—the giving up all to Christ. The giving up of everything to His cause. When we do that, then shall we understand this passage—"Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" For your business, though it is carried on in your name, will, unknown to men, be carried on in God's name, too! Let me beg of you, however, not to tell everybody if you do it. I have known some that hang the Gospel in the window, more attractively, sometimes, than ribbons! I hate the cant of a man, who, when you go to buy ribbons or pay a bill, asks you to have a tract, or invites you into the back parlor to pray. You will see at once what he is after. He wants to sanctify his counter, so that as people catch flies with honey, he may catch you with religion! Put your religion where it will come out but do not cant about it. If a stranger should call upon you and in a moment exclaim, "Let us pray," your best policy is to let him have the street to do it in and you should say, "Thank you, I do my praying mostly alone. I see what it is. If I thought you had the spirit of prayer and it had been the proper season, I would have joined with you with all my heart." But the religion of a man who will just step into your house, to let you see what an extraordinary pious man he is, is either very sick, or else it is a galvanized thing that has got no life in it at all! I regard prayer as a very sacred thing. "When you pray, enter into your closet. And when you give alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does." For verily if you do it to be seen of men, you have your reward—and a poor one it is—a little praise for a minute and it is all gone! But nevertheless, do not run into one extreme by running from another. Consecrate your business by your religion. Do not paint your religion on your side-board, but keep it ready whenever you need it and I am sure you will always need it.

Says one, "How can I do God's business? I have no talent, I have no money. All I earn in the week, I have to spend and I have scarcely money enough to pay my rent. I have no talent. I could not teach in a Sunday school." Brother, have you a child? Well, *there* is one door of usefulness for you. Sister, you are very poor. No one knows you. You have a husband and however drunk he may be, *there* is a door of usefulness for you. Bear up under all his insults, be patient under all his taunts and jeers and you can serve God and do God's business. "But Sir I am sick, it is only today I am able to get out at all. I am always on my bed." You can do your Master's business by lying on a bed of suffering for Him, if you do it patiently. The soldier who is ordered to lie in the trenches is just as obedient as the man who is ordered to storm the breach. In everything you do, you can serve your God. Oh, when the heart is rightly tuned in

this matter, we shall never make excuses and say, "I cannot be about my Father's business." We shall always find some business of His to do! In the heroic wars of the Swiss, we read that the mothers would bring cannonballs for the fathers to fire upon the enemy and the children would run about and gather up the shot that sometimes fell, when ammunition ran short. So that all did something. We hate war but we will use the figure in the war of Christ. There is something for you all to do. Oh, let us who love our Master, let us who are bound to serve Him by the ties of gratitude—let us say, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

And now I close up by addressing all the Lord's people here and urging them to serve God with all their hearts, by giving them two or three very brief and very earnest reasons.

Be about your Father's business with all earnestness, because that is the way of *usefulness*. You cannot do your own business and God's, too. You cannot serve God and self any more than you can serve God and mammon. If you make your own business, God's business, you will do your business well and you will be useful in your day and generation. Never shall we see any great revival in the Church or any great triumphs of religion until the Christian world is more touched with the spirit of entire consecration to Christ! When the world shall see us in earnest, then God will bring men in—not before! We go to our pulpits in half-heartedness—we go to our place of worship mere shells without the kernel. We give the outward ceremony and take away the heart. We shall never see Christ's cause triumphant so. Would you be useful? Would you extend your Master's empire? Then be about your Father's business!

Again, would you be *happy*? Be about your Father's business. Oh, it is sweet employment to serve your Father! You need not turn aside from the ways of business to do that. If your heart is right, you can serve God in weighing a pound of tea as much as in preaching a sermon! You can serve God as much in driving a horse and cart as in singing a hymn—serve God in standing behind your counter at the right time and the right season, as much as sitting in your pews! And oh, how sweet to think, "I am doing this for God. My shop is opened on God's behalf. I am seeking to win profit for God. I am seeking to get business for God's cause, that I may be able to devote more to it and prosper it more by what I am able voluntarily to consecrate to Him." You will have a happiness when you rise such, as you never knew before, if you can think, "I am going to serve God today." And when you end at night, instead of saying, "I have lost so much," you will be able to say, "Not I—my God has lost it. But the silver and the gold are His and if He does not care to have either of them—very well. Let them go. He shall have it one way or another. I do not need it. If He chooses to take it from me in bad debts, well and good.

Let me give to Him in another way, it will be the same. I will revere Him continually, even in my daily avocations."

And this dear Friends, will be the way—and I trust you can be moved by this—this will be the way to have eternal glory at last, not for the sake of what you do, but as the gracious reward of God for what you have done! "They who turn many to righteousness shall be as the stars forever and ever." Would you like to go to Heaven alone? I do not think you would. My happiest thought is this—that when I die, if it shall be my privilege to enter into rest in the bosom of Christ—I know I shall not enter Heaven alone! By His Grace there have been thousands whose hearts have been pricked and have been drawn to Christ under the labors of my ministry. Oh, what a pleasant thing to flap one's wings to Heaven and have a multitude behind! And when you enter Heaven, to say, "Here am I and the children You have given me!" You cannot preach, perhaps, but you can travail in birth with children for God, in a spiritual sense, in another way, for if you help the cause, you shall share the honor, too! You do that, perhaps, which is not known among men, yet you are the instrument and God shall crown your head with glory among those who "are as the stars forever and ever." I think, dear Christian Friends, I need say no more, except to bid you remember that you owe so much to Christ for having saved you from Hell. You owe so much to that blood which redeemed you that you are duty bound to say—

***"Here, Lord, I give myself away—
'Tis all that I can do."***

Go out, now, and if you are tempted by the world, may the Spirit enable you to reply, "I must be about my Father's business." Go out and if they call you fanatical, let them laugh at you as much as they like—tell them you must be about your Father's business. Go on and conquer and God be with you!

And now farewell, with this last word, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not, shall be damned." Faith in Christ is the only way of salvation! You who know your guilt cast yourselves on Christ and then dedicate yourselves to Him. So shall you have joy, here, and glory everlasting in the Presence of the blessed, where bliss is without alloy and joy without end!

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

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

LOOSENING THE SANDAL STRAP NO. 1044

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 31, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“One mightier than I comes, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.”
Luke 3:16.***

IT was not John's business to attract followers to himself but to point them to Jesus, and he very faithfully discharged his commission. His opinion of his Master, of whom he was the herald, was a very high one. He revered Him as the Anointed of the Lord, the King of Israel, and, consequently, he was not tempted into elevating himself into a rival. He rejoiced to declare, “He must increase but I must decrease.” In the course of his self-depreciation he uses the expression of our text which is recorded by each one of the Evangelists with some little variation. Matthew words it, “whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.” He was not fit to fetch his Lord His shoes.

Mark writes it, “whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.” And John has it very much as in Luke. This putting on and taking off and putting away of sandals was an office usually left to menial servants. It was not a work of any repute or honor, yet the Baptist felt that it would be a great honor to be even a menial servant of the Lord Jesus. He felt that the Son of God was so infinitely superior to himself that he was honored if only permitted to be the meanest slave in His employ. He would not allow men to attempt comparisons between himself and Jesus—he felt that none could, for a moment, be allowed.

Now this honest estimate of himself as less than nothing in comparison with his Master is greatly to be imitated by us. John is to be commended and admired for this, but better still he is to be carefully copied. Remember that John was by no means an inferior man. Among all that had been born of women before his time there had not been a greater than he. He was the subject of many prophecies and his office was a peculiarly noble one. He was the friend of the great Bridegroom and introduced Him to His chosen bride. He was the morning star of the Gospel day, but he counted himself no light in the Presence of the Sun of Righteousness whom he heralded. The temperament of John was not that which bowed or cringed—he was no reed shaken by the wind—no man of courtly habits fitted for a king's palace.

No. We see in him an Elijah, a man of iron, a son of thunder. He roared like a young lion on his prey and feared the face of none. Some men are so naturally meek-spirited, not to say weak-minded, that they naturally become subservient and set up others as their leaders. Such men are apt to err in depreciating themselves. But John was every inch a man—his great soul bowed only before that which was worthy of homage. He was, in God's strength, as an iron pillar and a bronze wall. He was a hero for the

cause of the Lord, and yet he sat down in the Presence of Jesus as a little child sits on a stool at his master's feet, and he cried, "whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and to loose."

Remember, moreover, that John was a man endowed with great abilities and these are very apt to make a man proud. He was a Prophet, yes, and more than a Prophet. When he stood in the wilderness to preach, his burning eloquence soon attracted the people from Jerusalem and from all the cities round about! The banks of Jordan saw a vast multitude of eager hearers crowding around the man clothed with a garment of camel's hair. Thousands gathered together to listen to the teaching of one who had not been brought up at the feet of the rabbis, neither had been taught eloquence after the fashion of the schools!

John was a man of bold, plain, telling, commanding speech! He was no second-rate teacher, but a master in Israel. Yet he assumed no airs of self-conceit, but accounted the lowest place in the Lord's service as too high for him. Note, too, that he was not only a great preacher, but he had been very successful—not only in attracting the crowds—but in *baptizing* them. The whole nation felt the effects of John's ministry and knew that he was a Prophet! They were swayed to and fro by his zealous words, as the corn of autumn is moved in the breath of the wind. A man is very apt, when he feels that he has power over masses of his fellow creatures, to be lifted up and exalted above measure, but not so John! It was safe for the Lord to trust him with a great popularity and a great success, for though he had all those honors he laid them meekly down at Jesus' feet, and said, "I am not worthy to be even the lowest slave in Messiah's household."

Remember, also, that John was a religious leader and he had the opportunity, if he had pleased, of becoming the leader of a powerful sect. The people were evidently willing to follow him. There were some, no doubt, who would not have gone over to Christ, Himself, if John had not bid them go, and testified, "Behold the Lamb of God," and confessed over and over again, saying, "I am not the Christ." We read of some, who years after the Baptist was dead, still remained his disciples so that he had the opportunity of leading away a multitude who would have become his followers, and so of setting up his own name among men. But he scorned it!

His elevated view of his Master prevented his entertaining any desire for personal leadership. Putting himself down not in the place of a captain of the lord's hosts, but as one of the least soldiers in the army, he says, "His sandal straps I am not worthy to loose." What was the reason, do you think, of John's always retaining his proper position? Was it not because he had a high idea of his Master and a deep reverence for Him? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, because of our little estimate of Christ it is often unsafe for the Lord to trust us in any but the very lowest positions. I believe many of us might have been 10 times as useful—only it would not have been safe for God to have allowed us to be so—we would have been puffed up and, like Nebuchadnezzar, we would have boasted, "Behold this great Babylon that I have built."

Many a man has had to fight in the back ranks and serve his Master but little—and enjoy but *little* success in that service because he did not reverence Christ enough—did not love his Lord enough, and, consequently self would soon have crept in to his own overturning—to the grief of the Church, and to the dishonor of his Lord. Oh, for high thoughts of Christ, and low thoughts of ourselves! Oh, to see Jesus as All in All, and to see ourselves as less than nothing before Him!

Having thus introduced the subject, our object this morning is to draw instruction from the expression which John here and elsewhere used with regard to himself and his Lord—“Whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.” I gather from this, first, that no form of holy service is to be lightly esteemed. Secondly, that our unworthiness is apparent in the presence of any sort of holy work. And that, thirdly, this unworthiness of ours, when most felt, should rather stimulate us to action than discourage us—for so it doubtless operated in the case of John the Baptist.

I. First, then, note THAT NO FORM OF HOLY SERVICE IS TO BE LIGHTLY ESTEEMED. To unloose the straps of Christ’s sandals might seem very trivial. It might even seem as if it involved the loss of self-respect for a man of position and influence to stoop to offices which a servant might quite as well perform. Why should I bring myself down to that? I will learn of Christ—I will distribute bread among the multitude for Christ—I will have my boat by the sea shore ready for Christ to preach in, or I will go and fetch the donkey upon which He shall ride in triumph into Jerusalem. But what need can there be for the disciple to become a mere menial?

Such a question as that is here forever silenced and the spirit which dictates it is practically rebuked. Nothing is dishonorable by which Jesus may be honored! Nothing lowers a man, if, thereby, he honors his Lord! It is not possible for any godly work to be beneath our dignity—rather ought we to know that the lowest grade of service bestows dignity upon the man who heartily performs it. Even the least and most obscure form of serving Christ is more high and lofty than we are worthy to undertake.

Now, note that little works for Christ—little sandal bearings and strap loosening often have more of the child’s spirit in them than greater works. Outside, in the streets, a man’s companion will do him a kindness and the action performed is friendly. But for filial acts you must look *inside* the house. There the child does not lend money to its father, or negotiate business—yet in his little acts there is more than sonship. Who is it that comes to meet Father when the day is over? And what is the action which often indicates childhood’s love? Look, the little child comes tottering forward with father’s slippers and runs off with his boots as he takes them off! The service is little, but it is loving and filial—and has more of filial affection in it than the servant’s bringing in the meal, preparing the bed, or any other more essential service. It gives the little one great pleasure and expresses his love.

No one who is not my child, or who does not love me in something like the same way, would ever dream of making such a service his specialty. The littleness of the act fits it to the child’s capacity, and there is also something in it which makes it a suitable expression of a child’s affection.

So, also, in little acts for Jesus! Oftentimes men of the world will give their money to the cause of Christ, putting down large sums for charity or for missions. But they will not weep in secret over other men's sins, or speak a word of comfort to an afflicted saint. To visit a poor sick woman, teach a little child, reclaim a street Arab, breathe a prayer for enemies or whisper a promise in the ear of a desponding saint may show more of sonship than building a row of almshouses or endowing a Church! In little acts for Christ it is always to be remembered that the little things are as necessary to be done as the greater acts.

If Christ's feet are not washed. If His sandals are not loosed He may suffer and His feet may be lamed so that a journey may be shortened, and many villages may miss the blessing of His Presence. So with other minor things. There is as much need for the quiet intercessions of saints as for the public delivery of God's Truth before the assembled thousands. It is as necessary that babes be taught their little hymns as that monarchs be rebuked for sin. We remember the old story of the losing of the battle through the missing of a single nail in a horseshoe, and perhaps up to this moment the Church may have lost her battle for Christ because some minor work which ought to have been done for Jesus has been neglected.

I should not wonder if it should turn out that many Churches have been without prosperity because, while they have looked to the public ministry and the visible ordinances, they have been negligent of smaller service to their Master. Many a cart comes to grief through inattention to the linchpin. A very small matter turns an arrow aside from the target. To teach a child to sing, "Gentle Jesus," and to point its young heart to the Redeemer may seem a trifle, but yet it may be a most essential part of the process of that gracious work of religious education by which that child shall afterwards become a Believer, a minister and a winner of souls! Omit that first lesson and it may be you have turned aside a life.

Take another instance. A preacher once found himself obligated to preach in an obscure village. The storm was terrible, and, therefore, though he kept his appointment, he found only *one* person present in the place of meeting. He preached a sermon to that one hearer with as much earnestness as if the house had been crowded. Years later he found Churches all over the district, and he discovered that his audience of one had been converted on that day and had become the Evangelist of the whole region! Had he declined to preach to one, what blessings might have been withheld! Brethren, never neglect the loosing of the sandal strap for Christ since you do not know what may hang upon it.

Human destiny often turns upon a hinge so small as to be invisible. Never say within yourself, "This is trivial"—nothing is trivial for the Lord! Never say, "But this surely might be omitted without much loss." How do you know? If it is your duty, He who allotted you your task knew what He did. Do not you, in any measure, neglect any portion of His orders, for in all His commands there is consummate wisdom—and on your part it will be wisdom to obey them, even to the jots and tittles. Little things for Christ, again, are often the best tests of the truth of our religion. Obedience in little things has much to do with the character of a servant. You engage a servant in your own house and you know very well whether

she is a good or bad servant if the main duties of the day are pretty sure to be attended to. The meals will be cooked, the beds will be prepared, the house will be swept, the door will be answered—but the difference between a servant who makes the house happy and another who is its plague lies in a number of small matters, which, perhaps, you could not put down on paper—but which make up a very great deal of domestic comfort or discomfort, and so determine the value of a servant.

So I believe it is in Christian life. I do not suppose that the most of us here would ever omit the weightier matters of the Law. As Christian men we endeavor to maintain integrity and uprightness in our actions, and we try to order our households in the fear of God in great matters. But it is in the looking to the Lord upon *minor* details that the spirit of obedience is most displayed. It is seen in our keeping our eyes up to the Lord, as the eyes of the handmaidens are to their mistresses for daily orders about this step and that transaction. The really obedient spirit wishes to know the Lord's will about everything, and if there is any point which to the world seems trifling, for that very reason the obedient spirit says, "I will attend to it to prove to my Lord that even in the minutiae I desire to submit my soul to His good pleasure."

In small things lie the crucibles and the touchstones. Any hypocrite will come to Lord's-Day worship, but it is not every hypocrite that will attend Prayer Meetings, or read the Bible in secret, or speak privately of the things of God to the saints. These are less things, so they judge, and therefore they neglect them and so condemn themselves! Where there is deep religion, prayer is loved—where religion is shallow only public acts of worship are cared for. You shall find the same true in other things. A man who is no Christian will very likely not tell you a downright lie by saying that black is white, but he will not hesitate to declare that whitey-brown is white—he will go that length.

But the Christian will not go halfway to falsehood, no, he scorns to go an inch on that road! He will no more cheat you out of two pence farthing, than he would out of 2,000 pounds. He will not rob you of an inch any more than of an yard! It is in the little that the genuineness of the Christian is made to appear. The Goldsmiths' hallmark is a small affair, but you know true silver by it. There is a vast deal of difference between the man who gladly bears Christ's sandals and another who will not stoop to anything which he thinks beneath him. Even a Pharisee will ask Christ to his house to sit at meat with him—he is willing to entertain a great religious leader at his table. But it is not everyone who will stoop down and loose His sandal straps, for that very Pharisee who made the feast neither brought Him water to wash His feet, nor gave Him the kiss of welcome. He proved the insincerity of his hospitality by forgetting the *little* things.

I will be bound to say Martha and Mary never forgot to loose His sandal straps and that Lazarus never failed to see that His feet were washed. Look then, I pray you, as Christians, to the service of Christ in the obscure things, in the things that are not recognized by men—in the matters which have no honor attached to them—for by this shall your love be tried. Mark, with regard to little works, that very often there is about

them a degree of personal fellowship with Christ which is not seen in greater work. For instance, in the one before us, to unloose the straps of His sandals brings me into contact with Himself, though it is only His feet I touch.

And I think if I might have the preference between going forth to cast out devils and to preach the Gospel and to heal the sick, or to stay with Him and always loose His sandal straps, I should prefer this last, because the first act Judas did—he went with the 12 and saw Satan, like lightning, fall from Heaven—but he perished because he failed in the acts that came into *contact* with Christ. In keeping Christ's purse he was a thief, and in giving Christ the kiss he was a traitor. He who does not fail in things relating *personally* to Christ is the sound man—he has the evidence of righteousness of heart. There was never a grander action done beneath the stars than when the woman broke her alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it upon Him! Though the poor did not get anything out of it. Though no sick man was the better for it—the act was done distinctly unto Him—and therefore there was a peculiar sweetness in it.

Oftentimes similar actions, because they do not encourage other people, for they do not know of them—but because they may not be of any very great value to our fellow men—are lightly esteemed. Yet seeing they are done for *Christ*, they have about them a peculiar charm as terminating upon His blessed Person. True, it is but the loosening of sandal straps, but then they are His sandals and that ennobles the deed! Dear fellow Christians, you know what I mean, though I cannot put it into very good language this morning.

I mean just this—that if there is some little thing I can do for Christ—though my minister will not know about it, though the deacons and elders will not know and *nobody* will know. And if I leave it undone nobody will suffer any calamity because of it, but, if I do it, it will please my Lord and I shall enjoy the sense of having done it for Him, therefore will I attend to it, for it is no slight work if it is for Him. Mark, also, once more, concerning those gracious actions which are but little esteemed by the most of mankind, that we know God accepts our worship in little things! He allowed His people to bring their bullocks, others of them to bring their rams, and offer them to Him. And these were persons of sufficient wealth to be able to afford a tribute from their herds and flocks.

But He also permitted the poor to offer a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and I have never found in God's Word that He cared less for the turtledove offering than He did for the sacrifice of the bullock. I do know, too, that our ever blessed Lord, Himself, when He was here, loved the praise of little children. They brought neither gold nor silver like the wise men from the East, but they cried, "Hosanna," and the Lord was not angry with their Hosannas—He accepted their boyish praise. And we remember that a widow woman cast into the treasury two mites, which only made a farthing, but, because it was all her living, He did not reject the gift, but rather recorded it to her honor.

We are now quite familiar with the incident, but for all that it is very wonderful. Two mites that make a farthing given to the infinite God! A farthing accepted by the King of kings! A farthing acknowledged by Him

who made the heavens and the earth, who says, "If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are Mine." Two mites received with pleasure by the Lord of All! It was scarcely so much as a drop thrown into the sea, and yet He thought much of it! Measure not little actions by human scales and measures, but estimate them as God does—for the Lord has respect unto the hearts of His people. He regards not so much their deeds in themselves as the *motives* by which they are actuated. Therefore, value the loosing of the Savior's sandal straps, and despise not the day of small things.

II. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I wish to conduct you, in the second place, to the consideration of OUR OWN UNWORTHINESS, which is sure to be felt by us whenever we come practically into contact with any real Christian service. I believe, as a general rule, that a man who does nothing at all thinks himself a fine fellow. You shall usually find that the sharpest critics are those who never write, and the best judges of battles are those who keep at a prudent distance from the guns.

Christians of the kid-gloved order, who never make an attempt to save souls, are marvelously quick to tell us when we are too rough or too light in our speech—and they readily detect us if our modes of action are irregular or too enthusiastic. They have a very keen sense for anything like fanaticism or disorder. For my part, I feel pretty safe when I have the censures of these gentlemen—we are not far wrong when *they* condemn us! Let a man begin earnestly to work for the Lord Jesus and he will soon find out that he is unworthy of the meanest place in the employ of One so glorious! Let us turn over that fact a minute.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, when we remember what we used to be I am sure we must feel unworthy to do the very least thing for Christ. You know how Paul describes the wickedness of certain offenders, and he adds, "But such *were* some of you"? What hardness of heart some of us exhibited towards God! What rebellion! What obstinacy! What quenching of His Spirit! What love of sin! Why, if I might stoop down to loose the sandal strap of that foot which was *crucified* for me, I must bedew the nail print with my tears, and say, "My Savior, can it be that I am allowed to touch Your feet?" Surely, the prodigal, if he ever unloosed his father's shoes, could say to himself, "Why, these hands fed swine! These hands were often polluted by harlots! I lived in uncleanness, and was first a reveler, and then a swineherd, and it is amazing love which permits me, now, to serve so good a father." Angels in Heaven might envy the man who is permitted to do the least thing for Christ, and yet *they* never sinned! Oh, what a favor that we who are defiled with sin should be called to serve the sinless Savior!

But, then, another reflection comes at the back of it—we recollect what we *are* as well as what we were—I say what we *are*, for though washed in Jesus' blood and endowed with a new heart and a right spirit, yet we start aside like a deceitful bow, for corruption dwells in us! It is sometimes hard work to maintain even a little faith. We are so double-minded, so unstable, so hot, so cold, so earnest, and then so negligent. We are so everything except what we ought to be, that we may well wonder that Christ allows us to do the least thing for Him! If he were to shut us in

prison and keep us there, so long as He did not actually execute us He would be dealing with us according to *mercy* and not giving us our full deserts! Yet He calls us out of prison and puts us in His service, and therefore we feel that we are unworthy to perform the least action in His House.

Besides, Beloved, even small services, we feel, require a better state of heart than we often have. I am sure the service of preaching the Gospel here often brings to my sight my unworthiness far more than I should otherwise see it. If it is a gracious thing to see one's sinfulness, I may thank God I preach the Gospel, for it makes me see it. Sometimes we come to preach about Jesus Christ and glorify Him and yet our heart is not warm towards Him and we do not value Him aright. While the text we are preaching from seats Him on a high throne, our *heart* is not setting Him there. And oh, then we think we could tear our heart out of our very body if we could get rid of the black drops of its depravity which prevent our feeling in unison with the glorious Truth before us!

Another time, perhaps, we have to invite sinners and seek to bring them to Christ, and that needs so much sympathy that if Christ were preaching our sermon He would bedew it with His tears—but we deliver it with dry eyes, almost without emotion—and then we flog our hard heart that it will not stir and cannot be made to feel. It is just the same in other duties. Have you not felt, “I have to go and teach my class this afternoon, but I am not fit, I have been worried all the week with cares and my mind is not up to the mark now. I hope I love my Lord, but I hardly know whether I do or not. I ought to be earnest about these boys and girls—but it is very likely I shall not be earnest—I shall sit down and go through my teaching as a parrot would go through it, without life, without love”? Yes, then you painfully feel that you are not worthy to loose the straps of your Lord's sandals.

Possibly you are going, this afternoon to visit a dying man and you will try and talk to him about the way to Heaven. He is unconverted. Now, you need a tongue of fire to speak with, and instead of that you have a tongue of ice! You feel, “O God, how can it be that I shall sit by that bedside and think of that poor man who will be in the flames of Hell, perhaps, within a week, unless he receives Christ, and yet I shall treat his tremendously perilous condition as though it were a matter of the very slightest consequence?” Yes, yes, yes we have had hundreds of times to feel that we are in and of ourselves not fit for anything! If the Lord wanted dishwashers in His kitchen, He could get better than we are! And if He needed someone to shovel out the refuse of His house, He could find better men than we are for that. To such a Master we are unworthy to be servants.

The same feeling arises in another way. Have we not to confess, Brothers and Sisters, in looking upon what we have done for Christ, that we have far too much eye to *self* in our conduct? We pick and choose our work, and the picking and choosing is guided by the instinct of self-respect. If we are asked to do that which is pleasant to ourselves we do it. If we are requested to attend a meeting where we shall be received with acclamation. If we are asked to perform a service which will lift us up in

the social scale, or that will commend us to our fellow Christians, we jump at it like a fish at a fly! But, suppose the work would bring us shame? Suppose it would reveal to the public our inefficiency rather than our ability? We excuse ourselves!

The spirit which Moses felt a little of when the Lord called him, is upon many of us. "If I were to speak for Christ," says one, "I should stutter and stammer." As if God did not make stuttering mouths as well as intent mouths, and as if, when He chose a Moses, He did not know what He was doing! Moses must go and stammer for God and glorify God by stammering! But Moses does not like that—and many in similar cases have not had Grace enough to go to the work at all. Why, if I cannot honor the Lord with 10 talents, shall I refuse to serve Him with one? If I cannot fly like a strong-winged angel through the midst of Heaven and sound the shrill-mouthed trumpet so as to wake the dead, shall I refuse to be a little bee and gather honey at God's bidding? Because I cannot be a leviathan, shall I refuse to be an ant? What folly and what rebellion if we are so perverse!

And, if you have performed any holy work, have you not noticed that pride is ready to rise? God can hardly let us succeed in any work but what we become big-headed. "Oh, how well we have done it!" We do not need anybody to say, "Now, that was very cleverly, and nicely, and carefully, and earnestly done," for *we* say all that to ourselves, and we add, "yes, you were zealous about that work, and you have been doing what a great many would not have done, and you have not boasted of it either! You do not call in any neighbor to see it. You have been doing it simply out of love to God, and, therefore, you are an uncommonly humble fellow and none can say you are vain."

Alas, what flattery, but truly, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." We are not worthy to loose the straps of Jesus' sandals because, if we do, we begin to say to ourselves, "What great folks we are. We have been allowed to loose the Lord's sandal straps." If we do not tell somebody else about it with many an exultation, we at least tell ourselves about it and feel that we are something, after all, and ought to be held in no small repute! My Brothers and Sisters, we ought to feel that we are not worthy to do the lowest thing we can do for Christ because, when we have gone to the lowest, Jesus always goes lower down than we have gone!

Is it a little thing to bear His shoes? What, then, was His condescension when He washed His disciples' feet? To put up with a cross-tempered brother, to be gentle with him, and feel, "I will give way to him in everything because I am a Christian"—that is going very low—but then our Lord has borne far more from us! He was patient with His people's infirmities and forgave even to 70 times seven. And suppose we are willing to take the lowest place in the Church, yet Jesus took a *lower* place than we can, for He took the place of the *curse*—He was made sin for us, even He that knew no sin—that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

I have sometimes felt willing to go to the gates of Hell to save a soul, but the Redeemer went further, for He suffered the wrath of God for souls.

If there should be any Christian here who is so humble that he has no lofty thoughts about himself, but prefers to be least among his brethren and so proves his graciousness, yet, my dear Brother, you are not so lowly as Christ made Himself, for He “made Himself of no reputation,” and you have some reputation left. And He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and He became obedient to death—you have not come to that yet—even the death of the Cross. The felon’s death upon the gallows—you will never be brought to that.

Oh, the condescending of the Redeemer’s amazing love! Let us, from this hour on, contend how low we can go side by side with Him. But remember when we have gone to the lowest, He descends lower still—so that we can truly feel that the very lowest place is too high for us because He has gone lower. Beloved Friends, to put these things in a practical shape it may seem to be a very small duty for any of you to do—to speak to one person alone about his soul. If you were asked to preach to a hundred you would try it. I ask you solemnly, in God’s name, not to let the sun go down today till you have spoken to one man or woman, alone, about his or her soul. Will you do that? Is it too little for you? Then I must be honest with you and say you are not worthy to do it.

Speak today to some little child about his soul. Do not say, “Oh, we cannot talk to children, we cannot stoop to them.” Let no such feeling occupy any of our minds, for if this work is as the loosing of the Master’s sandal straps, let us do it. Holy Brainerd, when he was dying and could no longer preach to the Indians, had a little Indian boy at his bedside, and taught him his letters. And he remarked to one who came in, “I asked God that I might not live any longer than I could be of use, and so, as I cannot preach any more, I am teaching this poor little child to read the Bible.” Let us never think that we are stooping when we teach children! But if it is stooping let us stoop!

There are some of you, perhaps, who have the opportunity to do good to fallen women. Do you shrink from such work? Many do. They feel as if they could do *anything* rather than speak to such. Is it the loosening of the straps of your Master’s sandals? It is, then, an honorable business! Try it, Brother. It is not beneath you if you do it for Jesus. It is even *above* the best of you—you are not worthy to do it. Possibly there is near your house a district of very poor people. You do not like going in among them. They are dirty and perhaps infected with disease. Well, it is a pity that poor people should so often be dirty, but *pride* is dirty, too.

Do you say, “I cannot go there”? Why not? Are you such a mighty fine gentleman that you are afraid of soiling your hands? You will not unloose your Master’s sandal strap, then, is that it? The Lord lived among the poor, and was poorer even than they, for He had nowhere to lay His head. Oh, shame on you, you wicked and proud servant of a condescending, loving Lord! Go about your business and unloose the straps of His sandals! Instead of imagining that you would be lowered by such work for Jesus, I tell you it would honor you! Indeed, you are not fit for it—the honor is too great for *you*—and it will fall to the lot of better men. It comes to this, Beloved—*anything* that can be done for Christ is too good for us to do!

Somebody wanted to keep the door! Somebody wanted to rout out the back lanes! Somebody wanted to teach ragged roughs! Somebody wanted to ask people to come to the place of worship and to lend them their seats, and stand in the aisle while they sit. Well, be it what it may, I had rather be a door keeper in the House of the Lord, or the doormat, even, than I would be accounted among the noblest in the tents of wickedness. Anything for Jesus, the lower the better! Anything for Jesus, the humbler the better! Anything for Jesus! The more going down into the deeps! The more thrusting the arms up to the elbows in the mud to find precious jewels! The more of that the better!

This is the true spirit of the Christian religion. Not the soaring up there to sit among the choristers and sing in grand style! Not the putting on of apparel and preaching in lawn sleeves! Not the going through gaudy and imposing ceremonies—all that is of Babylon—but to strip yourself to the shirt sleeves to fight the battle for Christ! To go out among men as a humble worker, resolved by any means to save some—this is what your Lord would have you to do, for this is the unloosing the straps of His sandals.

III. And, now, our last remark shall be that ALL THIS OUGHT TO STIMULATE US AND NOT DISCOURAGE US. Though we are not worthy to do it, that is the reason why we should avail ourselves of the condescending Grace which honors us with such employ. Do not say, “I am not worthy to loose the straps of His sandals, and therefore, I shall give up preaching.” Oh no! But preach away with all the greater vigor! John did so, and to his preaching he added warning. Warn people as well as preach to them! Tell them of the judgment to come and separate between the precious and the vile.

We should perform our work in all ways, not omitting the more painful part of it, but going through with whatever God has appointed to us. John was called to testify of Christ. He felt unworthy to do it, but he did not shirk the work. It was his life-long business to cry, “Behold, behold, behold the Lamb of God!” and he did it earnestly. He never paused in that cry. He was busy in baptizing, too. It was the initiatory rite of the new dispensation, and there he stood continually immersing those who believed! Never a more indefatigable worker than John the Baptist—he threw his whole soul into it because he felt he was not worthy to do the work!

Brothers and Sisters, your sense of unworthiness will, if you are idle, sadly hamper you! But if the love of God is in your soul, you will feel, “Since I do so badly when I do my best, I will always do my utmost. Since it comes to so little when the most is done, I will at least do the most.” Could I give all my substance to Him, and give my life, and then give my body to be burned it would be a small return for love so amazing, so Divine, as that which I have tasted! Therefore, if I cannot do all that, at any rate I will give the Lord Jesus all I can. I will love Him all I can. I will pray to Him all I can. I will talk about Him all I can, and I will spread His Gospel all I can. And no little thing will I count beneath me if His cause requires it.

Brethren, John lived hard, for his meat was locusts and wild honey. His dress was not the soft raiment of men who live in palaces. He wrapped about him the rough camel's skin, and as he lived hard he died hard, too—his boldness brought him into a dungeon. His courageous fidelity earned him a martyr's death. Here was a man who lived in self-denial and died witnessing for the Truth of God and righteousness—and all this because he had a high esteem of his Master. May our esteem of Christ so grow and increase that we may be willing to put up with anything in life for Christ, and even to lay down our lives for His name's sake!

Certain Moravian missionaries, in the old times of slavery, went to one of the West Indian Islands to preach and they found they could not be permitted to teach there unless they, themselves, became slaves. And they did so—they sold themselves into bondage, never to return—that they might save slaves' souls. We have heard of another pair of holy men who actually submitted to be confined in a leper house that they might save the souls of lepers, knowing as they did that they would never be permitted to come out again. They went there to take the leprosy and to die, if by so doing they might save souls.

I have read of one, Thome de Jesu, who went to Barbary among the Christian captives, and there lived and died in banishment and bondage that he might cheer his Brothers and Sisters and preach Jesus to them. Brethren, we have never reached to such devotion! We fall far short of what Jesus deserves. We give Him little—we give Him what we are ashamed *not* to give Him. Often we give Him our zeal for a day or two and then grow cool. We wake up all of a sudden and then sleep all the more soundly. We seem, today, as if we would set the world on fire, and tomorrow we scarcely keep our own lamp trimmed. We vow at one time that we will push the Church before us and drag the world after us, but by-and-by we, ourselves, are like Pharaoh's chariots with the wheels taken off—and drag along right heavily.

Oh, for a spark of the love of Christ in the soul! Oh, for a living flame from off Calvary's altar to set our whole nature blazing with Divine enthusiasm for the Christ who gave Himself for us that we might live! From this hour on take upon yourselves in the solemn intent of your soul this deep resolve—"I will loose the sandal straps. I will seek out the little things, the mean things, the humble things. And I will do them as unto the Lord and not unto men—and may He accept me even as He has saved me through His precious blood." Amen.

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THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST NO. 3178

A SERMON
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“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.”
Luke 3:21, 22.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”
Luke 6:12, 13.

“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.”
Luke 9:28, 29.

“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.”
Matthew 14:23-25.

“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me.”
John 11:41, 42.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.”
Luke 22:31, 32.

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.”
Luke 23:46.

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preach-

er, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spoke like this Man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to *preach*, but we are told that, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior's life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the *preparatory prayers of Christ*—the prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all times—and yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual service—we shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22—"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying," (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faith—about to take up the soldier's life under the great Captain of our salvation—about to start out as pilgrims to Zion's city—I say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is

about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, “the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.” There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore *audible testimony to Christ*. And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christ’s prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Father—and if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your life—you must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, “Behold, he prays,” before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.”

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, “in a bodily shape like a dove,” to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! “Draw near

to God, and He will draw near to you,” not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayer—more power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Savior’s preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication *on our part in similar circumstances*. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayer—and so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirit’s blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13—“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14—SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, “I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them.” He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of God—but being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutes—but His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest

in heart and holy in life—and that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap it—as long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Father's ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Father's authority and the Spirit's power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the session—or an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one another—but when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with God's blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Savior's example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination—

***“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”***

When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satan's long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 dis-

ciples did when they returned to Him with joy, “Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!”

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29—“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” You see that it was *as He prayed that He was transfigured*.

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayer—only there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabor’s top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grass—but when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pastures—and get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Life—but that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORD’S PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25—“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.” He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and

then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of God's blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, "He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a man's hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42—"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me." He did not cry, "Lazarus, come forth," so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until *first* He had prayed, "My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead," and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETER'S FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34—

PETER'S RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34—PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter *before he was tempted*. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mind—and He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may *not* fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

“But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purse-proud.” Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not be—and do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

“Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him.” Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel—we do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgments—and let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him right—go and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts' hearts—and that pens need sharpening every now and then—but even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than

before! Do so, dear Friends—do not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORD'S PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." [See Sermons #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His people's Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, "He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem" and, in due time, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of John's Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayer—an example well worthy of His people's imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physically—you will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourself—body, soul and spirit—into His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumption—pray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordan's swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Cross—and pray even as He did—"Not my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconverted—who have imagined that prayer is the way to Heaven—yet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that *a saved man does is to pray*—and the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write—

***“Prayer is the contrite sinner’s voice,
Returning from his ways
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, ‘Behold, he prays!’
Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air!
His watchword at the gates of death
He enters Heaven with prayer!”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:1-14.**

Verse 1. *And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43—WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] An old writer says that many of Christ’s parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by it—“that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” And this is the parable.

2. *Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man.* It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear God—where they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this land—God grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. *And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.* She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. *And he would not for a while.* He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.

4, 5. *But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.* She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kind—but the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon him—for he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God,

nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted it—and though he was but little troubled about it—he said, “that I may not be worried to death by this woman’s continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary.”

6, 7. *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?* [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6—PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He is no unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose His people from eternity! “Shall not God avenge His own elect?” Yes, that He will—only let them persevere in prayer and “cry day and night unto Him.”

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* [See Sermon #1963, Volume 33—THE SEARCH FOR FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find it—although if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. *And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* It seems as if these two things went together—as our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes down—the scales seem to work that way.

10. *Two men went up into the Temple to pray.* [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41—THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in *these days*—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. *The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.* It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocrite—and if what he said was true—there was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer—but what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Temple—“or even as this publican.” What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in God’s sight!

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off*—Just on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* [See Sermon #1949, Volume 33—A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That was *all* prayer—it was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, “a sinner.” He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publican’s prayer, it is, “God be propitious to me,” that is, “be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice.” And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayer—while the Pharisee’s boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. *I tell you, this man*—This publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee did—this man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, “this man”—

14. *Went down to his house justified rather than the other.* He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justification—he had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46—TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

14. *For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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

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

SATAN DEPARTING, ANGELS MINISTERING NO. 2326

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 15, 1889.**

*“And when the devil had ended all the temptation,
he departed from Him for a season.”*

Luke 4:13.

*“Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.”
Matthew 4:11.*

BELOVED Friends, we have very much to learn from our Lord's temptation. He was tempted in all points, like as we are. If you will study the temptation of Christ, you will not be ignorant of Satan's devices. If you see how He worsted the enemy, you will learn what weapons to use against your great adversary. If you see how our Lord conquers throughout the whole battle, you will learn that, as you keep close to Him, you will be more than conqueror through Him that loved you. From our Lord's temptation we learn, especially, to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” Let us never mistake the meaning of that petition! We are to pray that we may not be tempted, for we are poor flesh and blood and very frail. It is for us to cry to God, “Lead us not into temptation.” But we also learn a great deal from the close of our Lord's great threefold trial. We find Him, afterwards, peaceful—ministered unto by angels—and rejoicing. That should teach us to pray, “But, if we must be tempted, deliver us from the evil,” or, as some render it, and very correctly, too, “Deliver us from the Evil One.” First, we pray that we may not be tempted at all and then, as a supplement to that prayer, yielding the whole matter to Divine Wisdom, “If it is necessary for our manhood, for our growth in Grace, for the verification of our Graces and for God's Glory, that we should be tempted, Lord, deliver us from the evil, and especially deliver us from the impersonation of evil, the Evil One!”

With that as an introduction, for a short time, tonight, let me call upon you to notice in our text, first, *the devil leaving the tempted One*—“Then the devil left Him.” Secondly, we shall keep to Matthew's Gospel and notice *the angels ministering to the tempted One* after the fallen angel had left Him. And then, thirdly, *the limitation of the rest which we may expect*—the limitation of the time in which Satan will be gone—for Luke puts it, “When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him *for a season*,” or, as some put it, “until a fit opportunity,” when he would, again, return, and our great Lord and Master would once more be tried by his wicked wiles.

I. First, we have as the subject for our happy consideration, THE DEVIL LEAVING THE TEMPTED ONE.

When did the devil leave our Lord? *When he had finished the temptation.* It must have been a great relief to our Divine Master when Satan left Him. The very air must have been more pure and fit to be breathed. His soul must have felt a great relief when the evil spirit had gone away—but he went not, we are told, until he had finished all the temptation. So Luke puts it—“When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season.” Satan will not go till he has shot the last arrow from his quiver. Such is his malice that as long as he can tempt, he will tempt. His will desires our total destruction, but his power is not equal to his will. God does not give him power such as he would like to possess—there is always a limit set to his assaults. When Satan has tempted you throughout and ended all his temptation, then he will leave you. You have not yet undergone all forms of temptation, so you may not expect absolutely and altogether to be left by the arch-enemy.

It may be a long time, when you are suffering from his attacks, before he will hold his hand, for he will try all that he possibly can to lead you into evil and to destroy the Grace that is in you. Still, he does come to an end with his temptations sooner than he desires, for, as God has said to the mighty sea, “Until this time shall you come, but no further; and here shall your proud waves be stayed”—and so says He to the devil. When He permitted Satan to try the Graces of Job and to prove his sincerity, He let him go just so far, but no farther. And when he asked for a further stretch of power, still there was a limit. There is *always* a limit to Satan’s power and when he reaches that point, he will be pulled up short—he can do no more. You are never so in the hands of Satan as to be out of the hands of God. You are never so tempted, if you are a Believer, that there is not a way of escape for you! God permits you to be tried for many reasons which, perhaps, you could not altogether understand, but which His infinite wisdom understands for you. But He will not suffer the rod of the wicked to rest upon the lot of the righteous. It may fall there, but it shall not rest there. The Lord may let you be put into the fire, but the fire shall be heated no hotter than you are able to bear. “When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him.”

Satan did not depart from Christ, however, until *he had also failed in every temptation.* When the Lord had foiled him at every point—had met every temptation with a text of Holy Scripture and had proved His own determination to hold fast His integrity and not let it go—it was not till *then* that the enemy departed. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you can hold out, if you can stand against this and then, against, that. If you are protected against frowns and protected against flatteries. If you are protected against prosperity and against adversity. If you are protected against sly insinuations and open attacks—when you have won the day, as by God’s Grace you will do, even as your Master did—then the enemy will depart from you! “Well,” says one, “I wish that he would depart from me, for I have been sorely troubled by him,” to which I say most heartily, “Amen.”

Let us think, for a minute or two, about when Satan will depart from the child of God, as he did from the great Son of God.

I have no doubt that he will do that when he finds that it is necessary for him to be somewhere else. Satan is not everywhere and cannot be, for he is not Divine. He is not Omnipresent, but, as one has said, although he is not everywhere present, it would be hard to say where he is *not*, for he moves so swiftly, he is such an agile spirit, that he seems to be here and there and everywhere. And where he is not in person, he is represented by that vast host—the legions of fallen spirits who are under his control. And even where they are not, he carries out his evil devices so that he leaves the leaven to work, the evil seeds to grow when he, himself, has gone elsewhere. Yet it is, probably, not many times in one's life that any man is actually called into conflict with Satan, himself, personally. There are too many of us, now, for him to give all his time and strength to one—he has to be somewhere else. Oh, I long to be the means of multiplying the number of God's people by the preaching of the Word of God, that the Gospel of the Grace of God may fly abroad and bring in myriads—that the devil may have more to do and, therefore, not be able to give so much of his furious attention, as he does in one direction and another, to the children of God!

He also leaves God's people very quickly when he sees that they are sustained by superior Grace. He hopes to catch them when Grace is at a low ebb. If he can come upon them when faith is very weak, when hope's eyes are dim, when love has grown cold—then he thinks that he will make an easy capture. But when we are filled with the Spirit as the Master was, (God grant that we may be), he looks us up and down and he presently leaves. Like an old pirate who hangs about on the lookout for merchant vessels, but if he meets with ships that have plenty of guns on board and hardy hands to give him a warm reception, he goes after some other craft not quite so well able to resist his assaults. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, be not *merely* Christians, *only barely* Christians, with just enough Grace to let you see your imperfections, but pray to God to give you mighty Grace, that you may “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” so that, after the devil has tested you and found that the Lord is with you, that God dwells in you, then you may expect that, as it was with your Master, so it will be with you—Satan will leave you.

Sometimes I think, however, that Satan personally leaves us because he knows that *not* to be tempted is, to some men, a greater danger than to *be* tempted! “Oh,” you say, “how can that be?” Brothers, Sisters, do you know nothing of carnal security, of being left, as you think, to grow in Grace and to be very calm, very happy and, as you hope, very useful and to find beneath you a sea of glass with not a ripple on the wave? “Yes,” you say, “I do know that experience and I have been thankful for it.” Have you never found creeping over you, at the same time, the idea that you are somebody, that you are getting wonderfully experienced, that you are an eminent child of God, rich and increased in goods? And have you not said, like David, “I shall never be moved”?

Possibly you have looked askance on some of your friends who have been trembling and timid and crying to God, from day to day, to keep them. You have been Sir Mighty—you have been Lord Great-One and everybody must bow down before you! Ah, yes, you have now fallen into a worse condition than even those are in who are tempted of Satan! A calm in the tropics is more to be dreaded than a tempest! In such a calm everything gets to be still and stagnant, the ship scarcely moves. It is like a painted ship on a painted sea and it gets to be in something like the state described by Coleridge's Ancient Mariner—

***“The very deep did rot—
Alas, that ever this should be!
And slimy things with legs did crawl
Over the slimy sea.”***

“Oh,” you say, “that is horrible!” Yes, and that is the tendency of a soul that is at peace with itself and is not emptied from vessel to vessel. I fear that is often the case with those who believe themselves to be supernaturally holy. A curious fact can be proven by abundant evidence, namely, that the boast of human perfection is closely followed by obscenity and licentiousness! The most unclean sects that have ever defaced the page of history have been founded by those who had the notion that they were beyond temptation, that they had ceased to sin and could never transgress again. “Ah,” says Satan, “this notion does my work a great deal better than tempting a man! When I tempt him, then he stands up to resist me. He has his eyes open, he grasps his sword and puts on his helmet. He cries to God, “Lord, help me!” And he watches night and day—and the more tempted he is—the more he looks to God for strength. But if I leave him quite alone and he goes to sleep, well, then, he is not in the battle! And if he begins to feel quite secure, then I can steal in upon him unawares and make a speedy end of him.” This is one reason why Satan leaves some men untempted. A roaring devil is better than a sleeping devil—and there is no temptation much worse than that of never being tempted at all.

Again, I doubt not that Satan leaves us—no, I know that he does—when the Lord says to him what He said in the wilderness, “Get you hence, Satan.” And He does say that when He sees one of His poor children dragged about, tortured, wounded, bleeding. He says, “Get you hence, Satan. I permit you to fetch in My stray sheep; but not to worry them to death. Get you hence, Satan.” The old Hell-dog knows his Master and he flies at once.

This voice of God will come when the Lord sees that we cast ourselves wholly upon Him. In my Brother's prayer, he suggested to us, if you remember, that in casting our burden upon the Lord, we might not be able to get rid of it. The way was to cast *ourselves and our burden*, both, upon the Lord. The best way of all is to get rid of the burden entirely, to cast yourself, but *without* your burden, upon the Lord! Let me remind you of a story that I once told you, of a gentleman who, riding along in his coach, saw a packman carrying a heavy pack, and asked him if he would like a ride. “Yes, and thank you, Sir.” But he kept his pack on his back while riding. “Oh,” said the friend, “why do you not take your pack off and put it

down in front?" "Why, Sir," he said, "it is so kind of you to give me a ride that I do not like to impose upon your good nature, and I thought that I would carry the pack myself!" "Well," said the other, "but, you see, it makes no difference to me whether you carry it or do not carry it—I have to carry you *and* your pack—so you had better unstrap it and put it down in front."

So, Friend, when you cast your burden upon God, unstrap it! Why should you bear it yourself when God is prepared to bear it? Beloved, there are times when we forget that, but when we can come and absolutely yield ourselves right up, saying, "Lord, here I am, tempted, poor and weak. But I come and rest in You. I know not what to ask at Your hands, but Your servant has said, 'Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.' I lie at your feet, my Lord. Here I am, here would I be. Do with me as seems good in Your sight—only deal in tender mercy with Your servant." Then will the Lord rebuke the enemy! The waves of the sea shall be still and there shall be a great calm.

So much for the devil leaving the tempted One. He does so, he *must do* so, when God commands it.

II. But now, secondly, let us think Of THE ANGELS MINISTERING TO THE TEMPTED ONE.

The angels came and ministered to our Lord after Satan was gone. Notice that they did not come while our Lord was in the battle. Why not? Why, because it was necessary that He should tread the winepress alone, and because it was more glorious for Him that of the people there should be none with Him! Had there been any angels there to help Him in the duel with the adversary, they might have shared the honor of the victory, but they must stay away till the fight is over. But when the foe is gone, *then* the angels come. It has been noted that it does not say that the angels came very often and ministered to Jesus, as much as to make us think that they were always near, that they hovered within earshot, watching, and ready to interpose if they might. They were a bodyguard round about our Lord, even as they are, today, about His people, for, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" But the moment that the fight was over, then the angels came and ministered to Christ. Why was that?

I suppose, first, because, as Man, *He was especially exhausted*. He was hungry, we are told, and that proves exhaustion. But, besides that, the strain of *forty days'* temptation must have been immense! Men can bear up under a strain, but when it is eased, then they fall. Elijah can do marvels. He can strike the priests of Baal and behave like a hero, but, after it is all over, Elijah fails! As Man, our Lord was subject to the sinless infirmities of our flesh, and it was necessary that angels should come and minister to Him, even as the angel did in the Garden, after the agony and bloody sweat.

But it was also because, being Man, *He was to partake of the ministry which God had allotted to man*. He has appointed angels to watch over His own people and, inasmuch as Jesus is our Brother, as the children were

partakers of the ministry of angels, He, Himself, also took part with the same that He might show how He took our weakness upon Him and, therefore, needed and received that succor which the Father has promised to all His children.

Was it not, again, because *He was so beloved of the angels and they were so loyal to Him?* They must have been amazed when they saw Him born on earth and living here in poverty! And when they saw Him tempted of the enemy, they must have loathed the adversary. How could Satan be permitted to come so near their pure and holy Master? I think that Milton could have pictured this scene and that he would have drawn every seraph there as longing to let his sword of flame find a scabbard in the heart of the foul fiend that dared to come so near to the Prince of purity! But they must not interfere. Yet, as soon as they might, then they joyfully came and ministered to Him.

And does it not also go to show that *His was a Nature very sensitive to the angelic touch?* You and I are coarse, hard-hearted—

***“Myriads of spirits throng the air—
They are about us now.”***

Women are to cover their heads in worship “because of the angels.” There are many acts of decorum in holy worship that are to be kept up “because of the angels.” They are innumerable. They are sent to minister to us, but we are not aware of them—often we do not perceive them. But Jesus was all tenderness and sensitiveness—and He knew that the angels were there, so it was easy for them to come and minister to Him. What they did in ministering to Him, we cannot tell. I should certainly think that they sustained His bodily Nature, for He was hungry and they readily brought food to Him. But they also sustained His mental and His spiritual Nature with words of comfort. The sight of them reminded Him of His Father’s house, reminded Him of the Glory which He had laid aside. The sight of them proved that the Father did not forget Him. He had sent the household troops of Heaven to succor and support Him. The sight of them must have made Him anticipate the day of which the poet sings—

***“They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His Throne—
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
‘The glorious work is done!’”***

Well now, Brothers and Sisters, if we are tempted, shall we have any angels to succor us? Well, we shall certainly have the *equivalent* of angels! Oftentimes, after a temptation, God sends His human messengers. Many of you can tell how, when you have been hearing the Word after a bad time of temptation, the Gospel message has been wonderfully sweet to you. You have sat in your pew and said, “God sent that sermon on purpose for me.” Or, if you have not had a sermon, you have read the Bible and the Words have seemed to burn and glow on the page! And you have warmed your soul by their heat. Has it not been so with you often? Are not all the holy things more sweet after trial than they were before? Have you not found them so? I bear my willing witness that never does Christ seem so precious, never do the promises seem so rich and rare, never does Evangelical Doctrine cling so closely to my heart, and my heart to it,

as after a time of painful trial when I have been laid aside from holy service and racked with anguish! Oh, then the angels come and minister to us, in the form of men who preach the Word, or in the form of the living page of God's written Word!

I have noticed, too, that God sometimes cheers His tempted people with clear sunshine after rain, by some very gracious Providences. Something happens that they could not have looked for—so pleasant, so altogether helpful—that they have had to burst into singing, though just before they had been sighing! The cage door was set wide open and God's bird has had such a flight and sung so sweetly, as it mounted up to Heaven, that the soul seemed transformed into a holy lark in its ascending music! Have you not found the Lord very gracious to you after some severe trial, or some strong temptation? I believe that this will be the testimony of many experienced Christians.

And, as these choice Providences come, so, I do not doubt, there also come actual angels ministering to us, though we are unaware of their presence. They can suggest holy thoughts, I doubt not, to bring us comfort. But, above the angels, far superior to angelic help, is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter! How sweetly can He close up every wound and make it even sing as it heals! He makes the bones that God had broken to rejoice and fills us with a deeper experience of delight than we have ever known before!

Well now, I suppose that some of you here, tonight, are in this condition—that Satan has left you and angels are ministering to you. If so, you are very happy. Bless your God for it! There is a great calm. Thank God for the calm after the storm. I hope, my Brothers and Sisters, that you are the stronger for what you have endured, and that the conflict has matured you, and prepared you for something better. Now, what did our Lord do after the devil had left Him and the angels had come to minister to Him? Did He go home and stay there and begin to sing of His delightful experiences? No, we find Him preaching directly afterwards, full of the Spirit of God. He went everywhere, proclaiming the Kingdom of God. He was found in the synagogue, or on the hillside. Just in proportion as the Spirit of God had enabled Him to overcome the enemy, we find Him going forth to spend that strength in the service of His Lord!

O tempted one, have you a respite? Spend that respite for Him who gave it to you! Is it calm, now, after a storm? Go, now, and sow your fields with the good Seed! Have you wiped your eyes and are the salt tears gone? Go sing a Psalm, then—sing unto your Well-Beloved—and go down into His vineyard and take the foxes, and prune the vines, and dig about them—and do necessary work for Him who has done so much for you! Listen! You have been set free! There are many under bondage to Satan—not as you are, fighting against him—but his willing slaves. Oh, come, my Brothers and Sisters—your God has set you free—go after them! Go after the fallen woman and the drunken man. Go, seek and find the most debauched, the most depraved. Specially look after any of your own house who have played the prodigal—

“Oh, come, let us go and find them!”

***In the paths of death they roam—
At the close of the day 'twill be sweet to say,
'I have brought some lost one home!'"***

And it will be right to say it, if the Lord has dealt so well with you.

III. Now, I have to close by reminding you of the third point, which is a searching truth, namely, THE LIMITATION OF OUR REST. Satan left Christ “for a season,” or until a fit occasion.

Did the devil assail our Lord again? I am not sure that he personally did, but he did so in many ways by others. I notice that, before long, he tried to entangle Him in His speech. That is a very easy thing to do with us. Somebody, tonight, can take up something that I have said, twist it from its connection, and make it sound and seem totally different from what was meant by it. You know how the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees did this with our Lord—they tried to entangle Him in His speech. In all of that, Satan led them on. Satan also actively opposed Christ’s ministry and Christ opposed Satan—but Jesus won the day, for He saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven!

A more artful plan, still, was that by which the devil’s servants, the demons that were cast out of possessed persons, called Jesus the Son of God. He rebuked them because He did not want any testimony from them. No doubt the devil thought it a very cunning thing to praise the Savior—then the Savior’s friends would begin to be suspicious of Him if He was praised by the devil. This was a deep trick, but the Master made him hold his peace. You remember how He said on one occasion, “Hold your peace, and come out of him”? It was something like this, “Down dog! Come out!” Christ is never very polite with Satan—a few words and very strong ones are all that are necessary for this arch-prince of wickedness!

Satan tempted our Lord through Peter. That is a plan that he has often tried with us, setting a friend of ours to do his dirty work. Peter took his Lord and rebuked Him, when He spoke about being spit upon and put to death. And then the Lord said, “Get you behind Me, Satan!” He could see the devil using Peter’s tenderness to try to take Him off from His Self-sacrifice. Oh, how often has Satan tempted us that way, entangling us in our speech, opposing us in our work, praising us out of wicked motives to try to deceive us and then setting up some friend to try to take us off from holy self-denial!

There were also occasional heart-sinking in our Lord. Thus we read in John 12:27, “Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour?” He seems to have been very heavy in heart at that time. But the deepest soul-sinking was when, in the Garden, His soul was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” Satan had a hand in that sore trial, for the Lord had said, “The Prince of this world comes,” and He said to those who came to arrest Him, “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” It was a dreadful season. Our Lord’s ministry began and ended with a fierce onslaught from Satan. He left Him after the temptation, but only for a season.

Well now, dear Friends, if we have peace and quietness tonight, and are not tempted, do not let us become self-secure. The devil will come to us,

again, at a fit opportunity. And when will that be? There are a great many fit opportunities with you and with me. One is when we have nothing to do. You know Dr. Watts' lines—

**“Satan finds some mischief still,
For idle hands to do.”**

He will come and attack us when we are alone. I mean, when we are sad and lonely, and are sitting still, and moping by ourselves.

But Satan also finds a very fit occasion when we are in company, especially when it is very mixed company—a company of persons, perhaps, who are superior to ourselves in education and in station—but who do not fear God. We may easily be overawed and led astray by them. Satan will come then.

I have known him frequently come and find an occasion against the children of God *when we are sick and ill*, the old coward! He knows that we would not mind him when we are in good health, but sometimes when we are down in the dumps through sickness and pain—then it is that he begins to tempt us to despair.

So will he do with us when *we are very poor*. When a man has had a great loss in business, down comes Satan and insinuates, “Is this how God treats His children? God’s people are no better off than other people.”

Then, *if we are getting on in the world*, he turns it the other way, and he says, “Does Job fear God for nothing? He gets on by his religion.” You cannot please the devil and you need not want to please him! He can make a temptation for you out of *anything*!

I am going to say something that will surprise you. One time of great temptation is *when we are very spiritual*. As to myself, I have never been in such supreme danger as when I have led some holy meeting with sacred fervor and have felt carried away with delight in God. You know that it is easy to be on the Mount of Transfiguration and then to meet Satan at the foot, as our Lord did when He came down from that hill.

Another time of temptation is when *we have already done wrong*. “Now he begins to slip,” says Satan. “I saw him trip. Now I will have him down!” Oh, for speedy repentance and an earnest flight to Christ whenever there has been a grave fault, yes, and before the grave fault comes, that we may be preserved from falling!

And Satan finds a good occasion for tempting us when *we have not sinned*. After we have been tempted and we have won the day and stood fast, then he comes and says, “Now, that was well done on your part, you are a splendid saint!” And he who thinks himself a splendid saint is next door to a shameful sinner, depend upon it! And Satan soon gets the advantage over him.

If you are successful in business or successful in holy work, then Satan will tempt you. If you are not successful and have had a bad time, then Satan will tempt you. When you have a heavy load to carry, he will tempt you. When that load is taken off, then he will tempt you worse than ever! He will tempt you when you have obtained some blessing that you have been thinking was such a great gift, just as, in the wilderness, when they would cry for flesh and said that they must have flesh, God gave them

their heart's desire—but sent leanness into their soul. Just as you have secured the thing that you are seeking, then comes a temptation—to which all I have to say is this—"Watch."

"What I say unto you, I say unto all," said Christ, "Watch. Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." And by the conflict and the victory of your Master, go into the conflict bravely and expect to conquer by faith in Him, even as He overcame!

But what shall I say to those who are the slaves and the friends of Satan? The Lord have mercy upon you! If you desire to escape, there is only one way! There is the Cross and Christ hangs upon it. Look to Jesus! He can set you free. He came on purpose to proclaim liberty to the captives. Look and live! Look, now, and live, now! I implore you, do it for His dear sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

LUKE 4:1-15.

Verse 1. *And Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.* "Full of the Holy Spirit." And then, led "into the wilderness" to be tempted. You would not expect that. Yet it is a sadder thing to be led into a wilderness when you are *not* filled with the Spirit, and a sadder thing to be tempted when the Spirit of God is not resting upon you. The temptation of our Lord was not one to which He wantonly exposed Himself. He "was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." The Spirit of God may lead us where we shall have to endure trial. If He does so, we are safe, and we shall come away conquerors even as our Master did.

2. *Being forty days tempted of the devil.* Six weeks of temptation! We read the story of the temptation, perhaps, in six minutes, but it lasted for nearly six weeks. "Forty days tempted of the devil."

2. *And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward was hungry.* It does not appear, therefore, that Jesus was hungry while He was fasting. He was miraculously sustained during that period. After fasting, one looks for deeper spiritual feeling and more holy joy. But the most prominent fact, here, is that, "He afterward was hungry," Think not that you have lost the benefit of your devout exercises when you do not at once feel it. Perhaps the very best thing that can happen to you, after much prayer, is a holy hunger. I mean not a *natural* hunger, as it was with our Lord, but a blessed hungering after Divine things. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

3. *And the devil said unto Him, If You are the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.* Satan met the hungry Man and suited the temptation to His present pangs, to His special weakness at that moment—"If You are the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." The devil suspected and I think he *knew* that Jesus was the Son of God, but he began the temptation with an, "if." He hissed into the Savior's ear—"If You are the Son of God." If you, Believer, can be led to doubt your sonship and to fear that you are *not* a son of God, Satan will have

begun to win the battle. So he begins to storm the royal fort of faith—"If You are the Son of God." Our Lord *is* the Son of God, but *then* He was suffering as our Substitute—and in that condition He was a lone and humble Man. What if I call Him, "a common soldier in the ranks"? Satan invites Him to work a miracle of an improper kind on His own behalf, but Jesus worked no miracle for Himself. Now, it may be that the devil is trying some of you, tonight. You are very poor, or business is going very awkwardly, and Satan suggests that you should help yourself in an improper manner. He tells you that you can get out of your trouble very easily by some action which, although it may not be strictly right, may not be so very wrong after all. He said to Jesus, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread."

4. *And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written.* That is Christ's sword. Look how swiftly He drew it out of its sheath! What a sharp two-edged sword is this to be used against Satan! You also, Believer, have this powerful weapon in your hand—let no man take it from you. Believe in the Inspiration of Scripture. Just now there is a fierce attack upon the Book of Deuteronomy. It is a very curious thing that all the texts Christ used during the temptation were taken out of Deuteronomy, as if that was to be the very armory out of which He would select this true Jerusalem blade with which He should overcome the tempter, "It is written," "It is written," "It is said."

4. *That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God.* "God can sustain Me without My turning the stone into bread. God can bring Me through my trouble without My saying or doing anything wrong. I am not dependent upon the outward and visible." If you can feel like that. If you can appropriate the promise of God and quote it to Satan, saying, "It is written," using it as Christ did, you will come off conqueror in the time of temptation even as He did!

5. *And the devil.* Now he tries Him again. There is wave upon wave trying to wash the Son of Man off His feet.

5. *Taking Him up into an high mountain, showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.* Skeptics have asked how that could be done. Well, they had better ask him who did it! He knows more about them and they know more about him than I do! But he did it. I am sure, for here it is written, that he "showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time."

6. *And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give You, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto and to whomever I will I give it.* Does not he talk proudly in the presence of his Lord and Master? What an audacious dog he must have been to howl, thus, in the Presence of Him who could have destroyed him by a look or a word, if He had wished to do so!

7, 8. *If You therefore, will worship me, all shall be Yours. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get you behind Me, Satan.* The temptation annoyed Him—it was so foreign to His holy Nature it vexed His gracious spirit—so He cried out indignantly to the tempter, "Get you behind Me, Satan."

8. *For it is written.* Here flashed forth the sword again.

8. *You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.* Then let us pay no reverence, no worship to any but God! Consciences and minds are made for God, alone—before Him let us bow—and if all the world were offered to us for a moment’s idolatry, let us not fall into the snare of the tempter!

9. *And he brought Him to Jerusalem.* Satan now takes Christ to holy ground. Temptations are generally more severe there.

9. *And set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple.* The highest point of all. Elevated high above the earth.

9-11. *And said unto Him, If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down from here, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You: and in their hands they shall bear You up, lest at any time You dash Your foot against a stone.* Now Satan tries to quote Scripture, as he can do when it answers his purpose, but he never quotes it correctly. You young Brothers who go out preaching, mind that you do not imitate the devil by quoting part of a text, or quoting Scripture incorrectly! He did it, however, with a purpose—not by misadventure or from forgetfulness—he left out the very necessary words, “In all Your ways.” “He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You in all Your ways.” Satan left out those last four words, for it was not the way of a child of God to come down from a pinnacle of the Temple headlong into the gulf beneath!

12. *And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.* Do nothing presumptuously. Do nothing which would lead the Lord to act otherwise than according to His settled Laws which are always right and good.

13, 14. *And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.* He had not lost anything by the temptation, “the power of the Spirit” was still upon Him.

14, 15. *And there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.* He became popular. The people resorted to Him and were glad to hear Him. He who has had secret temptation and private conflict is prepared to bear open success without being elevated by it. Have you stood foot to foot with Satan? You will think little of the applause or of the attacks of your fellow men!

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THE RULE OF GRACE

NO. 3061

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 17, 1873.**

***“Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet;
and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”
Luke 4:27.***

OUR Savior never sought popularity. His ministry was so attractive that thousands thronged to hear Him, glad to catch the accents of His instructive tongue, but He never for a moment sought to preach flesh-pleasing truths, neither did He keep back any Doctrine by which it might be feared that His hearers would be disgusted. On this occasion He was speaking to His own townsmen. The young Man who had left the place for a while and who, during His absence, had acquired great fame as a Teacher and Miracle-Worker, had come home and there was, naturally, much curiosity to hear Him. They supposed that He would make the town where He had been brought up, to be the chief place of His benedictions. They were His fellow townsmen, so surely they had some claim upon Him! But our Lord, knowing right well that if they really understood His teaching, they would not be pleased with it—and knowing that the blessings He came to bring were not such as they desired—at once dealt honestly with them and told them that Elisha did not heal the lepers in his own country, but one was healed who came from a foreign land. And He led them to infer that very likely He would do His greatest deeds of healing elsewhere than at Nazareth, that God might be pleased to bestow the richest supplies of His Grace upon heathens—upon Syrians—and not upon those who seemed to suppose that they had some right or claim to it. Our Lord, in fact, preached to these people the great Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, the humbling Doctrine of Divine Election of which Paul wrote to the Romans, “He said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” [See Sermon #442, Volume 8—GOD’S WILL AND MAN’S WILL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That was the main point of our Savior’s discourse and His fellow townsmen could not endure it, as many since have not been able to endure it—and seeking to end such hateful teaching by murdering the Teacher, they hurried Him from the synagogue to the top of the precipice whereon their city stood, that they might hurl Him down and destroy Him!

I learn, from this incident in our Lord’s life, that it is not the preacher’s business to seek to please his congregation. If he labors for

that end, he will in all probability not attain it. But if he should succeed in gaining it, what a miserable success it would be! He must lose the favor of his Master if he should once aim at securing the favor of his fellow men. We therefore ought to preach many Truths of God which will irritate our hearers! We ought to declare to them the doctrines which are for their present and eternal welfare, however distasteful they may be to their carnal reason and natural inclinations. As the physician must give bitter medicine to his patients if he would cure them of their diseases, so must the preacher, who is truly sent of God, proclaim unpalatable Truths of God to his hearers and he must preach the more often upon those very bitter Truths because men are so unwilling to receive them. That part of the Gospel which they will readily embrace without any persuasion need not be preached as often—but that part which they will kick at and resist must be enforced again and again, if perhaps at last their judgment should be convinced of its truth and their heart won for its reception!

By the Holy Spirit's help, I am going to preach to the unconverted with the earnest desire and hope that they will remain unconverted no longer. And my subject is the healing of Naaman the Syrian. There are two points in it that are especially worth noting. The first is *the sovereignty of Divine Grace* which was manifest in it. And the second is *the unvarying rules by which that Grace works*.

I. First then, let us consider THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE GRACE which was so clearly manifested in the healing of Naaman the Syrian.

And I will observe at the outset that *the experience of Naaman equally teaches the freeness of Divine Grace*. If our Savior had selected this case as an instance, not of the sovereignty, but of the freeness of Divine Grace, it would have been equally appropriate. Two Truths of God which sometimes appear to be in opposition will often prove, if they are examined more closely, to be nestling side by side with one another. Suppose our Savior had put the case of Naaman thus—"Every person who was a leper who applied to Elisha to be healed was healed, and though one of them came from a foreign country and was a heathen—and a determined enemy of Israel—he was not rejected, for whoever came to the Prophet was accepted and received the blessing." That would have been a Truth of God and a most blessed Truth, too, and a Truth which we delight to preach and which we do preach incessantly. And that Truth does not clash with the other Truth of God of which our text speaks—that out of all the lepers who were in Israel in the days of Elisha, none were cleansed save this one stranger from the alien land of Syria! The universality of Divine Grace is easily reconciled with the sovereignty of it! Perhaps we cannot reconcile it so that others can see the reconciliation, but we have felt the reconciliation in our own hearts and in our own experience. And for my part it would be as stern a difficulty to see that there is anything irreconcilable between the two Doctrines as it seems to be to others to see how the two Doctrines can possibly agree! I cannot, for the life of me, detect where they clash, just as some others cannot see how they agree. I do unfeignedly believe that Christ will in no wise cast out anyone who comes to Him and I dare to say that to every man and

woman of the human race—but I also believe just as firmly that no one comes unto Christ except those whom the Father draws to Him—and that all whom the Father has given to Christ shall surely come to Him. [See Sermons #1762, Volume 30—HIGH DOCTRINE AND BROAD DOCTRINE and #2386, Volume 40—THE DRAWINGS OF DIVINE LOVE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Both these statements are true and, therefore, both of them are to be believed and we may rest assured that they both agree with one another!

But our Savior, on this occasion, though He often preached upon the freeness of Divine Grace, was pleased to preach upon the sovereignty of it, for *it was the sovereignty of Grace that saved Naaman*. He was a heathen, a worshipper of the idol god, Rimmon, yet when he obeyed the Prophet's command, he received the healing he asked for, yes, and more than that, he received the salvation of his soul, too! In addition to being a heathen, this man was a sworn enemy of Israel. He had often led the bands of Syria to plunder the people of God and yet, for all that, eternal mercy looked with complacency upon him and determined not only that his leprosy should be healed but that he should be a perpetual monument of the Sovereign Grace of God! He also lived far away from the abode of Elisha and in those days, the difficulty of travelling such a distance was exceedingly great—and yet, for all that, the Grace of God which passed by the lepers who were living near the Prophet's home, went far afield and found this Syrian soldier—and it is even so to this day! There are those who have lived ungodly, dishonest, unrighteous, unchaste lives whom God, nevertheless, saves by His Almighty Grace! There are even those who have been enemies of the Gospel, deniers and despisers of it and some who have been persecutors of God's people who have, like Saul of Tarsus, breathed out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord and who have hated the things of God with their whole heart, yet, like Saul of Tarsus, these men have been overcome by the Omnipotence of Eternal Love and they have been saved by the Sovereign Grace of God. Some of these people have like Naaman been far off from the means of Grace. They have seldom attended the House of Prayer. They have been disregards of God's holy Sabbath and yet, strange to say, the first time they went to the House of God, they found the blessing! They have been sought for by Go, and found according to His Sovereign Grace. 'Tis wonderful, but 'tis true, and nobody can long be pastor of such a Church as this without observing that it is often the most unlikely persons who are saved. Those who seem to you not likely even to be influenced by Divine Truth, are the very people who yield to it! Many whom you have set down as quite incorrigible have been renewed by Sovereign Grace. Why it is so, is not for us to know—we can only say, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight."

This sovereignty of Grace, in the case of Naaman, seems all the more remarkable when we think of *the many others who were passed over* while he was healed. We would have thought surely, if Elisha can cure lepers, he will begin with those in Israel of whom our Lord tells us that there were many. But he does not begin with them—what he does is done for Naaman the Syrian! We think, surely, if he can cure lepers, he

will cure those who are observers of the Ceremonial Law, but he does no such thing—he brings healing to this heathen foreign soldier! At the present day, in every congregation, there are persons who have been brought up in an atmosphere of godliness. The first sound they ever heard was the voice of praise and prayer and they have lived in such surroundings all their lives—yet they are not converted. They have been at the House of God almost as often as the doors have been open—yet they are not saved. And they are respectable people, too. They are of excellent morals, very good in many ways and yet, for all that—while publicans and harlots, strangers and foreigners, occasional hearers and the like have actually been converted and are rejoicing in the blessings of full salvation—these people still remain in the leprosy of their natural depravity and sin—impenitent, unbelieving, unconverted, unpardoned!

How is this and why is it? It is not for us to give any reasons except the one reason that lies upon the surface, which is this—that God will have all men know that there is no one who has any right to salvation! That we are all lost and condemned to begin with and that if He does save any of us at all, it must be upon the resting of His free, Sovereign Mercy and cannot be upon the ground of our own merits and works. Suppose that it were a rule of the Kingdom of God that all the children of pious parents should be converted? There would be many who would say, “My mother was a godly woman, my father was a Christian—and that is all that is required.” But it is not so. You are a lost sinner whatever your mother may have been! And you must repent and be converted just as truly as if you had been the child of the worst drab of the streets. Even though you may have descended from a long line of saints, you are a sinner and must be pardoned through the Infinite Mercy of God quite as much as the child of the man who was hanged for committing murder! You must be saved on the same principles as the vilest of the vile, must be saved and, to make men see this, God often passes by the children of the godly and calls the children of the godless into the Kingdom of His Grace. If everybody who went to the House of God was entitled to the blessings of salvation, many would say, “We attend such-and-such a place of worship and that is sufficient to ensure us a place in the Kingdom of Heaven!” So you seat-holders would conclude that there was no need for you to be anxious and that one of these days you would be sure to get the blessing.

But, my dear Hearers, how many have gone to Hell from seats in places of worship! How many regular hearers of the Word are also regular unbelievers who will one day be banished from God’s Presence with a deeper woe upon them because they knew their duty, yet did it not—they heard the Truth of God yet did not heed it! And the Lord makes this to be known among men by often calling, by His Grace, those who attend our services, as it were, by accident and by making the Word preached to be the savor of life unto life to them—while those who regularly hear it, yet do not receive it, prove it to be the savor of death unto death to them! And, then, if all respectable people were saved, or those only were saved who were respectable, we would have this pretty thing which is nowadays called, “respectability,” seeking to make God its

debtor and to cause the Most High to bow down before the respectability of men!

Let a woman but turn aside from the path of virtue. Let a man be but once convicted of a crime and how our self-righteous hands are held up against them! We are so pure, so good, so free from sin that we can afford to say with the hypocrite of old, "Stand by yourself, come not near me, for I am holier than you." We do not wonder that the Lord said concerning such people, "These are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burns all the day." How the thrice-holy Jehovah must loathe those who hypocritically pretend to be pure when their heart is full of rottenness and uncleanness! Many a man may appear not to be leprous, but the fatal disease is upon him all the while—and only waiting for an opportunity to show itself as it will do before long! Oh how God hates the wicked cant of this self-righteous world! And therefore He comes and looks for sinners, for real sinners, for those who admit that they have gone astray from His ways like lost sheep—and He leaves those who think themselves good, those who are in their own esteem, righteous. And He says to them, "According to your belief, you do not need a Savior. Therefore go your way and perish in your sin. But as for those poor lost ones whom you judge to be so full of sin that there is a double necessity for them to be pardoned and saved, it is for just such sinners as these that Jesus died! He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

I have heard of a great man who was once taken to see the French galley slaves. And he had given to him the authority to set free any man whom he found at the galleys to whom he cared to give his liberty. He went to one man and found that he was committed for ten years and he asked him about his crime. He said that he thought he had been treated very unfairly. He didn't know that he had done much amiss. Perhaps he had, once or twice, taken a little that was not his, but the temptation to which he had yielded was very strong and he had done so much good in other ways that he really thought he was very harshly treated in being sent to the galleys. So the gentleman passed him by—he was too good a man to receive a free pardon. There was another who said that he was perfectly innocent. He even swore that he was as innocent as a new-born babe of every accusation that had been brought against him. The gentleman also passed him by, for he, too, was too good to be freely forgiven. Then he came to another who said that he might have tripped perhaps, but much more was made of it than was true and there were liars in court and perjury had been committed by a great many of the witnesses against him. And he knew a great many men who were twice as bad as he was, yet they were at liberty while he was there in chains. That man was not the one to be pardoned. At last the visitor came to a poor fellow who said to him, "I have a long sentence to serve, but I fully deserve even more than that sentence. I wonder that I was not condemned to death, for had they proceeded to extremities, they might have proved me guilty of murder. So I look upon my sentence as much lighter than I really deserve to suffer." Then he who had received the

authority to pardon whom he pleased, said, "I pardon you, for, according to your own confession, you appear to be the only man in the whole place who is really receiving justice and, therefore, I will show you mercy, so you may go your way as a free man." In like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ is always ready to bestow His mercy upon those who confess that they deserve the heaviest sentence of His justice. But as long as we kick against that, we cannot expect Him to look upon us in love.

II. Now I think I have spoken sufficiently upon the Sovereignty of Grace, so I want to enlist your earnest attention to another part of the subject as I try to show you that in the case of Naaman, Sovereign Grace followed THE UNVARYING RULES OF GRACE.

God is a Sovereign and may therefore save whom He wills. And He may also save them *how* He wills. Yet when He is about to save a man, He does not depart from His usual method of working, but saves him according to the way in which He is accustomed to save.

Let me call your attention, first, to the fact that although Naaman was to be healed, and although Divine Sovereignty ordained the healing, *it was necessary that he should first hear the good news of the possibility of healing.* The ordinary way in which a sinner is saved is this, "Faith comes by hearing." It is as simple as possible. We hear the message and we believe it. So Naaman must first hear about the possibility of his being healed—but how is he to hear? Where is the preacher who will wend his way to Syria and tell him about the Lord's Prophet in Samaria? There is no need for any preacher to go on that long journey—a little maid is taken captive and she conveys the necessary message! That is all that is required. It was through a suitable messenger that Naaman was healed and blessed, so let none of us ever get into our heads the idea that God will save His own and, therefore, there is no need for us to go out to seek them, or to preach to them when we have found them! He will not save them apart from His own way—which way is that the preacher shall be sent and the person to be blessed shall hear the Gospel—and when he hears it, he shall be constrained to believe it. Hence we who are preachers must continue to preach the Word and you who are unsaved hearers, must make a point of endeavoring to hear the Gospel message, for that is both your privilege and your duty. God's own message to you is, "Incline your ears and come unto Me. Hear and your soul shall live." Therefore give your most earnest attention to the gracious message of mercy which God sends to you by His servants!

Next, when Naaman has heard that there is healing to be had in Israel, *he must give heed to the message* and make a long journey in order to reach the Lord's Prophet. He would not have been healed if he had sat down and said, "I have heard about this possibility of being healed of my leprosy, but I shall take no trouble to see whether it is true or not." Oh, no! He does not talk like that, but he gives orders for the horses and camels to be brought out and the talents of silver, and the pieces of gold, and the changes of raiment that he will need for use as presents. And he departs for that far country where he hopes to receive the blessing that he desires. And, sinners, if you really wish to be saved, you must remember that God will save you through your attentively

listening to the Gospel message that He sends to you and compelling your spirits to do what that message bids you do. God does not convert sinners while they are asleep! The Gospel is not absorbed by men as water is absorbed by a sponge, by a kind of insensible action. The Truth of God comes to the mind of the hearer and he is impressed by it. And being impressed by it, he lays it to heart and gives his whole soul to its comprehension and reception. And if you would be converted, you must get the Truth into your very soul. You must not play with it, you must not toy with it, you must not trifle with it—but you must be in earnest about the matter—you must, as the Apostle says, “Lay hold on eternal life.” There must be an agonizing and a wrestling that you may enter into the full appropriation and possession of the Truth of God which is proclaimed in your hearing!

When Naaman had come to the Prophet Elisha, he was not healed merely because he had heard the little maid’s message, or because he had heard it with such a measure of attention that he had given earnest heed to it. But *it was also imperative upon him that he should obey the command he received.* “Go,” said the Prophet, “and wash in Jordan seven times.” Naaman was ordained to be healed, yet he never would have been healed without the washing that Elisha commanded! And there is no sinner, be the purposes of God what they may, who will ever get his sins forgiven except by washing in the precious blood of Jesus! It matters not who you may be—unless you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you cannot have eternal life! Do not suppose, dear Hearers, that there is some secret decree of God that will override this—there is no such decree! The Truth of God with which you have to do is this, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” If you do not believe in Jesus, there is no hope for you! There remains, neither in God, nor in anyone else, any hope for you! The way of salvation is set before you and it is quite as simple as Elisha’s command to Naaman to wash seven times in Jordan. The Gospel is that Jesus Christ suffered in the place of all sinners who trust Him as their Savior, that He endured what they ought to have endured and made atonement to God for all the sins that they would ever commit. And if you thus trust Him, you are saved. The simple act of relying upon Jesus as your Substitute and Savior puts away your guilt and sin forever!

But if you say, “This plan of salvation is too simple to be safe! I thought that there would be some imposing ceremony to be performed. I fancied that there would be certain mysterious feelings to be experienced!” If you talk like this, you cannot be healed. It is the Eternal Purpose of God that we shall be saved through faith in Jesus Christ and if there is no faith in Jesus Christ, that is a proof that there is no Divine Purpose to heal that soul! But where there is the Divine Purpose to heal, it is evidenced, sooner or later, by a submissive yielding to the ordained way of salvation and simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice once more, *Naaman was not healed until he was humbled.* It was God’s purpose to heal him. He had been set apart by Sovereign Grace to be healed, yet he had to be humbled before the blessing could

come to him. While his pride was so great, he could not be healed. Why should he wash in the Jordan? Were not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, quite as good as the Jordan? Why should he wash there? Is he not high in the esteem of his master, the king of Syria? Why should he stoop to this indignity? He will not do anything of the kind! But if he will not, be he who he may, he cannot be healed. Though he is such great man, there is no healing for him without humbling—and it is so with those who would be cured of the leprosy of sin! There is no hope of Heaven for you unless you are humbled. As long as you have a rag of your righteousness that you trust in, you cannot have the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover you. If you glory in what you have, and what you are, you are not the kind of man whom God delights to save! You must lie low at the feet of Jesus! You must plead for forgiveness like a poor guilty sinner! You must cry, "Jesus save me, or I die!" or else through the gate of Heaven you are too big to pass for, "strait is the gate and narrow is the way," and no self-righteousness can go in there.

"But," says one, "I have always been a regular attendant at a place of worship. I have always paid twenty shillings in the pound. I give a guinea to the hospital and I believe myself to be, on the whole, a most excellent person." I do not suppose that anybody will say just that, but I mean that great many will think it. And I want all such people to plainly understand that until they get all this horrible boasting out of their soul, they will no more go to Heaven than the devil himself will! But if any man here confesses that he is a mass of iniquity—that even his best works have something bad in them, that his praying has to be wept over and his tears of repentance have to be washed to get the filth out of them—if there is a sinner here, real black or scarlet sinner, he or she is the one who is freely invited to come and put his trust in Jesus, for it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the very chief! Pride must come down, self-righteousness must die and the sinner must glorify the Grace of God by admitting that he has no merit of his own—or he cannot be saved.

What shall we say, then, to these things? Just this. Let us all go together to the Throne of God where we have offended and let us confess that none of us have any claims upon Him. Let each of us say to Him, "My Lord, if You should destroy me, I must confess that I deserve it. If You should save my brother, who is equally guilty, and not save me, I dare not complain, for You have the right to exercise Your mercy wherever and however You will. I shall receive the sentence that is just even if I am banished from Your Presence forever." Submit to the Lord as the burgesses of Calais came to the conquering king with ropes about their necks! That is the proper costume for a sinner to wear before God. Say, "Lord, I deserve, to die. I deserve to perish. I deserve to be destroyed. I will have no quibbles with You about my sentence, for how can a worm dispute with the Almighty? Who am I that I should reply against my Maker?"

When you have taken that position, rely upon the freeness of Divine Grace. Grasp, as with a death-clutch, this great fact and say, "Lord, You

forgive sinners for Your own name's sake. You cannot find anything in us that is good, anything that can move You to pity. But oh, by Your mercy and Your love, let men see what a gracious God You are! For Your great name's sake, have mercy upon us and save us!" And you can plead that Jesus said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And that He has bid His servants say, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Plead with Him that He has said, "Come now, and let us reason together...Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Go and plead in that way, and trust yourself upon the Truth revealed in the Word of God. Try it and prove it, and see whether God really means what He says. Say to Him—

***"You have promised to forgive
All who in Your Son believe.
Lord, I know You cannot lie—
Give me Christ, or else I die!"***

I will not say to you—Go and risk it, for there is no risk. I will not say to you—Go and venture, for it is no venture. Go and say to the Lord, "O Lord, if I must perish, I will perish trusting in Your mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, Your dear Son! 'Other refuge have I none.' I cast aside all my former confidences and all my boasting and come as the worst sinner must come, for I feel that in some respects I am the worst sinner who ever came to You. I come as an utterly lost, undone, bankrupt sinner and I look to the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus for all that, I need." Then if you perish like that, I am quite willing to perish with you! And I will stand at the bar of God with you on the same terms, for if you are lost, I must be lost too! I solemnly avow that I have no hope in anything I have ever done. I have preached the Gospel these many years, but I have not preached one sermon that I can look upon with any confidence so far as to depend upon it as a merit in the sight of God! After we are saved, we may do something in the way of almsgiving and other things to show our gratitude to God, but they are worse than useless if we begin to boast of them as a reason *for* our salvation. My song is—

***"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."***

I know He did and I hope many of you can say the same thing. We are in the same boat and if we go down, God will have to go down, too, for it would stain His honor for anyone to be lost trusting in Jesus. But we shall never go down if we are trusting in Him! We shall stand when the great floods are out and the heavens are pouring forth their deluge of devouring rain! We shall stand, for we are built upon a rock if we are trusting in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ! God grant that we may all be found there and His shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 107:23-82.**

Verses 23, 24. *They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep.* The Jews were never given to navigation. To “go down to the sea in ships,” seemed a very extraordinary thing to them. They looked upon it as a going down, as it were, into a dreadful abyss. We who are more accustomed to going to sea than they were, talk of “the high seas,” but they spoke of going “down to the sea.” They never went to sea except on business. King Solomon had no pleasure yacht. There was never one of that ancient race who cared to trust himself upon the sea except as a matter of sheer necessity—and those who did so were looked upon with wonder by their land-loving friends. “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord”—that is, His greatest works, both in the sea and on it. They know what storms are and they see what Omnipotence can do—and they come back to tell of the wonders of God upon the mighty deep. This verse may be read spiritually as well as literally. God calls some of His servants, as it were, to go down to the sea in ships. They are tried with poverty, with personal sickness, with temptation, with inward conflicts, with fierce persecutions. And God never calls them to these trials out of mere caprice, there is always a reason for it. They go down to the sea in ships to “do business in great waters.” There is something to be gained from their trials and something to be learned from them. They “do business in great waters” and “these see the works of the Lord.” Others hear about them and believe what they are told concerning them. But these see them. They see what God has done in their case—how He sustains, how He delivers, how He sanctifies trials and overrules them for His own Glory and His people’s good. “These see the works of the Lord.” And they also see the wonders of the economy of Grace. They are made to experience the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of that love which passes knowledge. They see “His wonders in the deep.” You and I need not desire to have trouble, as though we put out to sea for our own pleasure, but if God calls us to sail upon a sea of troubles, if He sends us there upon His business, we may depend upon it that He means that business to end to our profit and His Glory.

25-27.—*For He commands, and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves. They mount up to the heavens. They go down again to the depths. Their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end.* Here we learn something of what sailors see and of what tried Christians experience. These great storms arise by God’s command—not as many say, nowadays, “by the laws of nature.” The wind, which had been quiet, heard God’s voice and raises itself up, like a wild beast from its lair—“He commands, and raises the stormy wind.” And no sooner does the great wind begin to blow than the white crests of the waves are seen, and the white horses fly before the blast which lifts up the waves on high. Then the ship, however staunch it is, seems to have no greater power of

resistance than a frail sea bird. And it is tossed up and down, up and down, from the trough of the sea to the billows' crown—"They mount up to the Heaven, they go down again to the depths." And their very soul begins to melt. Brave men as they are, it only needs a sufficient amount of storm to make their hearts turn to water and their spirits dissolve into the turbulent element that is all round them! "Their soul is melted because of trouble." Then they cannot keep their balance—"they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man." What is worse, they cannot control their thoughts—they "are at their wit's end." What can they do in such a case as that? There is an end to all human wit and wisdom when the great storms are out upon the sea. You who have ever had deep spiritual trials know the analogy of all this. There may come times—there have come times to some of us—when, at the command of God, or by Divine Permission, there has been a fierce blast of temptation or a fiery trial—and then all that was peaceful around us before, suddenly turns into a whirlpool of tempestuous billows and we are tossed to and fro at the mercy of the winds and the waves. Sometimes we ascend in presumption and then we go down into the very depths of despair. At one moment we are joyous with hope and a moment later we seem ready to give up all hope—our courage fails us and our soul dissolves within us. If you have never known this experience, I pray that you never may know it, but some of us have had stormy times when we have seemed to have no foothold, when we have reeled to and fro like drunken men—when the best faith we have had has been little better than staggering! Still, it is better to stagger on the promise than to stagger at it—and we did still stand though we staggered and we were at our wit's end. We could not see what to do, we could not tell what to do and we could not have done it if we had known what to do! We were brought to such an extremity that we seemed to have neither wit nor wisdom left.

28. *Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses.* This shows that although they were at their wit's end, they had wit enough or wisdom enough to pray! Their souls were melted, so they let them run out in prayer. It is a good thing to get the soul melted, for then it will flow out like water before the Lord. Note that these sailors cried to God when there was no one else to whom they could cry—"Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." Learn from this sentence that when your soul is melted because of trouble, you can still pray. When you reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, you can still pray—and when you are at your wit's end—you can still pray! Prayer is never out of season! It is a fruit of Grace that is acceptable to God in autumn and in winter, in spring and in summer. As long as you live and even when the worst comes to the worst, cry mightily unto God, for He will surely hear you. Was it not so with us when we were in spiritual trouble and could do nothing else but cry unto the Lord? It was a poor prayer that we offered, but it was a real prayer that we presented when we cried unto God. Mark how quick God is to hear such prayer as this—"Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses." He brought them into them and, therefore, He brought

them out of them. It was God who took Jacob into Egypt and, therefore, though it took 400 years to bring Israel out of Egypt, God brought them out at last. He kills and He makes alive. He wounds and He heals. Rest in this Truth of God as a matter of absolute certainty!

29. *He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.* At the first, God made everything out of nothing, so He can easily make a calm out of a storm. And He can make the storm a calm for you whenever He pleases to do so. Your troubled feelings, your tossing to and fro may soon subside into “the peace of God, which passes all understanding,” which “shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

30. *Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them unto their desired haven.* And there is no music that is sweeter to the mariner’s ears than the rattle of the chain as the anchor grips the bottom of the harbor and the ship rests from all her tossing. The Lord will give you Grace, my Brother, my Sister, to let down your anchor—or, rather, to throw it up “into that within the veil,” for that is the way that your anchor goes—and then you shall be glad because you will be quiet. I believe that there is often a greater, fuller, deeper joy in being quiet than there is in making a noise. There are times when it is good to praise the Lord with the high-sounding cymbals and with the harp of a solemn sound. But, in the deepest joy of all, we are still before God and praise is silent before God in Zion.

31. *Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!* Should they not do so? Those who have survived the storms at sea, or the still greater storms within their own souls should surely take care to praise the Lord. If we know how to pray, we also ought to know how to praise. Prayer and praise ought to form the two covers of the book of our life—and our life is not well bound unless these are the two covers to it—with a good stiff back of faith to bind the two covers firmly together and to hold every leaf in its proper place.

32. *Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.* Let them not only praise the Lord in private, but let them also sound out their song of gratitude to God where the graybeards are gathered together! And let the men of experience, the officers of the Church, the leaders of the Lord’s people, help them in the expression of their gratitude.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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NAZARETH—OR, JESUS REJECTED BY HIS FRIENDS NO. 753

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 2, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city. And they led Him unto the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them He went His way.”
Luke 4:28-30.*

JESUS had spent several years in retirement in the house of His reputed father at Nazareth. He must have been well known—the excellency of His Character and conduct must have attracted notice. In due time He left Nazareth, was baptized by John in Jordan, and began at once His work of preaching and working wonders. The inhabitants of Nazareth, no doubt, often said to one another, “He will be sure to come home and see His parents. When He comes we will all go to hear what the carpenter’s son has to say.”

There is always an interest in hearing one of the lads of the village when he becomes a preacher, and this interest was heightened by the hope of seeing wonders such as Jesus had worked at Capernaum. Curiosity was excited—everybody hoped and trusted that He would make Nazareth famous among the cities of the tribes. Perhaps He would settle down there and attract a crowd of customers to their shops by becoming the great Physician of Nazareth, the great Wonderworker of the district.

By-and-by, when it so pleased Him, the famous Prophet came to His own city, and, when the Sunday drew near, the interest grew very intense as men asked the question, “What do you think, will He be at the synagogue tomorrow? If He shall be there, He must, by some means, be induced to speak.” The ruler of the synagogue, sharing in the common opinion, at the proper point of the service, when he saw Jesus present, took up the roll of the Prophet and passed it to Him, that He might read a passage, and then speak according to His own mind upon it.

All eyes were opened. No sleepy people were in the synagogue that morning when He took the roll, unfolded it like one who was well accustomed to the Book, opened it at a passage most pertinent and applicable to Himself, read it, standing, thus paying respect to the Word by His posture. And then, when He had folded up the Book, He took His seat—not because He had nothing to say—but because it was the good practice in those days for the preacher to sit down and the *hearers to stand*. A

method much to be preferred to the present one in some respects, at any rate, when the preacher is lame, or the hearers drowsy.

The passage which Jesus read to them, I have said, was very suitable and applicable to Himself. But the most remarkable point, perhaps, was not so much what He read as what He did *not* read, for He paused, almost, in the middle of a sentence: “To proclaim,” said He, “the year of the Lord,” and there He stopped. The passage is not complete unless you read the next words, “and the day of vengeance of our God.” Our Lord wisely ceased reading at those words, probably wishing that the first sermon He should deliver should be altogether gentle, and have in it not so much as a word of threatening.

His heart’s desire and prayer for them was that they might be saved, and that instead of a day of vengeance it might be to them the acceptable year of the Lord. So he folded the Book, sat down, and then began His exposition by opening up His own commission, He explained who the blind were, who the captives were, who the sick and wounded and bruised were, and after what sort the Grace of God had provided liberty and healing and salvation.

They were all wonder struck! They had never heard anyone speak so fluently and with so much force—so simply, and yet so nobly. All eyes were fastened and everybody was astonished at the Speaker’s style and matter. Soon a buzz went round the synagogue, for each man said to his fellow, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? From where, then, has this Man all these things?”

They were astonished and envious, too. Then the Speaker, feeling that it was not the object of His ministry to astonish people but to impress their hearts, changed His subject, and charged with tremendous vigor upon their consciences. For if men will only give the minister their wonder, they have given him nothing! We desire you to be convicted, and converted, and short of this, we fail. Jesus turned from a subject glowing with interest, fruitful with every blessing—seeing that to them it was no more than pearls to swine—and He spoke to them personally, pointedly, somewhat cuttingly, as they thought. “You will surely say unto Me this proverb, Physician, heal Yourself: whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.”

And then He plainly told them that He did not recognize their claims, that albeit He might have been bred in that district, and have lived with them, yet He did not recognize from that reason any obligation to display His power to suit their pleasure. And He gave an instance in point—He showed that Elijah, when God, “the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow”—would bless a widow was not sent to bless a widow of *Israel*, but a *Gentile* woman, a Syrophenician, one of the accursed Canaanites!

To none of the widows of Israel “was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.” Then, again, He men-

tioned that Elisha, the servant of Elijah, when he had healing to give to lepers, did not heal an Israelite leper—he healed not even those lepers who came with the good news that the Syrian host had fled. But he healed a stranger from a far country, even Naaman.

Thus the Savior set forth the doctrine of Sovereign Grace! Thus He declared Himself to be free to do as He would with His own. And this, with other circumstances connected with the sermon, so excited the anger of the entire congregation that those eyes which had looked upon Him with wonder, at first, now began to glare like the eyes of beasts! And those tongues which were ready to have given Him applause began to howl forth indignation!

They rose up at once to *slay* the Preacher! The curiosity of yesterday was turned into the indignation of today, and whereas, a few hours ago they would have welcomed the Prophet to His own country, they would now think, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” is too good for Him. They drag Him out of the synagogue—breaking up their own worship, forgetful of the holiness of the day to which they paid such wonderful respect—and they compelled Him forth to cast Him, as malefactors sometimes were from lofty rocks, from the brow of the hill on which their city was built.

He evaded them and escaped, but what a singular termination to such a beginning! Why, you and I would have said, What a fruitful field have we here! The best of Preachers! And one of the most desirable of audiences—a people all attentive, every ear open, almost every mouth open, so wonder-struck are they with Him—with His mode of address and with what He has to say! There will be innumerable conversion here! Nazareth will become the stronghold of Christianity! It will be the very metropolis of the new faith!

But no such thing—such is the perversity of human nature—that where we expect much, we get but little. And the field which should have brought forth wheat a hundred-fold, yields nothing but thorns and thistles. My design is, as God may help me, to make an application of this narrative to the hearts and consciences of some now present—some who are doing with the Savior somewhat in the same manner as these men of Nazareth did with Him in the days of His flesh. We shall consider, first of all, who were these rejecters of Christ. Secondly, why this rejection. And thirdly, what came of it.

I. First, then, WHO WERE THESE REJECTORS OF CHRIST? I ask the question because I am persuaded that they have their types and representatives here at the present moment. They were, dear Friends, first of all, those who were nearest related to the Savior. They were the people of His own town. Ordinarily, you would expect fellow townsmen to show a man the most kindness. He was come unto His own, and though His own received Him not, this was a subject of wonder that they should not do so!

Now, there are some in this house this morning who are not Christians. They are not *with* Christ and consequently they are *against* Him. But still they are the nearest related to Christ of any unconverted people in the world because from their childhood they have attended religious worship.

They have joined in the songs, and prayers, and services of the Lord's House.

Moreover, they are fully persuaded of the authenticity and Divinity of the Word of God, and they have no doubt but what the Savior was sent from God and that He can save, and is the appointed Savior. They are not troubled with doubts. Skeptical thoughts do not perplex them. They are, in fact, Agrippas, almost persuaded to be Christians. They are *not* Christians, but they are the nearest related to Christians of any people living upon the face of the earth.

You would naturally expect that they would be the best people to preach to, but they have not proved to be so. They have not proved to be so in *my* case, for some such attending here are less likely to be brought to a decision than those who are afar off. You know to whom I refer, for some of you, as you look me in the face, might well think, "Master, in saying so, you rebuke us, also."

These people of Nazareth, again, were those who knew most about Christ. They were well-acquainted with His mother and the rest of His relatives. They knew His whole pedigree. They could tell at once that Joseph and Mary were of the tribe of Judah. They probably could tell why they came from Bethlehem and how it was that they once sojourned for awhile in Egypt. The whole story of the wondrous Child was known to them.

Now, surely these people, not needing to be taught the rudiments, not requiring to be instructed in the very elements of the faith, must have been a very hopeful people for Jesus to preach to! But alas, they did not prove to be so! I have many here who are wonderfully like they. You know the whole story of the Savior and have known it ever since your childhood. More than that, the doctrines of the Gospel are theoretically well understood by you. You can discuss Gospel Truths, and you delight to do so, for you take a deep interest in them.

When you read the Scripture it is not to you a dark, mysterious volume, which you cannot at all comprehend—you are able to teach others what are the first principles of the Truth of God. And yet, for all that, how strangely sad it is that, knowing so much, you should practice so little! I am afraid that some of you know the Gospel so well that for this very reason it has lost much of its power with you, for it is as well known as a thrice-told tale.

If you heard it for the first time, its very novelty would strike you, but such interest you cannot now feel. It is said of Whitfield's preaching that one reason of its great success was that he preached the Gospel to people who had never heard it before. The Gospel was, to the masses of England in Whitfield's day, very much a new thing. The Gospel had been either expunged from the Church of England and from Dissenters' pulpits, or where it remained it was with the few within the Church and was unknown to the masses outside.

The simple Gospel of "believe and live," was so great a novelty, that when Whitfield stood up in the fields to preach to his tens of thousands,

they heard the Gospel as if it were a new revelation fresh from the skies! But some of you have become Gospel-hardened. It would be impossible to put it into a new shape for your ears. The angles, the corners of the Truth of God, have become worn off to you. Sundays follow Sundays, and you come up to this Tabernacle—you have been here long. You take your seats and go through the service and it has as much become routine with you as your getting up and dressing yourselves in the morning.

The Lord knows I dread the influence of routine upon myself. I fear lest it should get to be a mere form with me to deal with your souls, and I pray God He may deliver you and me from the deadly effect of religious routine. It were better if some of you would change your place of worship rather than sleep in the old one. Go and hear somebody else if you have heard me long and obtained no blessing. Rather than get in those pews and perish under the Word, lulled by the Gospel which is meant to arouse you, go elsewhere, and let some other voice speak to your ears, and let some other preacher see what God may do by him. O may the Spirit of God but save you, and it shall be equal joy to me whether you be saved under someone else, or under my own word. Yet here is the matter—it is sad, indeed, that men so nearly related to Christianity, who know so much about Christ—should yet reject the Redeemer.

Again, these were people who supposed that they had a claim upon Christ. They did not feel that it would be a great kindness on the part of the Lord Jesus to heal their sick. They no doubt argued, “He is a Nazareth man, and of course He is, in duty, bound to help Nazareth.” They considered themselves as being, in a sort, His proprietors who could command Him to help them.

I have sometimes feared that you who are children of godly parents, or seat-holders, or subscribers to various religious objects, in your hearts imagine that if *any* are to be saved, surely it must be yourselves! Yet your claim has no basis to rest upon! I would to God that you were not only *almost*, but altogether saved, every one of you. But perhaps the very fact that you *think* you have a claim upon Divine Grace may be the stone which lies in your path, because you think, “Surely Jesus Christ will cast an eye of favor upon us, even if others perish!”

I tell you He will do as He wills with His own and publicans and harlots will enter into the kingdom of Heaven before some of you if you think that you have any *right* to mercy! For the mercy of God is God’s sovereign gift and He will have you know it to be so. He has said it—said it as with a voice of thunder, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” If you kick against His sovereignty, you shall stumble at a stone upon which you shall be broken.

Oh, but if you can feel you have *no* claim upon God! If you can put yourself into the position of the publican who dared not lift up so much as his eyes towards Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” you are in a position in which God can bless you consistently with the dignity of His own sovereignty! O take up the posi-

tion which Grace accepts! Beggars, and such you must be, must not be choosers. He who asks for Grace must not set himself up to dictate to his God. He who would be saved, though he is unworthy, must come to God upon the footing of a suppliant and humbly plead, that for mercy's sake, the Lord's love would be manifested towards him.

I fear that there may be a spice of this kind of spirit in the minds of some of you, and if so, you are the people who have rejected Christ. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! We call the skies and the round earth to witness! Here are those that are near to being Christians. They know the Gospel by the letter of it, and they think they have a claim upon the Savior, and yet they remain disobedient to the Divine command, "Believe and live." They turn upon their heels and reject the Savior, and will not come unto Him that they might have life! Hear it, I say, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!

II. Secondly, we are to explain the reasons WHY THEY THUS REJECT THE MESSIAH. The reasons will be applicable to some of you, you unconverted people, who are sitting here! Sometimes the Spirit of God comes with a melting power over an audience and makes men feel the Truth which is meant for them. Pray, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that such may be the case now—that our unconverted friends who give us so much concern because of their enmity to Jesus—may be impressed with the remonstrances now addressed to them.

Why did they reject Christ? I think they did so under a very complex feeling not to be accounted for by one circumstance. Several things went to make up their wrath and enmity. The fire of their anger fed upon several kinds of fuel. In the first place, I should not wonder but what the groundwork of their dissatisfaction was laid in the fact that they did not feel themselves to be the persons to whom the Savior claimed to have a commission.

Observe He said, in the 18th verse, that He was, "anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor." Now, the poorest ones in the synagogue may have felt pleased at that. But as it was almost a maxim with the Jewish doctors that it did not matter what became of the poor—for few but the rich could enter Heaven—the very announcement of a Gospel for the poor must have sounded to them awfully democratic and extreme—and must have laid in their minds the foundation of a prejudice. He meant, of course, the "poor in *spirit*," whether they are poor in *pocket* or not, for those are the poor whom Jesus comes to bless.

But the use of expressions so contrary to all that they had been accustomed to hear made them bite their lips while they said within themselves, "We are not poor in spirit, but have not we kept the Law?" Did not some of them say, "We have worn our phylacteries and made broad the borders of our garments. We have not eaten except with washed hands. We have strained out all gnats from our wine. We have kept the fasts, and the feasts, and we have made long prayers—why should we feel any poverty of spirit?"

Therefore they felt there was nothing in Christ's mission for them. When He next mentioned the broken-hearted, they were not at all conscious of any need of a broken heart. They felt heart-whole, self-satisfied, perfectly content. What is the use of a preacher? Who is to preach to the broken-hearted when all his hearers feel that they have no cause to rend their hearts with repentance? Then when He spoke of captives, they claimed to have been born free and not to have been in bondage to any man. They rejected with scorn the very idea that they needed any liberator, for they were as free as free could be.

When Jesus further spoke of the blind—"Blind!" they said, "does He insult us? We are far-seeing men! Let Him go and preach to some of the outcasts who have become blind, but as for us, we can see into the very depths of all mysteries. We need no instruction and opening of eyes from Him." When at last He spoke of those who had been bruised, as though they had been beaten with stripes for their sins—"We have no sins," they said, "for which we should be bruised. We have been honorable, upright people, and never have been chastened by the scourge of the Law. We need no liberty for them that are bruised. What is the acceptable year of the Lord to us, if it is only for bruised captive ones? We are not such."

At a glance you perceive, my Brethren, the reason why in these days Jesus Christ is rejected by so many Church-going and Chapel-going people. Here you see the reason why so many of your respectable attendants at our places of worship reject salvation by Grace—it is because they do not feel that they *need* a Savior. They think that they are rich and increased in goods, and have need of *nothing*! But they know not that they are naked, and poor, and miserable. They claim to be intelligent, thoughtful, and enlightened. They do not know that until a man sees Christ, he walks in darkness and is stone blind, and beholds no light. They are not bruised, they say. Would to God they were! God, perhaps, has left them because it was of no use to bruise them—and why should they be struck any more?

They only revolt more and more because they feel no smarts of conscience, no terrors of God's Law. Therefore Jesus Christ is a root out of a dry ground to them. They despise Him, as the healthy man laughs at the physician, and as the man that is rich cares not for the alms of the benevolent. Ah, but my dear Friends, let me remind you that if you do not feel your need of a Savior, the need exists for all that! You were born in sin and shaped in iniquity, and no baptismal waters can wash away your defilement. Beside this, you have sinned from your youth up in heart, and word, and thought—and you are condemned already because you have not believed on the Son of God!

Although you may not have been openly wicked, yet there is a text which I must bring to your remembrance—"The wicked shall be turned into Hell with all the nations that forget God." That last list includes you, my Hearer—you who forget, and postpone, and trifle—you who wait for "a more convenient season." It includes you who live with the Gospel before you and yet do not comply with its commands, but say to your sins, "I

love you too well to repent of you,” and to your self-righteousness, “I am too fond of this foundation to leave it to build upon the foundation which God has laid in the Person of His dear Son.”

Ah, my dear Hearers, it is the self-conceit which makes the empty bag think itself full and which makes the hungry man dream that he has feasted and is satisfied. It is self-righteousness which damns the souls of thousands! There is nothing so ruinous as this presumptuous self-confidence. I pray the Lord may make you feel yourself to be undone, ruined, lost, cast away, and then there is no fear of your rejecting Christ, for he that is perfectly bankrupt is willing to accept a Savior! He that has nothing of his own falls flat before the Cross and takes gladly the “all things” which are stored up in the Lord Jesus! This is the first and perhaps the greatest reason why men reject the Savior.

But, secondly, I entertain little doubt but what the men of Nazareth were angry with Christ because of His exceedingly high claims. He said, “The Spirit of Jehovah is upon Me.” They started at that. Yet they might be willing to admit that He was a Prophet, and so, if He meant it in that sense, they would be patient. But when He said, “The Lord has anointed Me to preach,” and so on, claiming to be no other than the promised Messiah, they shook their heads and murmuringly said, “He claims too much.”

When He placed Himself side by side with Elijah and Elisha, and claimed to have the same rights and the same spirit as those famous ones—and by inference compared His hearers to the worshippers of Baal in Elijah’s day—then they felt as if He set Himself up too high, and put them down too low. And here, again, I see another master reason why so many of you good people, as you would be thought to be, reject my Lord and Master.

He sets Himself too high. He asks too much of you. He puts you down too low. He tells you, you must be nothing—and He must be everything. He tells you that you must give up that idol god of yours, the world, and the pleasures of it, and that He must be your Master, and not your own wills. He tells you that you must pluck out the right eye of pleasure if it comes in the way of holiness, and rend off the right arm of profit rather than commit sin. He tells you that you must take up your cross and follow Him outside the camp—leaving the world’s *religion* and the world’s *irreligion*.

He tells you you must no longer be conformed to the world, but become, in a sacred sense, a Nonconformist to all its vanities and maxims, customs and sins! He tells you that He must be the Prince Imperial in your souls and that you must be His willing servants and His loving disciples. These are claims too high for human nature to yield to them! And yet, dear Hearer, remember that if you *do not* yield to them, a much worse thing awaits you!

Kiss the Son, kiss His scepter now, I say! Now, bow down and acknowledge Him, for if not, beware “lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Those who kiss not the scep-

ter of silver shall be broken with the rod of iron! They who will not have Christ to reign over them in love shall have Him to rule over them in terror in the day when He puts on the garments of vengeance and dyes His vesture in the blood of His foes!

O acknowledge Him as He is covered with His own blood lest you have to acknowledge Him when He is covered with *yours*! Accept Him while you may, for you will not be able to escape from Him when those eyes, which are like eyes of fire, shall flash devouring flame upon His adversaries! Alas, this is a fruitful source of mischief to the sons of men! They cannot give King Jesus His due, but would gladly thrust the Lord of Glory into a corner. Oh, base hearts to kick against so dear, so great, so good a King!

Thirdly, another reason might be found in the fact that they were not for receiving Christ until He had exhibited some great wonder. They craved for miracles. Their minds were in a sickly state. The Gospel, which they did need, they would not have! The miracles which He did not choose to give, they eagerly demanded. Oh, how many there are nowadays who must see signs and wonders, or else they will not believe! I know you, young woman, you have set this in your heart before you, "I must *feel* as John Bunyan felt—the same horror of conscience, the same gloom of soul—or else I will never believe in Jesus."

But what if you never should feel it, as probably you never may? Will you go to Hell out of spite with God, because He will not do for you just what He did for another? A young man yonder has said to himself, "If I had a *dream*, as I hear So-and-So had, or if there should happen to me some very remarkable event in Providence which should just meet my taste! Or if I could feel today some sudden shock of, I know not what, then I would believe." Thus you dream that my Lord and Master is to be dictated to by *you*! You are beggars at His gate, asking for mercy, and you must draw up rules and regulations as to how He shall give that mercy!

Do you think that He will ever submit to this? My Master is of a generous spirit, but He has a right royal heart and He spurns all dictation and maintains His sovereignty of action. But why, dear Hearer, do you crave for signs and wonders? Is it not enough of a wonder that Jesus bids you trust Him and promises that you shall be saved at once? Is not this enough of a sign that God has proposed so wise a Gospel as that of, "Believe, and live"? Is not this enough—is not the Gospel its *own sign*, its *own wonder*, and its *own proof*, because he that believes has everlasting life? Is not this a miracle of miracles, that, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish"?

Surely that precious word, "Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely," and that solemn promise, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out," are better than signs and wonders! A truthful Savior ought to be believed. He never did lie. Why will you ask proof of the veracity of One who cannot lie? The devils themselves declared him to be the Son of God—and will you stand out against Him? Sovereign, mighty, Irresistible Grace, come and conquer this wickedness in the hearts of men

and make them willing to trust Jesus, whether they see signs and wonders or not!

Again, and perhaps this time I may hit the head of the nail in some cases, though I suppose not in many in this place—part of the irritation which existed in the minds of the men of Nazareth was caused by the peculiar doctrine which the Savior preached upon the subject of Election. I question whether that was not at bottom the real sting of the whole matter. He laid it down that God had a right to dispense His favors just as He pleased and that in doing so He often selected the most unlikely objects. For instance, a widow in idolatrous Sidon had her needs supplied in famine, while the widows of Israel were left without meal.

At another time under Elisha, when God would heal a leper, He left the Israelite lepers to die, but a leper who came from the idolatrous land of Assyria, and who had been accustomed to bow in the house of Rimmon received healing! Now they did not like this. And I suppose even in this congregation, though you are pretty well accustomed to strong statements upon the Sovereignty of God, and we are not ashamed to preach Predestination and Election as clearly as we preach any doctrine—yet there are some who are mightily uneasy when the doctrine is preached and feel as if they could almost slay the preacher because the doctrine is so offensive to human nature!

Everywhere you will notice that the church of Rome has not half the hatred to Lutheranism that it has to Calvinism. It is the Doctrine of Grace, which is the soul of Calvinism, that is the poison of Popery! Rome cannot endure the Truth that God will save where He wills—that He has not given salvation into the hands of priests, nor given it to our own merit or our own will to save us. God holds the keys of the treasury of Divine Grace and distributes as He pleases. This is the doctrine which makes men so angry that they know not what to say of it!

But, my dear Hearer, I trust this is not the reason why *you* refuse to believe in Jesus, for if it is, it is a most foolish reason! For while this is true, there is yet another Truth that, “Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, shall not perish.” While it is true that the Lord will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, it is equally true that He wills *to have mercy*, and has already had mercy on every soul that repents of its sin and puts its trust in Jesus! Why cavil at a Truth of God because you cannot understand it? Why kick against the pricks to your own wounding, when the pricks remain as sharp as ever and will not be moved by all your kicking?

The Lord of Hosts has purposed it to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the excellency of the earth: “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” The Lord will bring down the high tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree to flourish that no flesh may glory in His Presence, so that the Lord may be exalted. Bow, then, to Sovereign Grace! Should He not be King? Who else should rule but God? And if He is a King, has He not a right to forgive the felon condemned to die and yet give no reason to *you*? Leave that question, and all others, and come to Jesus, whose open arms invite you!

He says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you wait till you have solved all difficulties, you will never come at all! If you refuse Christ till you understand all mysteries, you will perish in your sins! Come while the gate is opened and while the lamp holds out to burn! He has said it, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out."

I must still mention another reason for the quarrel of the Nazarenes with our Lord. It was probably because they loved not such plain, personal speaking as the Savior gave them. Some hearers affect great delicacy. You must not call a spade a "spade." It is an "agricultural implement," and only to be spoken of in dainty terms. But our Lord used no fine talk. He was a plain speaking Man, and He spoke to men plainly. He knew that men would go to Hell, let Him be as plain as He might, and therefore He would not let them have the excuse that they could not understand the preacher.

He put the Truth of God so clearly that not only could they understand it, but they could not *misunderstand* it if they tried. His preaching was most personal. "You will say." He did not speak about Capernaum but all about Nazareth, and this helped, also, to make them angry. Once again He gave a hint that He meant to bless the Gentiles. Elijah had fed and Elisha had healed a Gentile, and this undoubted fact made the Jew set his teeth, for he feared that the monopoly of blessing was to cease, and that gifts of Divine Grace were to be given to others besides the sons of Israel. A Gentile dog was to be admitted into the family, to be permitted not only to eat the crumbs that fell from the table, but to be changed into a child—the Jews could not bear it.

Now there is a great deal of this monopolizing spirit among self-righteous people. Why I have heard people say—shocked I have been to hear it—"Oh, they are having meetings for getting together these girls off the street. It is no use—you may try, but it is no use trying to reform *them*. And then here are other people looking after these low characters, going into those nasty back slums. Well, if people get there, they ought to be there! We ought not to lower ourselves to look after such good-for-nothing people. There is the Church—if they do not choose to go—let them stay away."

As to going after the very lowest, some people turn up their noses at the very idea of it. This is just the horrible old Jewish monopolizing of the Gospel—as if these people were not as good as you, for all their sins and for all their poverty. But though their vice may happen to be outward, it is not a whit more detestable than the pride of some people which make a boast of a self-righteousness which does not exist. I do not know which God looks upon with the greater abhorrence—the open sinner or the openly good living person whose inward pride stands out against the Gospel! It matters nothing to the physician whether he sees the eruption outside the skin or knows it to be inside. Perhaps, he thinks, it may be harder to get at the second than at the first.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ will have you to know, however good you are, that you must come to Him just as the vilest of the vile must come. You must come as guilty—you cannot come as righteous. You must come to Jesus to be washed. You must come to Him to be clothed. You think you do not want washing. You fancy you are clothed, and covered, and beautiful to look upon. But oh, the garb of outward respectability, and of outward morality often is nothing but a film to hide an abominable leprosy till God's Grace changes the heart! God requires truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part He will make us to know wisdom.

But this superficial England of ours is perfectly satisfied with outside gentility, and you may be as rotten as you will within the heart. The living God will have no pretence—you must be born again! This doctrine, too, is one which people cannot endure! They will say hard things of the preacher, and for this reason they reject Christ. But in so doing they reject their own mercy! They reject the only hope of Heaven, and they seal their own destruction! I wish the time did not fly quite so rapidly when I have such a subject as this. I seem to have the consciences of some of you here, and I am hammering away as with a big sledge hammer, but I am afraid there is very little effect produced because the iron is cold.

O that the Lord would thrust you into the furnace and make you like melted iron! Then the hammer of the Gospel and the Law together might well beat you into something like an evangelical shape, and you might be saved. God's arm is strong enough! God's fire is fierce enough to melt even the iron of self-righteousness!

III. And now, WHAT CAME OF IT? This came of it. First of all, they thrust the Savior out of the synagogue and then they tried to hurl Him down the brow of the hill. These were His friends—good, respectable people—who would have believed it of them? You saw that goodly company in the synagogue who sang so sweetly, and listened so attentively. Would you have guessed that there was a murderer inside every one of their coats? It only needed the opportunity to bring the murderer out—for there they are—all trying to throw Jesus off the cliff!

We do not know how much devil there is inside any one of us. If we are not renewed and changed by Divine Grace, we are heirs of wrath even as others. The description which is given in Romans, that second chapter, that awful chapter, is a truthful picture of every child of Adam. He may look respectable. He may seem to be a lamb, and to be so quiet that a weaned child might play in the cockatrice's den. But he is a deadly cockatrice for all that.

The snake may sleep and you may play with it, but let it wake and you will see that it is a deadly thing. Sin may lie dormant in the soul, but there may come a time when it will wake up. And there may come a time in England when those good people who hang on to the skirts of Christ, and attend our places of worship may actually develop into persecutors. It was once so in England. The people who used to hear the Gospel at the close of Henry the Eighth's day—the people that were so pleased to hear

Hugh Latimer under Edward the Sixth—were quite as ready to carry fire-wood under Queen Mary, and to burn the servants of the Lord.

My dear Friends, your opposition to Christ may not take that active form, but unless you are converted you are enemies to Jesus. You deny it? I ask you why, then, do you not believe in Him? Why do you not trust Him? You are not opposed to Him, why do not you yield to Him? As long as you do not trust Him, I can only set you down as His enemy. You give this clearest proof of it—you will not even be saved by Him! If there were a man drowning, and another man put out his hand, and he said, “No, I will not be saved by *you*, I would sooner be drowned,” what a proof that would be of enmity! What proof could be more sure?

That is your case—you refuse to be saved by Christ’s Grace. Oh, what an enemy of Christ at the bottom of your heart you must be! But what came of it? Why, though they thus thrust Him out, they could not hurt the Savior. The hurt was all their own. Christ did not fall from the hill. He escaped by His miraculous power—and the Gospel will not be hurt even though you reject it and do *worse* than reject it—and set yourself in opposition to it.

Jesus Christ glides through the midst of His enemies uninjured. Through the persecutions of Nero and Diocletian, the true Christ of God went on His way. Through all the burnings of Mary, and the hangings of Elizabeth, right on through the times of Claverhouse and his dragoons, the good old Gospel remained unconquered by its foes! It abides still to this very day the same! It escapes from all the anger of its most virulent foes.

But what became of *them*? Well, they had rejected Christ, and He left them—left them unhealed because of their unbelief. That will be your case. And now it is 1,860 years ago and the souls of all these men of Nazareth have appeared before the Judgment Seat. And in a few more years, when the great trumpet shall sound, all those men who tried to throw Christ down over the cliff will have to look at Him. And they will see Him seated where they cannot grasp Him, nor abuse Him, nor cast Him down.

What a sight it will be for them! Will they say to one another, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” When they see Him sitting on the Throne of His glory, and all His holy angels with Him, will they say, “His mother, is she not with us, and His brothers and his sisters?” Will they, then, say to Him, “Physician, heal Yourself”? Oh, what a change will come over those bronze brows! How for every sneer there will be a blush, and for each word of anger there will be cries, and weeping, and wailings, and gnashing of teeth!

My Hearers, the same thing will happen to you! Within a few more years you and I will have mixed our bones with mother earth. And then after that shall come a general resurrection. We shall live and stand in the latter days upon the earth and Christ will come in the clouds of Heaven. And you who heard the Gospel and despised Him, what will you say? Have your apology ready, for you will soon be called upon to say why judgment should not be pronounced upon you. You cannot say you did not know the Gospel or that you were not warned of the result of rejecting

it! You have known. What more could you have known? But your heart would not receive what you knew.

When the Lord begins to say, “Depart, you cursed,” what claim will you have not to be numbered with that accursed company? It will be in vain to say, “We have eaten and drunk in Your Presence, and You have taught in our streets,” for that will be an aggravation that the kingdom of Heaven came so near unto you and yet you received it not! And when the thunderbolts are launched and He who was once the Lamb so full of mercy shall shine forth as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, full of majesty—that thunderbolt shall be winged with extra force and speed with this tremendous fact—that *you* rejected Christ, that *you* heard Him but turned a deaf ear to Him—that *you* neglected the great salvation, and did despite to the Spirit of Grace!

As I cannot even hope to find words that can have the force of God’s own language, I shall close this sermon by reading you these few words which I beg you to lay to your heart. They are in the first chapter of Proverbs, at the 24th verse: “Because I have called, and you refused, I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded. But you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would have none of My reproof, I, also, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes; when your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer. They shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”

God save you from that curse.

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FEVER AND ITS CURE

NO. 2174

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 23,
1890.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPT. 11, 1890.**

***“And He arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon’s house. And Simon’s wife’s mother was taken with a great fever, and they besought Him for her. And He stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.”
Luke 4:38, 39.***

PETER was of Bethsaida but he had a house at Capernaum. Is it not highly probable that he had moved there to be near our Lord’s headquarters, to hear everything that He said, to see all His miracles, and to yield Him constant attendance and service? I think it was so. This is what we should expect from the Lord’s true-hearted followers and I am sad when I remember how many professed disciples of Jesus nowadays act on another principle. When they are moving they do not consider whether they shall be near a House of Prayer or a place of usefulness. Though their souls have been fed and they have declared intense love to the Church and the pastor, they nevertheless go away with a light heart to places where there are no means of Grace.

Should these things be so? In choosing our residence, we should have large respect to its relation to our soul’s work and welfare. We should ask, “Shall we be where we can honor our Lord?” In his house, Simon willingly entertained his wife’s mother, which is presumptive evidence that he was a good man, willing out of love to run risk of discomfort. We have evidence that his wife’s mother was a good woman, for the moment that she was healed, she arose and ministered unto them—whereas in too many cases—an invalid and aged person would demand to be waited upon. She was a blessing to any house, for she evidently lent all the strength she had to the work of the family.

I know just such women whose very life is to minister to others. Happy Peter to have such a mother-in-law! Happy mother-in-law to have such a son! Good as the tenants were, sickness came to the house. Capernaum was situated, like several other towns, in that low, marshy district which surrounds the northern part of the sea of Galilee, near the spot where the Jordan runs into it. There was always a great deal of fever about and that fever, putting on its very worst form, had come to Peter’s house as “a great fever,” and had laid low his excellent mother-in-law, much to the grief of all. However dear you may be to the heart of God and however near you live to Him, you will be liable to sorrow. “Although affliction comes not forth of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.”

None of us can hope for entire exemption from affliction—I am not sure that we should wish for it. But then, it so happened—and it so happens always—that just when the trial came, Jesus came, too. It is very beautiful to see the Lord of Life close on the track of the fever, ready to deliver His chosen one. When a great affliction comes to a house, a great blessing is coming, too. As our tribulations abound, so do our consolations. I have often noticed that when we are exceedingly glad, some ill news will hurry up to calm our excitement. It has happened so to me this very week—returning from a happy meeting, a telegram met me to announce a sorrowful bereavement. On the other hand, when we are exceedingly sorrowful, the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, causes a sense of peace and rest to steal over us and sustain us.

How often have I found the Divine Presence more consciously revealed and more sweetly sustaining in the hour of trouble than at any other season! I would not invite the fever to my house, but if Jesus would come with it, I would not be alarmed at its approach! If we see our Lord riding on the pale horse, we will welcome the horse for the sake of its Rider! Come, Lord Jesus, come how You will! But suffer not the trial to come alone!

When Jesus came, they told Him of her. Make a practice of telling the Lord about all your family concerns. Bring sicknesses and other troubles to your best Friend. Do it at family prayer, but do it, also, alone at your bedside. If Jesus has come to stay with you, He will not hold Himself aloof from your anxieties. He comes with His great sympathetic heart to be afflicted in your afflictions. Keep no secret from Him, since He keeps none from you for, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” So Peter and the rest told Jesus of the good woman who was bedridden with fever and at once the Lord Jesus went into the room and brought His Divine power to bear upon the disease that she might be at once restored.

He stood over her. He rebuked the fever. He took her by the hand and lifted her up—and in a moment the fever was gone—and she was not only well, but strong! You have heard this incident preached from before, but not in the way in which I shall use it. It is a very singular thing that, as far as I know, in the whole range of homiletics there is not one in which this cure of the fever is treated as the other healing miracles have been. The other miraculous cures have been legitimately regarded by preachers of the Word as types of the removal of certain forms of sin. When we preach about the leper, we talk to you concerning great sin and grievous defilement. When we consider the story of Lazarus, who had been dead, we perceive that every point of his resurrection bristles with spiritual teaching.

If it is so in other miracles, why not in this? Why is one miracle to be looked upon as instructive as to spiritual and moral Truth and another is left unused? I shall use this miracle of the healing of the fevered one for ourselves, since it may be that some of us are mentally or spiritually sick of a fever. There is a fever of soul which comes even upon gracious people which only Christ can heal. Oh, that He may heal us now! Here will be the run of my discourse. First, *spiritual fevers are common*. Secondly, *they are*

from several causes. Thirdly, *these are mischievous in their action* and fourthly, *there is One who can cure these fevers.*

Oh, that I may be helped so to speak of this spiritual disease at this time, that while you hear my voice, you may also feel my Master's touch and go your way restored from your fever!

I. Let me, first, remind you, that SPIRITUAL FEVERS ARE VERY COMMON. *A fever begins with a kind of restlessness.* The patient cannot be quiet nor be at ease in any position. He is not pleased with anything for more than a moment. He cannot help it—he is tossed to and fro—he is like the troubled sea. He suspects everybody and has confidence in nothing. Are there not many who are in that condition with regard to spiritual things? Their religion is a question, rather than a doctrine—an experiment and not an experience. Their own interest in Christ is a grave anxiety rather than an assured delight. They believe the promise, but cannot grasp it for themselves so as to feel sure and happy.

A sermon full of good cheer does not afford them a cup of comfort. They are so feverish that they settle to nothing. No promise, no Truth of God, no heavenly gift can yield them repose—they are tossed up and down like the locust. This restlessness affects them with regard to temporal things, too—they are always anxious, doubtful, timorous. There is that excellent woman, Martha. She is here tonight, but she has had a task to tear herself away from the washing and mending. And while she has been sitting here she has been wondering all the while whether she put the guard before the fire when she came out. She has felt three or four times in her pocket for her keys. She is half afraid that an accident will happen to the baby before she gets back. She is anxious about everything she can think of and anxious about some things she has not thought of. Will her husband be home before she gets back? How will he be? Will he like his supper? Will the children all be well tomorrow? Evidently she has the domestic fever upon her and rest is out of the question. She must worry and fidget—there is no consoling her.

I know what it is as a minister to feel very feverish about the characters and proceedings of the members of the Church. I have been told that farmers are very liable to the weather fever. It is either too wet or too dry. There may be good times for the root-crops, but then, it is bad for the corn. Merchants have the speculative fever, and workmen the strike fever. Some of you trades folk are wonderfully feverish in reference to your shop and your stock-taking. Will you, after all, have a good season and make a fair profit? When a man falls into that state, although we do not call in a doctor, there is great need to call in the heavenly Physician. A Christian in good, sound, spiritual health is calm, quiet, peaceful, happy, full of repose—for he is obedient to that sweet verse of the Psalm—"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." This restlessness is a sign of the times, but it is a great pity that it should afflict the people of God.

Some folks with this fever are troubled with the *burning heat of irritability*. They take offense where none is intended. You cannot put your words in the right order to satisfy them. Members of Churches who get into this irritable state are always imagining that they have enemies all around them—everybody has not been quite respectful to their royal highnesses—

they treasure up little slights and feel highly indignant. I know more people with this fever than I should like to mention. It is a happy thing to live with a Brother who is spiritually and mentally sound, for then you may speak freely and you need not be afraid of being misunderstood. But feverish folk make you an offender for a word, or a look. They are grieved because you did not see them, or *did* see them—either way you are wrong!

One feels that he is like a man walking among eggs—he has to be careful, even to a painful degree. Let us be gentle with the irritable Brother. He cannot help it, poor man! It is not the man so much as it is the fever that is in him.

The influence of fever is seen in other ways. It is *intermittent* and makes the patient *change from hot to cold*. Feverish persons love a religion of excitement. They are eager and impatient, omit repentance and leap into a false security. Their zeal is not according to knowledge and so it is fierce as the blaze of thorns under a pot and dies out as soon. What haste they make! Everything must be done immediately—the patient waiting of faith is too slow for them. They are determined to drive the Church before them and drag the world after them—to plod on in Scriptural ways they cannot endure. We like to see the healthy heat of earnestness, but theirs is the burning heat of *passion*. This fever heat soon turns to a chill and they shiver with dislike of the very thing they cried up so loudly. They are as cold as they were hot! And again they turn to be as hot as they were cold!

A strange fever is upon them and you know not where to find them. The steady warmth of vital principle, intelligent faith, true love to Christ and zeal for the conversion of souls has little in common with the fever of fanaticism. May God grant that we may always have the warmth of healthy life, but may we be saved from being delirious one day and lethargic the next! Religious inflammation is the dangerous counterfeit of holy zeal. Be as hot as you will, but do not turn cold directly, or else we shall tremble for you.

A worse kind of fever, perhaps, is that which shows itself in thirst of different kinds. Some suffer from the yellow fever of avarice—they thirst for gold water—and the more they drink the more the thirst consumes them. They rise up early, they sit up late, they eat the bread of carefulness and all they long for is to gain and hoard—the love of Jesus is not near to their hearts. They are all hack and hurry, toil and turmoil, woe and worry. The deadly yellow fever is upon them—they must lay up much goods for many years and add field to field till they are left alone in the earth. God save His people from even a *touch* of this fever!

Some are smitten with the scarlet fever of ambition. They must be everybody. Some would be great, greater, greatest and then greater still, always sighing for the pre-eminence, like Diotrefes. Ambition, kept in due check, may be right enough, but when it rises to fever heat, it is a great sin. The man does not enjoy what he has because he is lusting for more. And meanwhile he treads down his brethren and becomes high-minded and unkind. While anyone is still a little higher than himself, he is envious and malicious. May the Lord cure us of these fevers if we have even the smallest trace of them!

Alas, alas! I have to mention one other fever, which is a kind of gastric fever, *a fever of the stomach!* It comes to men who have degraded themselves below the brutes by intoxication. When they seek to abstain and quit the cup, a drink fever hinders them. Some imagine that it is an easy thing to escape from drunkenness, but it is not so. Those who are now true children of God have given us an awful description of the hankering which came upon them months after they had given up the drink. Often it seemed to them nothing but a miracle that they kept clear of the temptation—they felt as if they must drink or die! O dear Friends, have great pity upon the drunk in his struggle to escape! Help him all you can by words of encouragement and especially by the grand encouragement of your own example, for, believe me, it is a horrible fever and happy is he who has never felt it. If any of you have it upon you, look to Almighty Grace for deliverance, for if you look to anything short of this, I fear you will go back to your sin.

Yet one more fever I would mention. There is one which I may well call *brain fever*—a very common disease nowadays. Persons cannot be satisfied with the old doctrines of the Gospel—they must have something new. They do not know that in theology nothing new is true and nothing true is new. God has given us a faith which He once and for all delivered unto the saints with no intention that it should ever be changed. Do you think that Revelation is imperfect and that we are to improve upon it? After all, then, it is not God's Revelation that we are to believe but our own deductions and our own improvements thereupon? God forbid that we should fall under such a delusion!

Very many young men—and I dare say young women, too, though I do not so often meet with them—have begun to feel that they must *think*, which, also, we should be glad for them to do! But they dream that they must think their own thoughts and they will not submit their thoughts to the instruction of the Spirit of God. This is a vain thought! They claim that they may think as they please and so it comes to pass that their thoughts are not God's thoughts. They diverge more and more from the eternal Truth of God till they wander among the dark mountains of error and perish in utter infidelity! God keep us from this! If this fever is upon any one of you, may the cooling hand of the Holy Spirit and the sobering influence of a Divine experience bring you back to spiritual and mental health.

These fevers are as common as they are fatal. If you, dear Hearer, have not suffered from them, many others have done so and we are anxious for their cure—therefore, we would bring them to Jesus who can rebuke the fever—and heal the sick ones.

II. Secondly, THESE FEVERS ARISE FROM MANY CAUSES. Peter's wife's mother may have been struck with fever through the undrained and boggy spots around the sea of Galilee, especially where the Jordan makes a marsh. *She dwelt in a low spot*, where the air was full of malaria and the fever pounced upon her. Ah, Christian people! If you live below your privileges. If you live in the marshland of worldliness. If prayer is neglected. If the Bible is not read. If the great Truths of the Gospel do not fill your meditations. If you sojourn much among ungodly folk and make them

your companions—you are living in a low situation where you will get one or other of these fevers before long!

If you climb the mountains of confidence in God and dwell near Him and rest your souls upon Him, the fever will soon vanish! But if you continue in the hollows of unbelief and the damp places of worldliness, you will grow more and more anxious and restless and will thirst for evil things. You who dwell in the misty lowlands doubt your own love to Jesus. If you climbed the hills of joy and dwelt on the heights of fellowship, you would know your love to God and find it growing daily! The sunlight of His Countenance is a sure cure for the fever of anxiety! Abide with Him and the heat of anxiety will depart, your irritability will disappear and you will be calm and joyful!

A second great cause of spiritual fever is *allowing things to stagnate*. The moment the sanitary authorities cut drains, let the waters run out of the land and carry away the filth, the fever begins to abate. Stagnant water breeds a noxious atmosphere and fever is sure to come. When the waters are no longer putrid, but have free course, then the source of fever is taken away. How many people get into a feverish state through having everything stagnant! You do not teach in the Sunday school—your teaching power is stagnant. You never go out to the village station to preach—your talking power is stagnant. You have nobody to pray for—your intercessory power is stagnant. Everything about you is still and stale. You have nothing to live for, nothing to do—and therefore your whole being is shut up within itself—and this breeds mischief. The Lord help you to cut a good wide drain and let your life run out to some useful purpose instead of hoarding it up by selfishness. Spiritual fever soon disappears before holy, unselfish activity.

Fevers, again, come in through excessive heat. In countries where the temperature rises high, fever is more common and fatal than with us. The white man dies and even the black man finds it hard to live in parts of Africa. I fear that life in London is growing very much like the tropical regions. Our forefathers took things rather more coolly than we do. In Cromwell's time a writer tells us that he walked all down Cheapside in the early morning and found all the blinds down because at every house they were having family prayer. Where will you go to find such a state of things in this burning age? You are up in the morning and at it—and all day long you are at it, and at it, and at it! Little rest is given to our minds and yet we need holy rest. We need to sit at Jesus' feet with Mary—and because we do not do so, the burden and heat of the day are telling upon our spiritual constitutions—and we are not strong as we need to be.

But, worst of all, *fever is often born of filth*. I suppose that even excessive heat would not produce it if it were not for decaying matter which, in rotting, gives out evil vapors and deadly gases. There is nothing more putrid in the natural world than sin is in the moral world. Flee from sin as you would from a reeking dunghill of rottenness. I charge you, children of God, be clean in yourselves and your surroundings. "Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." It is hard to avoid contact with evil in these days—but yet we must aim at it. Our public walls disgust us with indecencies of the most staring kind—they make us blush for the times.

We can, however, keep ourselves from the resorts of the frivolous, the vicious and the drunken—and I beseech you, as you love the Lord and as you desire to be healthy in His sight—stand not in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scorers. Run not with the multitude to do evil! Come out from among them—be you separate—touch not the unclean thing, for then God will be a Father unto you and you shall be His sons and daughters. The corruption which reeks around us has the dread tendency to breed fevers in our minds of the most perilous kind—we must, therefore, use our utmost endeavors, by the Grace of God, to keep ourselves disinfected.

Fever also comes of overcrowding. Where people are closely packed together in their sleeping places, breathing exhausted air, disease lurks as in its chosen lair. I am afraid that most of us get too crowded by fellowship with men—conversing with them from morning to night, working with them, dealing with them in business—and thus learning their ways and catching their spirit. Oh, to get into the purer atmosphere of Heaven and to be alone with God! In the spiritual realm we find space and air enough for a soul to breathe freely. Where God manifests Himself to us we are refreshed with breezes from the eternal hills! Why are we wearied with man's talk, or with women's chat, when conversation with God would revive our spirits? Oh, to be quit of men and quiet with God! Amid this crowd we find our souls suffocating, but when we are on the mount of God we breathe freely and feel revived.

Not to leave out any one thing which may instruct us, I would remind you that *fevers are often caused by poor diet.* Persons have not enough to eat and the fever germs fructify in their weakness. With many Christians the rule seems to be one spiritual meal a week. Sunday morning is the occasion for baiting the religious horse. Your very respectable Christian person goes out to worship on Sunday morning—but at no other time. What does he do on Sunday afternoon? This witness says nothing. What does he do on Sunday evening? He is at home taking his ease. At a Prayer Meeting, some time ago, one Brother prayed that the Lord would bless those who were at home “on beds of sickness and on sofas of well-ness.” The last words were unexpected, but very necessary. Certain of our friends practice the art of tarrying at home, but I fear they do not divide the spoil.

As to Prayer Meetings, and week-night lectures, these are regarded rather as *tasks* than privileges by many professors. They live on one meal a week. Would any of you, who are doing this, oblige me with a trial of this regimen in reference to your bodies? Will you only eat on a Sunday morning? You shall take what you please at that one meal and consume as much as you can of it—but you must have only that one meal till next week! Do you decline the experiment? I think you are wise. I should not expect to see you here often to report your experience. I feel sure you would break through the regulation before it had reached its full result. Therefore, I pray you, do not carry out the experiment of *spiritual* starvation, lest you die in the operation!

This neglect of heavenly food brings many Christians into so low a state that spiritual fever readily fastens upon them. Alas, many have poor spiri-

tual diets. Spiritual meals, nowadays, when they are taken, do not amount to much. In many a place where Christ was preached by a good old man who is now in Heaven, you will find that anything else is held forth except the Lord Jesus. Your cultured gentleman sickens at the idea of preaching about the precious blood. He calls the cardinal doctrine of the Atonement, "the theology of the shambles." Shame on his profane tongue! He is ashamed to speak of original sin, or the new birth, or to tell men that if they are not saved they will be cast into Hell! He is too refined to speak the plain Truth of God! You may eat a thousand meals of his sort of meat before you will know that you have had a mouthful! It is all light as air and unsubstantial as froth. Such wind can never satisfy a hungering soul, but it can starve it down so low that disease preys upon it.

Some become fevered, not so much by what they do themselves, as by being in *contact with others who are full of the disease*, for it is exceedingly contagious. I can bear witness to that. It has been my lot to deal with the fevers of doubt, depression, anxiety and despair—and it is hard to deal with these without catching them! I remember that one day I saw several mournful cases of depression. I will not say that the patients ought to have been in an asylum, but I am sure that many in those places are as reasonable as those I conversed with. They were sadly doubting, fearing, trembling and dreading—and it was no light work to treat their unhappy cases. I tried to comfort them and I hope that I succeeded in a measure—but by the time that I had borne the burdens of a half dozen of them, I needed comfort myself!

It is not easy to lift others up without finding yourself exhausted. I went over all the Gospel arguments for salvation by faith and I heard their objections. I pressed the Truth of God upon them and when they went away smiling, I stayed behind to pray God to make the work effectual and also to lift up the light of His Countenance upon *me*—for I needed to be filled again after pouring out my soul for others! The fever of depression may be caught while we are acting as surgeons to other fevered ones. If you live with a friend who is always playing on the minor key, you will find your own music growing mournful. If you have companions in life who are nervous, fretful, fearful, melancholy—or, what is worse, full of doubts of God—you will likely be warped as they are and you will soon feel that the sunlight has gone out of your life.

What must you do? Run away from these sorrowful ones? By no means! But you must seek more Divine Grace, that, instead of being dragged down *by* them, you may draw them upward, by His Grace, to God and brighter things! Be filled with spiritual life and then you will survive your contact with the feeble and diseased. I could not help mentioning this—for to me it is a frequent cause of fever and I would that I could rise far above it!

III. Thirdly, and as briefly as I can, THIS FEVER, IN ANY OF ITS FORMS, IS MISCHIEVOUS. What does it do? Well, fever *puts you altogether out of order*. You cannot precisely say where a fever begins or ends, or in what organ it operates most powerfully for it puts the whole system out of gear. Nothing is right. You feel as if you could not sit, or lie, or be quiet in any position. You cannot do anything and yet you must be doing.

Now, when a soul gets into the fever of unbelief, fear and anxiety, it is in general disorder. Prayer is fevered. Song languishes. Patience fails. Service drags. The mind is like a harp whose strings are out of tune. It is a mischievous thing, this fever—mischievous to every faculty.

And then *it brings sin and misery*. In the commencement of a fever, pain is usually felt in the joints and other parts of the body. If I am fearful and anxious, I am in mental pain. If I am doubting and dreading, I am in pain. If I am fretful, irritable, petulant, murmuring—I must have pain and hence it is an evil thing to be overtaken by a spiritual fever. Mental fever *takes away beauty* from the Christian. A man who has a fever has his features pinched and drawn. A practiced doctor can tell when a patient has the fever by the very look of his face. Looking at his eyes and other features, he says, “This man has a typhoid upon him. I am sure of it.”

Are there not some Christians who do not look as they used to look? They are ill-humored, or timid, or fretful, or hasty—and all through the inward fever. Their voice has lost the joyful note it used to have and their whole deportment is dreary. The hallelujahs have gone. The hosannas have died out. The Lord would have His people beautiful and gladsome. He made them that they might show forth His praise. It is no small evil when the heat of spiritual fever dries up the moisture of our Graces and turns our comeliness into corruption. This mental heat brings with it *languor and weakness*. The man is a Christian, but he is not much of a Christian. He lives, but he does not grow, nor exhibit strength.

What a difference there is between the able-bodied worker and the invalid! Here is a railway cutting to be made through a hill and we need a number of working men to do it. They tell me that we can get a hundred men at once if we apply to the Hospital for Consumptives. But we do not see the wisdom of the advice. Poor fellows—what a misery it would be to see them doing their little best with pain and labor! I had rather not be the leader of such a band. Give me a company of stout English knaves with bone and muscle! Why, the mountain dies before their spades like the waters before the blast of the north wind! The road is cut through the mountain and the men are gone to perform like wonders elsewhere.

We need, in these days, Christian men with stamina in them! What work healthy souls will do! But when they catch fever in their souls, what painful and futile efforts they make! Dear Friends, it is to be feared that *those who give way to fever may drift into delirium*, by-and-by, for fevers often lead to that. My good friend who begins complaining just a little does not know that he will grow to be one of the most obstinate grumblers in the world! My good Sister yonder, who is only a little nervous and fretful, does not know into what an abyss of unbelief she will yet plunge! If you say one word against God, there is no reason why you should not say two. And if you say two, the devil will soon teach you to say 20, till at last you rave at the Lord God! Oh, that we could be silent before Him, in holy calm and peace! We should then escape that delirium of rebellious dread into which so many are hurried.

If, by God’s Grace, we are delivered from this fever, *it may leave behind it sad remains*. Any doctor will tell you that fevers are not only to be dreaded for what they are, but for what they leave behind them. When a

man is cured of fever, he may yet be injured for the rest of his life. And if you and I do not keep quiet before God—and calm and happy, but begin to get anxious and willful, avaricious, and ambitious—we may hurt ourselves seriously for all time! And, it may be, even on our death-bed we shall look back with sorrow to that day of unbelief when we grieved the Lord and lost His Presence. The Lord keep us from these fevers in every degree!

I must also remind you of one thing more, Beloved—*this disease*, as I have said, *is catching*. I brought this fact forward under our second head, but I must mention it again. If some of you could fret and trouble and worry yourselves—and did not, at the same time, injure others—it might not so much matter. But the sad fact is there are some Christians who drag others down into their own wretchedness. You spoil the joys of the saints! They are willing to comfort you but you ought not to be so ready to cause them disquietude. Some of you are enough to give the fever of despondency to a whole parish! God's ministers are willing to comfort you, but they ought not to be called upon to spend so much time in entering into your case. It is a dreadful waste of time and thought—this looking after the fevered ones. When an army has to carry half its number in ambulances, it takes well-near the other half to carry them and no fighting can be done.

The cruelties of war are great, but I am told that the aim is now to not *kill* the opposite party, but to *wound* them. If you kill a man, he counts one as a loss to the other side—but if you wound a man and another man is called out to look after him, that counts as a loss of *two* from the fight. This is the sort of craft whereby Satan injures the host of God. He does not kill off some of you by leading you into gross sin, but he wounds you so that you need more than one to look after you—and thus the strength of the army of salvation is greatly diminished. I ought to be spending my strength in winning souls, but instead I have to look after you who have the fever. I am content to be a nurse, but I had rather be winning souls.

IV. Lastly, THERE IS ONE WHO CAN CURE THE FEVER. I am afraid that I have given rather a sad description and I am sorry that some of you have been obliged to say, "However sad, it is true of us." But observe, dear Friends, the cure—which is not worked by medicine, or surgery, or any profound system of the doctors. The cure lies here. The poor patient lies flat in her bed. We read, "She was laid and sick of a fever." She could not, therefore, sit up, much less rise from the bed. When she opened her eyes and looked up, she saw the Lord Jesus Christ *standing over her*. O fevered soul! Open your eyes tonight and see Jesus standing over you! With tender love and Infinite compassion He looks down upon you. He shields you, thinks of you and watches over you for good. He will help you, therefore, fear not. Over you, tonight, He broods as does an eagle over its young. Jehovah-Jesus bows over you with fullness of love and power! In your present trouble, fear and depression of spirit, Jesus stands over you and His eyes and His heart are upon you!

Then next, to her great surprise, *the Lord touched her*. Dear Master, touch the fevered ones tonight! Oh, to feel that He is a real Man like your-

self, your Brother, very near to you! This is the touch which will drive out the fever. I love the old verse—

***“A Man there was, a real Man
Who once on Calvary died,
That same dear Man exalted sits
High at His Father’s side.”***

The Lord Jesus is a real Man and so He touches you in your feeble and suffering nature and He seems to say, “In all your afflictions I am afflicted.” When saints are in the furnace, One like unto the Son of God is there with them! They are sufferers, but He is “the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” The Lord give you to feel the touch of the true humanity of Christ!

We read that when our Lord had touched her, *He rebuked the fever*. Your feverishness deserves His rebuke. Oh, that He would bid it be gone! Oh, that He would say tonight, “Be gone unbelief! Be gone anxiety! Be gone fretfulness! Be gone doubt and fear”! The winds and the waves heard His rebuke and from their noise and clamor they hushed themselves to a great calm. Oh, that Jesus would come, now, and speak to your feverishness and you shall be as happy as the birds of Paradise!

I had a great trouble last night—I will not tell you what it was—a great trouble to my heart. But this morning I had a great joy which I will tell you. It is this note—“Dear Sir, I feel so happy to tell you that the Lord has pardoned a poor outcast of society. I got into your place in a crowd, hoping nobody would see me. I had been out all night and was miserable. While you were preaching about the leper, [See Sermon No. 2162, “*And Why Not Me?*”] my whole life of sin rose up before me. I saw myself worse than the leper—cast away by everybody. There is not a sin I was not guilty of. *As you went on I looked straight away to Jesus*. A gracious answer came, ‘Your sins, which are many, are forgiven.’ I never heard any more of your sermon! I felt such joy to think that Jesus died even for a poor harlot! Long before you get this letter I trust to be on the way to my dear home I ran away from. Do please pray for me, that I may be kept by God’s almighty power. I can never thank you enough for bringing me to Jesus”—and so on.

If it had not been for that bit about *going home*, I might have had some doubt about it. But when a fallen girl goes home to her father and mother, it is a safe case! This gives me joy—do you wonder? To see souls saved is Heaven to me! I find that my Lord has a gracious way of laying on a plaster where He makes a sore. If the heart is heavy with grief, He can balance it with consolation.

The next thing Jesus did was to raise her up. You must have felt, when lying very ill, as if you were buried in the bed. So the Savior gave His hand to her and *He lifted her up*. She did not think that she could rise, but with His aid she sat up. Then He gave her an instant cure and at the same time renewed her strength. No trace of fever remained. She was perfectly well. Her instinct, as a matronly woman and head of the household, was to rise at once to prepare a meal for her Benefactor and His disciples. Oh, that you doubting ones, you fevered ones might at once be cured and lifted up so that you would immediately set about serving the Lord and ministering to those around you! Come, let us be as happy as ever we can

be and as useful as it lies in our power to be—and may the fever never visit any one of us again!

On the contrary, as you go home, trip over the pavements with a sense of spiritual health! And when you get home, say at once, “I must minister unto Jesus. He has driven out my cares and fears and soothed my mind—and therefore out of love I will spend and be spent to His praise.” God bless you, for the Savior’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 37.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 37 (SONG II), 746.**

A LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—By God’s goodness, though compassed with infirmity, I have preached right on through the year although I have felt gradually growing feeble. During the last week of the term I was obliged to keep in my bed—the body was in pain and the mind would not work. It was a general running down of all my powers. So I left home thoroughly exhausted. The journey to this delightful haven is a long one, but sitting here in the warm, clear sunlight I feel that I am none the worse for the thousand miles of traveling. The change in climate is almost beyond belief! A few days in such air as this will set me up.

What a change from being steamed to death in the almost solid fogs of London! Thanks be unto God for such a place of recovery for those who are spent in service! I would get out of it all the benefit I can that my ministry may show vigor of mind and power of Divine Grace. Bright upon the tablet of my heart is the record of what was done by Tabernacle friends on Friday, November 7, when the people willingly offered of their substance unto the Lord and all that was needed for the repair of the house of our assembly was brought in at one stroke! A thousand times do I thank all those generous givers. Outside friends have also sent in grand amounts to provide for the other funds and thus the Lord has put His servant beyond care for the needs of the work at this present. I write because continually requested to do so and to assure you of my love in Christ Jesus.

Mentone, November 15, 1890.

Yours truly,

C. H. SPURGEON

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THE MINISTRY OF GRATITUDE

NO. 1071

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.**

***“And immediately she arose and ministered unto them.”
Luke 4:39.***

PETER'S wife's mother had been sick of a great fever and had been restored by the touch of the Savior's hands and by the power of the Savior's word. The Grace of God does not secure us from trial. The house of Peter and of Andrew, (for it was common to them both), was a highly favored one. The Grace of God had passed by many other houses and had selected this for its dwelling place and yet in that abode there was great sickness—the wife's mother lay sick of a fever and was near death. This was no small grief to the household—but that grief was for their lasting benefit.

God loves His chosen too well to let them always live without the rod. If He loved us less He might allow us unalloyed pleasure, but the love of our wise Father is too great to deprive us of the saved benefits of affliction. Sickness came to that house not as an enemy but as a friend, for it was the means whereby Christ's great power was made manifest to that family and through His power His love. The wife's mother could never have been so distinguished a subject of the Redeemer's power if she had not been prostrated with fever. The malaria from the marshes around the city occasioned her being made a trophy of our Lord's Divine energy.

The worst of ills are often the black horses upon which the very best of blessings ride to us. It was no small honor to Peter that his house became the headquarters of the Savior. The sick thronged the door as the sun went down and the Sabbath was over. The multitude brought persons afflicted with all manner of diseases and panted to reach that favored dwelling to lay them before the Lord. The healing power which had displayed itself within poured forth from the house like a mighty flood and all who drank of it were restored. That house contained the springhead and was beyond measure honored by it. Surely for many a year that house would be one of the most notable in the city—surely it would be called the House of the Great Physician.

Not like that ancient house in Antwerp, detestable because it was the den of the Inquisition, but dear to many of the healed ones and their sons as the Hospital of Mercy, the Palace of Blessing. Peter among the Apostles is singularly honored, for everything about him was in some way or other connected with a miracle. His person—it was by a miracle that he had walked the waters. It was by a miracle that he had been saved from drowning when the Savior stretched out His hand and bade him stand fast upon the liquid wave. There was a miracle in connection with his boat, for it was from that boat that the miraculous draught of fishes had been taken and it was filled so full that it began to sink and Simon knelt down and adored the Savior.

There was a miracle in connection with Peter's rusty sword—he cut off with it the ear of the high priest's servant, but the Master healed the wound that his rash defender made. And here, in this case, there was a miracle performed upon his relative—his wife's mother was restored from a great fever by the almighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian man should be ambitious to have the hand of God connected with everything that he has, so that when he looks upon his house he may see God's Providence in giving it to him. When he looks upon the garments that he wears he may see them to be the livery of love and may view the food upon his table as the daily gift of Divine charity.

In looking back upon his whole biography, the Believer may see bright spots where the Presence of God flames forth and makes the humblest circumstances to be illustrious—but, above all, it ought to be his prayer that God's hand should be very conspicuous in connection with his relatives—that of every one of them it might be said, "The Lord restored her," or, "The Lord gave him spiritual life in answer to my prayer." May husband, wife, children, servants—all received healing from "the beloved Physician." May our whole household be, "holiness unto the Lord," and may all sing for joy because the Lord has done great things for them whereof we are glad!

The occurrence about which we are to speak this morning happened on a Sabbath. Sabbaths were generally Christ's great chosen field days to break down the superstitiously rigid observance of the Sabbath among the Pharisees and because it seemed as a holy day to be peculiarly adapted for the display of the greatest works of the holy Savior. It was a Sabbath and the poor patient was probably lying there complaining in her soul that she could not go to the synagogue, or mingle with the people where prayer was sure to be made. Perhaps her fever had reduced her to such a state that she was quite unable to remember Christ the Healer, and unable to breathe a prayer to Him.

But Peter and Andrew went to Him and told the case and besought Him to come and heal her. It is a blessing for you, my Friend, even though you are sick in soul, to have saints for your relatives—to have some in the household who will remember you in prayer and speak into the ear of Christ on your behalf. If through despair or depression of spirit you cannot pray for yourself, happy are you that there are compassionate friends who will speak unto the King on your behalf! One Christian in a family may bring a great blessing to it, but here were two, for Simon and his brother Andrew were both here. And if two of you are agreed as touching anything concerning the Master's kingdom, it shall be done unto you.

The two prevailed with the Savior and, that Sabbath, when the patient little dreamed it, the Savior came to her lowly room and standing over her in infinite pity, He first spoke a royal word of rebuke to the disease, and then, lifting her up gently in His own kind familiar manner she found herself perfectly restored to health! What love she must have felt to her gracious Benefactor! Little wonder is it that thankfulness glowed in her heart and being healed, she rose at once and began to serve her Healer. Her ministering commenced from the very minute of her recovery. Of that min-

istering we are about to speak. "Immediately she arose and ministered unto them."

I. Now, the fact that this restored woman began at once to minister to Christ and to His disciples proves, first, THE CERTAINTY OF HER CURE, and there are no better ways of proving the thoroughness of our *conversion* than by conduct similar to hers. Suppose now, in order to prove that this woman was really restored, we were critically to examine the modes operandi of Christ? Suppose the Master had been accustomed, as He was *not*, to use one set of *ceremonies* over everybody whom He healed, and we were to say, "Well, He has done this, that and the other, as He is accustomed to do. Therefore the woman is healed."

It would not be at all *conclusive* reasoning, yet this is the reasoning of a great many today. This child was baptized. This young person was confirmed and afterwards took the sacrament and consequently this individual is regenerated in Baptism and established in Grace, and so on! The ceremonies are correct and therefore the work is done! Some may believe such reasoning but I marvel that they do—to us it seems that there is a far better way of testing whether persons have Grace or not! If these afore-said baptismally-regenerated people and sacramentally-confirmed people live in sin like other people, it appears to us that they have none of the Grace of God in them, let them pretend to have received it however they may! If the woman had still been hot with fever and had all the symptoms of her disease continued in her, it would have availed nothing to have said, "This has been done and the other"—the woman would *not* have been healed. And if men live like unregenerate sinners, depend upon it, the work of the Holy Spirit is not in them!

Suppose the patient had lain there and had begun to talk about how she felt, how much better she was, what a strange sensation passed through her when the Savior rebuked the disease, and how strangely well she felt? Yet if she had not risen up, but had lain there, still, there would have been no *evidence* of her restoration—at any rate none that you or I could judge of. So when persons tell us that they have felt great changes of heart, that they know they are renewed because they enjoy this and love that and hate the other, we are very hopeful and desire to believe what they say. But, after all, trees are known by their fruit—and converted people, while they will, themselves, know their inward experience—cannot convince us by it! We must *see* their outward ministering for Christ. If their actions are holy, if their lives are purified, then shall we know, but not till then, that their nature is renewed!

Suppose this good woman, still lying upon her bed, had begun to say, "Well, I *hope* I am healed," and had begun to express some feeble expectation that one day she would be able to exercise the functions of health? We would not have known that she was restored. Something more was needed than mere hopes and expectations. Or suppose she had leaped out of her bed in wild excitement, rushed down the street and performed strange antics—it would have been no proof that she was recovered—but it would have made us feel sure that she was delirious and the fever still strong upon her!

So when we see persons inactive as to *holiness*, we cannot believe that they are saved. Or when we see them full of empty excitement about religion but not serving God in the common acts of life, we think them to be in the delirium of a sinful presumption, but cannot regard them as healed by the cooling, calming hand of the Great Physician, who, when He puts out the fever, restores the soul to quiet and peace.

The woman gave a much better proof than any of these could be. This leads us to remark that the only irresistible proof with onlookers of a person being spiritually healed by Christ must be found in the change in his conduct, and especially in his from that moment on living to serve Christ and to be obedient to Him. This is the test and nothing short of it. When we see holy living in the man who was once a gross offender, we are quite sure that Christ has healed him because the man begins to do what he could not have done before.

Perhaps this poor fevered woman might have made some shift to have done something for the Savior, but the unconverted man is dead in trespasses and sin—he may go through forms of religion, but real holiness is far above and out of his sight—he cannot obey the Law of God. His nature is set against it—he is unable to walk in the way of God’s commandments. Therefore, when we see him doing so, we exclaim, “This is the finger of God! God has healed that man or else he would not be able to live as he is now living.” Besides, the unconverted man, before conversion, *hates* holiness. He is disinclined to it so that in his case, when his life becomes pure and upright, when he spends and is spent in the service of Jesus Christ, you know that this must be the work of the Holy Spirit in his soul for *nothing* else could have changed his nature but the same Omnipotence which first of all created him! God’s hand is in that conversion which is proved by the holiness of the man’s outward character.

Beside this, while the sinner is disinclined to everything that is holy, we know that he especially despises the Savior and thinks little of His people. Consequently, when a man is brought to serve the Savior and is willing to do good to the children of God for Christ’s sake, there is a sure mark that a miracle has been worked in him which has touched the secret springs of his being and altogether transformed him. The woman’s rising up to minister to our Lord was a sure sign of returned health and the change of outward character which leads a man to devote himself to the service of Christ is even more infallibly a proof of true salvation!

I need you to note, however, dear Friends, for a moment, the nature of the acts which this restored woman performed, because they are symbolic of the best form of actions by which to judge of a person’s being renewed. Her duties were humble ones. She was probably the head of the household and she began at once to discharge the duties of a housewife—duties unostentatious and commonplace. Many persons who profess to be converted aspire at once to preaching—a pulpit for them is the main thing and a large congregation is their ambition! They must do some great thing and occupy the chief seat in the synagogue!

But this good woman did not think of preaching—women are always best when they don’t. She thought of washing Christ’s feet and preparing Him necessary food which was her proper business. To these kind but

simple actions she devoted herself. Attention to humble duties is a better sign of Grace than an ambition for lofty and elevated works. There is probably far more Grace in the loving service of a mother towards Christ in bringing up her children in the fear of God than there might be if she were well known as taking a leading part in great public movements. There may be more service for Christ done by a workman in discharging his duties, as such, and trying to do good to his fellow workmen than if he aspired to become a great leader of the minds and thoughts of others.

Of course there are exceptions, for glorious was Deborah and great shall be her name in Israel! And those who are sent of God to lead His Church shall not be without their reward, but even then, when they have to look for personal evidences of Grace they never dare say, "We know that we are passed from death unto life because we preach the Gospel," for they remember that Judas did the same! They never say, "We are confident of salvation because God has worked wonders by us," for they remember that the son of perdition had the same distinction! No, Brothers and Sisters, they fall back upon the same evidences which prove the truth of the religion of humbler people—they rejoice in testimonies common to all the elect—"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the Brethren."

The humbler graces and duties are the best tests. Hypocrites mimic all public duties but the private and concealed life of true godliness they cannot counterfeit! And because they cannot "do so with their enchantments" we feel like the men of Egypt, that, "this is the finger of God." Remember, too, that this good woman attended to home duties. She did not go down the street a 100 yards off to glorify Christ. She, I dare say, did that afterwards, but she began at home. Charity begins there and so should piety. That is the best religion which is most at home at home. Grace which smiles around the family hearth is Grace, indeed.

If your own household cannot see that you are godly, depend upon it, nobody else can! And if your parents or children have grave doubts about the sincerity of your religion, I am afraid you ought to have grave doubts about it yourself. Peter's mother-in-law ministered to Christ at home and that was clear evidence of her being restored to health. And in your case it will be the best witness to your conversion if you serve Jesus in the bosom of your family and make your house the dwelling place of all that is kind and good and holy. She attended to suitable duties, duties consistent with her sex and condition. She did not try to be what God had not made her, but did what she could. She attended to natural duties, duties which suggested themselves in a moment and were not far-fetched and fanciful.

She set about doing present duties required then and there, and did not wait to serve the Lord in a year's time. In a quiet natural manner she pursued her calling as if it never occurred to her to do otherwise. If somebody had thought it wonderful that she ministered to Christ, she would have been surprised at them! It seemed to her the most natural thing for her to do. Dear Soul, I dare say while lying in bed sick there were 50 things she would have liked to have done—what housewife would not in such a case see many grievous arrears of work all around her? But Jesus being there, no sooner did she feel her health returned than she at once

arose to discharge the offices of grateful hospitality as a matter of course. How could she do otherwise but wait upon Jesus and His friends?

Now, observe that those good works which prove a man to be a Christian are not such as he could boast of. He does them as a matter of course. He feels he could not do otherwise and wonders that anybody else can. Is he born of God? He yearns to teach others about the Savior—he cannot help it—his tongue needs to be talking about Jesus! Then he begins to give of his substance to the poor. It does not strike him as being at all a remarkable or extraordinary thing—he wonders if anyone can help being generous to real need! Now he begins to enquire about the little children in the neighborhood—can he get them into the Sunday school? Or he occupies himself with some other form of Christian work and he does it because he feels it to be inevitable for him to do so—it is one of the instincts of the new Nature which God the Holy Spirit has implanted in him.

Those natural, commonplace duties which grow out of holy instincts within are the best evidence of a work of Grace! The more genuinely natural and unstrained the better. Vain is the religion which aims at unnatural conditions and makes much of distinctions of a needless kind. What is there in a peculiar garb, or affectation of speech, or separation of residence? These minister to our own vainglory! True godliness aims not at her own honor, but is content to labor among the many, to be a man among men, yet differing in nothing but character. Ours it is, as the true salt, to mingle with the masses—not to seek a proud isolation. We are men, not monks! And our Sisters are women, not nuns! All that interests men interests us—we only differ from our race by being conformed to the image of Jesus, while they wear the image of the fallen Adam.

May God grant us Grace to exhibit the Christianity of common life—the real and practical Christianity of every day. Christianity is not with hermits in their cells, nor nuns in their convents, nor priests in their cloisters—those are all cowardly soldiers who shun the battle of life! The true faith is the joy and strength of all who love the Lord and fight His battles on the broad plains of life. True religion must be manifested in your workshops, in your houses, in the streets, in the fields, in the nursery and in the parlor. This celestial flower reveals its richest perfume, not in the conservatories of unnatural seclusion, but under the clear sky of human life, for “as a flower of the field so it flourishes,” where God has planted it.

One other point before leaving this—these things become a conclusive proof of Divine Grace in the heart when they are voluntarily rendered as this good woman’s ministry was. I do not read that she was *asked* to do anything for Christ, but it suggested itself to her at once without command or request. Her work was done promptly, for, “immediately she arose” and did it. She no sooner had power to work than occasion was seized without delay. Promptness is the soul of obedience—“I made haste and delayed not to keep Your commandments.” I doubt not she did her ministering cheerfully. There is all the air of cheerfulness about the words, “She arose.” It reads as if with alacrity, vigor, sprightliness and eagerness she entered into the service.

That is the best service for God that is done promptly, without delay; voluntarily, without pressing; generously, without grudging; heartily, without complaining. With us it is not, "This you should do, and this you must do," but we serve Jesus because we love to do so and because labor for Him is to us a joy and a delight!

II. I have thus brought before you the first point of our discourse, now notice the second one which is most interesting. This woman's ministry for Christ and His disciples showed, secondly, THE PERFECTION OF HER CURE. It may not strike you for a moment, but just think about it. She was sick with a fever. Supposing a Prophet should visit your house and restore your friend from a great fever. Yet the person healed would not be able to rise from the bed for some time—fever leaves extreme weakness behind and when the fever itself is entirely gone, it needs some two or three weeks, and sometimes more—before the person who has been prostrated by it will be able to go about his daily work.

This was healing from God, indeed, a Divine work emphatically because the woman was so healed that all her weakness vanished and she was able to proceed to her work without difficulty! And, Beloved, it is our mark of a work of Grace in the soul when the converted man becomes at once a servant of Christ. The human theory of moral reformations makes *time* a great element in its operations. If you are to reclaim a great offender you must win him first from one vice and then from another. You must put him through a process of education by which he gradually perceives that what he has been accustomed to do is bad for himself and wakes up to the conviction that honesty and sobriety will be the best for his own profit.

Time is required by the moral reformer or he cannot develop his plans. He ridicules the idea of effecting anything in an hour or two. Man, the creature of time, must have time for the accomplishment of his very imperfect works—but to the eternal God time is nothing! His miracles annihilate time. A man who is converted is cured at once of his sins—the tap root of his sins is cut away then and there and though some of his sins linger, yet every one has received the stroke which will prove its deathblow. Once and for all, in a moment—when a man believes and is born-again—the axe is laid at the root of all the evil trees within him! Sin is then and there condemned to die and what is more, all Divine Graces are in a moment implanted in the soul, not in perfection—they will have to grow. But they are all sown in the man in a moment in embryo so that the renewed sinner, though he has only been born-again five minutes, has within him the embryo of the perfect saint who shall stand before the Throne of God—this is one of the marvels which certify the work to be Divine.

For note, Beloved, those who have just been converted to God can worship God, can praise God, can pray to God, can love God though they were strangers to these things up to then. And some of the sweetest worship that God Himself ever hears comes from the hearts of the newly regenerate. Of all the prayers that strike the Christian's ear like music, surely among the sweetest are the broken pleadings of those who have just found the Savior! I delight in the expressions of faith of elderly and full-grown Christians—they are exceedingly instructive and precious. But,

oh, that first grip of the hand, that first flash of the eye, that first tear of joy when a soul has seen Christ for the first time and stands astonished at the matchless vision of incarnate love! Why, there is no worship sweeter beneath the sun!

The woman arises at once and ministers to Christ and the sinner arises at once and begins to adore Christ. Did not I say that the newly-converted sinner can love and does love his Lord as soon as ever he is born to God? I must correct myself. He not only *can* and *does* love, but he loves beyond most others, for very seldom do men's after-love exceed in fervency the love of their espousals, which is also called their first love! This standard love is implanted in us at once, all blooming and full of perfume. Hating Christ one minute, hearts have been brought to be ravished with His love the next! The men were enemies to God an hour ago, and now they could die to defend His Gospel, so changed are their natures!

This must be a Divine work! If that which was water flood, quenching every spark of fire, should suddenly blaze and glow like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, God alone could have worked the change! Say, who has turned the waters of raging hatred into the flame of holy love? Who has done it but the mighty God Himself? If the iceberg suddenly becomes a flaming beacon, who can have worked this marvel but the Miracle Worker who alone does great wonders? Glory be to God, we often see it and He shall have the praise of it!

How pure some men's lives become at conversion—pure at once, though before they were polluted with every vice! Certain sins we may have to fight with all our lives, but a renewed man usually has no difficulty whatever with the grosser sins. For instance, I have known a man habituated to blasphemy who probably never did, since he was a boy, speak a dozen sentences without an oath, and yet, after he had been converted the profane habit has never molested him. We have known some who have been troubled with a ferocious temper which made them like demons, but from the moment of conversion they have been remarkable for their singular gentleness and meekness. We have known misers instantly display the freest generosity and thieves become scrupulously honest.

Though the temptation to old sin may return, yet for the most part those who have been saved from gross vices have been the greatest loathers of the very mention or name of their former abominations. Such is the work of God in the soul, that these evils are driven out at once and sent right away—and then the man who before had been an adept in all manner of evil work becomes as much an expert in all manner of holy labor! He may not at once have picked up the technicalities of religion—perhaps it would be as well he *never* did—but he gets to the bottom of it, the secret of it and goes to work for Jesus Christ in his own fashion and way, with wonderful wisdom and extraordinary skill from the very first!

Some of the best evangelists we have ever seen have been those who learned at once to evangelize—who seemed to have known it from the first hour in which they were converted to God—taking to it from inward love as the young swans take to the stream. Some of the best persons who speak to others about their souls, privately, began to do so as soon as

they have found the Savior! They have attained to the sacred art—and a blessed art it is—as though they were in a moment touched by the hand of God and inspired for the service He meant them to render.

Now, what is the practical drift of this second remark but this? As it proved the real divinity of this woman's cure that she was able, immediately, to go to work for Christ, so you young converts should hold the honor of Christ in great esteem and prove the reality of His Grace in your souls by bringing forth immediate fruit to His honor. See if you cannot at once rise and minister to Him! Be as zealous as the dying thief—he had no sooner known Christ than he confessed Him and he did the only thing he could do for his dying Lord—he rebuked the other malefactor who had reviled the Savior. Oh, if you love Jesus, do not wait till you have been 10 years a Christian! Serve Him now!

If you are healed from sin, do not wait for experience—with your inexperience of everything except the new birth, go and seek the good of others! Do not suppose you must be trained for this war through a long process of spiritual drill, but march forward at once with all your heart and soul in the freshness of your newly-given life. It may be you will achieve greater triumphs than some of the older ones, for alas, some of them are dry and sapless and have long forgotten their early days of enthusiasm. In too many Christians the peach has lost its bloom, the flower has withered from the stem—they are not now loving and earnest—they have declined into the sere and yellow leaf of religion. Go with the dew of the morning still upon your spirit and I know not what great and gracious works the Lord may do by you!

III. Now we pass on to a third head briefly. Peter's wife's mother in ministering to Christ proved HER OWN GRATITUDE. Her acts of hospitality were an exhibition of her thankfulness. Brethren, if we need to evidence our gratitude to Christ we had better do it in the same way as she did. There is no record of her having fallen at Jesus' feet and saying, "Blessed be Your name." She may have done so—the Bible has not room for many holy expressions, though it finds space for gracious *acts*.

I do not know that she sat down and sang a hymn, perhaps she did—good women before her have done so and I hope they will after her—but the hymn is not recorded. Holy Scripture has not room for all the hymns which good people sing, but it finds a corner for the *actions* which they perform. We have the Acts of the Apostles, through we have not the devotional emotions, the hymns, or the pious resolutions of the Apostles. This good woman proved her gratitude by tangible deeds. Did she not say to herself, "The Lord has served me; I will serve Him"? It never strikes an awakened person that mere *words* are a fit return for the Grace of God. Can you give for the Lord's healing fruit a handful of mere leaves from the tree of talk? It looks like mockery! Give Him the leaves, but wrap the *fruit* up within them! Let Him have true *action* and consecrated *service*—for this is the fittest fruit of a grateful heart.

Observe that it is not said that she waited upon Christ before she was healed. The fevered patient is first restored and then she begins to minister. I am far from exhorting any of you to serve Christ in your lives if your inner life is not first of all renewed by Him. There must be a *regenerated*

heart through His blessed touch, or else a renewed life may be imitated but cannot be truly possessed. First the healing, then the serving! The healing is first, but note well that the serving follows close at its heels. If you are saved, arise and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Since the light is now kindled, let it shine forth from you—since Christ has opened in your soul a well of living waters—let it flow out of the midst of you as a river of water for His service and the benefit of your fellow men.

This good soul knew to what end she had been raised up. She knew from Whom she had received the healing—it was from the Lord alone. She knew from what she was restored, namely, from the very jaws of death. She knew to what she was restored, for she felt that health and strength had returned to her, and therefore she guessed rightly for what she was restored, namely, that she might wait upon the Lord. You, my Brother, are saved from Hell. You are lifted up into spiritual life and acceptance. You are ennobled and made an heir of Heaven. Why was this done but that you might minister to your Lord here and glorify Him hereafter? Our gratitude ought to teach us the Divine object of Grace and we ought to take care that it is attained.

The Lord cannot have saved us at such an expense as the death of His own Son for any reason less than that we should live unto Him! What is the reckoning of all our grateful hearts about this? Is it not this, that if we are bought with a price, we are not our own? That if the Holy Spirit has given us a new Nature it must be that we should lead a new life, and that our new life must be consecrated to Him who is the Author of it? Beloved, true gratitude always leads us to serve and it distinctly makes our healing Lord the object of our service—it puts Him in the forefront. “She arose and ministered unto them.” To Him first, and to His disciples next—to the Head and for the Head’s sake to all the members. To the Redeemer and because of Him to all the redeemed.

I put to each one here present who has been healed from sin and saved from spiritual death by Christ, this question—What are you rendering unto your Lord? What are you doing for Him? Begin with Him. Do it as unto Him. Do what you do in His Presence and present it at His dear feet—then I know you will be doing something for His people, too! His poor you will befriend. His backsliding ones you will seek to gather in. His sick ones you will visit. His comfortless ones you will console. His wandering ones—as yet uncalled—you will seek after them. His lost sheep, your anxieties will go out for them. You will minister to Him and to His chosen—to all the members of His body.

What are you doing, Brother? What are you doing, Sister? I do not ask you now in my own name, for I am no master of yours—neither are you accountable to me—but I ask it in the name of Him whose hands were pierced for you and whose heart was opened by the soldier’s spear for your redemption! Oh, what are you doing for Him? Do you love Him? If you love Him feed His lambs and His sheep. If you love, serve! And if you serve, serve Him first and serve His children and His people next, and you will prove your gratitude.

IV. But now, lastly, this woman's ministering to Christ proved in the fourth place, THE CONDESCENSION OF THE PHYSICIAN. He who healed her of the fever did not need her to minister to Him! He who had power to heal diseases had certainly power to subsist without human ministry. If Christ could raise her up He must be Omnipotent and Divine—what need, then had He of a womanly service? Might He not have used the grand style of the Old Testament, and said, "If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are Mine"? But instead of this the mighty Master of all angels condescended to be waited upon by a poor female.

It was great condescension on Christ's part that He needed ministry and great gentleness that He so often chose woman's ministry. He came to earth and the first garments of His Infancy were wrapped about Him by a woman's hands, and here He dwelt till at last He died and holy women bound Him up in the cerements of the tomb and laid Him in the sepulcher. Matchless marvel was this of condescension, that He who is Almighty and ever-blessed should stoop from Heaven to need the ministry of human beings! He has ministered to us by humbling Himself to accept mortal ministry! Peter's wife's mother was one of the despised poor, but Jesus honored her. What was she but a fisherman's wife—at any rate the mother of a fisherman's wife, a poor, obscure, illiterate woman, yet Christ allowed her to wait upon Him—an honor which Herodias the royal princess never had!

So the Lord today should be beloved of us for His humility in allowing us to wait upon Him—in allowing me, in allowing you—to do anything for His dear name's sake. I do not wonder that Christ allowed Paul and Peter and John to serve Him, but that He should suffer *me* to do it? I am overwhelmed with astonishment at it! Do you not marvel, also? It seems easy enough to believe that the blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalene and other holy women were honored of God. But that you, dear Sister, should be allowed to take a part in His service, is not this marvelous? Will you not bless Him and minister with the utmost cheerfulness because you feel it to be so great a Grace? Is it not gracious on our Lord's part to leave room in His Church for ministry?

Suppose, now, the Lord had made all His people rich? Then there would be no room for the generosity of His people to help His poor saints and you would not have the opportunity of proving your love to Him as you now can. Suppose He had converted all His elect by the secret working of His Spirit without any teaching? Then He would not have needed you in the Sunday school, nor you with your tracts, nor me with my sermons—and we should have had nothing to do for Christ—we should have been sighing and crying, "The good Master has not permitted us to give Him anything! Why, on our birthdays our little children love to give their father something, if it is only a bunch of flowers out of the garden, or a four-penny piece with a hole in it!"

They like to do it to show their love and wise parents will be sure to let their children do such things for them. So is it with our great Father in Heaven. What are our Sunday school teaching and our preaching and all that, but these cracked four-penny pieces? Just nothing at all! But the

Lord allows us to do His work for His own love's sake. His love to us finds a sweetness in our love to Him. I am most thankful that in the Church there is room for such a variety of ministries. Some Brethren are so strangely constituted that I cannot tell what they were made for—but I believe if they are God's people there is a place for them in His spiritual temple!

A man who was accustomed to buy timber and work it up, on one occasion found a very crooked stick of wood in his bargain and said to his son as he put it aside, "I cannot tell, John, whatever I shall do with it. It is the ugliest shaped piece I ever bought in my life." But it so happened, while building a barn, that he needed a timber exactly of that shape and it fitted in so thoroughly well that he said, "It really seems as if that tree grew on purpose for that corner." So our gracious Lord has arranged His Church so that every crooked stick will fit in somewhere or other, if it is only a tree of His own right hand planting—He has made it with a purpose and knows when it will answer that purpose.

How this ought to rebuke any who say, "I do not see what I can do." Dear Friend, there is a peculiar work for you. Find it out—and I think it will not be far off—the exercise of a little rejection will soon enable you to discover it. Be grateful that this is a certain fact, without exception, that every child of God who has been healed has some ministry which he can render to Christ and which he *ought* to render at once! May the Lord allow every one of you to show your gratitude in this way, and while you do it, let it always be in an adoring spirit, saying, "Lord, I thank You I am allowed to go to my Sunday school class."

Do not look at your work as a burden! Say, "Lord, I thank You I am permitted to do it." "O God, I bless You that I am allowed to go round that little district and call at the houses." You Bible Women, bless God that He has let you be Bible Women! And you city missionaries, thank God that you are allowed to be city missionaries. "Oh," says one, "I can hardly do that because I suffer so much abuse and so much ill-treatment." Bless God, dear Brother, that He counts you worthy to suffer for His name's sake! You know the old story of Sir Walter Raleigh. When Queen Elizabeth, one day, came to a miry place in the road, he took off his cloak for her to walk upon.

Did he regret it? No, he was delighted at it, and half the court wished for another muddy place that they might be able to do the same! Oh, you that love your Lord, be willing to lie down for Christ's sake and pave the miry parts of the way by being despised for His name's sake! This honor you should covet and should not shun! Arise, and minister, you healed ones! And as for you who are not healed, may you believe in Him who is able to restore you with His touch. He is mighty to save. Believe in Him and you shall live forever! Amen.

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

“AT YOUR WORD”

NO. 1654

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 16, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled
all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at
Your word I will let down the net.”
Luke 5:5.*

How very much may simple obedience partake of the sublime! Peter went to take up the net, but let it down into the sea as he said as naturally as possible, “At Your word I will let down the net.” He was then and there appealing to one of the grandest principles which rules among intelligent beings—and to the strongest force which sways the universe—“At Your word.” Great God, it is “at Your Word” that seraphs fly and cherubs bow! Your angels which excel in strength do Your commandments hearkening to the voice of Your word. “At Your word” space and time first came into existence and all things that are. “At Your word”—here is the cause of causes, the beginning of the creation of God. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made,” and by that word was the present constitution of this round world settled as it stands.

When the earth was formless and dark, Your voice, O Lord, was heard, saying, “Let there be light,” and, “at Your word” light leaped forth. “At Your word” day and night took up their places and, “at Your word” the waters were divided from the waters by the firmament of Heaven. “At Your word” the dry land appeared and the seas retired to their channels. “At Your word” the globe was mantled over with green and vegetable life began. “At Your word” appeared the sun and moon and stars, “for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.” “At Your word” the living creatures filled the sea, the air, the land and man, at last, appeared. Of all this we are well assured, for by *faith* we know that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

Acting in conformity with the word of our Lord we feel ourselves to be in order with all the forces of the universe, traveling on the main track of all real existence. Is not this a sublime condition, even though it is seen in the common deeds of our everyday life? It is not in creation, alone, that the word of the Lord is supreme, but in Providence, too, its majestic power is manifested, for the Lord upholds all things by the word of His power! Snow and vapor and stormy wind are all fulfilling His word. His word runs very swiftly. When frost binds up the life-floods of the year, the Lord sends forth His word and melts them. Nature abides and moves by the word of the Lord.

So, too, all matters of fact and history are beneath the supreme word of God. Jehovah stands in the center of all things! As Lord of All, He abides at the saluting point, and all the events of the ages come marching by at His word, bowing to His sovereign will! “At Your word,” O God, kingdoms arise and empires flourish! “At Your word” races of men become dominant and tread down their fellows. “At Your word” dynasties die, kingdoms crumble, mighty cities become a wilderness and armies of men melt away like the hoarfrost of the morning. Despite the sin of man and the rage of devils, there is a sublime sense in which *all* things—from the beginning, since Adam crossed the threshold of Eden even until now—have happened according to the purpose and will of the Lord of Hosts. Prophecy utters her Oracles and history writes her pages, “at Your word,” O Lord!

It is wonderful to think of the fisherman of Galilee letting down his net in perfect consonance with all the arrangements of the ages! His net obeys the Law which regulates the spheres. His hand consciously does what Arcturus and Orion are doing without thought. This little bell on the Galilean lake rings out in harmony with the everlasting chimes! “At Your word,” says Peter, as he promptly obeys, therein repeating the watchword of seas and stars, of winds and worlds! It is glorious to be keeping step with the marching of the armies of the King of kings!

There is another way of working out this thought. “At Your word” has been the password of all good men from the beginning until now. Saints have acted upon these three words and found their marching orders in them. An ark is built on dry land and the ribald crowd gather about the hoary Patriarch, laughing at him, but he is not ashamed, for lifting his face to Heaven, he says, “I have built this great vessel, O Jehovah, at Your word.” Abraham quits the place of his childhood. He leaves his family and goes with Sarah to a land of which he knows nothing! Crossing the broad Euphrates and entering upon a country possessed by the Canaanite, he roams as a stranger and a sojourner all his days. He dwells in tents with Isaac and Jacob. If any scoff at him for thus renouncing the comforts of settled life, he lifts his calm face to Heaven and smilingly answers to the Lord, “It is at Your word.”

Yes, and even when his brow is furrowed, and the hot tears are ready to force themselves from beneath the Patriarch’s eyelids as he lifts his hand with the knife to stab Isaac in the heart, if any charge him with murder, or think him mad, he lifts the same placid face towards the majesty of the Most High and says, “It is at Your word.” At that word he joyfully sheathes the sacrificial knife, for he has proven his willingness to go to the utmost at the word of the Lord, His God! If I were to introduce you to a thousand of the faithful ones who have shown the obedience of faith, in every case they would justify their acts by telling you that they did them “at God’s word.”

Moses lifts his rod in the presence of the haughty Pharaoh, “at Your word,” great God! Nor does he lift that rod in vain at Jehovah’s word, for

thick and heavy fall the plagues upon the children of Ham. They are made to know that God’s Word returns not to Him void, but fulfills His purpose, whether it is of threat or of promise! See Moses lead the people out of Egypt, the whole host in its myriads! Mark how he has brought them to the Red Sea, where the wilderness does shut them in. The heights frown on either side, and the rattle of Egypt’s war chariots is behind. How came Moses to so play the fool and bring them here? Were there no graves in Egypt that thus he brought them forth to die in the Red Sea? The answer of Moses is the quiet reflection that he did it at Jehovah’s word—and God justifies that word, for the sea opens a wide highway for the elect of God—and they march joyfully through! And with timbrels and dances on the other side they sing unto the Lord who has triumphed gloriously!

If in later days you find Joshua compassing Jericho and not assailing it with battering rams, but only with one great blast of trumpets, his reason is that God has spoken to him by His word! And so, right on, for time would fail me to speak of Samson, Jephthah and Barak—these men did what they did at God’s word and, doing it, the Lord was with them! Is it bringing things down from the sublime to the ridiculous to talk of Peter and the net which he casts over the side of his little boat? Oh, no! We are, ourselves, ridiculous when we do not make our own lives sublime by the obedience of faith. Certainly, there may be as much sublimity in casting a net as in building an ark, lifting a rod, or sounding a ram’s horn! And it is clear that if it is done in *faith*, the simplest action of life may be sublimely great! The flash of the wave, as it covers Peter’s net may be as sublime before the Lord as the Glory of the Red Sea billow when it returned in its strength.

God, who sees a world in a drop, sees wonders in the smallest act of faith. Do not, I pray you, think that sublimity lies in masses, to be measured by a scale, so that a mile shall be sublime and an inch shall be absurd! We measure not morals and spirituals by rods and chains! The common act of fishing at Christ’s word links Peter with all the principalities, powers and forces which in all ages have known this as their only Law—“He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” We, too, shall have fellowship with the sublime if we know how to be perfectly obedient to the Word of the Lord! This ought to be the rule of all Christians for the whole of their lives—“At Your word.” This should direct us in the Church and in the world. It should guide us in our spiritual beliefs and in our secular acts! “At Your word.”

I wish it were so. We hear boasts that the Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of Protestants. It is a mere boast. Few Protestants can honestly repeat the assertion. They have other books to which they pay deference! They have other rules, other guides, beyond and above, and even in opposition to the one Word of God! It ought not to be so. The power of the Church and the power of the individual to please God shall never be fully known till we get back to the simple, yet sublime rule of our text, “At Your

word.” I am going to hammer upon that phrase, this morning, as God shall help me—“At Your word.” This rule has many applications. First, I shall somewhat repeat myself by saying that it ought to apply to the affairs of ordinary life. Secondly, it should apply to matters of spiritual profiting. And thirdly, and here I shall enlarge, it ought to find its chief application in our great life business—being fishers of men.

I. “At Your word” should apply TO ALL THE AFFAIRS OF ORDINARY LIFE. I mean, first, as to continuance in honest industry. “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.” Many a man, in the present trying crisis, is half ready to throw up his work and run away from his business because he has toiled all night and taken nothing. Truly, the financial darkness has lasted long and does not yet yield to the dawn, but yet Christians must not murmur or leave their posts. Oh tried ones, continue to be diligent in your business, still provide things honest in the sight of all men. Labor on in hope! Say as Peter did, “Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” You know that Truth of God full well! Know this, also, that the Lord will not forsake His people! Your best endeavors will not, of themselves, bring you prosperity. Still, do not relax those endeavors. God’s Word to you is to quit yourselves like men, be strong, gird up the loins of yours mind, be sober, and stand fast. Throw not away your shield, cast not away your confidence, but stand steadily in your rank till the tide of battle turns! *God* has placed you where you are—move not till His Providence calls you! Do not run before the cloud. Take down the shutters tomorrow morning and display your goods! Let not despondency drive you to anything that is rash or unseemly. Say, “Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”

If I am speaking to those who are out of work just now, searching for some place where they can provide bread for themselves and for their families, as is their duty, let them hear and ponder! If any man does not do his best to provide for his own household, he comes not under a Gospel blessing, but he is said to be worse than a heathen and a publican—it is the duty of us all to labor with our hands for that which is good—that we may have to give to the needy as well as to those dependent on us. If, after having gone about this city till your feet are blistered, you can find nothing to do, do not sit at home next Monday sulkily saying, “I will not try again.” Apply my text to this painful trial and yet, again, sally forth in hope, saying with Peter, “We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”

Let men see that a Christian is not readily driven to despair! No, let them see that when the yoke is made more heavy, the Lord has a secret way of strengthening the backs of His children to bear their burdens. If the Holy Spirit shall make you calmly resolute, you will honor God much more by your happy perseverance than the talkative by their fine speeches, or the formalist by their outward show. Common life is the true

place in which to prove the truth of godliness and bring Glory to God! Not by doing extraordinary works, but by the piety of ordinary life, is the Christian known and his religion honored. At God’s Word, hold on, even to the end. “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.”

It may be, too, that you have been endeavoring in your daily life to acquire skill in your business and you have not succeeded, or you have tried to acquire more knowledge, so that you could better fulfill your vocation, but up to now you have not prospered as you wish. Do not, therefore, cease from your efforts! Christians must never be idlers. Our Lord Jesus would never have it said that His disciples are a sort of cowards who, if they do not succeed the first time, will never try again! We are to be patterns of all the moral virtues as well as of the spiritual graces! Therefore, at the bidding of the Lord, work on with mind and hand and look to Him for the blessing. “At His word” let down the net once more—He may intend to bless you largely when, by trial, you have been prepared to bear the benediction.

This will apply very closely to those who are laboring hard in the training of children. It may be that with your own children you may not have succeeded yet—the boy’s spirit may still be wild and proud—and the girl may not yet have yielded to obedience and submission. Or you may be working in the Sunday school, or in the Day school, trying to impart knowledge and to fashion the youthful minds aright—and you may have been baffled. But if it is your business to teach, do not be overcome! Stand to your work as though you heard Jesus say, “Whatever you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men.” Earnestly, then, at His word, let down the net! I counsel you, dear Friends, in everything to which you set your hands, if it is a good thing, do it with all your might! And if it is *not* a good thing, have nothing to do with it!

It may be possible that you are called to teach the age some moral Truths of God. In most generations, individuals have been called to carry out reforms and to promote progress. You are bound to love your neighbor as yourself; therefore, as you have opportunity, do good unto *all* men. If you have tried, and up to now have not won a hearing, do not give up your point—if it is a good thing and you are a Christian man, never let it be said that you were afraid or ashamed. I admire in Palissy, the potter, not only his Christianity, which could not be overcome by persecution, but his perseverance in his own business of making pottery. His last farthing and his last breath would have gone in discovering a glaze, or bringing out a color! I love to see such men Believers. I should not like to see our Lord followed by a set of cowards who could not fight the common battles of life—how should such as these become worthy of the lordlier chivalry which wrestles with spiritual wickedness in high places? It is for us to be bravest among the brave in the plains of common life, that when

we are summoned to higher fields, where still greater deeds are needed, we may go there trained for the higher service!

Does it seem to you to be a little out of place to be talking thus from the pulpit? I do not think so. I notice how, in the Old Testament, we are told of the sheep and the cattle and the fields and the harvests of good men—and these had to do with their religion. I notice how the prudent woman, according to Solomon, looked well to her household. And I observe that we have in the Bible, a book of Proverbs, and another called Ecclesiastes, with little spiritual teaching in them, but a great deal of good, sound, practical common sense! It is evident to me that the Lord intends that our faith should not be penned up in a pew, but should walk the shop and be seen in every walk of life! The great principle of my text fell from the lips of a working man—and to the working man I return it!

It was connected with a net and a boat—the implements of Peter’s labor—and with these common things I would link it. And I would say to all who serve the Lord in this present evil world—in the name of God, if you have anything to do, be not so desponding and despairing as to cease from it, but, according to His word, once more go forward in your honest endeavors, and, like Peter, say—“I will let down the net.” This may prove a word in season to some who are weary of the hardness of the times. I shall rejoice if it nerves an arm or cheers a heart. Have faith in God, my tried Brothers and Sisters. “Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

II. IN MATTERS OF SPIRITUAL PROFITING we must, at the word of Christ, let down the net again. I put this, first, to those who have been up to this Tabernacle a great many times, heartily, if I am to believe them, hoping to find salvation. You have prayed before the sermon began that the Lord would really bless the sermon to you. Now, mark, I do not understand you at all! I cannot make you out because the way of salvation is open to you at this very moment and it is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” You have nothing to wait for—all your waiting is sinful! If you say you are waiting for the stirring of the pool, I tell you there is no pool to be stirred and no angel to stir it! That pool was dried up long ago and angels never go that way now.

Our Lord Jesus Christ shut up Bethesda, when He came, and said to the man lying there, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” That is what He says to you! You have no business waiting—but as you are, and are here this morning, I would earnestly invite you, at the word of Christ, who has bid us preach the Gospel to every creature—“believe and live.” Let down the net once more and let it down this way—say, “My Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief.” Breathe a prayer to Jesus that He would accept you. Submit yourself to Him and beseech Him to become, now, at this very moment, your Savior. You will be heard! Plenty of fish are waiting to be taken in the net of faith. At the Lord’s word, let it down!

But I will now speak to others present who have been letting down their nets, in vain, perhaps, in the form of importunate prayer. Have you been praying for the conversion of a relative, or pleading for some other good thing which you believe to be according to the will of God? And, after long pleading—pleading into the night, for your spirit has been sad—are you tempted never to offer that petition again? Now then, at Christ’s Word, who said that men ought always to pray and not to faint—at Christ’s Word, who says, “Pray without ceasing”—let down the net and pray again! Not because the circumstances which surround you are more favorable, but simply because Jesus bids you, continue in prayer! And who knows but that this very time you will meet with success!

Or have you been searching the Scriptures to find a promise which will suit your case? Do you want to get hold of some good Word from God that will cheer you? Shoals of such fish are around your boat! The sea of Scripture is full of them—fish of promise, I mean—but, alas, you cannot catch one of them. Nevertheless, try again. Go home this afternoon and search the Scriptures again with prayer! Beseech the Holy Spirit to apply a precious portion to your heart, that you may, by faith, enjoy the sweetness of it—and who knows but you shall, this very day, obtain your desire and receive a larger blessing than your mind can fully contain—so that in your case, also, the net shall break through the fullness of the favor!

Or it may be you have been laboring a long while after some holy attainment. You need to conquer a besetting sin, to exercise firmer faith, to exhibit more zeal and to be more useful, but you have not yet gained your desire. Now, then, since it is the Lord’s mind that you should be “perfect in every good work to do His will,” do not cease from your purpose, but, at His Word, let down your net again! Never despair. That temper of yours will be conquered yet! That unbelief of yours will give way to holy faith! Let down the net and all the Divine Graces may yet be taken in it, to be yours for the rest of your life! At Christ’s Word still labor for the best things and He will give them to you.

Or are you seeking, just now, the closer Presence of Christ and a nearer fellowship with Him? Are you yearning after a sight of His face—that face which outshines the morning? Do you wish to be brought into His banqueting house to be satiated with His love? And have you cried in vain? Then cry once more, “at His Word,” for He bids you come to Him! His loving voice invites you to draw near. At His Word press forward, once again—let down the net once more—and joys unspeakable await you, surpassing all you have ever experienced! Thus you see that there is a just application of the great principle of the text to our spiritual profiting. God help us, by His gracious Spirit, to carry it out from day to day!

III. The great principle of our text should be applied to OUR LIFE BUSINESS. And what is the life business of every Christian here? Is it not soul-winning? That we may glorify God by the bringing of others to the faith of Christ is the great objective of our remaining here on earth—otherwise we

would have been caught up to swell the harmony of the heavenly songs. It is expedient for many wandering sheep here below that we should tarry here till we have brought them home to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Our way of winning men for Christ, or, to use His own metaphor—our method of catching men—is by letting down the net of the Gospel.

We have learned no other way of holy fishing! Men with great zeal and little knowledge are inventing ingenious methods for catching men, but, for my part, I believe in nothing but letting down the Gospel net—by telling out the story of the love of God to men in Christ Jesus. No new Gospel has been committed to us by Jesus and He has authorized no new way of making it known! Our Lord has called all of us to the work of proclaiming free pardon through His blood to all who believe in Him. Each Believer has a warrant to seek the conversion of his fellow men. May not every man seek to save his brother from the burning? Must not Jesus smile on any man's endeavor to deliver his neighbor from going down to eternal death? Has He not said, “Let him that hears say, Come”? Whoever hears the Gospel is to invite others to come to Christ!

The Word of the Lord is our warrant for keeping to our one work of making known the Gospel—it would be a sorry act of mutiny if we were either to be silent, or to preach another Gospel which is not another! The Word of the Lord is a warrant which justifies the man who obeys it. “Where the word of a king is, there is power.” What higher authority can we need? “Oh, but,” they say, “you ought to advance to something higher than the mere elementary Doctrines of Grace, and give the people something more in keeping with the progress of the period.” We shall *not* do so while Jesus bids us go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature! If we do what He bids us, the responsibility of the matter rests no longer with us. Whatever comes of it, we are clear if we have obeyed orders. A servant is not to justify his master's message, but to *deliver* it. This makes it a joy to preach, this doing it, “at Your Word.” Our business is to do *what* Christ tells us, *as* Christ tells us—and to do this again and again so long as we have breath in our bodies!

The commanding Word cries always to us, “Preach the Gospel, preach the Gospel to every creature!” Our justification for setting forth Christ Crucified and incessantly bidding men believe and live, lies in that same Word which bade Peter walk the sea, and bade Moses fetch water out of a rock! The result of this preaching will justify Him who commanded it! No man, at the last, will be able to say to the Savior, “You gave Your servants an impossible task and You gave them an instrument to wield which was not at all adapted to produce its end.” No, but at the closing of all things, it shall be seen that for the salvation of the elect there was nothing better than a crucified Savior—and to make that crucified Savior known there was no better means than the simple proclamation of His Word by honest lips in the power of the Spirit of the Lord. The foolishness of preaching will turn out to be the great proof of the Wisdom of God!

Brothers, you that teach in the school, or you that preach from the pulpit, or distribute tracts, or speak personally to individuals—you need not be afraid but what Wisdom will exonerate herself from all charges and vindicate her own methods! You may be called a fool, today, for preaching the Gospel, but that accusation, like rust on a sword, will wear off as you use the weapon in the wars of the Lord! The preaching of the Word of God soon puts down all clamors against itself—those clamors mainly arise because it is *not* preached. No one calls the Gospel ineffective where it is smiting right and left like a great two-handed sword! Our reply to the outcry about the failure of the pulpit is to get into it and preach with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven!

Indeed, this Word of Christ, whereby He gives us His warrant for letting down the net, is such that it amounts to a *command*, and it will leave us guilty if we do not obey. Suppose Simon Peter had said, “We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; and therefore, notwithstanding Your word, I will not let down the net”? Then Simon Peter had been guilty of disobedience to His Lord and blasphemy against the Son of God! What shall I say to any of my fellow Christians who profess to be called of God, and to be Christ’s disciples, and yet never let down the net? Is it so that you are doing nothing for the Truth of God? That you never disseminate the Gospel? Is it so that you call yourselves lights of the world, and yet never shine? That you are sowers of the seed and yet forget that you have a seed basket? Am I addressing any members of this Church who are, in this respect, wasting their lives? Is it so that it is professedly your life’s objective to be fishers of men and yet you have never cast a net, nor even helped to draw one on shore?

Are you dwelling among us under false pretences? Are you mocking God by a fruitless profession which you never try to make fruitful? I have not the strength with which to condemn you, but I would to God your own conscience might fulfill that office! What shall be said of the man to whom the Lord gives charge that he shall make known the glad tidings of salvation from eternal misery—and yet he is sinfully silent? The great Physician has entrusted you with the medicine which heals the sick—you see them die about you but never speak of the remedy? The great King has given you the meal with which to feed the hungry and you lock the storehouse door, while the crowds are starving in your streets? Is not this a crime which may well make a man of God weep over you? This great London of ours is growing heathenish to the very core and yet our Lord has given the Gospel into the hands of His Churches—what can be the reason for the indifference of the godly?

If we keep this Gospel to ourselves, coming ages will condemn us as cruel to our posterity. Succeeding generations will point to our era and say, “What sort of men were these, that had the Light of God and shut it up in a dark lantern?” In a century to come, when others shall stand in this city and walk these streets, they will say, “A curse upon the memory

of the ministers and people who failed in their duty! They came to the kingdom in a solemn time but never realized their calling and so missed the end and objective of their being!” May we be spared from such a calamity as this! Yes, we have a warrant for laboring to spread the Truth of God, and more than a warrant—we have a statute from the Throne of God—a peremptory command and it is woe to us if we preach not the Gospel!

Now, Brothers, this warrant from Christ is one which, if we are in the state of heart of Simon Peter, will be omnipotent with us this morning. It was very powerful with Simon Peter. For, observe, he was under the influence of a great disappointment, yet he let down the net. “We have toiled all the night.” Some say, “We have had all this Gospel preaching, we have had all these revivals, all these stirs and nothing has come of it.” When was that? I hear a good deal of this talk, but what are the *facts*? “Oh,” you say, “you know we have had a great deal of revival a little while ago.” I do *not* know anything of the sort! We have had flashes of light here and there, but comparatively so little that it is a pity to make so much of it.

Moreover, considering the little that has ever been done for it, the spread of the Gospel has been marvelous! Look at Gospel work at the present moment in India! People say that the Christian faith is not spreading. I say that it is spreading wonderfully as compared with the labor expended and the sacrifice made! If in that land you spend a penny and get a thousand pounds, you have no right to say, “What is that? We want a million.” If your desires are thus exacting, prove their sincerity by corresponding action! Increase your outlay! The harvest is wonderful, considering the little seed, but if you wish for more sheaves, sow more! The Church has had an enormous return for what little she has done. In England there have been partial revivals, but to what have they amounted? A flash of light has been seen in a certain district, but darkness has still remained supreme over the length and breadth of the country!

The papers have reported a great work in a certain spot, but if the papers had reported the places wherein there has been *no* revival, we should have had a different view of things! A little corner at the top of a column would have sufficed for the good—and column after column would *not* have sufficed to make known the black side of the situation! The fact is, the Church has scarcely ever been in a state of universal revival since the day of Pentecost! There has been a partial moving among Christians every now and then, but the whole mass throughout has never burned and flamed with the earnestness which the grand cause demands. Oh, that the Lord would set the whole Church on fire! We have no cause, whatever, for disappointment. In proportion to the little effort put out, great things have come to us—therefore let us get to our nets and say no more about the night in which we have toiled!

But next, this command in Peter overcame his love of ease. Evidently he was tired when he said, “We have toiled all the night.” Fishing is hard

work, especially when no fish are caught. It is natural to wish to be excused from further toil when you are already weary with unrewarded labor. I have heard some Christians say, “You know I had my time in the Sunday school, years ago, but then I worked too much for my strength.” No doubt their efforts were stupendous in the remote ages of their youthful zeal—we can hardly imagine what they must have been like—for no relic remains to assist our conceptions! At this time they feel authorized to take things easy, for they owe no more to their Lord, or, at least they do not intend to pay any more!

Is it so that any one of us can cease from service when it is plain that we do not cease from *receiving* mercy at the Lord’s hands? Are we not ashamed of the case when it is plainly put? “Take it easy.” Yes, soon, very soon, we shall take it easy, for there will be rest enough in the grave! Just now, while souls of men are perishing, to relax our efforts is wickedness. No, no, Peter! Although you may be, now, in a dripping sweat through having toiled all night, you must get at it again! He does so. The night’s work is nothing, he must work in the day, too, if he is to catch fish! Moreover, the command of Christ was so supreme over Peter that he was not held back by carnal reason, for reason would say, “If you could not catch fish in the night, you will certainly not do so in the day.”

Night was the special time for taking fish on the Gennesaret lake, and by day, when the garish sun was lighting up the waves and letting the fish see every single mesh of the net, they were not likely to come into it. But when Christ commands, the most unlikely time is likely and the most unpromising sphere becomes hopeful! No act is out of season when Christ commands it! If He says, “go,” go at once, without deliberation. Say not, “There are yet four months and then comes harvest.” “The fields are white already to the harvest.” Peter lets down the net at once and wisely does he act at Christ’s word. The lesson to you and to me is this—Let us do as Peter did and let down the net personally, for the Apostle said, “I will let down the net.”

Brother, cannot you do something, yourself, with your own heart, lips and hands? Sister, cannot you do something, yourself, with your own gentle spirit? “I was thinking about getting half a dozen friends to form a *committee* to relieve the poor around us.” Nothing will ever come of it! The poor will not get a basin of soup or a loaf of bread. Set about it *yourself!* “But I think I might get a dozen to come together and organize a *Society*.” Yes, and then more resolutions and amendments all day long—and finish up with passing votes of mutual approbation! You had better get to work, yourself, as Peter did. And you had better do it at once, for Peter immediately let down the net, as soon as he had launched out into the deep. You may never have another opportunity—your zeal may have evaporated, or your life may be over!

Peter, however, only let down one net, and there was the pity of it. If John and James and all the rest had let down their nets, the result would

have been much better. “Why?” you ask. Because, through there being only one net, that net was overstrained and broke. If all the nets had been used, they might have taken more fish, and no net would have been broken. I was reading, some time ago, of a take of mackerel at Brighton. When the net was full, the mackerel sticking in all the meshes made it so heavy that the fishermen could not raise it—and the boat, itself, was in some danger of going down—so they had to cut away the net and lose the fish. Had there been many nets and boats, they might have buoyed up the whole of the fish—and so they might have done in this case. As it was, many fish were lost through the breaking of the net.

If a Church can be so awakened that each individual gets to work in the power of the Holy Spirit, and all the individuals *combine*, then how many souls will be captured for Jesus! Multitudes of souls are lost to the blessed Gospel because of our broken nets—and the net gets broken because we are not well united in the holy service—by our lack of wisdom, we cause loss to our Master’s cause. Ministers need not become worn out with labor if all would take their share! One boat would not begin to sink if the other boats took a part of the blessed load.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I close by saying that if I have accomplished anything, this morning, by the help of God’s Spirit, I hope I have made you ready to accept the following directory of service drawn from the text. The way in which to serve God is to do it at His Word. I pray that none of us may sink into serving the Lord as a matter of routine. May we never fall to serving Him in our own strength. We must preach, teach and labor in His name because we *hear* Him bidding us do it! We must act at His Word. If this were the case, we should work with much more faith, with much more earnestness and with much more likelihood of success. It is a blessed thing to see Christ sitting in the boat while you cast out the net. If you catch a glimpse of His approving smile, as He watches you, you will work right heartily.

We must labor in entire dependence upon Him. We must not preach or teach because, in our judgment, it is the right thing to do—Peter did not think so—but because Jesus gives the word, and His Word is Law. You may not work because you have any expectation of success from the excellence of yours work, or from the nature of the people among whom you labor, but because Jesus has given you the Command. You stand there doing a thing which critics sneer at as absurd, but you do it in all confidence, believing that it must be wise because Jesus bids you do it. I remember well how some of our Brothers used to talk to us. They said, “You preach the Gospel to dead sinners! You bid them repent and believe! You might just as well shake a pocket handkerchief over a grave and bid the corpse come out of it.”

Exactly so! They spoke the truth! But I would be delighted to go and shake a pocket handkerchief over graves and bid the dead live if Jesus bade me do so! I would expect to see the cemetery crack and heave from

end to end if I were sent on such an errand by the Lord! I would accept the duty joyfully! The more absurd the wise men of our age make the Gospel out to be—and the more they show that it is powerless to produce the designed end—the more will we persevere in our old method of preaching Jesus Crucified! Our resolves are not to be shaken by that mode of reasoning. We never drew our argument for preaching the Gospel from the work, itself, but from the *orders* given us to do it!

We would rather be acting upon the responsibility of Christ than upon our own. I would rather be a fool and do what Christ tells me than be the wisest man of the modern school and despise the Word of the Lord. I would rather lay the responsibility of my life at the feet of Him who bids me live according to His Word than seek out an objective in life for myself and feel that the responsibility rested on my own shoulders. Let us be willing to be under orders to Christ; willing to persevere under difficulties; willing to begin anew in His service from this very hour. Amen.

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“NEVERTHELESS AT YOUR WORD”

NO. 2810

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 21, 1902.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 3, 1877.**

***“Nevertheless at Your word.”
Luke 5:5.***

OUR Lord Jesus Christ had preached a sermon to the multitude while He was sitting down in Peter’s boat. And after the people had gone, He had a private message for Simon. He said to him, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” Christ’s discourses to the general public were all full of most blessed teaching, but His little private talks to His intimate acquaintances were even more helpful and precious. They were important Truths of God which He proclaimed to the many, but the choicest things He reserved for the few. Many a parable which He addressed to the crowd, He explained only to His own disciples—and many a thing which He never said to the crowd at all, because they could not understand it, and it would have been like casting pearls before swine, He whispered in the ears of His disciples. So it was with Simon Peter at this time. First there was the sermon to the many and after the sermon, this word to Peter about launching out into the deep. Mind that you, who love the Lord, always look for the private piece after the public sermon. Watch for the sweet Word which your Master is always willing to utter—and do not be satisfied unless you hear it.

Then, if the message that He gives you shall be a precept, or a command, like that addressed to Simon, bidding him let down his nets, be careful that you obey it at once. Be not negligent of the special voice of God in your own heart and conscience, for God intends thereby to bestow a great blessing upon you, even as He did upon Simon whose boat was filled with fish almost to sinking! If you give heed to that special private word of your Lord to your own heart and soul, you shall have many a boatful of fish, or rather, many a heart-full of untold blessing which otherwise you might never have received.

Peter, being exhorted to launch out into the deep and to let down his nets for a catch, reasoned that, according to the ordinary course of events, it would be of very little use to do so, for he and his comrades had been toiling hard with their great nets all through the night, yet they had caught nothing and it did not, therefore, seem probable that they would catch anything now. However, feeling that Christ was his Master and Lord, and that it did not become him to raise any question about the

matter, he just stated the facts of the case and then added, cheerfully, “Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”

Those four words, “Nevertheless at Your word,” seem to furnish me with a topic upon which I shall try to speak thus—First, *the word of Christ is our supreme rule*. “At Your word.” Secondly, *the word of Christ is our sufficient warrant*. If we have that at our back, we may well say, “Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.” And, thirdly, *to keep that word will always ensure a reward*.

I. First, then, THE WORD OF CHRIST IS THE SUPREME RULE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

Time out of mind have we spoken to you about the precious blood of Christ that cleanses all sin and about the blessings that Jesus brings to you when He becomes your Savior. But we are also bound to remind all of you who profess to have believed on Him, and to have become His disciples, that you must not only acknowledge Him as your Master and Lord, but that you must do whatever He bids you—

**“Faith must obey the Savior’s will,
As well as trust His Grace.”**

The moment we become Christians, who are saved by Christ, we become His servants to obey all His commandments. Hence, it is incumbent upon us to search the Scriptures, that we may know what our Master’s will is. There He has written it out for us in plain letters and it is an act of disobedience to neglect this search. By refusing to learn what the will of our Lord is, the *sin of ignorance becomes willful* because we do not use the means by which we might receive instruction. Every servant of Christ is bound to know what he or she is to do and then, when he knows it, he should at once do it. The Christian’s business is, first, to learn Christ’s will and, secondly, to do it! Once learned, that will is the supreme law of the Christian whatever may seem to oppose it.

Let me just mention a few of the times when it seems difficult to conform to that will, but when we must say, “Nevertheless at Your word.”

And, first, we must do this with regard to great Gospel Truths *when our own reason is staggered*. No thoughtful person can seriously consider the Doctrines of Grace without often crying out, “They are high! I cannot attain to them.” There are many things revealed to us in the Scriptures which we cannot understand—no, not even though we give all our mind to endeavor to comprehend them. There are difficulties in theology. This doctrine does not appear to square with that, or that one with the next. One Truth, perhaps, appears inconsistent with the love of God, or we may, sometimes, wonder how certain events in God’s Providential dealings can be consistent with His goodness or justice. Well, my Brothers and Sisters, whenever you put your hand to your brow and say, concerning anything revealed in the Scriptures, “I cannot comprehend it,” lay your other hand upon your heart and say, “Nevertheless I believe it. It is clearly taught in the Bible and although my reason may find it difficult to explain it, and I may not be able to discover any arguments to prove the truth of it, yet I lay my reason down at my Infallible Master’s feet and trust where I cannot see.” For a man to take his creed blindly from a pope or a priest is to degrade himself because he receives that teaching

from his fellow man—but for him to lay his whole mind down at the feet of Jesus Christ is no degradation since Christ is the Wisdom of God, and all wisdom is Infallibly gathered up in Him. I do not expect to fully understand my Lord’s will—I only ask to be informed what that will is. I do not suppose that I can comprehend it, but I say, “What is Your will, my Master? If You will reveal it to me, I will believe it.”

We must adopt a similar course *when we are exposed to the quibbles of our fellow men*. Many young persons, especially, find themselves unable to answer all the objections that are raised by those who oppose the Gospel. It would be a marvel if they could, for the old proverb says, “One fool can ask more questions than 50 wise men can answer.” It is not likely that those who are just beginning to learn Divine Truths could be able to overcome all its opponents. When a question has sometimes staggered me, I have felt, “Well, I cannot answer that, but I believe that it can be answered. I thank God that I have heard it asked, for it has taught me my ignorance upon that point—and I will sit down and study God’s Word till I *can* answer it—but even if I cannot answer it, it does not matter. Somebody can do so and, above all, God Himself can! Be it mine, sometimes, to leave the arrows of the adversary sticking in my shield—they will do no harm there. If he likes to see them there, let him be amused by it, but as long as I cling to Christ’s Infallible teaching, they will not hurt me. So let him shoot and shoot again.” You will find, Beloved, that this will be good exercise for your humility and good exercise for your loyalty to Christ. It will be shown that you are, after all, a follower of Christ—not a believer in your own infallibility, or relying upon that reason of yours which, at best, is but a dim candle. It will be shown, I say—that you have really yielded up your mind to the lordship of your Savior.

Sometimes we shall have to say, “Nevertheless at Your word,” *when the command of Christ seems contrary to our own experience*. It would become a dangerous thing if we were always to follow the experience even of Christians, for the experience of one man might teach us one thing, but the experience of another might teach us the very reverse. And to make experience the basis of theology—though it is often a helpful illustration of it, would lead to great mistake. I must never say, “I did such-and-such a thing—I know it was not right, yet good came of it and, therefore, I feel that I may do the same thing again.” Neither ought I to say, “I did such-and-such, which I knew was right, but I suffered great trouble as the result of it and, therefore, I ought not to do it again.” No, no! Whatever happens to us, our only course is to pursue the right path and to avoid all that is wrong. Let each of us say, “My Master, if any act of obedience to You were to cost me many a privilege—cost me my liberty—cause me to be put into prison” (and it has done so to many of the saints of old) “yet I will do as You command me, whatever the consequences may be.”

What said Master John Bunyan, after he had lain in prison many years simply for preaching the Gospel? The magistrates said to him, “John, we will let you out, but you must promise not to preach again. There are the regular divines of the country—what have you, as a tinker, to do with preaching?” John Bunyan did not say, “Well, now, I can see

that this preaching is a bad thing. It has got me into prison and I have had hard work to tag enough laces to keep my wife and that poor blind child of mine. I had better get out of this place and stick to my tinkering.” No, he did not talk like that. He said to the magistrates, “If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the Grace of God.” And when they told him that they would not let him out unless he promised not to preach, he bravely answered, “If I lie in jail till the moss grows on my eyelids, I will never conceal the Truth which God has taught me.”

We are, therefore, not to put our own past experience in the way of obedience to our Lord’s will, but to say to Him, “Nevertheless, however costly this duty may prove to be, at Your command I will let down the net, or do whatever You bid me do.” But, sometimes, people get remarkably wise through experience, or they think that they do. Old sailors, for instance, fancy that they “know a thing or two.” And Simon Peter, who had been fishing in that lake for a long while, thought he knew all that could be known about fishing. And Christ interfered with Peter just in Peter’s own line and gave him a command about fishing! The fisherman might have said, “What is the good of casting the net? We have been fishing all night long and have taken nothing! What is the good of our fishing anymore?” Peter did not talk so, though he may have thought like that, but he said, “Nevertheless at Your word, since You know far more about fish than I do—since You did make them and can make them come wherever You will. Since, Lord, You command it—I would not do it at anybody else’s bidding, but I will do it at Yours—I will let down the net.” So, sometimes, there may be something in God’s Word, or some path of duty clearly indicated to you which does not seem, to carnal judgment, to be very wise, but you are to say, “Nevertheless at Your word—no other authority could make me do it—but Your Law is the supreme rule for my conduct and I will do whatever You bid me.”

This great principle ought also to prevail *when self-love is in the way*. Sometimes the command of Christ runs completely contrary to what we would like and obedience to it involves self-denial. It threatens to take away from us much that was very pleasurable to us and then, very likely, something within us says, “Do not obey it. It will go very hard with you if you do.” Nevertheless, Brothers and Sisters, may the Holy Spirit so mightily work upon you that you will do anything and everything that Christ commands, however galling to the flesh it may be! We are not our own, so let us never act as if we were. The mark of the precious blood of Jesus is upon us—we have been bought with it—so it is not right for us to make provision for the flesh, or to be looking out for our own ease or aggrandizement. It is our duty to do whatever our Lord bids us do and to take the consequences, whatever they may be. So let us, each one, say, “I know that it will cost me much, my Master, but, nevertheless, I will do whatever You command me.”

Sometimes, there is a still more powerful opposition to the will of the Lord—that is, *when love of others would hinder us from obeying it*. “If I do such-and-such, which I know I ought to do, I shall grieve my parents. If I carry out that command of Christ, the dearest friend I have will be very angry with me. He has threatened to cast me off if I am baptized. My old

companions, who have been very kind to me, will all consider that I have gone out of my mind and will no longer wish to have me in their company.” If a person has a genial heart and a loving spirit, this kind of treatment is very trying and there is a strong temptation to say, “Well, now, how far can I go in religion and yet manage to save these fond connections? I do not wish to set myself up in opposition to everybody else—can’t I, somehow or other, please God and yet please these people too?” But, Brothers and Sisters, if we are indeed Christians, the supreme rule of our Lord’s will drives us to say to Him, “Nevertheless, I will do whatever You command.” Farewell, our best-beloved, if they stand in the way of Christ our Lord, for He said, “He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” Everyone else and everything else must go that we may keep company with Christ!

It sometimes happens that we have God’s Word pointing us to a certain course of action, but we do not follow it because of *the faintness of our own heart*. Do you ever feel faint-hearted? There are some people who seem as if they were born without nerves, or feelings, for they never appear to be downcast. But some of us, at times, shrink away and seem to be dried up, as if the marrow were gone from our bones and the strength from our hearts. At such a time as that we know what Christ would have us do, but we hesitate to do it. We feel as if we could not—not that we *would* not, but that we really *could* not. There is a lack of courage—a lack of confidence. We are timid and cannot dash into the fray. Then is the time—when heart and flesh fail—for us to take God to be the strength of our soul by resolving, let our weakness be what it may, that we will obey the command of Christ! When your heart is faint, dear Brother or Sister, still follow Christ. When you feel as if you must die at your next step, still keep close at His heels and if your soul is almost in despair, yet hold on to Him and keep your feet in His ways. If anyone who fears the Lord still walks in darkness and has no Light of God, let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God, for so shall His Light break forth as the morning and his heart shall be once more glad in the Lord.

So you see, whatever obstacle there may be in the way of our obedience to the command of Christ, still let each one of us say to Him, “Nevertheless at Your word, I will do whatever You command. That shall be the supreme rule and guide for all my actions.”

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that THE WORD OF CHRIST IS OUR SUFFICIENT WARRANT, as well as our supreme rule.

This is, first, our warrant for *believing on Him*. If the Lord Jesus Christ has bid you do this, you certainly may do it! And if any shall ask you why you believe on Him, this shall be your triumphant answer, “The King gave me the command to do so.” Listen to this, all you who desire to have eternal life and who have not yet obtained it! The Gospel commission is, “Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And this is the Gospel command, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” The poor timid soul says, “How can I venture to trust my guilty soul with Christ? It would be presumption upon my part. What right have I to

come and rely upon Him?” It must be right for you to do it, for He bids you do it! And if He bids you do it, this is warrant enough for you! Every sinner under Heaven who hears the glad tidings of salvation is *commanded* to believe on Jesus—and he is warned that if he does not believe on Him—he shall be damned! “God now commands all men everywhere to repent.” This is the very widest form of command, so I bid each one of you to say, this very moment, “Lord, I am not worthy to be Your disciple, but, nevertheless, at Your command, I will believe in You. I feel that it will be a wonder of Grace if I am saved and it is almost incredible that it should ever take place—nevertheless, at Your command, I let down my net. I even dare to trust Your precious blood and Your spotless righteousness and to expect that You will save me.” Is not that a blessed form of argument? I pray that some of you may feel its force and act upon it even now!

Next, *this is an excellent reason for being baptized if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.* Somebody may say to you, “What is the good of Baptism? It will not save you—to be immersed in water will not wash away your sins.” I hope you will be ready to reply, “Yes, I know all that. Nevertheless, at Christ’s command, I mean to do it. I ask not what will be the gain to me of obeying His orders. That would be sheer selfishness—He bids me be baptized and that is enough for me.” “But such-and-such a church does not practice the Baptism of Believers, *or* Baptism by immersion.” No, but Christ has ordained it! By His own example, by His plain precept, by the preaching and practice of His Apostles, He has revealed His will to us and, therefore, it is for us to obey that will! If any shall accuse us of making too much of the Baptism of Believers, we reply, “Our Lord has said, ‘He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,’ and we have no more right to leave out one portion of His words than the other. So, at His command we do this—let men say what they will.”

This, Beloved, is also *the great argument for our taking up the position which we hold as Dissenters.* Is it not a bad thing to dissent from other people! Yes, of course it is, if they are right and we are wrong, but it is just as bad for them to dissent from us if we are right and they are wrong! I am not to say, “I will be singular and keep myself separate from other people.” It would be wrong for me to act like that. But it is right to say, “Whatever Christ commands is Law in His Church.” What synods command, or bishops command, or popes command is not worth the paper it is written on—there is no authority in it to a Christian. He is free from all such control as that. But the Law of Christ, as he finds it revealed in the Bible, is binding upon him. I should honor any man who stood absolutely alone, without another individual to support him in his opinion, for having the courage to do so, if he justified his action by the Word of God! To run with the multitude is only too often to go on the wrong road. To believe a thing because the many believe it is a coward’s reason! To slink away from truth because she stands in the pillory—because she is unpopular—because the crowd cries her down—oh, this is a cowardly spirit! I would rather be on the side of truth with half a dozen paupers than be on the side of a lie with all the kings and prelates who ever rode in their pomp through the streets of this world, for, at the

last, they who were on truth’s side, and on Christ’s side, shall be honored and they who had not the conscience and the courage to follow the Lamb shall be dishonored and covered with everlasting shame and contempt!

This principle can also be applied to many other matters. “Nevertheless at your word” ought to be *an argument for keeping on praying*. If you have been asking, for seven years, for the salvation of a soul, and yet that soul is not saved, you may be tempted to say, with Peter, “We have toiled all night and taken nothing.” But if you do, mind that you also add, “Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.” Still pray on! If you have begun to pray for any man, keep on praying for him as long as you live and he lives! Or if it is some choice blessing for the Church or for the world, which God has evidently promised and it is laid on your heart to ask for it, still intercede even though for years you should receive no answer to your petition. Still knock at mercy’s door! Wrestle till the break of day, for, if in the night the blessing comes not, before the morning sun has risen, the Lord will give you the desire of your heart.

So, too, is it *with regard to Christian service*. I will suppose that you have begun to labor for Christ and that you feel very stupid at it. You have not much talent and what little you have, you hardly know how to put it to the best use. Well, Brother, Sister, it looks as if you had better not try again, yet I would advise you to say to your Lord, “Nevertheless at Your word I will go to work, again. I will try once more—no, I will try many times more.” Suppose you have been working in a certain district, or class, and you have not succeeded—do not yield! Many a hard piece of soil has, after many efforts, at last brought forth a harvest! If Jesus bade you sow there—and He did, for He told you to sow beside all waters—go, and say, “Nevertheless at Your word I will do what You command.” When I come to address this congregation, I like to feel that I come because I am told to do so. One of you may say, “If I go to that dark village and stand up on the green to preach, I expect I shall be mobbed. Nevertheless at Your word I will do it.” It is a blessed thing to render obedience to Christ under the most difficult circumstances. To obey Him when it is pleasant to do so—when all that you do prospers—is good as far as it goes, but to obey Him when everything seems against you and nothing appears to prosper—to trust the Lord and still to work on for Him—this is, indeed, making Jesus Christ to be your Lord!

III. I must not dwell longer on this part of my theme lest I weary you. So I will conclude with the last point, which is this, **TO KEEP YOUR MASTER’S WORD WILL ENSURE A REWARD TO YOU.**

You who believe in Jesus are already saved, so you will understand that I speak not of any legal reward, as of debt, for this is all of Grace. But the man who carefully and faithfully does everything according to Christ’s word shall have, first of all, *the reward of an easy conscience*. Suppose you go home, one night, and say to yourself, “Today I have done something that I thought to be right, but I did not stop to enquire if it was according to my Master’s will. I did not wait upon Him in prayer for guidance.” You will feel very uneasy and uncomfortable in your conscience and if any trouble shall arise through it, you will have to say, “I

brought this on myself, for I took my own course.” But if you can say, at nightfall, “What I have done today will probably be much discussed and possibly it will be censured by some. And it may even be that it will cost me much pain and even financial loss—but I know that, as far as I could judge, it was my Master’s will.” You will sleep very sweetly after that. “Whatever comes of it,” you will say, “I will take it from my Savior’s pierced hands and reckon it to be part of the sacrifice that is necessary in being a Christian.” It is better to be a loser in that way than to be a gainer in any other, for, as the old Divine used to say, “He that can wear the flower called heart’s ease in his bosom is better off than he that wears diamonds in his crown, but who has not true ease of heart.” If a man goes up and down in his daily business in the world and in his family—and is always able, by God’s Grace, to feel, “I have labored as in the sight of God to do that which is right according to the teaching and example of my Lord and Savior”—he has a reward in his own heart from that very fact even if he had no other.

But, next, there is a great reward in being enabled to obey the Master’s word, because rightly looked at, *it is in itself a blessing of Divine Grace*. When you thank God for the good things He has done for you, thank Him not only for keeping you out of sin, but also thank Him for enabling you to do His will. No man has any right to take credit to himself for his own integrity, for, if he is a Christian, that integrity is the gift of God’s Grace and the work of God’s Spirit within him. If you did, in your youth, form a candid, honest judgment of the Word of God and then, burning all bridges and boats, and severing all connection with that which was behind you—if you dared to cast in your lot with the despised people of God, bless Him for it and count it as a great favor which He did for you in that He enabled you to act thus! And if, when tempted with heavy bribes, you have, up to now been able to say, “Get you behind me, Satan,” and to follow close to the heels of Christ, give God all the glory of it and bless His holy name! In such a case as this, virtue is its own reward.

To have been obedient to Christ is one of the highest blessings that God can have bestowed upon any man. There are some of us who have to thank God that when there were pinching times, we did not dare to yield—but when friends and enemies, alike, pointed out another way, we saw what was our Master’s way and followed it, by His Grace. We shall have to thank Him to all eternity for this. Once begin to parley with the foe—to stifle your conscience or hide your principles—your man, once begin to follow trickery in trade—once begin to dally with the wrong and you will soon find that you are sowing thorns that will pierce through your pillow when you grow old! Be just, and fear not. Follow Christ though the skies should fall and, in doing this, you will be rewarded, for it is a blessing in itself!

But, more than this, *no man fully does his Master’s will without getting a distinct reward*. Simon Peter’s boatful of fish was his reward for launching out at Christ’s word. And in keeping His commandments there is always a great reward. There is usefulness to others, there is happiness to yourself and there is glory to God. I sometimes fear that we mi-

nisters do not preach enough about practical godliness. We tell you about justification by faith and the Doctrines of Grace—and we cannot too frequently discourse upon such topics as these—but we must also insist upon it that where there is *faith* in Christ, there *will be obedience* to Christ! And we cannot too often insist upon it that while the everlasting salvation of the Christian does not depend upon what he *does*, yet his own comfort, his own usefulness and the glory which he will bring to God must depend upon that. Therefore, look you well to it, Beloved, young and old, rich and poor—and henceforth, as long as you live—take the Word of God to be the polestar to you in all your sailings across the ocean of life and you shall have a blessed voyage, and reach the Port of Peace, not with torn sails and broken cordage, a dismasted wreck, but, “an entrance shall be abundantly ministered to you into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

May God add His blessing, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 10:19-39.**

Verses 19-22. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.* The place of the Christian is that of the nearest conceivable access to God, for “the Holiest” is “the Holy of Holies”—that innermost part of the tabernacle to reach which the high priest had to pass through the outer court, through the court of the priests and then through the beautiful veil which concealed the Mercy Seat. At the death of Christ that veil was torn from top to bottom, so now there is nothing to keep us back from the Mercy Seat! We, therefore, have boldness and liberty in that way, “to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus”—where the high priest, himself, could only go once in the year—we may go at all times! The veil has not been merely lifted up, for a while, and then dropped again. It is not rolled up ready for future use—it is torn in two—destroyed! Since Jesus has died, there is now no separation between the Believer and his God except by means of such a veil as our base unbelief may please to hang up. The crimson way of Christ’s shed blood lies open to all Believers! Therefore, “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,”

23. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* Not only hold it, but hold it fast without wavering. Let us never have a question about it! God grant that we may have an unquestioning, unstaggering faith! To hold fast the profession of our faith seems good enough—but to hold it fast without wavering is better—and so we ought to do it.

23. *(For He is faithful that promised).* God gives us no cause for wavering, for He never wavers. If He were an unfaithful God, we might natural-

ly be an unbelieving people, but, “He is faithful that promised.” Therefore, “let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.”

24. *And let us consider one another to stir up love and good works.* I am afraid there are some who consider one another to stir up in quite a different spirit from this—who watch to discover a tender spot where a wound will be most felt. They observe the weakness of a Brother’s constitution and then play upon it, or make jests about it. All this is evil, so let us avoid it. Let us all seek out the good points of our Brothers and Sisters and consider them, that we may afterwards be the means of guiding them to those peculiar good works for which they are best adapted. “Stir up love and good works.” I do not know how we can do that better than by being very loving and full of good works, ourselves, for then will others be likely to say, “If these people are helped by God’s Grace to love like this, and to labor like this, why should we not do the same?” A good example is often better than a very proper precept.

25. *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.* Yes, there are some who even make a bad use of what ought to be a great blessing, namely, the printing press and the printed sermon, by staying at home to read a sermon because, they say, it is better than going out to hear one! Well, dear Friend, if I could not hear profitably, I would still make one of the assembly gathered together for the worship of God. It is a bad example for a professing Christian to absent himself from the assembly of the friends of Christ. There was a dear Sister, whom many of you knew, who used to attend here with great regularity—although she could not hear a word that was said. But she said it did her good to join in the hymns and to know that she was worshipping God with the rest of His people. I wish that some who stay away for the most frivolous excuses would think of this verse—“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.”

25. *But exhorting one another and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching.* It is not the work only of the minister to exhort, but the Brothers, and the Sisters, too, should exhort one another and seek to stir each other up in the faith and fear of God.

26, 27. *For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* This is a solemn text, containing a very terrible Truth of God. If, after having been regenerated and made children of God, we were willfully and deliberately to let the Savior go and apostatize altogether to the world, there would be no hope for us. What, then, is our hope? Why, *that we shall never be permitted to do so*—that the Grace of God will keep us so that, although we may fall like Peter, we shall not fall away like Judas—that, though we may sin, there shall not be that degree of studied willfulness about it that would make it to be the sin unto death—a deliberate act of spiritual suicide. The Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints derives great glory from this other Truth of God that if they did not persevere, there is no second means of Grace, no other plan of salvation. No man was ever born-again twice! No man was ever washed twice in the precious blood of Jesus! The one washing makes us so clean

that, “he that is washed needs not save to wash his feet,” for which Jesus provides by daily cleansing—but the one grand atoning act never fails. If it did fail, there would remain “no more sacrifice for sins.”

28, 29. *He that despised Moses’ Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? For apostasy from Christ would amount to all this—and if that were possible, what Grace would remain?*

30. *For we know Him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. O professors, take this message home to your hearts! Let everyone of us take it home—“The Lord shall judge His people.” God’s fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem! If a man tries nothing else, he will test his gold. And if no others shall be judged, yet certainly those will be who say that they are the Lord’s people! In that dread Day He will separate the goats from the sheep, the tares from the wheat, and the dross from the gold! His fan will be in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor! He will sit as a refiner of silver and He will purify the sons of Levi. He shall be like a refiner’s fire and like fuller’s soap. Woe to those, in that Day, who are a defilement to His Church and an adulteration to the purity of His people!*

31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. What a terrible verse that is! It is a text that ought to be preached from by those who are always saying that the punishment of the wicked will be less than, according to our minds, the Word of God leads us to expect it to be—“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

32. *But call to remembrance the former days. The Apostle is not expecting that any of them will ever go back to where they were before. He is persuaded that they will persevere even to the end. The very warning that he gives is a powerful preventive against apostasy. Now comes the exhortation—“Call to remembrance the former days.” Some of you can “call to remembrance” the time when you joined the Church—when you had to run the gauntlet for Christ’s sake. Then, in your early Christian life, you feared nothing and nobody so long as you could glorify God. You then had great enjoyment, sweet seasons of communion with your Lord—“Call to remembrance the former days.”*

32, 33. *In which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, while you were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, while you became companions of them that were so used. In your early Christian days, you were pointed at and regarded as quite singular for being servants of Christ. Or, possibly, it was not yourselves so much as your pastors, your leaders, your friends who were prominent in the Church at whom the arrows of the adversaries were aimed. They shot at you through them and, sometimes, that pained you much more than when they distinctly attacked you. Altogether, it was “a great fight of afflictions” that you had to endure.*

34. *For you had compassion on me in my chains.* In those early days the Jewish Believers clung to Paul just as ardently as the unbelieving Jews persecuted him!

34, 35. *And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence which has great recompense of reward.* Be like the brave Spartan who would never lose his shield, but would come home either with it or on it! “Cast not away your confidence.” You trusted in God in those early days and nothing seemed to daunt you, then. “Cast not away your confidence.” Rather, get more to add to it! Let there be no thought of going back, but may there rather be a distinct advance!

36. *For you have need of patience.* Our supply of that virtue is often very short. It is an article of which there is very little in the market and all of us have need of more of it—“You have need of patience.”

36. *That, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise.* There must first be the doing of the will of God—and then the reward will come afterwards. God will not give to His people their full reward yet. Patience, then, Brother! Patience, Sister! Saturday night will come one of these days—your week’s work will then be over and you will be more than repaid for anything you have done for your Lord!

37, 38. *For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* The drawers back—the mere professors—those who say they have been illuminated and who have tasted, in a measure, the sweetness of religion, yet who never received Christ in their inmost heart—these are the people in whom God has no pleasure!

39. *But we.* What a consoling end this is to the chapter! It ought to comfort every Believer in Christ who has been distressed by the earlier verses! “But we”—

39. *Are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.* May that be true of all of us, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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ON THURSDAY EVENING JUNE 10, 1869.**

***“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying,
Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”
Luke 5:8.***

THE disciples had been fishing all night. They had now given up fishing—they had left their boats and were mending their nets. A Stranger appears. They had seen Him, probably, once before, and they remembered enough of Him to command respect. Besides, the tone of voice in which He spoke to them and His manner at once ruled their hearts. He borrowed Simon Peter’s boat and preached a sermon to the listening crowds. After He had finished the discourse, as though He would not borrow their vessel without giving them their hire, He bade them launch out into the deep and let down their nets again. They did so and, instead of disappointment, they at once took so vast a haul of fish that the boats could not contain all and the net was not strong enough and began to break. Surprised at this strange miracle—overawed, probably by the majestic appearance of that matchless One, who had worked it, Simon Peter thought himself quite unworthy to be in such company—and fell on his knees and cried this strange prayer—“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” So I desire that, first of all, we shall hear—

I. THE PRAYER IN THE WORST SENSE WE CAN GIVE TO IT.

It is always wrong to put the worst construction on anyone’s words and, therefore, we do not intend to do so except by way of license and, for a few moments only, to see what might have been made out of these words. Christ did not understand Peter so. He put the best construction upon what he said, but if a caviler had been there, a wrong interpretation would have been to this sentence—“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

The ungodly virtually pray this prayer. When the Gospel comes to some men and disturbs their conscience, they say, “Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season, I will send for you.” When some troublesome preacher tells them of their sins—when he puts a burning Truth of God into their conscience and awakens them so that they cannot sleep or rest—they are very angry with the preacher and the Truth that he was constrained to speak. And if they cannot bid him get out of their way, they can at least get out of his way, which comes to the same thing! And so the spirit of it is, “We do not want to give up our sin. We cannot afford to part with our prejudices, or with our darling lusts

and, therefore, depart—get out of our way—leave us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come to torment us before our time?” Peter meant nothing of this sort, but there may be some here who do and whose avoidance of the Gospel, whose inattention to it, whose spite and hatred of it, all put together virtually make up this cry, “Depart from us, O Christ!”

Alas, I fear *there are some Christians* who do, in fact—I will not say intentionally—really pray this prayer! For instance, if a believer in Christ shall expose himself to temptation—if he shall find pleasure where sin mingles with it, if he shall forsake the assemblies of the saints and find comfort in the synagogue of Satan—if his life shall be inconsistent, practically, and he also shall become inconsistent by reason of his neglect of holy duties, ordinances, private prayer, the reading of the Word and the like—what does such a Christian say but, “Depart from me, O Lord”? The Holy Spirit abides in our hearts and we enjoy His conscious Presence if we are obedient to His monitions. But if we walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to us and, before long we shall have to ask—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?”***

Why does the Holy Spirit withdraw the sense of His Presence? Why, but because we ask Him to go! Our sins ask Him to go! Our unread Bibles do, as it were, with loud voices ask Him to be gone! We treat that sacred Guest as if we were weary of Him and He takes the hint and hides His face and then we sorrow and begin to seek Him again. Peter does not do so, but we do. Alas, how often ought we to say, “Oh, Holy Spirit, forgive us that we so vex You, that we resist Your admonitions, quench Your promptings and so grieve You! Return unto us and abide with us evermore.”

This prayer in its worst is *sometimes practically offered by Christian Churches*. I believe that any Christian Church that becomes divided in feeling, so that the members have no true love, one to another, that lack of unity is an act of horrible supplication! It does as much as say, “Depart from us, You Spirit of unity! You only dwell where there is love—we will not have love! We will break Your rest—get away from us!” The Holy Spirit delights to abide with a people that is obedient to His teaching, but there are churches that will not learn—they refuse to carry out the Master’s will or to accept the Master’s Word. They have some other standard, some human book—and in the excellencies of the human composition they forget the glories of the Divine! Now I believe that where any book, whatever it may be, is put above the Bible, or even set by the side of it, or where any creed or catechism, however excellent, is made to stand at all on an equal basis with that perfect Word of God, any church that does this, in fact says, “Depart from us, O Lord.” And when it comes to actual doctrinal error, particularly to such grievous errors as we hear of, now-a-days—such as baptismal regeneration and the doctrines that are congruous thereto—it is, as it were, an awful imprecation and seems to say, “Begone from us, O Gospel! Begone from us, O Holy Spirit! Give us outward signs and symbols, and these will suffice us! But depart from us, O

Lord—we are content without You.” As for ourselves, we may practically pray this prayer as a Church. If our Prayer Meetings should be badly attended. If the prayers at them should be cold and dead. If the zeal of our members should die out. If there should be no concern for souls. If our children should grow up untrained in the fear of God. If the evangelization of this great city should be given over to some other band of workers and we should sit still. If we should become cold, ungenerous, listless, indifferent—what can we do worse for ourselves? How, with greater potency, can we put up the dreadful prayer, “Depart from us—we are unworthy of Your Presence! Begone, good Lord! Let ‘Ichabod’ be written on our walls! Let us be left with all the curses of Gerizim ringing in our ears.”

I say, then, the prayer may be understood in this worst sense. It was not so meant—our Lord did not so read it—we must not so read it concerning Peter. But let us, oh, let us take care that we do not offer it thus, practically, concerning ourselves!

But now in the next place we shall strive to take the prayer as it came from Peter's lips and heart—

II. A PRAYER WE CAN EXCUSE AND ALMOST COMMEND.

Why did Peter say, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord”? There are three reasons. First, *because he was a man*. Secondly, *because he was a sinful man*. And again, *because he knew this and became a humble man*.

So, then, the first reason for this prayer was that *Peter knew that he was a man* and, therefore, being a man, he felt himself amazed in the Presence of such an One as Christ. The first sight of God—how amazing to any spirit even if it were pure! I suppose God never did reveal Himself completely—could never have revealed Himself completely to any creature, however lofty in its capacity. The Infinite must overwhelm the finite. Now, here was Peter, beholding, probably for the first time in his life in a spiritual way, the exceeding splendor and Glory of the Divine power of Christ! He looked at those fish and at once he remembered that night of weary toil, when not a fish rewarded his patience. And now he saw them in masses in the boat—and all done through this strange Man who sat there, having just preached a still stranger sermon, of which Peter felt that never man spoke like that before and he did not know how it was, but he felt abashed! He trembled, he was amazed in the Presence of such an One. I do not wonder if we read that Rebecca, when she saw Isaac, came down from her camel and covered her face with her veil. If we read that Abigail, when she came to meet David, alighted from her donkey and threw herself upon her face, saying, “My Lord, David!” If we find Mephibosheth depreciating himself in the presence of King David and calling himself a dog—I do not wonder that Peter, in the Presence of the perfect Christ, should shrink into nothing and, in his first amazement at his own nothingness and Christ's greatness, should say he scarcely knew what, like one dazed and dazzled by the light, half-distraught and scarcely able to gather together his thoughts and put them connectedly togeth-

er! The very first impulse was as when the light of the sun strikes the eyes and it is a blaze that threatens to blind us! "Oh, Christ, I am a man—how can I bear the Presence of the God that rules the very fishes of the sea and works miracles like this?"

His next reason was, I have said, *because he was a sinful man* and there is something of alarm mingled with his amazement. As a man he stood amazed at the shining of Christ's Godhead! As a sinful man, he stood alarmed at its dazzling holiness. I do not doubt that in the sermon which Christ delivered, there was such a clear denunciation of sin, such laying of justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet—such a declaration of the holiness of God—that Peter felt himself unveiled, discovered, his heart laid bare! And now came the finishing stroke. The One who had done this could also rule the fishes of the sea! He must, therefore, be God! And it was to God that all the defects and evils of Peter's heart had been revealed and thoroughly known! And almost fearing with a kind of inarticulate cry of alarm because the criminal was in the Presence of the Judge—the polluted in the Presence of the Immaculate—he said, "Depart from me, for I am *a sinful man*, O Lord."

But I have added that there was a third reason, namely, that *Peter was a humble man*, as is clear from the saying, because he knew himself and confessed bravely that he was a sinful man. You know that sometimes there have been persons in the world who have suddenly found some king or prince come to their little cottage—and the good housewife, when the king, himself, was coming to her, has felt as if the place itself was so unfit for him that, though she would do her best for his majesty, and was glad in her soul that he would honor her hovel with his presence, yet she could not help saying, "Oh, that Your Majesty had gone to a worthier house, had gone on to the great man's house a little ahead, for I am not worthy that Your Majesty should come here." So Peter felt as if Christ lowered Himself, in coming to him, as if it were too good a thing for Christ—too great, too kind, too condescending a thing—and he seems to say, "Go up higher, Master! Sit not down so low as this in my poor boat in the midst of these poor dumb fishes. Sit not down here, for You have a right to sit on the Throne of Heaven in the midst of angels that shall sing Your praises day and night! Lord, do not stop here—go up, take a better seat, a higher place—sit among more noble beings who are more worthy to be blessed with the smiles of Your Majesty."

Don't you think he meant that? If so, we may not only excuse his prayer, but even commend it, for we have felt the same. "Oh," we have said, "does Jesus dwell with a few poor men and women that have come together in His name to pray? Oh, surely, it is not a good enough place for *Him*—let Him have the whole world and all the sons of men to sing His praises! Let Him have Heaven, even the Heaven of heavens! Let the cherubim and seraphim be His servants and archangels loose the laces of His shoes! Let Him rise to the highest Throne in Glory and there let Him sit down, no more to wear the crown of thorns, no more to be wounded and despised and rejected, but to be worshipped and adored

forever and ever.” I think we have felt so and, if so, we can understand what Peter felt, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Now, Brothers and Sisters, there are times when these feelings, if they cannot be commended in ourselves, are yet excused by our Master and have a little in them, at any rate, which He looks upon with satisfaction. Shall I mention one?

Sometimes a man is *called to an eminent position of usefulness* and, as the vista opens before him and he sees what he will have to do—and with what honor his Master will be pleased to load him—it is very natural and I think it is almost *spiritual* for him to shrink and say, “Who am I that I should be called to such a work as this? My Master, I am willing to serve You, but oh, I am not worthy.” Like Moses, who was glad enough to be the Lord’s servant and yet he said, and he meant it so heartily, “Lord, I am slow of speech. I am a man of unclean lips, how can I speak for You?” Or, like Isaiah, who was rejoiced to say, “Here am I, send me!” But who felt, “Woe is me, for I am a man of uncircumcised lips! How shall I go?” Not like Jonah, who would not go at all, but must go off to Tarshish to escape working at Nineveh! Yet perhaps with a little seasoning of Jonah’s bitters, too, but mainly a sense of our own unworthiness to be used in so great a service, we seem to say, “Lord, do not ask me to do that! After all, I may slip and dishonor You. I would serve You, but lest by any means I should give way under the strain, excuse Your servant and give him a humbler post of service.” Now, I say we must not pray in that fashion, but still, while there is some evil there, there is a sediment of good which Christ will perceive in the fact that we see our own weakness and our own unsuitableness. He won’t be angry with us, but separating the chaff from the wheat, He will accept what was good in the prayer and forgive the bad.

Sometimes, again, dear Friends, this prayer has been almost on our lips *in times of intense enjoyment*. Some of you know what I mean, when the Lord draws near unto His servants and is like the consuming fire—and we are like the bush that seemed to be altogether on a blaze with the excessive splendor of God realized in our souls! Many of God’s saints have, at such times, fainted. You remember Mr. Flavel tells us that riding on horseback on a long journey to a place where he was to preach, he had such a sense of the sweetness of Christ and the Glory of God, that he did not know where he was—and he sat on his horse for two hours, together—the horse wisely standing still! And when he came to himself he found that he had been bleeding freely through the excess of joy. And as he washed his face in the brook by the roadside he said he felt, then, that he knew what it was to sit on the doorstep of Heaven and he could hardly tell that if he had entered the pearly gates, he would have been more happy, for the joy was excessive. To quote what I have often quoted before, the words of Mr. Welsh, a famous Scotch Divine who was under one of those blessed deliriums of heavenly light and rapturous fellowship, exclaimed, “Hold, Lord! Hold! It is enough! Remember, I am but an earthen vessel, and if You give me more, I die!” God does sometimes put

His new wine into our poor old bottles and then we are half inclined to say, "Depart, Lord! We are not yet ready for Your glorious Presence." It does not come to saying that—it does not amount to all that in words—but still, the spirit is willing and the flesh is weak, and the flesh seems to start back from the Glory which it cannot bear as yet. There are many things which Christ could tell us, but which He will not because we cannot bear them now.

Another time, when this has passed over the mind, not altogether rightly, not altogether sinfully, like the last two, is *when the sinner is coming to Christ* and has, indeed, in a measure believed in Him, but when, at last, that sinner perceives the greatness of the Divine Mercy, the richness of the heavenly pardon, the glory of the inheritance which is given to pardoned sinners! Then many a soul has started back and said, "It is too good to be true, or, if true, it is not true to me." Well do I remember a staggering fit I had over that business! I had believed in my Master and rested in Him for some months—and rejoiced in Him—but one day, while reveling in the delights of being saved and rejoicing in the Doctrines of Election, Final Perseverance and Eternal Glory—it came across my mind, "And all this for *you*, for such a dead dog as *you*—how can it be so?" And for awhile it was a temptation stronger than I could overcome! It was just saying, spiritually, "Depart from me, I am too sinful a man to have You in my boat—too unworthy to have such priceless blessings as You bring to me!"

Now, that, I say, is not altogether wrong and not altogether right. There is a mixture there, and we may excuse and somewhat commend, but not altogether. There are other times in which the same feeling may come across the mind, but I cannot stay now to specify them. It may be so with some here, and I pray them not to concern themselves utterly, nor yet to excuse themselves completely, but to go on to the next teaching of this prayer—

III. A PRAYER THAT NEEDS AMENDING AND REVISING.

As it stood, it was not a good one. Now let us put it in a different way. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Would it not be better to say, "*Come nearer to me*, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"? It would be a more brave prayer and a more tender prayer—more wise and not less humble, for humility takes many shapes. "I am a sinful man," here is humility. "*Come nearer to me*." Here is faith which prevents humility from degenerating into unbelief and despair! Brothers and Sisters, that would be a good argument, for see—"Since, Lord, I am a sinner, I need purifying. Only Your Presence can truly purify, for You are the Refiner and You purify the sons of Levi. Only Your Presence can cleanse, for the fan is in Your hand and You alone can purge Your floor. You are like a refiner's fire, or like fuller's soap—come nearer to me, then, Lord, for I am a sinful man and would not be always sinful. Come, wash me from my iniquity that I may be clean. And let Your sanctifying fire go through and through my nature till You burn out of me everything that is contrary to Your mind and will." Dare you pray that prayer? It is not natural to pray it. If you can, I would say to you, "Simon Bar-Jona, blessed are you, for

flesh and blood have not taught you this." Flesh and blood may make you say, "Depart from me"—it is the Holy Spirit, alone, that under a sense of sin, can yet put a Divine attraction to you in the purifying fire and make you long, therefore, that Christ would come near to you!

Again, "Come near to me, Lord, since I am a man and, being a man, am weak—and nothing can make me strong but Your Presence. I am a man so weak that if You depart from me, I faint, I fall, I pine, I die! Come near to me, then, O Lord, that by Your strength I may be encouraged and be fitted for service. If You depart from me, I can render You no service whatever. Can the dead praise You? Can those with no life in them give You glory? Come near me, then, my God, though I am so feeble! And as a tender parent feeds his child, and the shepherd carries his lambs, so come near to me."

Do you not think he might have said, "Come near to me, Lord, and abide with me, for I am a sinful man," in the recollection of how he had failed when Christ was not near? All through that night he had put the net into the sea with many a splash—and had drawn it up with many an eager look as he gazed through the moonlight—and there was nothing that rewarded his toil. In went the net again—and now when Christ came and the net was full to bursting—would it not have been a proper prayer, "Lord, come near to me and let every time I work, I may succeed! And if I am made a fisher of men, keep nearer to me, still, that every time I preach Your Word, I may bring souls into Your net and into Your Church that they may be saved"?

What I want to draw out from the text, and I shall do so better if I continue bringing out these different thoughts—is this—that it is well when a sense of our unworthiness leads us not to get away from God in an unbelieving, petulant despair, but to get nearer to God! Now, suppose I am a great sinner. Well, let me seek to get nearer to God for that very reason, for there is great salvation provided for great sinners! I am very weak and unfit for the great service which He has imposed upon me—let me not, therefore, shun the service or shun my God, but reckon that the weaker I am, the more room there is for God to get the glory! If I were strong, then God would not use me, because then my strength would get the praise for it. But my very unfitness and lack of ability and all that I lament in myself in my Master's work is but so much elbowroom for Omnipotence to come and work in! Would it not be a fine thing if we could all say, "I glory not in my talents, not in my learning, not in my strength, but I glory in infirmity because the power of God does rest upon me"! Men cannot say, "That is a learned man—and he wins souls because he is learned." They cannot say, "That is a man whose faculties of reasoning are very strong and whose powers of argument are clear—and he wins sinners by convincing their judgments." No, they say, "What is the reason of his success? We cannot discover it. We see nothing in him different from other men, or perhaps, only the difference that he has less of gifts than they." Then glory be to God! He has the praise more clearly and more distinctly—and His head who deserves it—wears the crown!

See, then, what I am aiming at with you, dear Brothers and Sisters. It is this— do not run away from your Master's work, any of you, because you feel unfit—but for that reason do twice as much! Do not give up praying because you feel you cannot pray, but pray twice as much, for you need more prayer and, instead of being less with God, be more! Do not let a sense of unworthiness drive you away. A child should not run away from its mother at night because it needs washing. Your children do not stay away from you because they are hungry, nor because they have torn their clothes—they come to you because of their necessities! They come because they are children, but they come more often because they are needy children—because they are sorrowful children! So let every need, let every pain, let every weakness, let every sorrow, let every sin drive you to God. Do not say, "Depart from me." It is a natural thing that you should say so and not a thing altogether to be condemned, but it is a glorious thing, it is a God-honoring thing, it is a wise thing to say, on the contrary, "Come to me, Lord. Come still nearer to me, for I am a sinful man and without Your Presence I am utterly undone."

I shall say no more, but I would that the Holy Spirit would say this to some who are in this house, who have long been invited to come and put their trust in Jesus, but always plead as a reason for not coming that they are too guilty, or that they are too hardened, or too something or other! Strange that what one man makes a reason for coming, another makes a reason for staying away! David prayed in the Psalms, "Lord have mercy and pardon my iniquity, for it is great." "Strange argument," you will say. It is a grand one! "Lord, here is great sin and there is now something that is worthy of a great God to deal with! Here is a mountain sin, Lord, have Omnipotent Grace to remove it! Lord, here is a towering Alp of sin—let the floods of Your Grace, like Noah's flood, come 20 cubits over the top of it! I am the chief of sinners— here is room for the chief of Saviors." How strange it is that some men should make this a reason for staying away! This cruel sin of unbelief is cruel to yourselves—you have put away the comfort you might enjoy. It is cruel to Christ, for there is no pang that ever wounded Him more than that unkind, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling. Believe, believe that He never is so glad as when He is clasping His Ephraim to His breast! As when He is saying, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you." Trust Him! If you could see Him, you could not help it. If you could look into that dear face and into those dear eyes, once red with weeping over sinners that rejected Him, you would say, "Behold, we come to You! You have the words of eternal life! Accept us, for we rest in You alone. All our trust on You is stayed." And that done, you would find that His coming to you would be like rain on the mown grass, as the showers that water the earth and, through Him, your souls would flourish, your sackcloth would be taken away and you would be girt about with gladness and rejoice in Him, world without end! The Lord Himself bring you to this. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15:1-27.**

We shall, tonight, read a chapter which, I suppose, the most of us know by heart. But as often as I have read it, I do not remember ever reading it without seeing some fresh light in it. May it be so tonight!

Verse 1. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him.* A rare crowd they must have been, when it is said *all* the publicans and sinners! All sorts of sinners came in such numbers that it seemed as if the city had sent out all its hosts of sinners. And these drew near—came as close as they could for fear of losing a single word! They made the inner ring about the Savior. He had a bodyguard of sinners and certainly there are none that will ever glorify Him as these people will do.

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners and eats with them.* They stood further off. Not to listen, but to murmur. Here was the old fable of the dog in the manger. They did not want Christ, themselves, but they murmured that other people should have Him. They despise Him. They thought themselves too righteous to need a Savior. Yet they murmured when the Physician came to His patients to give them the healing medicine!

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.* They were hardly worth His trouble. But though He spoke it to them, others who are not of that sort have sucked sweetness out of it ever since! We are told this is a parable, but on looking at it we find it to be *three*. Have you ever seen a picture in three panels and the whole of the panels necessary to complete the picture? So it is here. Different views of the great work of Divine Grace suiting different persons, so that if we do not see through one glass, we may use a second, and a third!

4, 7. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.* Not that one repenting sinner is of more esteem in Heaven than 99 saints who have been kept by the power of God. No, not so, but there is a greater stir of joy in Heaven at the time of the sinner's repentance than there is over all the ninety-nine. And you know how that is. You may have many children and you may love them all alike, yet if one is ill you take far more notice of him just then—and all the house is ordered with a view to that sick child. He may not be the best child you have, but still, for the time being, there is more thought of him because he is ill. And if you should happen to have in your family a boy that has greatly grieved you and has gone astray, I am sure that if he were to repent, you would feel intense joy over him. But it would not be true that you thought more of him than of his brothers and of his sisters who are with you and are obedient to you. We must not learn from a passage more than it teaches. At the same time, let us learn as much as

we can from it. It sets Heaven on a blaze of joy when one single penitent turns to his Father!

8. *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it?* Eastern houses generally are very dark and if you need to find anything, you must light a candle. Now, this is one piece of money out of ten, as the sheep was one out of a hundred. The woman does not stand counting over the other nine, but she leaves them in the box and lights a candle and begins to make a stir. No doubt other people who were in the house would say, "What an inconvenience this dust is." She must find her piece of money. So sometimes in a congregation, we feel it necessary to have special services and makes a little stir—and there are some good souls who are inconvenienced and they do not like all the dust. Oh, it matters not what dust we make, as long as we find the lost piece—and if a soul is found, we can put up with some irregularities as long as the precious thing is discovered and brought to its Owner!

9, 10. *And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.* Here follows this most wonderful of all parables—the truest picture of man's folly and lost estate that was ever sketched—and at the same time the most wonderful picture of the Mercy and Love of God that was ever painted!

11, 12. *And He said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to His father, Father, give me the portion of goods that fall to me. And he divided unto them his living.* In the East the younger son has a smaller portion of the estate compared with the elder. But it is a usual thing—certainly not an unusual thing—to let him have his portion while his father is yet alive, that he may make use of it and be able, by his industry, to increase it till he becomes a substantial person—a custom not altogether without wisdom in it if there must be a distinction between elder and younger sons. You remember how Abraham gave portions to his sons by Keturah and sent them away, whereas Isaac had nothing because he was the heir and had everything. So this younger son asks for his portion and the father divided to them his living.

13. *And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* His heart was distant from his father. Therefore he did not feel at ease until he put himself at a distance where he could do just as he liked—could do that which he knew his father would not approve of and what he would not like to do in his father's house. And is not this a true picture of the man who is not a friend of God? He wants to do as he likes. He desires to be independent and as he knows that what he likes to do will not please God, he tries to forget God. He gets into a far country by his forgetfulness. He says in his heart. "No God." He wishes there was no God. He gets as far away from God as he can. Then it is that he wastes his substance. Did you ever look at an ungodly life as the wasting of precious substance? It is just that! The love which ought to go to God

is wasted in lust. The energy that ought to be spent in righteousness is wasted upon sin. The thought, the ability that ought to be laid at Jesus' feet is all used for selfish pleasure—and so it is wasted. He wasted his substance in riotous living.

14. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in need.* “Began to be in need.” What a change! At home with his father, then with plenty to waste—and now in need. Those two words, “in need,” describe the condition of every ungodly man! After a time, he is in need—in need of everything that is good and worth having. His soul is a pauper. He is in need.

15. *And he sent and joined himself to a citizen of that country.* A gentleman with whom he had spent a fortune. Many a time had this citizen sat at his table and drank his best wines. And what does this fine fellow do for him?

15. *And he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* A very low occupation anywhere, but in Judea a peculiarly degrading occupation. He sent him, a Jew, into the fields to feed swine!

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.* It does not say that he would have stopped his hunger with the husks, for that could not be done. He would only fill his belly—fill it up, as it were, with anything just to choke his sense of need. And there are many men that know that the world cannot satisfy them, but it could at least take their thoughts off a little from their inward need and so they gladly fill up their belly with the husks that the swine do eat.

16. *And no man gave unto him.* He gave to them—he spent all his money with them. He was a fine fellow, then, so they said. But now no man gave to him. And what a mercy it was, for if they had given him all he needed, he would not have gone back to his father! There is nothing like a little gracious starvation to fetch a man home to Christ. And it is a blessed Providence and a blessed work of the Spirit of God when a man at last is starved till he must go home to God!

17-20. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and went to his father.* “And when he came to himself.” He had been beside himself before. There are two things upon which ungodly men are very ignorant—God and themselves. “He arose and went to his father.” That was the best of all. He stopped not with resolutions, but he actually did the deed! This was the turning point with him. He arose and went to his father.

20, 21. *But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.* But the father inter-

rupted the prayer. He would not let him conclude it. "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear."

22-24. *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fatted calf, and kill it and let us eat and be merry, For this, my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.* What a change between being in need and, "let us eat and be merry."—

"Wonders of Grace to God belong."

There is no wishing to fill his belly with husks, now! But the word is passed round, "Let us eat and be merry."

25. *Now his elder son was in the field.* There is a great deal of questioning about who this man was—this eldest son. Why, dear me, I have known him! I have the misfortune to meet him every now and then. He is a very capital man—one of the best of men, but he does not care about revivals, or about having a great many converted. He is very suspicious about such things—he does not care about making so much fuss over men that have newly repented. He holds rather hard views about them. "He was in the field at work."

25-27. *And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Your brother is come; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.* Did you ever notice that point—the father's gladness because he had received him safe and sound? No bones broken. His face was not disfigured. He was safe and sound. It is a wonderful thing that the sinner should come back to Christ safe and sound, considering where he has been! He has been in much worse danger than if he had been in battle or in shipwreck. He has been with drunks and with harlots—and yet he is received safe and sound. Oh, the wonders that Divine Grace can do, to put safeness and soundness into us who went so far astray!

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

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

CARRIED BY FOUR

NO. 981

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 19, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed. And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?’ But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answering said unto them, ‘What reason you in your hearts? Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you. Or to say, Rise up and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today.”
Luke 5:16-26.

YOU have this same narrative in the ninth chapter of Matthew, and in the second chapter of Mark. What is three times recorded by Inspired pens must be regarded as trebly important and well worthy of our earnest consideration. Observe the instructive fact that our Savior retired and spent a special time in prayer when He saw an unusual crowd assembling. He withdrew into the wilderness to hold communion with His Father, and, as a consequence, to come forth clothed with an abundance of healing and saving power. Not but that in Himself, as God, He always had that power without measure. But for our sakes He did it—that we might learn that the power of God will only rest upon us in proportion as we draw near to God.

Neglect of private prayer is the locust which devours the strength of the Church. When our Lord left His retirement He found the crowd around Him exceedingly great, and it was as mixed as it was great. For while here were many sincere Believers, there were still more skeptical observers. Some were anxious to receive His healing power, others equally desirous to find occasion against Him. So in all congregations, however the preacher may be clothed with His Master's Spirit and his Master's might, there will be a mixed gathering. There will come together your Pharisees

and doctors of the law, your sharp critics ready to pick holes, your cold-blooded cavilers searching for faults.

At the same time, chosen of God and drawn by His Grace, there will be present some devout Believers who rejoice in the power that is revealed among men, and earnest seekers who wish to feel in themselves the healing energy. It seems to have been a rule with our Savior to supply each hearer with food after his kind. The Pharisees soon found the matters to find fault with for which they were looking. The Savior so worded His expressions that they caught them eagerly, and charged Him with blasphemy. The enmity of their hearts was thus thrown out upon the surface that the Lord might have an opportunity of rebuking it. And had they been but willing, the power of the Lord was present to heal even them!

Meanwhile, those poor tremblers who were praying for healing were not disappointed. The Good Physician passed not by a single case. And at the same time, His disciples, who were looking for opportunities of praising Him anew, were also fully gratified, for with glad eyes they saw the paralytic restored, and heard sins forgiven. The case which the narrative brings before us is that of a man stricken down with paralysis.

This sad disease may have been of long duration. There is a paralysis which gradually kills the body, binding it more and more surely in utter helplessness. The nerve power is almost destroyed—the power of motion is entirely suspended. And yet the faculties of the mind remain, though greatly weakened, and some of them almost extinguished. Some have thought that this man may have been stricken with what is called the universal paralysis which very speedily brings on death. This may account for the extreme haste of the four bearers to bring him near the Savior.

We do not know the details of his case, but certain is it that he was paralyzed. And, as I look at the case, and study the three records, I think I perceive with equal clearness that this paralysis was in some way or other, at least in the man's own judgment, connected with his sin. He was evidently penitent, as well as paralytic. His mind was as much oppressed as his bodily frame. I do not know that he could be altogether called a Believer. But it is most probable that being burdened with a sense of sin, he had a feeble hope in Divine mercy, which, like a spark in smoking flax, had hard work to exist, but yet was truly there.

The affliction for which his friends pitied him was in his body, but he himself felt a far severer trouble in his soul, and probably it was not so much with the view of being healed bodily, as in the hope of spiritual blessing, that he was willing to be subjected to any process by which he might come under the Savior's eye. I gather that from the fact that our Savior addressed him in these words, "Be of good cheer"—intimating that he was desponding, that his spirit sunk within him. Therefore, instead of saying to him at once, "Rise, take up your bed," our tender-hearted Lord said, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

He gave him at the outset a blessing for which the patient's friends had not asked, but which the man, though speechless, was seeking for in the silence of his soul. He was a "son," though an afflicted one—he was ready to obey the Lord's bidding when power was given—though as yet he could neither lift hand nor foot. He was longing for the pardon of sin, yet could not stretch out his hand to lay hold upon the Savior. I intend to use this

narrative for practical purposes. May the Holy Spirit make it really useful. Our first remark will be this—

I. THERE ARE CASES WHICH WILL NEED THE AID OF A LITTLE BAND OF WORKERS BEFORE THEY WILL BE FULLY SAVED. This man needed to be borne by four, so the Evangelist, Mark, tells us. There must be a bearer at each corner of the couch where he lay. The great mass of persons who are brought into the kingdom of Christ are converted through the general prayers of the Church by the means of her ministry. Probably three out of four of the members of any Church will owe their conversion to the Church's regular teaching in some form or other.

Her school, her pulpit, her press have been the nets in which they were taken. Private personal prayer has, of course, in many instances been mingled with all this. But still, most of the cases could not be so distinctly traced out as to be attributable mainly to *individual* prayers or exertions. This is the rule, I think, that the Lord will have the many brought to Himself by the sounding of the great trumpet of Jubilee in the dispensation of the Gospel by His ministers.

There are some, again, who are led to Jesus by the individual efforts of one person—just as Andrew found his own brother, Simon, so one Believer by his private communication of the Truth of God to another person becomes instrumental, by the power of God's Spirit, in his conversion. One convert will bring another, and that other a third. But this narrative seems to show that there are cases which will neither be brought by the general preaching of the Word, nor yet by the instrumentality of one.

They require that there should be two, or three, or four in holy combination, who, with one consent, feeling one common agony of soul, shall resolve to band themselves together as a company for this one object—and never cease from their holy confederation until this object is gained and their friend is saved. This man could not be brought to Christ by one—he must have four to lend their strength for his carrying—or he cannot reach the place of healing.

Let us apply the principle. Yonder is a householder as yet unsaved—his wife has prayed for him a long time. Her prayers are yet unanswered. Good wife, God has blessed you with a son who, with you, rejoices in the fear of God. Have you not two Christian daughters, also? O you four, take each a corner of this sick man's couch and bring your husband, bring your father, to the Savior!

A husband and a wife are here, both happily brought to Christ. You are praying for your children—never cease from that supplication—pray on! Perhaps one of your beloved family is unusually stubborn. Extra help is needed. Well, to you the Sunday school teacher will make a third. He will take one corner of the bed. And happy shall I be if I may join the blessed group, and make the fourth. Perhaps, when home discipline, the school's teaching, and the minister's preaching shall go together, the Lord will look down in love and save your child.

Dear brother, you are thinking of one whom you have long prayed for. You have spoken to him also, and used all proper means, but as yet without effect. Perhaps you speak too comfortingly to him—it may be you have not brought that precise Truth of God to bear upon him which his conscience requires. Seek yet more help. It may possibly be that a second

brother will speak instructively, where you have only spoken consolingly. Perhaps the instruction may be the means of Grace.

Yet may it possibly happen that even instruction will not suffice any more than consolation, and it may be necessary for you to call in a third, who, perhaps, will speak impressively with exhortation, and with warning, which may possibly be the great requisite. You two, already in the field, may balance his exhortation, which might have been too pungent by itself, and might have raised prejudice in the person's mind if it had come alone. All three of you together may prove the fit instruments in the Lord's hand. Yet when you three have happily combined, it may be the poor paralyzed one is not yet affected savingly.

A fourth may be needed, who, with deeper affection than all three of you, and perhaps with an experience more suited to the case than yours, may come in—and working with you—the result may be secured. The four fellow helpers together may accomplish, by the power of the Spirit, what neither one, nor two, nor three were competent to have done. It may sometimes happen that a man has heard Paul preach. But Paul's clear doctrine, though it has enlightened his intellect, has not yet convicted his conscience.

He has heard Apollos, and the glow of the orator's eloquent appeals has warmed his heart, but not humbled his pride. He has later still listened to Cephas, whose rough cutting sentences have hewn him down, and convicted him of sin. But before he can find joy and peace in believing, he will require to hear the sweet affectionate words of John. Only when the fourth shall grasp the bed and give a hearty lift will the paralyzed person he laid in Mercy's path.

I anxiously desire to see in this Church little bands of men and women bound to each other by zealous love to souls. I would have you say to one another, "This is a case in which we feel a common interest—we will pledge each other to pray for this person. We will unitedly seek his salvation." It may be that one of our seat holders, after listening to my voice these ten or fifteen years, is not impressed. It may be that another has left the Sunday school unsaved. Let brotherly quaternions look after these by God's help.

Moved by one impulse, form a square about these persons, beset them behind and before, and let them not say, "No man cares for my soul." Meet together in prayer with the definite object before you, and then seek that object by the most likely ways. I do not know, my Brethren, how much blessing might come to us through this, but I feel certain that until we have tried it we cannot pronounce a verdict upon it. Nor can we be quite sure that we are free from all responsibility to men's souls until we have tested every possible and probable method for doing them good.

But I am afraid that there are not many, even in a large Church, who will become sick-bearers. Many will say the plan is admirable, but they will leave it to others to carry it out. Remember that the four persons who join in such a labor of love ought, all of them, to be filled with intense affection to the persons whose salvation they seek. They must be men who will not shrink because of difficulty—who will put forth their whole strength to shoulder the beloved burden—and will persevere until they succeed.

They need be strong, for the burden is heavy. They need be resolute, for the work will try their faith. They need be prayerful, for otherwise they labor in vain. They must be believing, or they will be utterly useless—Jesus saw their faith, and therefore accepted their service. But without faith it is impossible to please Him. Where shall we find quartets such as these? May the Lord find them, and may He send them to some of you poor dying sinners who lie paralyzed here today!

II. We now pass on to the second observation that **SOME CASES, THUS TAKEN UP, WILL NEED MUCH THOUGHT BEFORE THE DESIGN IS ACCOMPLISHED.** The essential means by which a soul is saved is clear enough. The four bearers had no question with each other as to what was the way to effect this man's cure—they were unanimous in this—that they must bring him to Jesus. By some means or other, by hook or by crook, they must place him in the Savior's way. That was undoubted fact. The question was, how to do this?

There is an old worldly proverb, that "where there's a will there's a way." And that proverb, I believe, may be safely imported into spiritual things almost without a caution or grain of salt. "Where there's a will there's a way." And if men are called of God's Grace to a deep anxiety for any particular soul, there is a way by which that soul may be brought to Jesus. But that way may not suggest itself till after much consideration.

In some cases the way to impress the heart may be an out-of-the-way way, an extraordinary way—a way which ordinarily should not be used and would not be successful. I dare say the four bearers in the narrative thought early in the morning, "We will carry this poor paralytic to the Savior, passing into the house by the ordinary door." But when they attempted to do so the multitudes so blocked up the road that they could not even reach the threshold. "Make way! Make way for the sick! Stand aside there, and give room for a poor paralyzed man! "For mercy's sake give a little space, and let the sick man reach the healing Prophet!"

In vain were their entreaties and commands. Here and there a few compassionate persons back out of the crowd, but the many neither can nor will. Besides, many of them are engaged upon a similar business and have equal reasons for pressing in. "See," cries one of the four, "I will make way." And he pushes and elbows himself a little distance into the passage. "Come on, you three!" he cries—"follow up, and fight for it, inch by inch." But they cannot do it. It is impossible. The poor patient is ready to die for fear.

The bed is tossed about by the throng like a cockleshell boat on the waves of the sea. The patient's alarm increases, the bearers are distressed, and they are quite glad to get outside again and consider. It is evidently quite impossible by ordinary means to get him in. What then? "We cannot burrow under the ground—can we not go over the heads of the people, and let the man down from above? Where is the staircase?"

Frequently there is an external staircase to the top of an eastern house. We cannot be sure that there was one in this case. But if not, the next door house may have had such a convenience, and so the resolute bearers reached the top and passed from one roof to another. Where we have no definite information, much may be left to conjecture. But this much is clear—by some means they elevated their unhappy burden to the house-

top and provided themselves with the necessary tackle with which to let him down.

The Savior was probably preaching in one of the upper rooms, unless the house was a poor one without an upper story. Perhaps the room was open to the courtyard, which was crowded. At any rate, the Lord Jesus was under cover of a roof, and a substantial roof, too. No one who carefully reads the original will fail to see that there was real roofing to be broken through. It has been suggested as a difficulty, that the breaking up of a roof might involve danger to those below, and would probably make a great smother of dust.

To avoid this, there have been various suppositions—such as that the Savior was standing under an awning, and the men rolled up the canvas. Or that our Lord stood under a veranda with a very light covering, which the men could readily uncover. Others have even invented a trapdoor for the occasion. But with all due deference to eminent travelers, the words of the Evangelists cannot be so readily disposed of. According to our text, the man was let down through “tiling.” Not canvas, or any light material—whatever sort of tiling it was, it was certainly made of burnt clay—for that enters into the essence of the word.

Moreover, according to Mark, after they had uncovered the roof, which, I suppose, means the removal of the “tiling,” they *broke it up*, which looks exceedingly like breaking through a ceiling. The Greek word used by Mark, which is interpreted “breaking up,” is a very emphatic word and signifies digging through, or scooping up—which evidently conveys the idea of considerable labor for the removal of material. We are told that the roofs of Oriental houses are often made of big stones. That may be true as a general rule, but not in this case, for the house was covered with tiles.

And as to the dust and falling rubbish that may or may not be a necessary conclusion. But as clear as noonday is it that a substantial housetop which required untiring and digging through, had a hole made in it—and through the aperture the man in his bed was let down. Perhaps there was dust, and possibly there was danger, too, but the bearers were prepared to accomplish their purpose at all risks. They must get the sick man in somehow.

There is no need, however, to suppose—for no doubt the four men would be careful not to disturb the Savior or His hearers. The tiles or plaster might be removed to another part of the flat roof, and the boards likewise, as they were broken up. And as for the spars, they might be sufficiently wide to admit the narrow couch of the sick man without moving any of them from their places. Mr. Hartley, in his *Travels*, says—“When I lived at Aegina I used to look up not infrequently at the roof above my head and contemplate how easily the whole transaction of the paralytic might take place.

The roof was made in the following manner—A layer of reeds, of a large species, was placed upon the rafters, on these a quantity of heather was strewed. On the heather, earth was deposited and beaten down into a solid mass. Now, what difficulty would there be in removing first the earth, next the heather, and then the reeds? Nor would the difficulty be increased if the earth had a pavement of tiling laid upon it. No inconvenience could result to the persons in the house, from the removal of the

tiles and earth—for the heather and reeds would stop anything that might otherwise fall down, and would be removed last of all.”

To let a man down through the roof was a device most strange and striking—but it only gives point to the remark which we have now to make. If we want to have souls saved, we must not be too squeamish and delicate about conventionalities, rules, and proprieties—for the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence. We must make up our minds to this—“Smash or crash, everything shall go to pieces which stands between the soul and its God—it matters not what tiles are to be taken off, what plaster is to be dug up, or what boards are to be torn away, or what labor, or trouble, or expense we may have. The soul is too precious for us to stand upon nice questions. If by any means we may save some, is our policy. Skin for skin, yes—all that we have is nothing comparable to a man’s soul.”

When four true hearts are set upon the spiritual good of a sinner, their holy hunger will break through stone walls or house roofs. I have no doubt it was a difficult task to carry the paralyzed man upstairs. The breaking up of the roof, the removing the tiling with all due care—must have been a laborious task, and have required much skill—but the work was done, and the end was gained. We must never stop at difficulties. However stern the task, it must always be more difficult to us to let a soul perish than to labor in the most self-denying form for its deliverance.

It was a very singular action which the bearers performed. Who would have thought of breaking up a roof? Nobody but those who loved much, and much desired to benefit the sick. O that God would make us attempt singular things to save souls! May a holy ingenuity be excited in the Church—a sacred inventiveness set at work for winning men’s hearts!

It appeared to his generation a singular thing when John Wesley stood on his father’s tombstone and preached at Epworth. Glory be to God that he had the courage to preach in the open air. It seemed an extraordinary thing when certain ministers delivered sermons in the theatres. But it is matter of joy that sinners have been reached by such irregularities who might have escaped all other means!

Let us but feel our hearts full of zeal for God, and love for souls, and we shall soon be led to adopt means which others may criticize, but which Jesus Christ will accept. After all, the method which the four friends followed was one most suitable to their abilities. They were, I suppose, four strong fellows to whom the load was no great weight, and the work of digging was comparatively easy. The method suited their capacity exactly. And what did they do when they had let the sick man down?

Look at the scene and admire! I do not read that they *said* a single word, yet what they *did* was enough—abilities for lifting and carrying did the necessary work. Some of you say, “Ah, we cannot be of any use. We wish we could preach.” These men could not preach—they did not *need* to preach. They lowered the paralytic, and their work was done. They could not preach, but they could hold a rope. We want in the Christian Church not only preachers, but soul-winners, who can bear souls on their hearts and feel the solemn burden! Men who, it may be, cannot talk, but who can weep! Men who cannot break other men’s hearts with their language, but who break their own hearts with their compassion!

In the case before us there was no need to plead, “Jesus, son of David, look up, for a man is coming down who needs You.” There was no need to urge that the patient had been so many years sick. We do not know that the man himself uttered a word. Helpless and paralyzed, he had not the vigor to become a suppliant. They placed his almost lifeless form before the Savior’s eyes, and that was appeal enough!

His sad condition was more eloquent than words. O hearts that love sinners, lay their lost estate before Jesus! Bring their cases as they are before the Savior. If your tongues stammer, your hearts will prevail. If you cannot speak even to Christ Himself, as you would desire, because you have not the gift of prayer—yet if your strong desires spring from the *spirit* of prayer—you cannot fail.

God help us to make use of such means as are within our power, and not to sit down idly to regret the powers we do not possess. Perhaps it would be dangerous for us to possess the abilities we covet. It is always safe to consecrate those we have.

III. Now we must pass on to an important Truth of God. We may safely gather from the narrative THAT THE ROOT OF SPIRITUAL PARALYSIS GENERALLY LIES IN UNPARDONED SIN. Jesus intended to heal the paralyzed man, but He did so by first of all, saying, “Your sins are forgiven you.” There are some in this House of Prayer this morning who are spiritually paralyzed. They have eyes and they see the Gospel. They have ears and they have heard it, and heard it attentively, too. But they are so paralyzed that they will tell you, and honestly tell you, that they cannot lay hold upon the promise of God.

They cannot believe in Jesus to the saving of their souls. If you urge them to pray, they say—“We try to pray, but it is not acceptable prayer.” If you bid them have confidence, they will tell you, though not in so many words, perhaps, that they are given up to despair. Their mournful ditty is—

***“I would, but cannot sing.
I would, but cannot pray
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frightens my soul away.
I would, but can’t repent,
Though I endeavor often.
This stony heart can never relent
Till Jesus makes it soft.
I would, but cannot love,
Though wooed by love Divine.
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine.
O could I but believe!
Then all would easy be.
I would, but cannot.
Lord, relieve—
My help must come from You.”***

The bottom of this paralysis is *sin* upon the conscience working death in them. They are sensible of their guilt, but powerless to believe that the crimson fountain can remove it—they are alive only to sorrow, despondency, and agony. Sin paralyzes them with despair. I grant you that into this despair there enters largely the element of unbelief, which is sinful—

but I hope there is also in it a measure of sincere repentance—which bears in it the hope of something better.

Our poor, awakened paralytics sometimes hope that they may be forgiven, but they cannot believe it. They cannot rejoice. They cannot cast themselves on Jesus. They are utterly without strength. Now, the bottom of it, I say again, lies in unpardoned SIN. I earnestly entreat you who love the Savior to be earnest in seeking the pardon of these paralyzed persons. You tell me that *I* should be earnest—so I should. And so I desire to be—but, Brethren, their cases appear to be beyond the minister's sphere of action.

The Holy Spirit determines to use other agencies in their salvation. They have heard the public Word of God. They now need private consolation and aid—and that from three or four. Lend us your help, you earnest Brethren! Form your parties of four! Grasp the couches of those who wish to be saved but who feel they cannot believe. The Lord, the Holy Spirit, make you the means of leading them into forgiveness and eternal salvation. They have been lying a long time waiting—their sin, however, still keeps them where they are. Their guilt prevents their laying hold on Christ. That is the point, and it is for such cases that I earnestly invoke my Brethren's aid.

IV. Let us proceed to notice, fourthly, that JESUS CAN REMOVE BOTH THE SIN AND THE PARALYSIS IN A SINGLE MOMENT. It was the business of the four bearers to bring the man to Christ. But there their power ended. It is our part to *bring* the guilty sinner *to the Savior*—there our power ends. Thank God! When we end, Christ begins! And works right gloriously, too. Observe that He began by saying—“Your sins are forgiven you.”

He laid the axe at the root. He did not desire that the man's sins might be forgiven, or express a good wish in that direction—He pronounced an absolution by virtue of that authority with which He was clothed as the Savior. The poor man's sins, then and there, ceased to be, and he was justified in the sight of God. Do you believe this, my Hearer—that Christ did this for the paralytic man? Then I charge you believe something more—that if on earth Christ had power to forgive sins *before* He had offered an *Atonement*—much more has He power to do this now that He has poured out His blood, and has said, “It is finished,” and has gone into His Glory, and is at the right hand of the Father.

He is exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sin. Should He send His Spirit into your soul to reveal Himself in you, you would, in an instant, be entirely absolved! Does blasphemy blacken you? Does a long life of infidelity pollute you? Have you been licentious? Have you been abominably wicked? A word can absolve you—a word from those dear lips which said, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

I charge you ask for that absolving word! No earthly priest can give it to you. But the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, can utter it at once. You twos and fours who are seeking the salvation of men, here is encouragement for you. Pray for them now, while the Gospel is being preached in their hearing! Pray for them day and night, and bring the glad tidings constantly before them, for Jesus is still able “to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.”

After our blessed Lord had taken away the root of the evil, you observe He then took away the paralysis, itself. It was gone in a single moment! Every limb in the man's body was restored to a healthy state. He could stand, could walk, could lift his bed! Both nerve and muscle were restored to vigor. One moment will suffice, if Jesus speaks, to make the despairing happy and the unbelieving full of confidence.

What *we* cannot do with our reasonings, persuading, and entreaties—nor even with the letter of God's promise—Christ can do in a single instant by His Holy Spirit, and it has been our joy to see it done! This is the standing miracle of the Church, performed by Christ today, even as before. Paralyzed souls, who could neither do nor will, have been able to do valiantly, and to will with solemn resolution. The Lord has poured power into the faint, and to them that had no might He has increased strength.

He can still do it! I say again to loving spirits who are seeking the good of others, let this encourage you. You may not have to wait long for the conversions you aim at. It may be, before another Sunday ends, the person you pray for may be brought to Jesus. Or if you have to wait a little, the waiting shall well repay you—and meanwhile, remember He has never spoken in secret in the dark places of the earth. He has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face in vain."

V. Passing on, and drawing to a conclusion—WHEREVER OUR LORD WORKS THE DOUBLE MIRACLE IT WILL BE APPARENT. He forgave the man's sins and took away his disease at the same time. How was this apparent? I have no doubt the pardon of the man's sins was best known to himself. But possibly those who saw that gleaming countenance which had been so sad before, might have noticed that the word of absolution sunk into his soul as the rain into the thirsty earth. "Your sins are forgiven you," fell on him as a dew from Heaven!

He believed the sacred declaration, and his eyes sparkled! He might almost have felt indifferent whether he remained paralyzed or not, it was such joy to be forgiven, forgiven by the Lord Himself! That was enough, quite enough for him. But it was not enough for the Savior—and therefore He bade him take up his couch and walk—for He had given him strength to do so. The man's healing was *proved* by his *obedience*. Openly, to all onlookers, an active obedience became indisputable proof of the poor creature's restoration.

Notice, our Lord bade him rise—he rose. He had no power to do so except that power which comes with Divine commands. He rose, for Christ said, "Rise." Then he folded up that miserable pallet—the Greek word used shows us that it was a very poor, mean, miserable affair—he rolled it up as the Savior bade him. He shouldered it, and went to his home. His first impulse must have been to throw himself down at the Savior's feet, and say, "Blessed be Your name." But the Master said, "Go to your house."

And I do not find that he stayed to make one grateful obeisance, but elbowing the crowd, jostling the throng with his load on his back, he proceeded to his house just as he was told. And that without deliberation, or questioning. He did his Lord's bidding, and he did it accurately—in detail, at once—and most cheerfully. Oh, how cheerfully! None can tell but those in like case restored. So, the true sign of pardoned sin, and of paralysis

removed from the heart is obedience. If you are really saved, you will do what Jesus bids you. Your request will be, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" And that once ascertained, you will be sure to do it.

You tell me Christ has forgiven you, and yet you live in rebellion to His commands! How can I believe you? You say you are a saved man, and yet you willfully set up your own will against Christ's will. What evidence have I of what you say? Have I not, rather, clear evidence that you speak not the truth? Open, careful, prompt, cheerful *obedience* to Christ becomes the test of the wonderful work which Jesus works in the soul.

VI. Lastly, ALL THIS TENDS TO GLORIFY GOD. Those four men had been the indirect means of bringing much honor to God and much glory to Jesus, and they, I doubt not, glorified God in their very hearts on the housetop. Happy men to have been of so much service to their bedridden friend! Who else united in glorifying God? Why, first the man who was restored. Did not every part of his body glorify God? I think I see him! He sets one foot down to God's Glory! He plants the other to the same note. He *walks* to God's Glory, he carries his bed to God's Glory! He moves his whole body to the Glory of God!

He speaks, he shouts, he sings, he *leaps* to the Glory of God! When a man is saved, his whole manhood glorifies God. He becomes instinct with a new-born life which glows in every part of him—spirit, soul and body. As an heir of Heaven, he brings Glory to the Great Father who has adopted him into the family! He breathes and eats and drinks to God's praise. When a Sinner is brought into the Church of God we are all glad, but we are none of us so joyous and thankful as he is. We would all praise God, but *he* must praise Him the loudest, and he will.

But who next glorified God? The text does not say so, but we feel sure that his family did, for he went to his own house. We will suppose that he had a wife. That morning when the four friends came and put him on the bed, and carried him out, it may be she shook her head in loving anxiety. And I dare say she said, "I am half afraid to trust him with you. Poor, poor creature, I dread his encountering the throng. I am afraid it is madness to hope for success. I wish you Godspeed in it, but I tremble. Hold well the bed. Be sure you do not let him fall. If you do let him down through the roof hold fast the ropes, be careful that no accident occurs to my poor bedridden husband. He is bad enough as he is, do not cause him more misery."

But when she saw him coming home—*walking*—with the bed on his back! Can you picture her delight? How she would begin to sing, and praise and bless the Lord Jehovah Rophi, who had healed her beloved one! If there were little children about, playing before the house, how they would shout for glee, "Here's Father! Here's Father walking again, and come home with the bed on his back! He is made whole again, as he used to be when we were very little." What a glad house! They would gather round him, all of them, wife and children, and friends and neighbors, and they would begin to sing, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities: who heals all your diseases."

How the man would sing those verses, rejoicing in the forgiveness first, and the healing next, and wondering how it was that David knew so much about it, and had put his case into such fit words! Well, but it did not end there. A wife and family utter but a part of the glad chorus of praise, though a very melodious part. There are other adoring hearts who unite in glorifying the healing Lord. The disciples who were around the Savior, they glorified God, too. They rejoiced, and said one to another, "We have seen strange things today."

The whole Christian Church is full of sacred praise when a sinner is saved! Even Heaven itself is glad. But there was Glory brought to God even by the common people who stood around. They had not yet entered into that sympathy with Christ which the disciples felt, but they were struck by the sight of this great wonder, and they, too, could not help saying that God had worked great marvels. I pray that onlookers, strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, when they see the desponding comforted, and lost ones brought in, may be compelled to bear their witness to the power of Divine Grace, and be led themselves to be partakers in it. There is "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men," when a paralyzed soul is filled with gracious strength!

Now, shall I need to stand here, and entreat for the four to carry poor souls to Jesus? Shall I need to appeal to my Brothers and Sisters who love their Lord, and say band yourselves together to win souls? Your humanity to the paralytic soul claims it, but your desire to bring Glory to God *compels* it. If you are, indeed, what you profess to be—to glorify God must be the fondest wish and the loftiest ambition of your souls!

Unless you are traitors to my Lord, as well as inhuman to your fellow men, you will catch the practical thought which I have strived to bring before you, and you will seek out some fellow Christians, and say, "Come, let us pray together, for such an one." And if you know a desperate case you will make up a sacred quaternion to resolve upon its salvation. May the power of the Highest abide upon you, and who knows what Glory the Lord may gain through you? Never forget this strange story of the bed which carried the man, and the man who carried his bed.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 5:1-26.

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“SITTING BY”

NO. 1991

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 13, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching,
that there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by.”
Luke 5:17.***

A CONGREGATION is a strange aggregate—it is like the gatherings of a net, or the collections of a dredge. If it is a very large one, it is especially remarkable. What strange varieties of creatures meet in the Noah’s ark of a crowded House of Prayer! If anybody could write the histories of all gathered here, the result would be a library of singular stories.

You, my dear Friends, who usually worship here, have probably no idea of the strange medley of nations, ranks, professions, conditions and religions which are represented in one of the great congregations of this Tabernacle. I am often myself greatly startled when I come across the tracks of people quite unknown to me, except by the newspapers, who have mingled in these vast assemblies. I could not have imagined that they would ever have entered a place where the Gospel is preached! It is noteworthy that God always selects our congregations for us—and His arrangements are always wise. I have frequently said to myself, “I shall have a picked congregation tonight,” and in some instances this has been very singularly the case. Persons have come here who had, themselves, no thought of coming, till some special matter drew them—and then the Word of God spoken has been so manifestly suited to their case that it made them marvel! If they had sent notice of their coming and the preacher had known all about them, he might not have ventured to be quite so personal, for he has unwittingly entered into minute details and secret items which, knowingly, he would never have revealed! The Lord who knows what is done in the closet, knows how to direct His ministering servant so that he shall speak to the point and speak to the heart.

In the present congregation we have a large company of people who have long known the Lord and have, for years, rejoiced in His name. We have another company of persons who do not know the Lord *savingly*, but yet are well acquainted with the Gospel and are not far from the Kingdom of God. They are almost persuaded. They tarry in the border land. Oh, that they would cross the frontier and become dwellers in Immanuel’s Land! We have also among us some who are far removed from Divine life—a people about whom we have little or no hope. Yet it is from among these that we reap the richest spoils for Christ, for He has compassion on the

ignorant and on those that are out-of-the-way. I am fond of that word, "out-of-the-way." The Lord save all of you who are out-of-the-way ones!

In every congregation we have a fourth class who would decline to be classed at all—they may be said to be here and not here! They are spectators rather than hearers. Like the gentlemen mentioned in our text, they are "*sitting by.*" They are too respectable to be numbered with the vulgar crowd. No, no—they are only callers, sitting by. They would not like to have it supposed that they are regular hearers, much less converts—they are "*sitting by.*" They are not repenting. They are not believing. They are not entering into the Truth of God at all. But, they are, "*sitting by.*" They have come to look on, take notes and make remarks. They are on the outskirts of the battle, but they are not combatants at all—they are "*sitting by*"—where they hope they are out the range of gunshot!

It is about these who are "*sitting by*" that I shall now speak, for I am afraid they are becoming by far too easy in the seats which they have chosen. They are sitting as God's people sit and yet they are not truly among them, but only, "*sitting by.*" They are a very irritating and disappointing part of our assemblies, but, at the same time, there they are and we would not turn them out if we could! We are *glad* to have these persons to quarry from, for who knows but that out of them, God, in infinite mercy, may select individuals who will never again "*sit by,*" but who will be heart and soul with Christ and His people—and even become leaders of the host of God?

Let me freely speak to you concerning certain of those who sat by. They were by no means to be despised, for some of them were eminent persons. They were Pharisees, members of the separate sect, who kept themselves to themselves, and were punctilious about the externals of religion. Very superior, indeed, were these Pharisees—and you could see by their faces that they felt themselves to be persons of importance. With these were doctors of the Law of God, the learned men who had studied the Scriptures very carefully, counted the words of each Holy Book and found out the middle letter of it. These doctors of the Law had come to hear the unlettered peasant from Nazareth, concerning whom they had a very strong, but by no means favorable opinion. They had heard about Him and they condescended to give Him a hearing, half blushing at their own modesty in doing so. Not, of course, that *He* could teach *them* anything—they were merely, "*sitting by,*" and nothing more. We do not see many of these great folk among our crowds and, perhaps, there are none such here on this occasion, but we cannot be sure. I do not much care to know whether the learned and profound are here, but they do come among us at times, though it is only to sit by. I will say no more about these remarkable people just now, for many others come into congregations merely to sit by. They have not come with any wish to learn, or understand, or feel, or be saved—they are only "*sitting by.*"

I. Let our first head answer the enquiry—WHAT WERE THESE PEOPLE DOING? They were "*sitting by.*" There is a good deal in this. First, *they were indulging their curiosity.* They had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem to know what this stir was all about. They had

heard the great fame of Christ for working miracles and this drew them into the throng which continually surrounded Him. Besides, the crowd, itself, drew them. Why was there such a large company? What could it be all about? They would like to know for the sake of curiosity. They would, for once, hear the Man, that they might be able to say that they had heard Him—but they were not going to be influenced by what they heard—they would hear Him as outsiders, "sitting by." They were curious, but not anxious.

As a rule, very little comes of this kind of attendance at places of worship. And yet, I had sooner people come from this motive than not at all! Curiosity may be the stepping-stone to something better, but, in itself, what good is there in it? Persons on the Sunday go to St. Paul's, to Westminster Abbey, to the Tabernacle, to this place and to that—and they suppose that they are worshipping God—whereas they might just as well have gone to see a show! In fact, it is going to a show and nothing more as far as their motive is concerned! Do not flatter yourselves—if you go to places of worship merely to look about you or to hear music, you are not worshipping God! If you come to this great house to gratify your own fancy, you are no more worshipping God than you would be if you walked in the fields! You are only, in a very poor and groveling sense, "sitting by."

Many come into our assemblies and sit by in *this* respect—that *they are altogether indifferent*. I do not suppose that these scribes and Pharisees were quite good enough to be altogether indifferent—they leaned the wrong way and were bitterly opposed. Too many act as if they said, "I come to hear a noted preacher, but what his doctrine may be I neither know nor care." They do not enquire, "What is this doctrine of the Fall? What is this depravity of heart? What is this work of the Spirit? What is this vicarious Sacrifice?" They do not *care* to know whether they are concerned in anything that is spoken of. Nor do they ask, "What is this new birth, this translation from darkness to Light, this sanctification of nature?" They hear a theological term and dismiss it as no concern of theirs. They do not want to know too much. This atoning Sacrifice—they hear so much about it. This shedding of the precious blood of Jesus. This putting away of sin by the Sacrifice of Jesus—they will not lend an ear to this saving mystery—but treat it as a matter of little or no consequence. It is nothing to them that Jesus should die!

O dear Sirs, it ought to be something to you! If there is anything worth enquiring into, it is your own state before God, your position as to eternal things, your condition at this moment in reference to sin—whether it stains you scarlet, or whether you have been washed from it in the fountain which Christ has opened! If there is *anything* worthy of a man's enquiry, it is the matter which concerns his own soul for eternity! Would God you would no longer be found, "sitting by," but would in earnest feel, "There is something here for me. Perhaps for me there is a peace which I have never known, a joy which I have never imagined. I will see for myself. Perhaps for me there is a Heaven of which I have, up to now, despised. I will make a searching enquiry and see whether it is so or not." May *that*

be your resolve and may you no longer be among those who sit by in stolid indifference!

The scribes and Pharisees were sitting by in another and a worse, sense, for *they were there to criticize in an unfriendly spirit*, and either find faults, or invent them. I see them take out their notebooks to jot down a Word the Savior said which they thought could be twisted. How they nudged one another as He said something which sounded unusual and bold! Oh, could they but catch Him! When, at last, He said to the sick man, "Your sins are forgiven you," I think I see their eyes flash with malignant fire! "*Now we have got Him! Now we have got Him! This Man blasphemes!*" They hoped He had now said more than He could stand to and they asked in triumph, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" They were, "sitting by," watching the Savior as a cat watches a mouse! How eagerly they spring upon Him!

My Hearers, this was a wretched business, was it not? It is a very poor business to go to the House of God to criticize a fellow mortal who is sincerely trying to do us good. It will not, in the present case, affect the preacher much, for his skin is hardened and he feels not the tiny strokes of ordinary censure. In no case can ungenerous criticisms do any good. But the pity of it is that when we earnestly desire to show you the way of salvation, some of you should hinder us by petty observations upon a faulty mannerism, a slight blunder, a mispronunciation of a word, or an inaccurate accent! Alas, what small things put the eternal Truth of God on one side! I do not know and I would not like to say if I did know, what petty trifles people will carry away and talk of, after we have been solemnly pleading with them about Heaven, Hell, the Judgement Day and the wrath to come—and the way to escape from it! Was it Carlyle who spoke of the cricket as chirping amid the crack of doom?

I am apt to think that many people are like that cricket—they go on with their idle chitchat when Christ, Himself, is set before them on the Cross. Assuredly this is poor work! I am hungry. I come to a banquet, but, instead of feasting upon the food, I begin to criticize the dress of the waiters, abuse the arrangements of the banqueting hall and vilify the provisions! I shall go home as hungry as I came and who will be blamed for it? The best criticism that you can possibly give of your friend's entertainment is to be hearty in partaking of it! The greatest honor that we can do to Christ Jesus is to feed upon Him, to receive Him, to trust Him, to live upon Him! Merely to complain and to question will bring no good to the most clever of you. How can it? It is a pitiful waste of time for yourself and a trial of temper to others. Yet there are many who, like the scribes and Pharisees, are in this manner, "sitting by."

Now, I do not care to go farther into these different forms of "sitting by," but no doubt *some kindly admire, but do not profit*. Hundreds of people are "sitting by" who are attentive hearers and warm friends—and yet have no part nor lot in the matter. They have been more or less regular attendants at this House of Prayer for, say 12, 14, 15, 20 years—and yet they are not one whit the better! Some go from public worship to the public house—and yet they would not neglect church or chapel on any account! Many

are no better at home for all they have heard—their wives are sorrowful witnesses to that fact. Why, some of you have been prayed for time out of mind and you have been preached at as well, but still, you are, "sitting by." I cannot make out why you come so constantly and yet profit so little! It would seem to all who knew you a very odd thing if you were seen loafing about a certain shop for an hour and a half one day in the week for 20 years and yet you never bought a pennyworth of goods! Why do you hang about the Gospel shop and yet purchase nothing? On your own showing you are a fool! I do not like using a hard word, still, it is used in Scripture for such as you are. He who believes a thing to be so important that he spends one day in the week in hearing about it, and yet does not think it important enough to accept it as a gift, stultifies himself by his own actions! How will you answer for it at the Last Great Day when the Judge shall say, "You believed enough to go and hear about salvation. Why did you not believe enough to accept it? You believed enough to quarrel for it. You would stand up for the doctrine of the Gospel—and yet you, yourself, perished in your sin." What answer will you give, you that are "sitting by"? You will have to give some answer, what will it be? Oh, that you would use a little commonsense about your souls and would quit the seat of the foolish for the stool of the penitent—and no more be of those who are "sitting by!"

II. Secondly, let us enquire WHAT WAS HAPPENING WHILE THESE PERSONS WERE "SITTING BY"? They had entered the room where Jesus was preaching, where crowds were listening, where miracles of mercy were being worked. They were criticizing, carping and quibbling—but what was happening to them all the while?

Well, first, *they were incurring responsibility*. Sirs, you cannot hear the Gospel and refuse it, and yet remain as you were! You are either better or worse after hearing the Gospel. It is made to you either a savor of life unto life, or else of death unto death! Remember, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgement, than for Bethsaida and Chorazin, who had heard the Gospel. The refusal of the Gospel is a crowning crime—there is no sin like it! Does not the Word of God say so? This is no gloomy talk of *mine*. The Lord Jesus taught that the men of Nineveh would condemn the men of Jerusalem because they heeded warning and Jerusalem did not. Oh, you that have heard the Gospel so long, and have been "sitting by" all the while, what a mountain of guilt rests upon you! How shall you escape? What must become of you after such base ingratitude?

Besides that, *they were gathering hardness of heart*. Every hour that you listen to the Gospel—and bar your heart against it—you are less and less likely to admit it. The bolt that is rusted is hard to move back from its place. The path that has long been trodden by daily traffic has become hard, as though it were paved with stone—hearts that have often been traversed by the Gospel become like iron beneath its tread. I fear your consciences have grown hardened by the traffic of the Gospel. I know that it is so with many. The Lord forgive them! If I could have a congregation that never heard the Gospel before, I should feel more hopeful than I do

when I speak to you who have heard it for years. What is now likely to affect you? What fresh arguments can I bring? I can tell you some new story, perhaps, but what of that? You have had too many stories already! It is not so easy a matter to retain your attention, now, as it once was—the voice has grown familiar and the manner is stale to you. Can I hope that I shall now reach the hearts at which I have shot so many arrows which have all missed the mark? O God, have mercy upon those who have been "sitting by" so long!

Once again, let me remind you that those who were "sitting by" *were obstructing Christ all that they could*. There is a something—every preacher has felt it—there is a something in a congregation itself which affects the preacher, even as he affects the congregation. I soon feel when godly men are praying for me and crying, "O Lord, help him to preach!" I cannot tell you how it is, but so it is, that some congregations freeze me and others set me on fire. When the doctors of the Law and the Pharisees are, "sitting by," they drag us down and we cannot do many mighty works. If my eye catches the glance of one of these ice men. If I perceive his wretched indifference and detect his half-concealed sneer, I am weakened by it. I fancy I hear such folks saying, "We care nothing for what you say. We do not belong to those whom you can influence. We are clad in mail against your weapons." This chills one to the marrow.

Now, this is the tendency of your conduct if you are "sitting by"—you chill the preacher—and in chilling the preacher you do boundless mischief to the congregation. Don't you know that it was said, even of Jesus, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief"? Even He, as Man, was, in a measure, dependent upon those who surrounded Him! When He saw their faith, He healed the sick of the palsy! And at another time, when He saw their unbelief, He looked round with indignation! It is a terrible fact that certain of you may be so acting as to hinder the salvation of others by your indifference to the sacred message! I believe that this is eminently the case with you that are very good people in all but the one thing necessary—you do not fear God and your very goodness works for evil! The example of a rank and rotten profligate will not influence certain minds, for they are disgusted by its grossness and driven to seek something better. But when young men see an excellent person like you, so moral and amiable, without religion, they gather from your example that godliness is not absolutely necessary and take license to do without it! Thus, you who are "sitting by" may be a *curse* when you little suspect it—you may be encouraging others in the attempt to live without the Savior!

Yet let me not finish this head without repeating the remark that we are *glad to have these people*, "sitting by," rather than not coming at all! Being in the way, the Lord may meet with them. If you go where shots are flying, you may be wounded one of these days. Better to come and hear the Gospel from a low motive than not to come at all! Remember Hugh Latimer's quaint story when he urged all his hearers to go and hear the Gospel? He even praised that sleepless woman who had been taking sleeping medicine, but found that there was no drug strong enough to make her sleep

till, at last, she said, "If you would take me to the parish church I know that I could go to sleep, for I have slept there every Sunday for many years." She was taken to that place of rest and was soon at peace! "Well, well," said Latimer, "she had better come for sleep than not come at all." And so I say—even if you come here to sleep, the Lord may awake you to seek and find the Savior! Still it is a wretched business—this, "sitting by."

III. Next, let us enquire WHAT WAS THE REASON THESE PEOPLE WERE "SITTING BY"? Why did they come to hear Jesus and yet did not become a part of the really attentive congregation, but were hovering round the skirts of it and, "sitting by"? I would not needlessly offend any of those who have come here at this time, but let me quietly say a few things which may be applicable to them.

In the first place, in the case of the scribes it was *self-conceit* which made them sit by. They were divided from the common throng by a sense of superiority. They said, "What have *we* to do with hearing Jesus of Nazareth and His message concerning the pardon of sin?" "Why," they said, "we are highly educated people and do not need to listen to so plain a preacher. His salvation we do not need, for we are not lost." Jesus, Himself, said, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick," thus indicating that it was their good idea of themselves which kept them back from Him. That is the reason why so many sit by—in their own opinion they are quite as good as the best and are not in need of any great change. They are most respectable people and they believe that they are also upright and generous.

There went a man out of this place one evening who was spoken to by one of our friends who happened to know him in trade and had him in good repute. "What? Have you been to hear our minister tonight?" The good man answered, "Yes, I am sorry to say I have." "But," said our friend, "why are you sorry?" "Why," he said, "he has turned me inside out and spoiled my idea of myself! When I went into the Tabernacle I thought I was the best man in Newington, but now I feel that my righteousness is worthless." "Oh," said the friend, "that is all right, you will come again, I am sure. The Word of God has come home to you and shown you the truth—you will get comfort soon." That friend *did* come again and he is here tonight—he takes pleasure in that very Truth of God which turned him inside out! And he comes on purpose that the Word of the Lord may search him and try him—and be to him as a refiner's fire! He that is most afraid to be turned inside out is the man who most needs to undergo that process!

Alas, many will not let the Word of God search them! They say within themselves, "That is good, very good. But it is not for me." Such are those that sit by. They sit in a corner, out of the wind of the winnowing fan. Do you not see them draw themselves up and look very solemnly at other people, as if they would say to their neighbor, "There, you take that home! That doctrine is good for *you sinners*, but the preacher has no reference to *me*."

These people were "sitting by" because there was, in them, *no sense of personal need*, no perception of their own nakedness which only Christ

can cover, no sense of inward hunger which only Jesus can remove. They did not need a Savior for *themselves*, though quite willing to hear Him preached to others. They did not require mercy for *themselves*, though pleased that *sinner*s should hear of it. They could see and, therefore, needed not that their eyes should be opened. They had all things and had no poverty to plead. So it always will be in the preaching of the Word—those will hear it with gladness who perceive that they need what it presents to them—but others will take no interest in it. Conscious need inclines the ear to hear—and until the *Spirit of God works this in us*, we shall be deaf as posts to the voice of love—and continue "sitting by."

There was also about these people *a mass of prejudice*. Their conservative tendency kept them aloof. Carried a certain distance, this tendency is good, but it may turn a man into a pillar of salt and prevent his fleeing for his life. Having drunk the old wine, these immovable people do not desire new because they feel sure that the old is better. Yet if the old wine is sour or musty and the new wine is sweet and good, it is a pity to prefer the bad to the good! The old intoxicating wine of salvation by *human merit*, or by *ceremonies*, is, by many, preferred to our Lord's own new wine of the Kingdom, namely Justification by His righteousness through *faith*. "Believe and live" is set aside for, "the man that does these things shall live by them." They prefer Sinai to Calvary, their own filthy rags to the Lord's perfect robe of righteousness! They stick to the Old Covenant, which is taken away, and cannot endure the Everlasting Covenant of Grace. The prejudice of proud human nature is hard to overcome—men are not willing to search the Scriptures and see whether they are right or not—they stick to their inherited falsehoods.

Many are "sitting by" because of *resolute unbelief and determined self-confidence*. O Friends, it is born in us by nature to believe in ourselves! What is that but clear *idolatry*? It is not till we are *born again* that we come to believe in Jesus Christ and so to trust in the living God and receive a *living* hope! May the Lord deliver us from that old, good-for-nothing confidence in self, confidence in works, confidence in outward ceremonies, confidence in the flesh! Oh, that we might pour the old and musty wine on the ground—and taste of the new wine, crushed from the cluster by the dying Son of God—the new wine of salvation by Grace, through faith, unto the glory of God! Would God that those who are "sitting by" on account of their vainglorious prejudices, may be brought into the marriage feast of Grace and made willing to wear the wedding garment and honor Him who has prepared it! Prejudice is the ruin of thousands! They might be made to see if they did not think that they already saw! They might be happy in the Lord if their groundless conceit did not make them to be "sitting by."

IV. WHAT SHALL WE SAY OF THESE SITTERS-BY? Just a word by way of forming an estimate of them and then I will have done with them. Oh, that the Lord, Himself, might deal with them by His Holy Spirit! These sitters-by, these people who do not go in for the Truth of God and faith of the Gospel, but hear it, play with it, talk about it and then have done with it—what shall I say of them?

Why, first, they seem to me to be *wonderfully out of place when you think of the Lord who was preaching*. How could they be indifferent in His Presence? He was at a white heat and they were blocks of ice. He was all energy and they were "sitting by." He spending and being spent—and they "sitting by." He engaged all night in prayer with His Divine Father and now, coming forth clothed with Divine Power to heal—and they, "sitting by." Pretending to be doctors and teachers of the people and, therefore, under great responsibility, they were yet content to be, "sitting by," when Jesus was pouring out His soul! O Sirs, none of us ought to be indifferent in the Presence of the Christ of God! He is clad with zeal as with a cloak—how can we be lukewarm? He laid down His life for the sheep—how can we live for self? He still lives for His people and holds not His peace, but by His incessant pleading He proves His everlasting interest in our cause—for us to be, "sitting by," is horrible ingratitude! Men who have received great salvation, "sitting by," while the Savior dies? Or even men who are in danger of sinking at once to Hell carelessly, "sitting by," when the gate of mercy is set open before them by the pierced hand of Jesus? Oh, it is sadly strange! Lord, teach this foolish generation wisdom! Let them not still be, "sitting by"!

It was equally incongruous with the condition of the rest of the congregation. Look, there is such a crowd around the Lord Jesus that they are trying to bring in a man who is sick of the palsy, but they cannot get him near. Nobody will make way—they are all so eager to hear and to get a blessing! At last they take the palsied man to the roof—they actually break up the tiling! They lower the man down with ropes over the heads of the people! Yes, right in among the learned lawyers and the proud Pharisees! The pieces of the tiles are falling everywhere! The dust is on the doctors and divines! Look how eager, how earnest, how impetuous the people are! And yet these gentlemen Pharisees and lawyers are, "sitting by" with cold indifference!

Look at them taking out their notebooks to jot down an expression with which they may find fault! See how they coolly observe little points in what is done! They are not moved—not they! A man is about to be healed who has long been paralyzed—and they treat it as if it were an interesting case in the hospital—around which a company of medical students gather, as to a show. How can they act in this way? Are they made of stone or iron? One would think common humanity might affect them—but no, they will not enter into anything that Jesus says or does—they are merely, "sitting by."

It will be an awful thing for some of you to be cast away forever—and then to remember that you sat next to people that were saved—sat next them at *the very time* when they heard unto eternal life! How will you bear to know that these people were saved by that powerful sermon which drove even *you* to your knees, but you shook off the impression, grew careless and again continued in your sin? This reflection will sting you as does a serpent when you are past hope and are driven forever from the Presence of God. This will be as the worm that never dies—when you say to yourself—"I was present when Jesus, by His Grace, renewed men's

hearts. I was present when my companion heard, believed and was saved, but I willfully refused to hear and turned away from the only Savior." What shall I say to yonder husband who will have to remember that she who in this world lay in his bosom, wept for him, told him that she had found a Savior and begged him to think of his immortal soul and turn unto the Lord? You will remember how you steeled your heart against the blessed influence and refused the holy tears of one you loved so well!

Or is it so, that your darling child came home from the Sunday school weeping on account of sin and you, the mother who ought to have thanked God for blessing your offspring, ridiculed your child's repentance? This is, "sitting by," in a most horrible way—"sitting by" to scoff and oppose! While others are saved—you are "sitting by." Why, if I were sick of the palsy, tonight. If I were lying here and I saw the Master healing you who were sick, I think I should at least cry out as best I could, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me!" I exhort any of you who are unconverted to take these words out of my mouth and with your whole heart use them in prayer. Cry, "Lord have mercy upon me! Christ have mercy upon me!"

V. I had much more to add upon this point, but time admonishes me. Let me in a few sentences speak to some WHO SHOULD NOT BE AMONG THOSE WHO ARE "SITTING BY." You that feel your *soul-sickness* will not be of that number. You feel your guilt—you feel your need of Christ. You are broken down—then do not, for a moment, sit by! Rise, He calls you! Press through the crowd to Jesus! Believe in Him and live! May His Spirit lead you to do so at once!

Before I found the Savior, I visited nearly every place of worship in the town where I lived, but I did not find full salvation at any one of them. I believe that it was through my own ignorance. In the little Primitive Methodist chapel, when I heard Christ preached and was bid to look, alone, to Him, I found rest unto my soul! But the reason why I found Him was because His Grace had made me know that I needed Him. I do not suppose that the sermon which was made useful to me had anything in it more remarkable than other Gospel sermons. The special point was that the *Lord had prepared me to receive the Gospel message*. They say that the water of the Nile is very sweet. We have heard some of our countrymen assert that a very little of it was too much for them and that they never wished to drink of it again. There is no use in disputing about *tastes*, but surely, people might agree upon the quality of *water*! Yet some praise this Nile water to the skies and others call it muddy stuff. The reason why the water of the Nile is so sweet to Egyptians is that their climate is dry and the people are thirsty—and other water is scarce. Under a burning sun, a drink of water is very refreshing. To the soul that is thirsty after mercy and reconciliation and eternal life, every promise of the Lord is delightful! Nothing puts such a savor and flavor into the Gospel as that work of the Holy Spirit, by which we are made to feel our great need of it!

Oh, if you have not found Christ—you that are seeking Him—go to every place where Christ is preached till you find Him! If you do not get the heavenly blessing in one place, go to another! Do not stop where there is no blessing merely because it is your regular place of assembly. You

need bread and if one baker has not got it, go to another! Seek after the Savior as men dig for gold or search for diamonds.

I have heard of a man who had long attended one of the Churches in Scotland, but as he did not get any good, he went off to listen to certain irregular preaching and there he found peace with God. The old minister warned him of his wickedness in being away from the Church and said, in Scotch, what I must put into English, "Donald, you should not have gone to hear that man! He is not of the old Church." "Well," said Donald, "but I needed a blessing and I felt I must go anywhere to get it." "Well," said the minister, "Donald, you should have waited at the pool, like the man in the Gospels, till the water was stirred." "Well, Sir," said the man, "but you see that man saw that the water was sometimes stirred and though he did not get in, himself, yet he knew that others stepped in and were healed. And that encouraged him to wait a little longer, in the hope that his turn might yet come. But I have lain at your pool these 40 years and I *never* saw the water stirred, neither did anybody get healed in it. And so I thought it was time for me to look somewhere else."

Indeed it was! We cannot afford to be lost for the sake of churches or chapels. O my Hearer, seek the Lord with all your heart! And seek Him on and on till you find Him! Do not be a mere sitter-by any longer, but obey the call which bids you draw near. Be not content to sit in any pretended House of Prayer where prayer is not heard and souls are never saved. Do not let down your bucket into any more dry wells. Go where Jesus is! Traverse all the denominations and stay not till you can say, "I have found Jesus." If He is not preached in one place, hasten to another. Keep your ears and your hearts open. "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near." Do not fall into the habit of going to a place because you always went there and always mean to go there. Why, some of you have almost grown to your seats and are as wooden as that which bears you up! O mere sitter-by, I implore you, do not remain in this wretched case! May your cry to the Lord be, at this moment—

"Give me Christ, or else I die!"

May God help you to make your hearing a reality, your sitting under the Gospel a true reception of it!

You that are in *great sorrow* I do not think it possible that you can be altogether sitters-by! You have been disappointed in love. You have met with a world of trouble, or else you have been the round of amusements and have seen no end of gaiety—but you are sick of it—and weary of the world and of yourself. You feel that you might as well try to fill your belly with wind as fill your soul with the world's amusements—and you have come here jaded and nauseated. Your heart is laboring and heavy laden and you pine for rest. Come and try my Master! He invites you. He entreats you to come. He cries to you, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He means what He says. You have labored enough for the world, and its wages are not worth having. Come now to Him whose gift is eternal life! May His Holy Spirit lead you to come at once and delay no longer! You are one of those that cannot afford to be, "sitting by," for sin curses you, death threatens you and eternal

wrath pursues you! I know how it will be with you unless Grace prevents—you will go home and the sermon will be over—and the many of you will still be sitters-by, for you will shake off conviction and still be careless. Remember, I have warned you. Will you despise the warning?

A poor fallen woman is here at this time, worn out with her crimes. Does she desire to know the Savior? Let her confess her sin and forsake it—then she will not be "sitting by." There is a broken-hearted youth here who begins to reap the wild oats he has sown. Will he sit by? Does he wish to know how his heart can be changed, his sin forgiven, his soul comforted? Let him arise and go to his Father—and no longer be "sitting by."

And so I close with a full and free Gospel call! Come and welcome, you that gladly would come to Jesus. Come just now, with all your sins about you, and behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! If you want to know what it is to come to Him, know that it is to *trust Him*. Go to your chamber, and look up and say, "Jesus, I cannot see You; but You are wherever there is a broken heart. Behold, I seek You; reveal Yourself to me. I trust You to forgive me and to renew me."

Jesus will not refuse you, for He casts out none that come to Him. I said, "Go home," but I will alter that. Keep your seats and seek Him where you are and as you are! Before you leave this place, commit yourselves into those dear hands which were pierced for the guilty and are always ready to grasp a sinner. As the pearl fisher is happy when he finds a handful of pearls, so is Jesus happy when He lays hold on poor sinners and takes them to be His own! Commit your souls to His keeping. Wholly trust Him! Trust him only! Trust him now! Today, escape for your lives and find refuge in the Rock of Ages! Jesus cries, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." O Lord, lead all these sinners to look to Jesus by Your Holy Spirit for Your mercy's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 5:12-26*.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—430, 606, 992.**

DEAR FRIENDS—Though for a while I shall be absent in body, yet shall I be present with you in spirit. Week by week I shall prepare the sermon with care and, I trust, it will be as profitable and as life-like as if I had just preached it. I beseech you to be more than ever importunate in prayer. A fierce battle is raging concerning the Gospel—"The God that answers by fire, let Him be God." Let us plead for the fire of the Holy Spirit! If we have a special visitation from above, we shall see the defeat of this worst form of infidelity—the infidelity which wears the Christian name. My parting watchword is, "*Let us pray.*"

Yours, for Christ's sake,

C. H. SPURGEON.

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

THE GOSPEL'S HEALING POWER

NO. 720

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 11, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.”
Luke 5:17.

LUKE, the writer of this Gospel, was a physician and therefore had a quick eye for cases of disease and instances of cure. You can trace throughout the whole of his Gospel the hand of one who was skilled in surgery and medicine. I gather from this that whatever may be our calling, or in whatever art or science we may have attained proficiency, we should take care to use our knowledge for Christ. And that if we are called being physicians we may understand the work of the Lord Jesus all the better by what we see in our own work, and we may also do much for our Lord in real substantial usefulness among our patients.

Let no man despise his calling. Whatever instrument of usefulness God has put into your hands, consider that the Great Captain knew what weapons were best for you to wield. Covet not your neighbor's sword or spear, but use that which your Lord has given you and go forth to the battle of life to serve according to your capacity. If you are placed in this corner of the vineyard or that, consider that you are in the best place for yourself and the best place for your Master. And do not always be judging what your fellow servants ought to do in their place, nor what you could do if you were in another place, but see what it is that you can do where you are and use such things as you have in glorifying your Lord and Master.

One is pleased to observe in the language of a true man how the man's self shows itself. David frequently sings like one who had been a shepherd boy, and though a king he is not ashamed to admit that he once grasped the crook. There is a manifest difference between the prophecies of Amos, the herdsman, and of Isaiah, the royal seer. True men do not imitate one another, but each one, moved of God, speaks according to his native bias and according to the circumstances in which Providence has cast him. It was destructive to Egyptian art when the great men of the land framed articles of taste, and laws of statuary and of painting by which every sculptor must be bound—for then everything like freshness and originality was driven away. The proportions of every colossal statue and of every figure upon the wall were rigidly fixed, and then the glory and excellence of art vanished from the land.

To do the same in religion is even more unwise. To say, “You shall all speak after one fashion, and you all shall conform to this manner of talk and life,” is folly at its height! Let each man speak after his own manner,

every man in his own order, each quickened soul bringing out its own individuality and seeking in that individuality to magnify God and to show forth the riches of His Divine Grace. These remarks were suggested by the abundant record of cures in this chapter and elsewhere in Luke's Gospel. Luke does not write like John, nor copy the style of Matthew. He writes not as a fisherman or a publican, but as a *physician*.

Luke did not cease to be Luke when he was called by Divine Grace. He was the same man elevated and refined, and taught to consecrate to noblest ends the gifts which he had acquired in his earthly calling. He was a physician before, and he became "the beloved physician" after his conversion.

I. The text, as we read it, suggests, in the first place, that THE POWER OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL IS MAINLY A POWER TO HEAL. "The power of the Lord was present to heal them." The power of the Gospel, of which Christ is the Sum and Substance, is a *healing* power. My Brethren, when Christ came on earth He might have come with *destroying* power. Justly enough might God have sent His only Son with the armies of vengeance to destroy this rebellious world. But—

***"Your hands, dear Jesus, were not armed
With an avenging rod.
No hard commission to perform,
The vengeance of a God.
But all was mercy, all was mild,
And wrath forsook the throne,
When Christ on the kind errand came,
And brought salvation down."***

"I have not come," He said, "to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Elijah calls fire from Heaven upon the captains of fifties and their fifties, so that they are utterly consumed. But Christ brings fire from Heaven for quite another purpose, namely, that by its power men might be saved from the wrath to come. The Gospel is not intended to be a power to destroy. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." And if that Gospel is made a savor of death unto death unto any, it is not on account of its own intrinsic qualities or design but because of the perversity and wickedness of the human heart.

If men perish by the Gospel of Life, it is because they make that to be a stumbling stone which was meant to be a foundation. The Gospel does not even come into the world merely to reveal disease. It is true it does discover, detect, and describe the maladies of fallen man. One of the clearest exposures of man's fallen estate is the Gospel of the Grace of God. But it is rather the design of the Law than of the Gospel to discover to man his ruin. It is by the glare of Sinai lightning that men tremblingly read the sentence of condemnation upon those who have broken God's Law. By the gentler light of Calvary they may read the same Truth of God, and *must* read it—but this is *not* the main purpose of Calvary.

Calvary is the place for the healing balm rather than for the lancet and the knife. The work of Jesus, our heavenly Physician, is not so much to point out disease as to indicate and to apply the remedy. Certain philosophers have made it their business and delight, with grim sarcastic smiles upon their faces, to put forth the finger and mark out human wickedness

and weakness as a theme for ridicule and sarcasm. The philosophy of the Stoics, the wisdom of such men as Diogenes, was but a heartless un pitying showing up of human folly and sin.

It knew no remedy, and cared not to search for one. They showed poor manhood to be besotted, befooled, debased, and depraved. And there they left it, passing by on the other side as the priest and Levite did with the wounded man in the parable. But Jesus came upon no such fruitless errand. He convicts the world of sin by His Spirit, but it is not to leave the world hopelessly despairing of its restoration, but to *recover* it by His power! Jesus bears with Him power to heal! This is His honor and renown. He has the eagle's eye to see our sicknesses, the lion's heart bravely to encounter them, and the lady's hand to gently apply the heavenly ointment! In Him the three requirements of a good surgeon meet in perfection.

Beloved, I trust you and I have known this power to heal in our own cases, and if it is so we know of a certainty that it is a *Divine* power which comes from our Lord Jesus because He is most surely God. It is the sole prerogative of God to heal spiritual disease. Natural disease may be instrumentally healed by men, but even then the honor is to be given to God who gives virtue unto medicine, and bestows power unto the human frame to cast off disease. But as for *spiritual* sicknesses, these remain with the great Physician alone. He claims it as His prerogative, "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal." And one of the Lord's choice titles is Jehovah Rophi, the Lord that heals you. "I will heal you of your wounds," is a promise which could not come from the lip of *man*—only from the mouth of the eternal *God*.

On this account the Psalmist cried unto the Lord, "O Lord, heal me, for my bones are sorely vexed." And again, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You." For this, also, the godly praise the name of the Lord, saying, "He heals all our diseases." He who *made* man can *heal* man. He who was at first the creator of our nature can new create it. What a transcendent comfort it is that in the Person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth we have Deity Incarnate! "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." My Soul, whatever your disease may be, this great Physician can heal you! If He is God, there can be no limit to His infinite power! If He is truly Divine, there can be no boundary to the majesty of His might!

Come, then, with the blind eye of your understanding. Come with the limping feet of your energy. Come with the maimed hand of your faith. Come just as you are, for He who is God can certainly heal you! None shall say unto the healing flood of His love, "Up to here can you go and no further." The utmost length of human sickness can be reached by this great Physician! Have confidence, O poor doubting heart! Have unstaggering confidence in the Divine Healer! Although our Lord Jesus healed as Divine, remember that He also possessed power to heal because of His being *human*. Is it not written, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed"? He used no other remedy in healing our sin-sickness but that of taking our sicknesses and infirmities upon Himself.

This is the one great cure-all. Blessed be the Son of God that the medicine, bitter as it is, is not for *us* to drink, but was all drained by Himself!

He took the terrible cup in Gethsemane and drank it dry on our account. The sharp but healing cuts of the lancet are not made in *our* bodies—He bore them in His own flesh. When the plowers made deep furrows, those furrows were not upon the *sinner's* shoulders, but upon the shoulders of the sinner's Substitute. Did you ever hear, O Earth, of such a Physician as this? Who heals by suffering Himself? Whose pains, and sorrows, and griefs, and pangs, and torments, and anguish, and death are the only medicine by which He removes the woes of men? Blessed Son of God, if I trust You, seeing that You are Divine, how I will love You!

How I will cling to You, seeing You are human! With what gratitude I will look up to Your Cross and view You, while those blessed fountains of health are streaming crimson floods, and while Your heart, the source of all spiritual sanity, is pouring forth a heavenly efficacious torrent to wash the sinner from all his sicknesses! Come here, all you sin-sick ones, and behold the glorious Son of God, made in the likeness of human flesh, breathing out His life upon the Cross! Come here, you that mourn for sin, you who are palsied and diseased with iniquity! Here is power, power still present in the dying Savior to heal you, whatever your diseases may be!

He healed all that had need of healing while He sojourned here, and the costly balm of His Atonement has lost none of its power. The power which dwelt in Christ to heal, coming from Him as Divine and human, was applicable, most eminently, to the removal of the guilt of sin. Reading this chapter through, one pauses with joy over that twenty-fourth verse, "The Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sin." Here, then, is one of the great Physician's mightiest arts—He has power to forgive sin! While He lived here below, before the ransom had been paid, before the blood had been literally sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, He had power to forgive sin! Has He not power to do it now that He has died? Brethren, what power must dwell in Him who to the utmost farthing has faithfully discharged the debts of His people! He has power, indeed, seeing that He has finished transgression and made an end of sin!

If you doubt it, see Him rising from the dead! Behold Him in ascending splendor raised to the right hand of God! Hear Him pleading before the Eternal Father, pointing to His wounds, urging the merit of His sacred passion! What power to forgive is here! "He has ascended on high, and received gifts for men." "He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins." At this moment, Sinner, Christ has power to pardon, power to pardon *you* and millions such as you are. He has nothing more to do to win your pardon. All the atoning work is done! He can, in answer to your tears, forgive your sins *today*, and make you *know* it!

He can breathe into your soul at this very moment a peace with God which passes all understanding, which all spring from perfect remission of your manifold iniquities. Do you believe that? I trust you believe it! May you experience now that the healing power of the Gospel is power to forgive sin! Waste no time in applying to the Physician of souls, but hasten to Him with words like these—

***"Jesus! Master! Hear my cry!
Save me, heal me with a word.
Fainting at Your feet I lie,
You my whispered plaint have heard."***

This is not the only form of the healing power which dwells without measure in our glorious Lord. He heals the *sorrow* of sin. It is written, "He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds." When sin is really manifest to the conscience it is a most painful thing. And for the conscience to be effectually pacified is an unspeakable blessing. Sharper than a dagger in the heart, or an arrow piercing through the loins is conviction of sin. He that has ever smarted under the pricks of an awakened conscience well knows that there is no pain of body that can be compared to it. When crushed under the hand of God, a man may form some idea of what the miseries of Hell must be.

Correspondingly joyous is the relief which Immanuel brings to us when He brings better balm than that of Gilead and ministers Heaven's infallible medicine to a diseased soul. When Jesus is received by faith, He lifts all our sorrow from us in a moment. One promise applied by His Spirit, one drop of His blood brought home to the conscience, and at once there is such a peace so deep and profound that nothing can rival it! What the poet wrote concerning recovery from bodily sickness is *doubly* true of spiritual restoration!—

***"See the man that long has tossed
On the thorny bed of pain,
At length repair his vigor lost,
And breathe and walk again:
The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening Paradise."***

God grant that to you who fear His name the Sun of Righteousness may arise with healing beneath His wings!

Jesus also heals the *power* of sin. Sin may be, in your case, dear Friend, so mighty that like a whirlwind it hurries you away at its pleasure. You feel like the sere leaves which are driven by the tempest. You have scarcely power to resist your passions. You have, perhaps, yielded so long to certain forms of evil that now you are positively powerless in strife against them. Do not, however, despair! Christ can surely deliver you! The demoniac had such an energy of evil within him that he broke the chains and bands with which he had been bound. He cut himself with stones, and howled all night amidst the tombs. But when Jesus came near to him he was soon seen clothed and in his right mind, sitting meekly at the great Physician's feet!

And so will you, poor captive of evil! Do not think that you *have* to be a drunkard, or that your angry temper needs always be your master! Do not conceive that you must always be a slave to lust, or led captive at the devil's will. There is hope for you, Man, where Christ is! And though your disease is of as long standing as your very life, yet a word from the powerful lips of the Son of God can make even you, whole! The power of the Gospel is a power to heal the guilt, the sorrow and the *influence* of sin. Jesus Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil in all their forms. It should not be forgotten that the Lord Jesus is able to heal us of our relapses. I have heard men say that a relapse is what the physician frequently fears more than the primary disease, and that there is frequently a period in the healing process when the virus of disease gathers

renewed energy and the physician feels that now, and not at the first, the *true* battle has to be fought.

We have met with men who have professed conversion, and we trust were changed, who have gone back like the dog to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. We have had to mourn over those in whom the change appeared to be great, but it was superficial, and soon the power of evil returned upon them. But, my backsliding Hearer, Jesus is able to heal your backslidings! What a mercy that is! "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for My anger is turned away from them," What if you are sevenfold more a child of Hell than you were before, yet even now, eternal mercy that drove out a legion of devils from one of old can drive them out of you! The healing power of my Master is such that if you have backslidden ever so far yet He says unto you, "Return! Return! Return!"

There shall be more joy over *you*, you poor lost sheep, than over ninety and nine that went not astray. He shall be more glad to receive *you*, you wandering prodigal child, than He has joy even over that righteous son who remained always in the father's house. To sum up much in little, my Master, as a Physician, works cures very suddenly. He touches, and the deed is done at once! He works cures of all kinds. Such as have been the stumbling stones of other physicians have been readily overcome by Him. He never fails. He has not in His diary one single case that has over-matched His mighty power. He heals effectually—the disease never again reigns when He has once dethroned it. When He casts the devil out of the man, the devil shall not return.

He heals with His word even those who think that they cannot be healed! There is no hospital for incurables now as to souls, for incurables there are none. The Friend of sinners is "able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by Him." Cases of disease so putrid that men say, "Put them out of sight." Vice so detestable that the very mention of it makes the cheek of modesty blush! Such as these the master hand of Immanuel can heal! With God nothing is impossible, and with the Son of God nothing is difficult! He can save the chief of sinners, and the vilest of the vile! In the highest conceivable degree the power of the Gospel is power to heal. Come, poor Sinner, and behold Him who is able to heal you of your deadly wounds! Come look upon Him now and live!—

***"Raise to the Cross your tearful eyes,
Behold, the Prince of Glory dies!
He dies extended on the tree,
And sheds a sovereign balm for you."***

II. A second remark arises from the text. THERE ARE SPECIAL PERIODS WHEN THE POWER TO HEAL IS MOST MANIFESTLY DISPLAYED. The verse before us says that on a certain day the power of the Lord was present to heal, by which I understand, not that Christ is not always God, not that He was ever *unable* to heal, but this—that there were certain periods when He pleased to put forth His Divine energy in the way of healing to an unusual degree. The sea is never empty. It is, indeed, always as full at one time as at another, but yet it is not always at flood. The sun is never dim, he shines with equal force at all hours, and yet it is not always day with us, nor do we always bask in the warmth of summer.

Christ is fullness itself, but that fullness does not always overflow. He is able to heal, but He is not always engaged in healing. There are times when the power to save is more than usually manifest—times of refreshing, seasons of revival, days of visitation—acceptable days, days of salvation. Any student of the world's history who has read it in the light of true religion will have observed that there have been favored periods when the power of God has been peculiarly present to heal men. My solemn conviction is that we are living in such an era—that this present moment is one of the set times when God's power is peculiarly manifest.

I gather this from many signs, but even the text assists me in my belief. Observe that on the occasion mentioned in the text there was a great desire among the multitude to *hear* the Word. In the opening of the chapter we read that they pressed upon our Lord by the sea. Further on we find them coming from all parts of the country in multitudes. Special mention is made of doctor's of the law and Pharisees, the last people to be impressed, who nevertheless, overcome by the common enthusiasm, were found mingling with the throng. We are told that the people thronged the house at such a rate that the palsied man could not be brought into the congregation except by the expedient of breaking through the roof!

When God's power is moving there will be a corresponding motion among the people! They will long to hear when God's power is with the speaker. Take it as a sign of Divine Grace when the houses dedicated to worship are full. Consider that the Lord is about to fill the net when the fishes crowd around the boat. We cannot expect the Gospel to be blessed to those who do not hear it. We may lawfully and properly expect it will be a blessing to those who have an intense anxiety to listen to it. At the present hour I see a religious awakening among the masses of London, not so great a one as we desire, but still there it is and we must be grateful for it.

We shall not long have to put up with the pernicious nonsense of Puseyism—public opinion will aid us in putting it down. It has taken a long time to wake up our nation, but it will awaken after all. I think I see the tide of popular feeling turning in the right direction. Men are just now occupied about religious thought, and whether they think rightly or wrongly, there is more attention just now paid to religious truth than has been for many a day. And where ministers do but preach simply and lovingly the Gospel of Christ at this moment they find no lack of hearers. This is a sure sign that the power of the Lord is present to heal.

Observe next that the healing power was conspicuously present when Christ was *teaching*. Note carefully the favored hour, "when He was teaching." Jesus linked the healing with the teaching. It was so with the material healing, much more with the *spiritual* healing, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Brethren, is there not among our own Brethren, of whom we can speak with the most certainty, more teaching of Christ now than there was? I am persuaded that the most of my Brethren preach more faithfully and fully the simple truth of Christ Jesus than they once did. Teaching is returning to the pulpits.

Now mark, dear Hearer, whether you are saved or not—if you are present where Christ is fully preached, where He is lifted up, exalted, proclaimed, and commended to you—you are in a place where He also is pre-

sent to *heal*. Is it not written, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me"? A further sign of present power is found most clearly in the sick folk who were healed by Jesus. Now we know that in this very house not a Sunday passes without souls being converted. We have before our Church meetings the cases of hundreds whom God has blessed by the simple telling of the story of the Cross. This, then, is proof positive that when Christ is being *taught*, and souls being *blessed*, He is in a remarkable manner present to heal.

One other thing must be noted, namely, that this particular time mentioned in the text was prefaced by a special season of prayer on the part of the principal Actor in it. Did you notice it? He withdrew Himself and prayed, and then the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Is it so that even with regard to Christ Himself, the Lord and Giver of Life, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead, and who has the Spirit without measure, yet before that Spirit is publicly manifested in any high degree there must be a special retirement for fervent prayer? How plainly does this say to us that the Church must pray if she would have the healing power! And, my Brothers and Sisters, we have prayed! There has been such prayer put up by this congregation as I believe was never excelled, even in Apostolic times!

Last Monday was a day of wrestling of such a kind that the blessing could not be withheld! I have almost ceased to ask further! I wait in joyful anticipation of the heavenly visitation! I come not forth today so much as a sower as a reaper! I believe that the fish are taken in the net, and that we have only to pull it to land! God grant the net may not break by reason of the multitude of fishes! God is with us, and that of a truth in this House this day. Wonders of Divine Grace are being worked—while we are yet speaking men are being inclined to look to Christ! While we are lifting Him up, tearful eyes are looking to Him! In many a heart there may be heard the cry, "I will arise and go to my Father."

Now with all these signs meeting together—a desire to hear, a set time of private prayer, the teaching of the Word, and the manifest blessing of souls under that Word—I gather that we have arrived at this present moment at that state which is described in the text.

III. Passing on to a third thought, we observe that WHEN THE POWER OF THE LORD IS PRESENT TO HEAL, IT MAY NOT BE SEEN IN ALL, BUT MAY BE SHOWN IN SPECIAL CASES AND NOT IN OTHERS. It is a melancholy reflection that men may be in the region of Divine power and yet not feel its operations. I have read this verse through a great many times with one object—I have tried, if I could—to make the text mean that the Pharisees and doctors of the law were present and that the power of the Lord was present to heal *them*.

But the text does not so teach us. The power of the Lord was not present to heal the doctors and Pharisees, for they were not healed. The word "them" agrees with the noun further back, according to the frequent usage of the New Testament by which the pronouns are not made to refer to the nearer noun, but to another more remote. The power of God was present to heal the *sick*—not to heal the doctors, nor the Pharisees. And yet how nearly they could have gained it, for had they but known their sickness,

and been willing to confess their infirmity, there was power enough to have healed even them!

But as it was, we do not find that one of them was healed—not so much as a single doctor of the law, or a Pharisee felt the power which was passing so near to them that they were amazed and staggered and fell to quibbling about it. Dear Hearers, this very melancholy observation must be applied to some that are present now. You may be in the midst of this congregation which is under remarkable visitations of God's Divine Grace, and yet there may be no power present operating in your heart to heal you. You will observe that those who missed this Grace were not the *harlots*. Infamous as they were by character, they felt the power of the love of Jesus and entered into His kingdom. We do not find that this power was lacking among the *publicans*—we have an instance here of one of them who made a great feast in his house for Christ.

Where, then, was the power lacking? Where was it unsought and unfelt? It was, in the first place, among the knowing people—the doctors of the law. These teachers knew too much to submit to be taught by the Great Rabbi. There is such a thing as knowing too much to know anything, and being too wise to be anything but a fool. The knowledge of the doctors was that which puffs up—not the knowledge which comes from God. Ah, dear Hearer, beware of *head* knowledge without *heart* knowledge! Beware of being so orthodox as to set yourself up as a judge of the preacher, and to refuse to be obedient to the Truth of God.

Beware of saying, “Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, that is very applicable to So-and-So, and very well put.” Do not criticize but *feel*. It were better for you that you had been a common plow-boy, whistling at the plow, who never heard these things until today, and have now listened to them, and have received them in all their novelty, and power, and beauty for the first time. This were better for you than to have heard them till they ring in your ears like the bell which you have heard every Sunday, of whose monotony you are weary! Beware of going down to Hell with a millstone of sound doctrine about your necks, for if you will be damned you may as well perish knowing the Truth of God as not knowing it!

No, if you catch the formula and lay hold upon the creed, and imagine yourself to be teachers of others, it is even easier to perish in *that* state than it is if you came in to hear the Word untaught before in its glad message. These were the knowing ones who had no power to be healed! Those, moreover, who had a good opinion of themselves were left unblessed. The Pharisees! No better people anywhere, from Dan to Beersheba, than the Pharisees, if you would take them upon their own testimony!

Observe with due respect their public character. Were they not most eminent? See the breadth of the borders of their garments! How visible were their phylacteries! How diligently did they wash their hands before they ate! How scrupulous about straining out gnats from their wine! How careful to tithe the anise, and mint, and cummin! Yet these were the people who obtained no blessing from Jesus. They were too good to be saved. How many people there are of this kind! “Well,” says one, “I know I never robbed anybody. I have brought up my family respectably and conducted myself with such decorum that nobody could possibly find fault with *me*.”

Just so, and you will not have Christ because you are whole, and have no need of a physician. "Ah," says another, "surely if we do our duty to the best of our ability it will be all right with us." If you think thus you will find that when you have done your duty to the best of your ability, you will have no part nor lot in a Savior because manifestly, on your own showing, you do not require one! The Lord Jesus will take your own showing and will say, "I never knew you. How could I know you? You were never sick. You never needed Me. You declared that you were whole, and you would not stoop to accept the salvation which I, the Savior, came to bring." Thus will Jesus speak to you who now proudly despise His Grace.

Once again, the people who did not get the blessing were not only the knowing ones and the very good ones, but they were also the people who stood by. As one observes, they did not come to be preached at, they came for Christ to preach *before* them. That used to be the old style of sermon prefaces—"A sermon preached before the honorable or worshipful company of So-and-So." Now that is the worst kind of preaching anywhere, preaching *before* people. Preaching right at people is the *only* preaching worth hearing and worth uttering. But they did not come for Christ to operate upon them—they were not patients—they were *visitors* in the hospitals. Like visitors they went round to the beds and looked at the prescriptions put over the sick and observed each case.

And when the physician came in and began to exercise his art upon the sick, they stood by and criticized his treatment, imagining all the while that they were not sick themselves. If they had been lying on the bed sick they could have been healed, but they took only a superficial interest in the healing, for they came not to partake in it. Beware, my dear Hearers, of going to places of worship merely to be lookers! There will be no lookers on in Heaven! And there will be no lookers on in Hell! Take care that you do not play the looker in the worship of God here. Every Truth of God spoken by God's servants has a bearing upon you. If it is threatening and you are in the gall of bitterness, it is yours—tremble under it!

If it is the promise of Divine love, then if you have no part in it, be afraid, be ashamed, be alarmed—and fly to Christ that you may partake in it. Those who get no blessing are those who suppose they do not particularly need it and stand by, having merely come to see and to be seen, but not to receive a cure. Those who felt not the healing power sneered and caviled. They said further down in the chapter, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" When a man gets no good out of the ministry, he is pretty sure to think there is no good *in* the ministry. And when he himself, for want of stooping down to drink, finds no water in the river, he concludes it is dry—whereas it is his own stubborn knee that will not bend, and his own willful mouth that will not open to receive the Gospel.

But if they quarrel, if they raise questions, if they dispute, we know their breed. We understand the race to which they belong, and we know how Jesus said to them of old, "You generation of vipers, how shall you escape the damnation of Hell?" If any shall not escape, surely they shall not whose only hearing of the Gospel is to make it the butt of their sarcasm and the object of their ridicule—who look derisively even at the Cross itself with a dying Savior upon it—and thrust their tongue into their

cheek and make jests and merriment of the agonies of the world's Redeemer.

Beware, lest you have those jests in your mouth on earth, which you will have to digest in Hell! Beware, lest your mockery return upon you at the Last Great Day when the words of Solomon shall be fulfilled, "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out My hands and no man regarded, I also will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear comes." There were persons, then, to whom the present power of Christ to heal was of no service whatever and there may be such now. Friend, are you such an one?

IV. In the last place, I want Christian people here to observe that WHEN THE POWER OF CHRIST WAS PRESENT IT CALLED FORTH THE ENERGY OF THOSE WHO WERE HIS FRIENDS TO WORK WHILE THAT POWER WAS MANIFEST. My dear Brothers and Sisters, the members of this Church especially—what I have to say is earnestly addressed to you.

You will perceive that as soon as ever it was discovered that the power of healing was present, loving hearts desired to bring in others that they might experience it. Four persons took each a corner of the bed and brought in a palsied man who could not come of himself. They let him down with much inconvenience through the *roof*. God is blessing the Church now. Christian men and women, join together to pray for your friends who cannot or will not pray for themselves! And if you meet with any in deep distress, palsied with despair who cannot lift the finger of faith, strive to bring them to hear the Gospel. Bring them where Christ is working miracles!

If one of you cannot prevail to lay the case before the Lord, let *two* of you unite. If two should not be enough, let *four* blend their petitions. If four should not suffice, tell it to the *Church* and ask the whole to pray. But strive to bring dying sinners where Christ is working spiritual miracles. If you read further on in the chapter you will learn how to bring some persons to the Savior who would never hear of Him otherwise. Levi made a great feast, for he thought to himself, "I should like Jesus to come and preach to the publicans. They are such great sinners, just such as I am. If I could but get them to hear Him they might be converted.

"But," he thought, "if I ask them they would say they could not afford to give up a day's work. They will not care to listen to a sermon. So (he said) I will get them this way—I will invite them to my house to a feast. They will be sure to come then, and then I will ask Jesus to come and eat with them, and I know He will not let them go without saying a good word." So you see he used arts as fowlers do when they are anxious to catch their prey! Now cannot you be as watchful and thoughtful in your generation as Levi was? Cannot you get the outcasts and the neglecters of the Sunday to your own house or to anybody else's house, and use means to bring them under the sound of God's Word?

Why, if you have a few flowers in your back room, if it rains in the summer time, do not you always put them out in it? You put all the pots out in the garden to let them catch the shower. Do so with your friends, your neighbors, your children, your kinsfolk—while the rain of Divine Grace is dropping, try to get them under the influence of it—and if they

will not come by one means try another! Only get them where the power of the Lord is present, for perhaps Jesus may look upon them and they may look to Him and may be healed!

And oh, let me say in closing, if they should not be saved, the responsibility will not then rest with you, even as the responsibility this morning does not rest with me. We have proclaimed to you in this House many times that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. We have told you that the heavenly Father is willing to receive returning sinners. That He delights in mercy. That He is free to blot out sin. We have told you that the blood of Christ can make the filthiest clean, that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. We have urged you to flee away like doves to Jesus' wounds.

The power of the Spirit of God has led many of you to come to Him, and you are saved! But alas, there still remains a multitude who are unsaved. Well, if you perish it is not because Christ has not been taught in your streets. You will go down to Hell, some of you, with the light shining on your eyelids, but with your eyes willfully closed against it. You will perish with the voice of Mercy ringing in your ears—and in Hell you will be awful monuments to the justice of God who will then say to you, "You sinned against light and knowledge, and against love and mercy."

If they perish who despised Moses' law, how shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? May the Holy Spirit now, with mighty energy, apply the precious blood of Jesus to every hearer, and unto God shall be glory world without end. Amen.

***"Blessed Savior, at Your feet I lie,
Here to receive a cure or die.
But Grace forbids that painful fear,
Almighty Grace, which triumphs here.
You will withdraw the poisoned dart,
Bind up and heal the wounded heart.
With blooming health my face adorn,
And change the gloomy night to morn."***

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GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN NO. 3016

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1906.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And the Physician God.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MARK 2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FIRST FORGIVENESS, THEN HEALING NO. 2417

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 16, 1895.
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*"When He saw their faith, He said to him, Man, your sins are forgiven you."
Luke 5:20.*

I HAVE read to you the narrative of the healing of the man taken with the palsy and many of you remember that, last Sabbath evening, I preached upon the Pharisees and the doctors of the Law who were "sitting by" [Sermon #1991, Volume 33—*"Sitting By"*—*Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>* .] I tried to represent the position of many in our congregations who are just "sitting by." I preached to the outsiders of the congregation on the divers reasons which led to this, "sitting by." I must confess that I did not reckon on so large a blessing as I have already seen as the result of that sermon. When I came here on Monday afternoon, that being Whit-Monday, when everybody is supposed to take a holiday, I was surprised, on my arrival at about three o'clock, by a friend running up to me and saying, "We are glad you have come, Sir, for there is already a room full." There is quite a nice number of friends who have come forward from the congregation and who, one after another have said, "We cannot be sitting by any longer. We feel that we cannot remain among the sitters-by, but that we must come in and partake of the Gospel feast and join ourselves with the disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

This blessed result of my sermon has set the bells of my heart ringing all the week and I have felt deeply thankful to God for it. I said to myself that as I had taken one arrow, which had sped so well, out of that quiver, I would take another! Having spoken to those who are "sitting by," I think I will now speak to those who are *not* sitting by, but who, indeed, are the principal persons in the congregation, namely, those who are sick and sorry and who need the Savior. For this palsied man who was let down by ropes through the ceiling was the most remarkable person in that congregation! We may readily forget those Pharisees and learned legal gentlemen, but we can never forget this man to whom, as soon as ever they "let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus," the Savior said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." I trust that, at this time, there are some present in this audience who are not sitting by, but who are already praying, "God be merciful to me!" Some

whose prayers are rising to Heaven in accents like these, “Lord, help me!” “Lord, save, or I perish!”

You are the principal persons in the congregation, both to the preacher and to the preacher’s Master! He cares more about you and about what shall take place in you, than about any of the Pharisees or doctors of the Law who may be sitting by. God is glorified in scattering His miracles of mercy where there is the greatest need of them. Our Lord Jesus, when the poor man was let down by his four friends through the ceiling, said to him at once, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” Matthew puts our Savior’s words thus, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you,” while Mark’s record is, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” Well, Jesus may have uttered all of these words and all the different versions of the story may be correct, for it is not every man’s ear that catches the whole of every sentence that is spoken, and we may be glad that there are three Evangelists who have recorded what the Savior said. There is no real difference in the sense—and the difference in the words may only show that Jesus said all three sentences.

I am going, on this occasion, to talk a little about this man, first, *before his forgiveness*. Next, a little more about his *forgiveness, itself*. And then a little about what followed *after his forgiveness*.

I. First, then, let us think of this man BEFORE HIS FORGIVENESS.

We are not told much about him. If I indulge in imagination a little, you will take it for what it is worth. This man, it seems to me, first, had faith which went out towards the Lord Jesus. Evidently, as I read the narrative, he had been suddenly paralyzed. This affliction usually comes up all of a sudden—men who have been about their business as actively as usual have been, in a moment, struck down with paralysis. This man appears to have been completely paralyzed, so as to have been unable to move and, as he lay in that helpless state, he heard that Jesus of Nazareth had come to the city—and he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was able to heal even him. It does not strike me that his friends would have brought him to Christ unless he requested it. The most rational explanation of the whole proceeding seems to me to be this—he believed in Jesus as able to heal him and he continued to cry out earnestly—and to pray that he might, somehow or other, be taken into Christ’s Presence. He could not stir hand or foot, but he had friends—and he begged those friends to take him to Jesus.

Well now, there never was a soul, yet, that had faith in Christ but what Christ revealed Himself more fully in the way of love to that soul! If you know that you can not save yourself. If you believe that Christ can save you and if your one anxiety is to be laid at His feet that He may look upon you, and save you, He will assuredly accept you. “Him that comes to Me,” He says, “I will in no wise cast out.” Whether he comes running, or walking, or creeping, or borne of four, so long as he comes, Christ will accept him! And if his faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, our Lord Jesus will not let it die! If there is but a smoldering faith, He will not

quench the smoking flax. Do you believe this? If you do, let it cheer you and comfort you. There is already something that is well with your soul! It was better to be paralyzed and to have faith in Christ than to be walking upright like the Pharisees and lawyers who had no faith in Him! The apparent wretchedness of your condition is not the real wretchedness of it—it may even turn out to be the blessedness and the hopefulness of it! If you believe in Jesus, I care not how far you have fallen, or how great is your inability—if you believe in Jesus, you are brought into contact with Omnipotence and that Omnipotence will heal you!

This man, I believe, further thought that Christ could heal him, but *he began to feel his great sinfulness*. I am certain that he did because Jesus never forgives where there is no repentance. There was never yet the flat, “Your sins are forgiven you,” until, first, there was a *consciousness* of sin and a *confession* of sin. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This man, lying there paralyzed, wept at the thought of his past life, his omissions and his commissions, his falling short and his transgressions! His heart was heavy within him. He seemed to say to his friends, “Get me, somehow, to the great Prophet! Get me within sight of this wonderful Savior! Oh, get me within a touch of Him, that I may be restored, that I may have this great load which presses me down so sorely, taken off my heart! Worse to me, even, than the paralysis is this awful sense of sin. Take me, oh, take me into the Presence of this Messiah, this Son of David, that He may have mercy upon me!” That I conceive to have been his condition before the Word of Pardon was spoken to him.

Next, being hopeful, himself, *he inspired those about him with hope*. Of course they would not have taken him to Christ if they had not had some sort of belief that, possibly, he might be healed. It is wonderful what sick people can do even when they can do nothing—how, when they seem to be utterly powerless—they find a strength in feebleness. Their very helplessness seems to be a plea where there is anything of generosity left in the heart of those who are near them. So this man pleaded, “I believe Jesus will heal me. I believe He will have mercy upon me—get me to Him, do get me to Him!”

They resolved to do it if they could and *he was willing to be carried to Christ*. Four stout stalwart men said, “Yes, we will get you to Him, somehow, though it is a difficult task, for the house is small, the room is crowded and there is sure to be a press about the door.” “But,” said the poor man, “oh, try to do it, for it is my only hope. If I could but get where Jesus could see me, He would look on me and save me. Oh, get me to Him, get me to Him!” The palsied man would make no dispute about how it was to be done, so they carried him to the door of the house. And then they said to the people crowding around, “Make way for this poor palsied man,” and he would say, “I pray you, friends and neighbors, make way.” But they would not. Perhaps they, too, had *their* friends who needed to be healed, or they, themselves, had an anxiety to hear the great Teacher,

so they pushed and pressed to get as near Him as they could. You see, those quibbling Pharisees and doctors of the Law had got in, first, and they blocked up the road. They are always in a poor sinner's way! What must be done? The poor man's bearers would have abandoned the task, I think, but he said, "No, do not give up trying to get me in! It is my only hope. Oh, get me to Him! Get me near Him!"

So, next, the man was *willing to be lowered into the Presence of Christ*. There was no other way but to go up those stairs outside the house and to take him to the roof. And he, not fearing as many would have done, said, "Yes, break it up and let me down." These four men, belonging to a fishing town, were adept in the use of ropes and they soon had their tackle ready and broke a way through the roof. As I told you in the reading [See "*Exposition*" at end of sermon—Ed.] I always feel pleased at the idea of the dust and the debris of the roof coming down upon the heads of the Pharisees and doctors of the Law! It always delights me to think that those gentlemen would have dust on their heads, for once, and since they were there, they were bound to have a little of it. Of course, when these gentlemen come to a place of worship, one feels bound to be respectful to them, but if they come at an untimely hour when there is any rough work going on, one does not feel any particular regret! If, when souls are being saved, these gentlemen should have their corns trodden upon, we do not even ask their pardon or make any apology! Such a work as Christ had to do could not stand still for the sake of reverence to the learned doctors of the Law! so the roof was broken up and this man, though paralyzed, was not afraid to be let down. It is probable that there were no outcries from him when they began to let him down. I think, if it had been *my* case, I might have been afraid that one rope would go a little faster than the other. But no, the man keeps still in his mingled paralysis and courage till down drops the pallet just before the Savior!

There he lies upon his mattress, on the floor of the house, *just before the Savior's eyes, exactly where he wanted to be*. Here I address myself to some who would give all that they have if they could but be brought under the eyes of Jesus. The one thought of such a sufferer is, "Oh, that I could be near Him! Oh, that I could be near Him! Oh, that He would look on me, cure my helplessness and pardon my sin!" What a wonderful picture this scene would make! The crowd is obliged to make way or else they will have to bear the man and his bed on their heads—so he is dropped down into their midst—and there he lies. The great Preacher has been preaching, but He stops. This is an interruption which is, indeed, no interruption to Him! His discourse is but broken off for a minute, to be illustrated with engravings, that men may see, in later years, that what they have heard is but the letter-press and that the miracle which is now to be worked shall be the engraving which shall convey the Teacher's wonderful meaning to all eyes! So the poor palsied man lies there before the Savior.

Is that where you desire to lie, dear Friend? In your deadly sorrow, sin and weakness, do you wish to lie at the Savior's feet? That is where I want you to lie and if you will to lie there, that is where you *do* lie. The Lord Jesus is in the midst of us, tonight, and you can at once cast yourself down before Him. Do so! Tell Him about your paralysis. Tell Him how sick you are, how sinful you are. No, you need not speak so that I can hear you—His ears will hear the whisper of your soul. Your heartbeats will be vocal to His heart and He will note all you say or feel in your inmost soul. Just lie before Jesus and as you lie there, what are you to do? This man did not speak a word, but, as I believe, he lay there repenting that ever he should have lived as he had done, mourning that he should have wasted his life and misspent his time. I think, too, that he lay there *believing*, looking at that wondrous Man and believing that all power was in Him, and that He had only to speak the word and the sinner would be, at once, forgiven! So he lay there, in the Presence of Jesus, hoping and expecting forgiveness and healing.

II. Now, in the second place, we are to consider THE FORGIVENESS ITSELF.

This poor paralyzed man had not lain there long before the blessed Master broke the silence and said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." I think that the four men up on the roof, looking down to see what would happen to their friend, would hardly understand what that sentence meant! They had brought him to Jesus because he was paralyzed, but he had wanted to come, first of all, because he was a sinner! He desired to have his paralysis cured, but secretly, in his soul, there was another matter which they might not have understood if he had tried to explain it to them. It was his *sin* that was his heaviest burden! And the Savior, the great Reader of Thoughts, knew all about that sin, so He did not, first, say to him, "Rise up and walk," but He began by saying, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Observe that *the pardon of sin came in a single sentence*. He spoke and it was done. Jesus said "Man, your sins are forgiven you," and they were forgiven him! Christ's voice had such almighty power about it that He needed not to utter many words. There was no long lesson for the poor man to repeat. There was no intricate problem for him to work out in his mind. The Master said all that was required in that one sentence, "Your sins are forgiven you." The burden of a sinner does not need two ticks of the clock for it to be removed—swifter than the lightning's flash is that verdict of absolution which comes from the eternal lips when the sinner lies hoping, believing, repenting at the feet of Jesus! It was a single sentence which declared that the man was forgiven!

Next, remember, that it was *a sentence from One who was authorized to absolve*. He was sent by the Father on purpose to forgive sin—and do not imagine that He has now lost His authorization to forgive—for, "He has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Jesus is appointed as

High Priest on purpose that He may stand on God's behalf and declare the remission of sin. What Jesus said was spoken with Divine Authority. It is vain for a priest to say to a sinner, "I absolve you." What can he do in such a case? He, or any other man who does not call himself a priest, may speak in his Master's name, and say to the penitent, "If you do sincerely repent, if you truly believe, I know you are absolved and I comfort you with the assurance of this absolution." So far, so good—but the Master, alone, can really give the absolution—it must come from Him who has power upon earth to forgive sins!

Now, my Hearer, have you never been forgiven? Are you in your pew and yet lying at that dear Master's feet—and do you desire above all things that He should say to you, "Your sins are forgiven you"? And do you believe that He *can* say it? And will you accept it from Him as being by Divine Authority? If so, I think He says it to you, for in His own Word He declares that they who believe in Him are forgiven. He says to each one of those who are penitent and believe in His Grace, "Your sins are forgiven you." Take the absolution and go your way! Do as Martin Luther did, in the days of his dark distress, when a brother monk said to him, "Do you not believe in the Creed, and do you not say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'? Now believe in the forgiveness of sins for yourself." Trust Christ's Word and you will be believing what is absolutely true! Trust it, take the comfort of it, and go your way! It is thus that Jesus Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel, and by the revealed Word of God, says authoritatively to each penitent, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Further, observe that this sentence, although it was but one, and was so short, yet was *wonderfully comprehensive*—"Man, your sins are forgiven you." Not one sin alone, nor many sins, but *all* your sins are forgiven you. When you go into particulars, you are apt to leave something out, therefore the declaration is made all-inclusive, there are no particulars given. "Your sins are forgiven you." Sins against the holy God? Sins against a righteous Law? Sins against the Gospel? Sins against the light of nature? Sins of this and sins of that kind? No, there is no enumeration. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from *all* sin." "Man, your sins are forgiven you." Murder, adultery, theft, fornication, blasphemy? Yes, in a word, "all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "Man, your sins are forgiven you." What a far-reaching pardon it is! "Your sins are forgiven you." At one sudden sweep of the Divine wave of mercy, they are all washed away! There is no such thing as a half-pardon of sin. I heard someone talking, the other day, about original sin being forgiven, but the other sins left. But sin is a whole—it goes or it stays altogether—it cannot be broken up into pieces! It is all there or it is not there at all—and it is not there if you believe in Jesus! This blessed and comprehensive sentence sets free from every jot and taint and stain of guilt—"Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Observe, also, that *this sentence contained no conditions*—and the blessed Gospel, speaking to every repenting and believing sinner, gives

him absolute forgiveness. Behold, the tally is destroyed, the record of your debt is nailed to the Cross! And as for your sins, they are like the Egyptians when the Red Sea swallowed them up—the depths have covered them—there is not one of them left, however great or many they may have been. If you are now a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, He says to you now by His Word, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” I pray the blessed Master, by His Holy Spirit, to make His Word come home to many here with power. Oh, that those dear lips, which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, did themselves speak to you! Oh, that those wounds of His which are mouths that preach pardon to sinners, might speak to you and say, “Your sins are forgiven you”! There is no mouth that speaks pardon like that gash in His side out of which His very heart speaks as He says, “I have loved you, and given Myself to death for you. Your sins I have borne on the tree and put them away once and for all. Man, your sins are forgiven you.” Oh, that Jesus Himself might thus speak effectually to many of you!

But note that *this sentence sufficed the receiver*. When the Savior afterwards raised this palsied man to health and strength, He did not do it to let the man know that his sins were forgiven. The man knew that, already, and did not need any more evidence of it. But Jesus did it for another reason. To the scribes and Pharisees He said, “That you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house.” Those unbelieving men had not evidence enough that Christ could forgive, but he to whom Christ spoke needed no further proof than the power of that voice in his own conscience! And if He shall speak to you, my Hearer, you will not need any books about the evidences of Scripture, the proofs of Inspiration and so on, to you—this indisputable miracle of pardoned sin shall stand forever as a holy memorial of God’s mighty Grace! It shall be unto you for a sign, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off, that God has pardoned you and spoken peace to your soul—and this God shall be your God forever and ever! To every soul that is in a similar case as that of the poor palsied man lying repenting and believing at the feet of Jesus, His Word gives the comfortable assurance, “Believe, and your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.” Believe it and go your way in peace!

III. Now I close by noticing, thirdly, what followed AFTER THIS MAN’S FORGIVENESS.

He was absolutely, irreversibly, eternally forgiven, for, “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” He never plays fast and loose with men. He never issues a pardon from His Throne and afterwards executes the pardoned sinner! His pardon covers all that may come afterwards as well as all that has gone before. But what happened to this man?

I believe that, first, there was *an inward peace that stole over his soul*. If you could have looked into the face of that palsied man, while still pal-

sied and lying there in that hammock, you would have seen a wonderful transformation! Did you ever see a face transfigured? If you are a soul-winner, you have often seen it. All human faces are not beautiful—some are absolutely repulsive! The countenances of some who have lived long in sin are dreadful to look upon. Yet I have noticed faces that at first I could scarcely endure, when the persons have been gently led to the Savior, and they have perceived the love of God to them and have at last believed, and felt within their soul the kiss of peace, why, they have looked positively beautiful!

I should have liked to have had them photographed, only it was too sacred a thing. Speak of physiognomies—the Grace of God is such an eternal beautifier that the face from which you would have turned away in disgust and said, “There can be no good thing behind that countenance”—is absolutely changed by the Lord’s mighty working! I say not that a single feature may be altered—the person may be the same in feature, but, oh, what a marvelous difference there is in the expression of the whole contour of the countenance when Free Grace and dying love have cast their magic spell over the spirit and the Holy Spirit has made the dead to live, and the person has been born again in Christ Jesus! Well, that change took place in this man’s mind, I am sure it did, when Jesus said to him, “Your sins are forgiven you.” He was in no hurry to be raised from his palsied state! He does not appear to have said a word and those scribes and Pharisees looked on with their malevolent countenances, but they did not frighten him—he lay quite still and was in no hurry, even, for the Master’s next blessing. It would come in due time, he knew it would, and he was of good cheer, for had not Jesus said to him, “Be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven you”?

But next followed *the man’s immediate cure*. The Master said to him, “Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house.” Our blessed Master was accustomed to preach the Gospel in a way which I have heard some friends greatly question. They tell us that we ought not to bid men to believe and repent because they *cannot*. There are two parties on opposite sides of this question—one says, “If you tell a man to believe and repent, that proves that he can,” which I do not believe. And others say, “If they cannot repent, you ought not to exhort them to do so,” which I also do not believe! Though I know them to be as helpless as that poor palsied man, unable to lift hand or foot, yet in the Master’s name we say, as the Master was known to say, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” “Oh,” says one, “I could not say that to an unregenerate man.” Do not do it, Brother, if you cannot do it. Go home and go to bed—what is the use of you for such work? The man who can speak miracles is the one who is needed and the man who can speak as his Master has bid him speak!

Surely, the *faith* does not lie in believing that the man can, himself, do what he is told to do! The faith lies in believing that *Christ can do it* and, therefore, speaking in Christ’s name, we say to the sinner just as the Lord Jesus did to the man with the withered hand, “Stretch forth your

hand,” and he does so. Look at Ezekiel speaking to the dry bones in the valley. Ezekiel, do you believe that these dry bones can live? “Not I,” he says, “I know that they are dead.” The Lord says to him, “Ezekiel, prophesy to these dry bones!” How can he do it? It would be inconsistent with what he just said! “I have nothing to do with that,” he says, “I was sent by the Lord to do it and I do it in the name of God.” That which may seem perfectly inconsistent with your reason is quite consistent when *faith* brings in the supernatural element with which God moves those to whom He gives the commission to preach the Gospel in His name!

The Savior said to this man, “Arise, take up your couch, and go into your house.” Now observe *his precise obedience*. “Immediately he rose up before them all.” The tendency of a paralyzed person is to be paralyzed in will. There are some persons, no doubt, who have ailments that can easily be cured if they believe they can be cured because there is not much the matter with them, after all. But this man was completely paralyzed, yet he so fully believed in Christ that up he rose and stood before the Master! Then Jesus said, “Take up your couch.” I think I see him undo those four ropes and quickly shoulder his mattress. “Walk,” says the Master, and he walks! “Go into your house,” says the Master. He might have stopped and said, “No, Lord, let me stay and hear the sermon out,” but no, not a word did he say about it, but off he went to his own house!

Oh, that all were as obedient to Christ as this man was, that, having the simplicity of faith, they would render the fullest obedience! But thus it often is that the very chief of sinners, when pardon is given to them, have given to them, at the same time, a tender conscience, a willing mind, a yielding spirit. “Whatever He says to you, do it,” said the virgin mother to the servants at Cana of Galilee—and that is good advice for you! If Christ has healed you, obey Him! Obey Him at once, obey Him exactly, obey Him in everything, be it little, or be it great! If some say it is nonessential, remember that *what is not essential to salvation may be essential to obedience*! Do it if Jesus commanded it! Do it whether it appears to you to be essential or not! That is not a question for you to ask—that is a heartless, loveless question. He has healed you, do *what* He bids you, *as* He bids you, *when* He bids you—and raise no question about it. Take up your bed and go into your house, if so He bids you. Or, if He puts it to you, “He that believes *and is baptized* shall be saved,” believe *and be baptized*. Be obedient unto Him who deserves to be obeyed!

Now, lastly, this man, it is said, “immediately rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house *glorifying God*.” I think I hear what he said. “Glory!” he cried, “Glory be to God!” He felt so glad, so happy, that he took up his bed before them all and, as he walked along, he glorified God. And would you not have done the same if you had been paralyzed and had been restored as he had been? And *will* you not do so? If you have been sin-bound and Christ has set you free, surely you will take the earliest opportunity of telling others what Jesus has done for you and seek to glorify His name! I did not won-

der when a Brother lately said to me, “I have been spending all the morning in the workshop telling the men that I have found the Savior.” And one, last Sunday, turned to his wife in this Tabernacle and said, “I am saved!” She said to him, “Don’t disturb the worship,” but I almost wish he had done so! What a mercy it is to be saved! Salvation puts a new sun in our sky and a new joy in our hearts! Believe on Jesus and this salvation is yours! God grant that it may be, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 5:12-26.**

Verse 12. *And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy.* As far gone with leprosy as he could be—thoroughly tainted and eaten up with that loathsome disease.

12. *Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.* He felt that the difficulty lay in the will of Christ, not in His power. No other teacher would have looked at such a man! Everybody shrank from him, for he scattered defilement wherever he moved. A leper was a being from whom all kept clear, so this one was afraid that the great Teacher was not willing to cure him. “If You will,” he said, “You can—I know that You can make me clean.”

13. *And He put forth His hand, and touched him.* This was a wonderful instance of condescending love on the part of the Lord Jesus and touching the leper did not defile Him. On the contrary, Christ removed the defilement from the leper—“He touched him,”

13. *Saying, I will: be you clean.* It was the will of Christ that worked the miracle, that secret movement of the heart of Christ, that silent Omnipotent going forth of Divine Energy that accomplished the leper’s cure!

13. *And immediately the leprosy departed from him.* Christ can heal sin in the same way that He cured this leper. If He touches the worst man in this place, He can make sin to depart from him the moment He touches him. It does not require years in order to perfect the work of salvation—it can be done in a moment! Such is the wonder-working power of Christ—“immediately the leprosy departed from him.”

14. *And He charged him to tell no man: but go, and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.* Our blessed Master did not court fame. He did not wish to make Himself notorious—the crowds that flocked around Him were inconvenient to Him, so He did not wish to have them increased. There was danger in such crowding and Jesus was wise in His generation, so He charged the healed leper to tell no man, but to show himself to the priest and to present the offering required under the Law.

15. *But so much the more there went fame abroad of Him.* Fame is like fire. If you heap anything on it to prevent it from spreading, it often acts as fuel to the flame! So, the very effort to hide the light of Christ’s power made it spread all the more widely.

15. *And great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.* I wish that all congregations would come together from the same motives—to hear and to be healed by Christ! What is your disease, my Hearer? What ails your soul? What is the mischief in your spirit? What is the malady in your heart? Jesus can heal you! Oh, that you would at once seek to be healed by Him!

16. *And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.* Just when there were such grand opportunities of doing good, just when everybody sought Him, does He go away from them into the wilderness to *pray*? Yes, because He felt what we ought to feel but often do not, that He needed fresh power, that as the servant of God He must wait upon God for fresh power for His great life-work. “He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.” No doubt it was the constant habit of Christ to pray, but there were certain special times when He retired into lonely places and His prayer was peculiarly fervent and prolonged.

17. *And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* The word, “them,” scarcely gives the right sense of the original. It should be, “the power of the Lord was present to heal.” Jesus did *not* heal the Pharisees and doctors of the Law, but He healed many of the congregation. Now, how do you account for this power present to heal? Why, by that wilderness prayer—“He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed,” and afterward, in a very high and remarkable manner, “the power of the Lord was present to heal.” And when the power to heal was present, the patient to be healed was very soon present, too!

18, 19. *And behold, men brought on a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus.* There appears to have been, according to Mark, some breaking up of the material that formed the roof of the house where Christ was. It was not altogether such an easy matter as some have imagined, to let this poor palsied man down into the Presence of Jesus. And if some of the dust from the roof fell down upon the Pharisees and doctors of the Law who were sitting by, it would only be what they were accustomed to throw into other people’s eyes!

20. *And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you.* Christ has eyes with which He can see faith. You and I cannot see it, but He can—“When He *saw* their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you.” This was going to the very root of his disease. Jesus knew what really ailed the man—he was palsied in spirit as well as in body—and Christ removed the root of his disease by forgiving his sin.

21. *And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason.* The gentlemen I alluded to, just now, began to reason. It was just like them—instead of beginning to *praise* God, they “began to reason”—

22. *Saying, Who is this, which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He, answering, said unto them, What reason you in your hearts?* See, Jesus can perceive *thoughts*! I have heard of “thought-reading”—here is a true specimen of it—“Jesus perceived their thoughts and said unto them, What reason you in your hearts?”

23. *Which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Rise up and walk?* Anyone can say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or, “Rise up and walk.” But to forgive sins, or to give the power to rise up and walk, equally needs God! If God is present and can make the palsied man arise and walk, He is also able to forgive his sins.

24-26. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up you couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear.* With awe, and reverence. They felt that God had come very near to them and they, perhaps, said, like Jacob of old, when he was afraid, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.” They were filled with fear—

26. *Saying, We have seen strange things today.* Oh, that we might see such “strange things” in this house, tonight, and whenever we meet to worship God!

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NO. 2614

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 18, 1883.

*"We have seen strange things today."
Luke 5:26.*

THE world is growing very old, dull and commonplace. One takes the newspaper and, often, after glancing through it, has to say, "There is really nothing in it." The reason probably being that there is nothing fresh or new happening on the earth—it is the same old sad story of sin and sorrow constantly repeated. The world seems to be like a cluster from the vine when all its generous juice has been pressed out. Life, to many persons, has come to be excessively humdrum. The human mind is always craving after novelties and, to find these novelties, it makes "much ado about nothing." It runs raving mad over that which is not worth thinking of and whips itself up into an intense excitement about a matter that is of no more importance than a drop in a bucket, or the small dust of the balance. The fact is, man wants something really fresh and strange and if he can get it, he feels delighted! I hardly think that when our good friend, Mr. John Ashworth, brought out his book, he would have achieved so great a success with it if he had not called it *Strange Tales*. But the strangeness was the attraction. The stories in it were strange tales to the mass of mankind, though to some of us they are very familiar things—but the *strangeness* was the point that attracted readers.

No man ever spent a day with Jesus Christ without being filled with the sight of strange things! No man ever entered into communion with the Lord Jesus without being delighted with wonders of love, of mercy, of Divine Grace, of the Truths of God, of goodness for, while His Gospel is the old, old Gospel, yet it always has a new face upon it and is continually fresh and new—it never gets stale! We read of our Lord that when John saw Him, "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," to denote His antiquity. And yet the spouse said of Him, "His locks are bushy and black as a raven," as if to indicate His perpetual youth, His unfailing strength and His unfading beauty. Believe me, dear Friends, if you want to see that which is truly strange, you must get into that spiritual realm where Christ is acknowledged as King, the new Heaven and new earth wherein dwell righteousness.

If you want to continue to be astounded, amazed, astonished, filled with holy awe, you must come and be familiar with the Savior, His person, His work, His offices and everything that has to do with Him and, when you have become familiar with all these things, then you will have to say constantly, "We have seen strange things today. Something has occurred that has surprised even us who have grown used to surprises. Our Lord has seemed to outdone Himself, though we thought Him to be higher than the heavens—and His mercy has appeared to go deeper than ever before, though we judged that it had already gone deeper than the abyss, itself!" "O world of wonders! I can say no less." He that enters this spiritual world where Christ is adored as God and King has unlocked a cabinet of marvels that shall astonish him during all his lifetime here and even throughout eternity! I am going to speak about strange things and I pray that God will make what is said to be of service to many.

I. First, I ask you to MARK THE STRANGE THINGS OF THAT PARTICULAR DAY which are mentioned in our text. It was so full of wonders that the people said, "We have seen strange things today." Well, what did they see?

First, they had that day seen *Christ disturbed in preaching*, greatly disturbed, and yet delighted to be so disturbed and accepting the disturbance as part of His usual experience and the means of doing further good to men. The Lord Jesus has gone into the square covered court of a house—the people have pressed in behind Him, one after another, till they are packed in a dense mass—and there are still others around the door vainly trying to enter. Here come four men—it is rather remarkable that there should be four such earnest men—who have brought a sick neighbor on his bed, with ropes tied to the four corners. But they find that they cannot get in through the crowd. They push, they squeeze, they struggle, but there is no getting in! And their poor paralyzed friend seems to be effectually shut out from Christ. They go up the outside stairs of the house. They get on the roof which covers the square where Christ and the people are—and they begin ripping off the tiling! And now, look! The man is being let down by the four ropes right before the Savior's face! There must be some measure of dust, even if something still heavier does not come tumbling down upon the Preacher's head, but here comes the bed with the man on it! The people are sure to make room for him, now, or else he will be supported on their heads! They seemed to be squeezed as tightly as they could be, but they feel that they must, somehow or other, get a little more closely together and so the man is gradually let down by his four friends who carefully let out the four ropes at the same rate, keeping good time together, lest one end of the bed should be too high and he should fall.

That must have been a great disturbance to our Lord! I know some preachers who cannot bear to have even a baby crying during the sermon. I do not feel especially delighted with that sweet music, yet I rejoice that the good woman did not stay away from the service! As far as I am concerned, she may bring her baby, even if it should sometimes cry—I

am glad to have her here that God may bless her. Perhaps a friend has just dropped his cane in the aisle and made a loud noise just when the preacher was trying to be very earnest. Well, that is a pity, but the dear Savior was much more rudely interrupted by all the falling stuff from the ceiling and the sick man coming down into the midst of the crowd before Him! If there had been any “thread” in His sermon, He certainly would have lost it—but His discourses were made of better material than that. They were made, indeed, of fire, and fell like fire-flakes on men’s heads and hearts. He still spoke on, after He had paused a while to attend to this man’s case, and He did attend to it very sweetly. He looked at the four men who had brought him and He saw that they had great trust in Him. And, seeing their faith, He worked the cure upon the sick man.

It was a strange thing that it should be so, but how much I would like to see more of this strange kind of work! I don’t know where I am to find four men who are so in love with one of their friends that they will break up ceilings and roofs to get him where Christ can bless him! They will probably be four very imprudent and rash men, in the opinion of others—the Lord bless the imprudent and the rash! They are generally the best sort of men for such a task as this. Your more prudent men would have stopped till the service was over and the people had come out and, very likely, they would have waited till Christ had gone out at another door—and so their friend would have missed Him. But these rash, head-strong, ardent lovers of their sick neighbor must somehow get him to Christ! So they break up the roof and there he is, right in the Presence of Christ! It was a strange thing to do, but, Brothers and Sisters, do not hesitate to do strange things in order to save souls! Hardly mind what you do, so long as you can get them to Christ. Your Lord will not blame you. He is so strangely loving—so strangely full of goodwill to men—that even should you be guilty of an indiscretion in your zeal, He will not upbraid you for it. Oh, labor for the souls of your children, your servants, your neighbors—and the Lord will accept that service, and you may yet have the delight of seeing them made whole by Christ! That was a strange thing to begin with. I am bound to say that the people who witnessed it talked all their lives about the man coming down from the ceiling and Jesus Christ healing Him!

But now they saw a greater wonder than that—the Christ of God forgiving this man his sins! We talk about the forgiveness of sins, I fear, rather glibly, without always realizing what a great thing it is. You know that when Martin Luther was in deep distress of soul, a good old monk said to him, “Brother, can you not say the Credo?” “Yes,” said Luther. “Well, then,” replied the old man, “in the Credo you say, ‘I believe in the forgiveness of sins.’” “Yes,” said Luther, “I know that. I have often said it.” “Then,” enquired the other, “do you believe in the forgiveness of your own sin? For, if not, how can you say, ‘I believe in the forgiveness of sins?’” This great Truth is sometimes spoken of as though forgiveness were an impalpable something that was done and yet not done, but Christ never meant it to be so. His death was not a shadowy, vague Atonement that

might possibly be available for sinners, but a real and complete putting away of sin and, as many as believe in Him may know for sure that their sin is put away and is as completely gone as if it had actually ceased to be, seeing that Christ bore the punishment of it. Yes, and the sin, itself, was, by imputation, laid upon Him, as it is written, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed."

Whenever a sinner has his sin forgiven, it is a strange, a wondrous thing! Never think of it as a mere commonplace matter of no account, for it is a marvel of marvels. The angels—a far nobler race than men—fell from their first estate, but never has any of the devils been pardoned for his rebellion against the Most High. No Savior has espoused their cause, no sacrifice has been offered for their guilt, no Gospel is ever proclaimed in their ears! When they sinned, they fell finally and now they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Yet man, who was not a pure spirit, like the angels, but a spirit allied with materialism, an inferior being, fell—and for him God left His throne to come and bleed on earth to offer up an expiation! For men, sin became pardonable! No, more, to multitudes of the sons of men sin has been forgiven and an act of amnesty and oblivion has been passed concerning their rebellion! What a wonderful Truth of God is this! Whenever you feel a sense of pardoned sin, or whenever you know that your fellow man has received absolution from the great High Priest, the Son of God, you may at once say, "We have seen strange things today."

When these people around our Lord had seen that wonder, they saw something else which must have greatly surprised them—they saw an exhibition of thought-reading. I have heard and read many curious things about thought-reading. Some I have believed, and some I have not. That any man can read my thoughts, I shall take leave to question! At any rate, he may read this thought, for I will tell him what is on my mind—that I do not believe him! But our Lord Jesus Christ, as He looked at the Pharisees and the scribes, read their unexpressed thoughts and, at once, saw what was passing within their minds! It was not an easy thing, I should think, to read thoughts like these, "Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God, alone?" But our Lord Jesus read those thoughts and answered them, though the men before Him had not as yet spoken a single word! I have seen wonderful exhibitions of thought-reading in this Tabernacle—not by me, but by the Lord Himself! Many of you are witnesses of how I have uttered from this platform the very words you have spoken when you were coming here—and what you said in your bedchamber, where nobody heard, perhaps, but some one companion, has been repeated in this place and you have been astounded as you discovered that the Word of God, which is quick and powerful, searches the heart and cuts asunder, just as you have seen an animal split from head to foot by a butcher and its innermost parts laid bare to the view of every passerby!

The Word of God often does that—discovers the secret thoughts and intents of the heart and makes the man see himself as God sees him—and makes him stand astonished that it should be so! We have frequently seen this sort of thing happen as we sometimes tell to one another some of the extraordinary instances in which men's very flesh has seemed to creep as the things they said and did have been made known to them. It will probably happen in like manner to many others—and those to whom God will thus speak will say, as these people did—"We have seen strange things today."

There was another strange thing they saw and, with that, I will conclude this first part of my discourse. They saw a sick man who could not lift hand or foot made, in a single moment, to walk and carry his bed, at the word of the Lord, Jesus Christ! That must have been a strange sight to those who knew this poor paralyzed man, when they saw him stand up from the bed and glorify God as he did what Jesus bade him do. And when the Lord speaks with power to a soul, as He constantly does, and the man who knew not God learns to know Him, and the one who feared not the Lord is brought to trust and love and serve Him, what a marvelous thing it is! I sometimes wonder whether any person would doubt the Inspiration of Scripture and the Divine origin and power of the Gospel if he could live each day as I live and see what I see of the wonders that are worked by the Gospel. Last Sunday night there came into Exeter Hall a man who did not care for the things of God, but he sat and heard the sermon. His brother had brought him—and was praying earnestly for him. As he was going out, a friend, who had observed him during the service, said to this man who had entered the hall utterly careless and Christless, "You were interested in the sermon tonight, were you not?" "I was," he answered, "very much." "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" The man at once replied, "I do believe in Him with all my heart and all my soul." His brother, who was with him, and who had been praying over him, said, "I was astonished beyond measure to hear him make such a declaration of his faith!"

Beside that one, there were 12 other persons who came forward when the service was over and distinctly declared that they had found the Savior that night under the preaching of the Gospel. Though they had not been religious people, and had scarcely ever thought of their souls, yet God had found them! And these strange things do not occur with us, alone—they happen every day with our beloved friends, Moody and Sankey and, indeed, in a great measure, with all who preach the Gospel! It is its own evidence of its almighty power and, as it wins its way, men are saved, they are healed of the deadly paralysis of sin and made to leap with active obedience and joyful service in the cause of Christ! Whenever you see this miracle of mercy worked, you can say, "We have seen strange things today."

II. Now, with great brevity, I ask you TO MARK THE STRANGE THINGS OF CHRIST'S DAY.

If you had ever beheld our Lord's life and work with the eyes of faith, you must have seen many strange things. First, the Maker of men became a Man! *He that is Infinite became an Infant*—He that made all things was wrapped in swaddling clothes! He who fills all space was laid in a manger and the Son of the Highest was known as the Son of Mary! We have heard strange things when we have heard the Doctrine of the Incarnation! "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth." Truly, this was a strange thing!

Further, He who was Lord of All, became Servant of All! "Being found in fashion as a Man," He lived a life of perfect obedience to His Father's will and went about healing the sick, raising the dead and ministering to all who came near Him. Most marvelous of all, on Him who knew no sin, the sin of man was laid, and the righteous God meted out to Him, the Innocent One, the chastisement due to the guilty! This is the ground of our hope and the only foundation of hope for sinners, that He, the innocent Christ, was made sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." But what a wonder it is! The guilty go free because He who is free from guilt suffers in their place! Tell all men that wonder of wonders!

Yet that was not all. Jesus died on the Cross! And loving friends laid Him in the tomb. Death had conquered Him, but, in that moment, Death was conquered—

"He Death by dying slew."

That day He led Death, itself, captive to His own supremacy. Wonder of wonders—Death put to death by death! Jesus Christ, by His dying, puts dying out of the way for all His people. Yet, even that wonder is not the last. Look, there He lies, for a while, wrapped in the grave clothes and Death appears to have the mastery over Him. But that Scripture must be fulfilled—"You will not leave My soul in Hades; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." He must wait there till the appointed hour strikes and then, early in the morning, before the break of day, He was up and away! An angel rolled away the stone, for He that had been dead was alive, again, and Jesus left the abode of Death, no more to die! What a wonder it is that He who was dead worked out our resurrection! And now, since He rose from the grave, so all His followers must.

You may take what point you please in the history of the Lord Jesus Christ and, if you really understand it, you will say concerning every part of it, "We have seen strange things" in this matter. It is a chain of miracles! It is like Alps on Alps and more than that, for the mountains of mercy tower above the stars and reach even to the Throne of God and God, Himself, was never more lofty and glorious than when He was occupied in the stupendous labors of His Son Jesus Christ. Only spend your time in the company of the great Wonder-Worker, and you will continually be able to say, "We have seen strange things today."

III. Now I must close by asking you to MARK THE STRANGE THINGS STILL TO BE SEEN IN THOSE IN WHOM CHRIST WORKS. If He comes and blesses us, we shall often say, “We have seen strange things today.”

First, we have seen *a self-condemned sinner justified by Christ*. I can tell you what I saw, one day, and I never shall forget the sight throughout eternity! I saw a sinner whom I know right well—and I can say no good of him, but much, very much that is evil, without at all slandering him. He had been proud and haughty in his opinion of himself, but there shone a light into his soul which unveiled to him his deep corruption and depravity, the sin that mixed with all his best things, and the still more dreadful sin that fermented in his worst things. I saw that sinner—for I know him well—self-condemned. He wrote his own sentence and he handed it to the Judge. He said that he deserved to be cast away forever from the Presence of God and the Glory of His power. And, as he passed up his own death-warrant, he dropped a tear upon it and he said, “I now trust myself to the Sovereign Mercy of God in Christ Jesus.” I remember it well and I saw that self-condemned sinner pardoned in a moment! The Lord said to him, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven,” and his face changed from darkness and gloom into shining light and joy! And he has never lost the impression of that blessed day—and, as he stands here to tell you the story, he can truly say that he saw strange things that day! But, Brothers and Sisters, there are hosts of you who have undergone the same blessed operation! Self-condemnation brought you where the Savior absolved you and, though it seems so easy to talk about it now, oh, how blessed it was when first we felt it! My heart did leap for joy! I was never so happy before and I sometimes think that I have scarcely ever been quite as jubilant as I was on that day of holy excitement and exhilaration!

I remember, also, *a natural heart renewed by Divine Grace*. I have gone into my garden and I have seen a great number of trees that have new branches which have been grafted into them, but I never yet saw a tree get a new heart. I have seen it get new bark and many changes have happened to it, but it cannot change its heart. There are some living creatures that shed their claws and grow fresh ones, but I never heard of a living creature that grew a new heart. That must be a strange, a wondrous thing, to change the very center and source of life! Yet the Lord Jesus Christ is constantly doing it—giving men new motives, new desires, new wishes, new habits—changing them entirely and, especially, creating in them new hearts and right spirits! Whenever you see that miracle of Grace worked, you can say, “We have seen strange things today.” A woman came to see me and cast herself down at my feet. She said that she had been such a sinner that she was not fit to speak with me. I bade her rise, for I said I, also, was a sinner. And she told me what she had been—I will not tell you the sad story, for I should have to use words of shame if I described her. But she is among us now, washed and sanctified—and she delights to serve her God and honor and glorify Him! What changed that woman? Was it fear? No, she was a brave spirit who would

have dared any kind of devil, but the Grace of God changed and transformed her, and made her into a loving servant of the living Savior. Oh, whenever we see this deed of Grace done—and we see it continually—we say, “We have seen strange things today.”

Another marvel is, *a soul preserved in spiritual life amid killing evils*. Did you ever see a bush burn and yet not be consumed? Did you ever see a spark float in the sea and yet not be quenched? Many persons here are, to themselves, just such wonders. They are living godly lives in the midst of temptation—holy in the midst of impurity—serving God in spite of all opposition. These are strange things!

Did you ever see *evil turned into good*? There are many of God’s children who constantly see it. “All things work together for good to them who love God.” They are made rich by poverty, made healthy by sickness, made strong by weakness, made alive by killing, made to go up by going down! You who live the new life know the meaning of these paradoxes and understand how these strange things make up a Christian’s progress to the Eternal City of God. Strange things do the people of God see in their own lives as they find Heaven on earth! It is a singular thing for anyone to be on earth and yet in Heaven, but we have proved it to be so! We have seen men sick and we have seen men dying—and yet as full of bliss as they could hold, as thankful in their room of poverty—and almost as joyful, as if they had been among the angels before the Throne of God above! There are surprises all the way along the road to Glory, but what will it be when we come to the end of it?

Did you ever try to picture the first half-hour in Heaven? Have you ever thought of the sensations that will pass through you in the first few days there? I think that we can very well judge what they will be, for they have been revealed to us by the Spirit. We shall have the same joys as we have here, only carried to a far higher pitch, for the life of God in Heaven is the life of God *in the heart* on earth! Heaven is but the outgrowth of a holy consecrated life and he that lives with Christ below is already in the lower chamber of the Father’s House. He has but to climb a pair of stairs and be in the upper chamber where all the glorified meet together with their Lord! Still, I doubt not that it will be passing strange to go from earth into Glory.

Whenever I begin to talk about this matter, I always wonder who will be the first among us to be called away, for it happens every week that some out of our great congregation go Home. Sometimes, in a single week, six or seven of our Church members go to the great Father’s House—whose turn will it be to go next? We have not the choice, otherwise some of us might venture to put in an early claim that we might enjoy our rest. I know some old folk and some sick ones, and some who are greatly beset by Satan, and some who are sorely troubled with doubts and fears who would gladly say, “Would God it were time for us to go!” Well, dear Friends, rest assured that you are not forgotten—the messenger will come to you, perhaps soon, and he will say to you, “By tomorrow, you shall see the King in His Glory.” You will have to go down into the

flood—to cross the dark river, as they call it—but I do not believe that it is dark at all. I have seen the light shining on the faces of many of the pilgrims as they have looked back at me, when I have stood upon the river's brink to comfort them—and it has not seemed at all dark. The happiest company I ever keep is that of dying saints! I come away right merry, sometimes, from their bedside, for they say to me, “O dear Pastor, the Truth of God you preach is good to live upon and good to die upon!”

I saw a man and his wife, both of them very ill, lying in bed, together, but not a syllable of sympathy did they appear to need from me. And they seemed delighted to say to me, “We learned Christ from your lips. We have lived on the Gospel you preached and it holds us up, now that we are lying here. We are glad to go home to Heaven—we are full of life and full of immortality even now!” Oh, yes, these are strange things—except to those who form part of this strange company with God, who is, to many, a stranger in His own world, and with Christ, who is a stranger, sometimes, in His own Church! We can say, and we shall say at the close of our lives, “We have seen strange things today.”

There is one strange sight which I wish that you, dear Friends, if you are unconverted, would look upon—I wish that you would see Jesus as your own Savior. He is not far from any one of you. O look, look, look at Him and, as you look at Him, you shall live! That is God's appointed way of salvation. “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” And, dear Heart, if you should see that strange being—yourself—a saved sinner, I would like you to see another strange sight, namely, all your family saved! It will be such joy to you to have your wife rejoicing in Christ with you, joining in your daily prayer, and your children, even in their childhood, loving their father's God. There is a text for you to lay hold of, supposing that you are not yet converted. It was the middle of the night when, in Philippi, the jail began to rock to and fro. The jailer's house was up above, and he knew that he had two strange prisoners down in the vaults below. They had been singing in the night and the other prisoners had heard them and, as the jail rocked and reeled, and the doors flew open, the jailer, a stern Roman legionary, thought that his prisoners must have escaped and that he would be put to death for allowing it.

So he was about to thrust his sword into his own heart, but Paul shouted to him, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.” Then, when a light was brought, that man fell down before Paul and Silas and said to them, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” Do not leave out those last three words, “*and your house.*” Do not seek your own salvation without that of your household, also! Look up the passage in Acts 16:31-34—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. And they spoke to him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

It was a midnight service and Baptism of the whole household upon a profession of their faith! God send you a like blessing! You will see strange things, then! Many of us have seen already them in our families and we hope to see them repeated a thousand times! The Lord give you, every one, a personal blessing, and then bless your households, also, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 5:12-32.**

Verse 12. *And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy.* What a contrast there was between these two persons—the Lord Jesus full of purity—and this man full of impurity—full of leprosy! He could not be more than full. He had as much leprosy as a man could contain.

12. *Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.* This was splendid faith! Here was adoration of the noblest kind! No angel before the Throne of God could render the Son of God more honor than this poor leprous man did. He believed in Christ's power at once to rid him of that otherwise incurable disease. "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean."

13. *And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be you clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.* This is what Christ can also do in the *spiritual* realm. If a man is full of sin, let him but fall down on his face before Jesus and say, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean," and the Lord will put out His hand, touch him, and he will be clean in a moment. "Immediately," not needing the lapse of a single hour—"immediately the leprosy departed from him."

14. *And He charged him to tell no man but go, and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.* As long as the Ceremonial Law was in force, Christ very diligently obeyed it and bade others do the same. That Law is now abolished and the Jewish priesthood has also ceased to be. But mark the modesty of our Savior. As Man, He sought no fame or honor, but, as far as He could do so, He suppressed the voices that would have brought Him notoriety. Yet grateful tongues could not all be silenced, even at His bidding.

15. *But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.* There was a double attraction about the Lord Jesus—His sweet, instructive speech, and His gracious, healing hand. There is a still somewhat similar attraction in every true Gospel ministry, not the attraction of the mere words of human eloquence, but in the Truths of God which every faithful minister preaches and in that matchless soul-healing power which goes with the Word wherever it is believably heard.

16. *And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.* That is just what you and I would probably *not* have done under such circum-

tances. We would have said, "We must seize this golden opportunity of publishing our message. There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to plenitude of blessing and we must take advantage of it." But our Savior did not wish for fame, He cared nothing about excitement and popularity, so, "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed" for more of that real power which touches the hearts of men so as to save them, caring nothing for that power which merely attracts a crowd and excites momentary attention. O servant of God, when you are best succeeding in your service, imitate your Lord—withdraw yourself and pray!

17. *And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which had come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* To heal the people? Yes, and to heal the doctors, too! And that was a far more difficult thing than to heal the ordinary folk. It must have been a time of great mercy and favor when Christ was ready to bless even the Pharisees and doctors of the law who were sitting by.

18. *And, behold—*For it was a great wonder—

18. *Men brought in a bed, a man which was taken with palsy.* A paralyzed man.

18, 19. *And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop.* There was, no doubt, a staircase outside, as there usually is to Eastern houses. "They went upon the housetop,"

19-21. *And let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?* Most true, O Pharisees and, therefore, He is God, for He can forgive sins and He has forgiven this poor sinner!

22, 23. *But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He, answering, said unto them, What reason you in your hearts? Whether it is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, rise up and walk?* "Does not each of these require the same Divine power? If I am able to bid him rise up and walk, I am also able, by the same Divine authority, to forgive his sins."

24-26. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them and took up that on which he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear.* With a reverent awe!

26, 27. *Saying, We have seen strange things today. And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom.* This Levi, or Matthew, was a tax collector. Not like those of our own day, but one who collected the taxes for the Roman governor

and made what he could for himself out of them. At least that is what many of the “publicans” did.

27, 28. *And He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him.* This was just a parallel case to that of curing the palsied man—it is precisely the same morally as the other was physically. The office of a publican was disreputable in the eyes of the Jews, and this Levi was probably making fast money at the cost of his own countrymen. He was *morally* paralyzed as the other man was *physically*, but as soon as Christ said to him, “Follow Me,” “he left all, rose up, and followed Him.”

29, 30. *And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But the scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?* It seems that there can never be a great wonder worked by Christ without somebody or other objecting to it! I suppose that the sun never rises without annoying thieves who would like a longer time to perpetrate their deeds of darkness. And no miracle of mercy is ever worked without somebody finding fault with it for some reason or other. Be not dismayed, therefore, now that in these modern days there have arisen many cunning objectors to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let them object to it, as the dog barks at the moon—the moon still shines on in her silver brightness! So, when all objectors shall have howled themselves to silence, the eternal Gospel will shine on with never-failing splendor. These scribes and Pharisees murmured against Christ’s disciples and said to them, “Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?” Their Master did not leave them to defend themselves, but He took the case into His own hands.

31. *And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole—“Such as you scribes and Pharisees claim to be*

31. *Need not a physician; but they that are sick.* “You regard them as sick and I regard them in the same way and, therefore, am I found where these sick ones are. Why should I turn aside from them to insult you, who are so wonderfully healthy and think yourselves so good?”

32. *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—289, 202, 570.

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

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

PATIENTS FOR THE GREAT PHYSICIAN NO. 2835

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON HOSPITAL SUNDAY.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1863.

*“And Jesus answering said unto them, They that
are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.”
Luke 5:31.*

IF you had never heard that passage before, you would be almost certain to know where to look for it. It must be in the Gospel according to Luke, for Luke was the beloved physician and, therefore, while taking notes of our Savior's discourses, he would be able to record anything that would be likely to strike upon a physician's ear and to be stamped upon his memory. Matthew and Mark also record this saying of our Lord, but Luke would have special reasons for mentioning it.

What a noble answer this was to the insinuations of Christ's enemies! He was sitting down with publicans and sinners—they had been invited to a feast by Levi, that is, Matthew. The scribes and Pharisees shrugged their shoulders and said they could very readily guess what kind of character Jesus of Nazareth was, for a man is known by the company he keeps. What an overwhelming reply Christ gave them! “Where should I be,” the Physician of Souls seems to say, “but with those who most need My services? I need not come into *your* company, for you consider yourselves to be whole. But these publicans and sinners are, according to your way of speaking, to be regarded as sick—where should I be but with those who need to be healed?” Christ, in associating with sinners, did not at all condone their sin. When He proved Himself to be the Friend of publicans and sinners, it was not that He would lessen the infinite distance between Divine Perfection and human guilt, but only that, coming down to man's fallen estate, He might lift him up. Touching his leprosy, He might heal him—and coming into the hospital of sick souls, He might there work His great miracles of mercy!

But, turning from the immediate occasion when these words were uttered and coming to the words, themselves, it appears, from our text, that Jesus Christ is the Great Physician and, just as we see our doctors hurrying through the streets, going from one house to another on their errands of mercy, so let us go with Christ, in the chariot of His Love, and let us visit some of the sick souls He has come to heal.

I. This will be our first business—TO VISIT THE SICK MAN AND ASK HIM A FEW QUESTIONS.

First, we will ask the man who is sick, but whom Christ comes to heal, *what kind of disease it is from which he is suffering*. If he is rightly instructed, if he understands the Truth of God, he will tell us that it is the worst disease there is. Other diseases may possibly be cured by men, but this one can never be cured except by Divine interposition. Some diseases, like fire, expire when they have burned out their fuel, but this one is of such a character that unless it is cured by Sovereign Grace, it will destroy both body and soul in Hell. This is the worst of diseases because it does not merely affect us in one point, but it affects the entire system—from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. It is so foul a disease that even the all-merciful God is so disgusted with it that He found it imperatively necessary that Hell should be made that He might shut sin up there, as in a morgue, when it came to the worst state. We might better bear to have the plague and the black pest let loose upon us than unbridled sin! It is the foulest disease in the sight of God and it is the most dreadful in its consequences to man.

Our patient, if he is further asked as to the nature of his disease, will tell you that it is internal, but that it works itself out externally—

“The leprosy lies deep within.”

The sin which Christ came to heal is not something on the skin, or a mere matter of custom, or habit. No, my Brothers and Sisters, the venom of sin is in the very fountain of our being! It has poisoned our heart. It is in the very marrow of our bones and is as natural to us as anything that belongs to us. You might even tear the man in pieces, but you could not tear his sin from him. The Mohammed legend tells us that Mohammed was so pure because an angel had taken out his heart and wrung two black drops of evil out of it. Those who believe that lie, little understand the great Truth that what is needed is to get out of a man every drop of evil, yes, that he must be *made a new man* before it is possible to destroy the disease that is in him! Two drops of evil, my Brothers and Sisters? It is far worse than that, for it is the whole man who is evil—all his heart, all his nature—the venom is everywhere! There is not, in unrenewed human nature, a place where you could put the point of a pin where it is not defiled with sin! It is in our entire system—we have been lying in it until we are steeped through and through with it. Sin, in human nature, is like those colors that are ingrained—the more you wash the material, the more clearly they are discovered! You can never wash them out—only the precious blood of Jesus can wash out man’s sin.

We bend down over our patient and ask him another question—*“How did you get this disease?”* He answers, “I got it as diseases are generally gotten. I had it in three ways. First, by inheritance.” Doubtless, many persons inherit certain diseases from their birth and we have all inherited sin from our birth. David expressly says and he, certainly, was no worse than others, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.” That old-fashioned Doctrine—that sin is bred in us—against which some people kick so ferociously, is true for all their kicking! And what is bred in the bones will come out in the flesh sooner or later. We were born of a traitor and traitors were we born.

Nor have we merely received sin by inheritance. Sin is contagious and we have caught it from our fellow men. Many sins, which, perhaps, we might not otherwise have fallen into, we have acquired through our association with other sinners. Hence the value of early Christian training. Hence the blessedness of being found in the company of the godly. Surely you know, O Man, that this world's very air is full of fumes and laden with the germs of the plague, so you have acquired innumerable diseases of soul beside that which you have inherited from your fathers!

In addition to that, as some diseases result from intemperance and other forms of evil living, doubtless the disease which was naturally in each one of us has been fed by our transgression. We have grown worse than we originally were through that upon which our sin has fed. We have gone from bad to worse, from one iniquity to another, till folly has ripened into sin and sin has culminated in crime. Such is the state of unrenewed man—diseased even from his birth, catching more soul maladies from others, or acquiring them by his own evil deeds, our patient is, indeed, sick—sick unto death!

Perhaps someone asks, "*Where is this disease of which you speak?*" I have already answered that question, but I will answer it again more fully. The disease of sin in you, my Hearer, for *you* are the patient of whom I speak—is to be found everywhere! The eyes of your understanding are darkened so that you cannot see the things of God as God would have you see them. Your affections are perverted so that you love that which you should hate, and hate that which you should love. Your conscience, which should be the candle of the Lord shining within you, burns very dimly. Conscience is no more perfect than is any other power in man. I know that some people speak of conscience as though it were the vice regent of God, but it is no such thing! It is defiled and depraved like all the rest of our powers. As for the will, my Lord Will-be-Will, as Bunyan calls it, the Mayor of Mansoul—it is a slave which boasts of freedom, but is never more in bondage than when it boasts of being free! Sinner, your very *memory* is prone to retain evil rather than good! It will keep the chaff, but let the wheat run through.

The refuse which floats down the stream finds a place of resting with you—but if goodly cedars come down from Lebanon, you lay not hold of them! The devil's lies, lascivious songs, foul words, thoughtless jeers—all these stick like burrs, but God's gracious Word, an earnest Gospel discourse, a solemn hymn—these, alas, glide from you like oil down a block of marble—and you go your way and forget all about them. There is no power that you possess that has not the slime of the serpent upon it! O Satan, you have dashed down the palace of manhood! Stately are its columns, even while they lie amidst the rubbish where the grass grows and the owl hoots—but you have cast down every pillar, you have broken the shafts and laid the capitals in the mire. Ah, you foul fiend, you have made that to be a den of darkness which was once a place of light where holy angels and even God, Himself, could walk. How are you fallen, O Man, once a son of the morning, but now a child of darkness until God shall give you light!

The disease of sin is everywhere in the realm of manhood and it is all the more certainly proved to be everywhere because so many people cannot see it! This is why you cannot see sin in yourselves—it has made all the various faculties of your soul to mortify so that you cannot feel the pains which this mortal disease would otherwise have caused you. Thus your heart has lost any tenderness that it may have had, naturally, and your conscience is seared as with a hot iron so that it cannot warn you of the mischief within, but prophesies smooth things—while all is in a state of ruin, destruction and dismay—and will be so forever unless God, by His Grace, shall work a miraculous change.

Perhaps someone asks, “If the man is so diseased, *what are the effects of his sickness?*” The usual effect of all sickness is that the man’s strength declines and he begins to waste away. You do not ask a sick man to run a race. And we must not ask an unrenewed sinner to run the race of godliness. We do not expect the man who has long tossed upon the bed of pain, to march in the soldiers’ ranks and to fight battles. Nor can an unsaved sinner be valiant for God and His Truth. What a dreadful inability sin brings with it! That simple command of the Gospel, “Believe,” the sinner cannot obey of himself. He can no more repent and believe without the Holy Spirit’s aid, than he could create a world! And, unless Divine Grace gives him the power to obey the command which bids him to believe, he never will be able to believe. You have lost all strength, Sinner. You have brought yourself down to be as one dead and as they that sleep in the grave. Your inability is awful and this is the effect of your sin.

Moreover, this sickness not only brings weakness, but it also impairs the beauty of the frame. We see many persons walking along our streets, poor, pale, emaciated creatures. And others who bear upon their features the marks which they must carry to the grave—of some dire disease which once made them its victims. Ah, Sinner, if you could but see yourself as God sees you, you would see that you have transformed that which was the image of God for loveliness into the image of Satan for horror! O Soul, if God should ever hold up His mirror to you and let you see yourself as you are by nature and by practice, too, you would be greatly alarmed, for there is no more dreadful sight out of Hell than that of a naked, unregenerate human heart! So, then, sin brings a marring of all beauty. And, besides this, it brings destruction of all comfort. Sick men cannot get peace and ease—they toss from side to side, but find no rest in any position.

Many of you must confess that sin gives you no comfort. I know you fill your glasses and sing and shout that the ungodly are jolly good fellows, but they have nothing substantial to sustain their joys. I know that when you wake up at midnight, you are not at ease. I know that when you are on a lonely road, the falling of a leaf makes you start and the more you brag, the more cowardly does it prove you to be! The very man who blasphemes God the most is generally the one who is most afraid of God. Men do but use great swelling words of vanity and boasting that they may hide the fears that lurk within them, but which they are

ashamed to admit. I believe there are no such superstitious people anywhere as those who pretend that they do not believe in a God. You may toil to find pleasure in sin, but you shall never discover it. The dregs of sin are always bitter—the cup may sparkle on the brim—but when you have drained it, there shall come satiety, woe and redness of the eyes. Rake all the dunghills of earth, but you will never find the jewel of peace with God! Go and work in all the world's mines till you have utterly spent yourselves, but you shall find that you have wasted your strength for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not. Yes, sin is a sickness that robs us of comfort.

And, worst of all, it is a sickness that will end in death—a death that is something more than death—it is the second death, the death that never dies. What a contrast there is between life and death! Yet there is not half such a contrast between life and death as between the mere act of dying and the second death, the casting into the Lake of Fire! Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come! It were enough to make you start from your seats if you did but know what those four words mean! To die unrenewed, unpardoned—to face a righteously angry God, to be made the target for all His arrows, to be torn in pieces in His hot displeasure, Sinner—can you bear even to think of this? Yet this is what your sickness will lead to unless the Great Physician, of whom I am presently to speak, shall come and heal you.

Having been to see the patient and having said so much concerning his disease, I wonder whether you are saying in your hearts, “If this is true, there is great need of a Physician”? For, if so, you have learned what is the very essence of the text. The only right a man has to Christ is his need of Him. If you have been brought into the condition I have been trying to describe, your need is extreme and, since you need the Great Physician, I am glad to tell you that He is here, ready to hear you. Lay hold of Him! Look to Him now! Christ Jesus is set before you in the Gospel—look to Him and live!

II. Now we are going to stop at the door of ONE WHO REFUSES TO BE CALLED A PATIENT or to come into the list of sick folk at all.

The sick have need of a physician, but those who are whole manifestly have no such need. Are there any “whole” people? Oh, no! All have need of the Great Physician and, therefore, we preach Christ to all. All are spiritually sick and, therefore, we entreat all to come unto Him who alone can heal them. But we have to deal with men as they look upon themselves—and there are some people who think that they are not sinners and who, therefore, do not need a Savior. Let me give you a description of some of them.

There is a good woman, probably she is here—who says, “I have brought up a large family. I am sure I was always kind to my children. My husband always said I was the best of wives. As for my neighbors, I have got up in the middle of the night to nurse them. If any of them ever had the fever, they always said, ‘Send for Mrs. So-and-So, she’ll come to us.’ I always managed my household affairs so that I owed no man anything. Everybody respects me and I do not like being told by you, Sir,

that I am as bad as you say. In fact, I do not believe that I am—many people say that I am about the best-hearted person in the parish—and I think I am.”

Well now, dear Friend, I see that you are evidently one of these whole people, or one of those who think themselves whole. You do not need a Savior, so you shall not have one! But, as you will have no Savior to take you to Heaven, where will you go? Why, you and all your good works will go down to Hell unless you repent of this proud way of talking, for you are rebelling against God all the while that you are speaking thus! You have been very good to your children? Well, that is right, so let your children repay you—God does not owe you anything for *that*. You have also been very kind to your neighbors? That is good—would that more were like you in that respect! But let your neighbors thank you—God owes you nothing for *that*. What did you ever do for God? Why, you have never done anything for Him since He made you! You preferred your children to Him and you thought it better to live to serve your neighbors than to live to serve your God! Oh, dear! What does all your fine righteousness prove to be as soon as we examine it? It is filthy rags! So throw it away, for, as long as you cling to it, you practically say that you have no need of a Savior and, having no need of a Savior, Christ does not come to you!

I also know a good many people of the other sex, everyone of whom says, “I never will believe that my nature is so bad as you say it is. I do not doubt that with some convicts, or other thoroughly bad-hearted fellows, it is as you say, but I do not believe that what you have said is true of all of us. Just look at me, Sir! I have large premises in the City. I like to conduct my business in an honorable manner—nobody can say that I am overreaching. I have an old clerk, Sir, who has worked for me for 30 years—ask him whether I am not as kind a master as can be. My people at home like me very much. I subscribe to the Bible Society. I give a couple of guineas a year to a Ragged School. I have been in the habit of going to church or chapel ever since I was a lad—I do not know that anybody can say much against me. I may have had a little too much wine after dinner once or twice, but that is nothing to be ashamed of—everybody does that sometimes. So, Sir, I can say that your representation of me is not true.”

Very well, Friend, I will take you at your own valuation. It seems, then, that you have no need of a physician, so Christ’s coming into the world could not have had any relation to you. Suppose you could get to Heaven on your theory—do you know what they would have to do for you? Why, they would have to build a new Heaven on purpose for you because all the people who have ever entered there say, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” But there is no need to wash what is already clean—and your robes are, it seems, so uncommonly clean that they need no washing! If you could get into Heaven as you are, you would be able to sing to your own praise and glory forever! But, to tell you the truth, you will never get there as you are, for the only footing on which a man can go to Heaven is that of a humble acceptance

of God's Grace. Now, you are not humble! What you have just said proves to me that you are as proud as Lucifer and, certainly, you have not a right estimate of sin, or you would not have said just now. "I have only done what everybody else does."

Does it make a thing less sinful because everybody does it? It appears to me, dear Friend, that you do not know much about yourself and that if you would spend half as much time in taking stock of your own character as you do in the stock-taking up at those large premises in the city of which you are so proud, you would soon discover that you are spiritually bankrupt, that you cannot pay a single penny in the pound, much less 20 shillings—that you have forgotten God up to this very day, that you have trampled on the blood of Christ by insisting upon it that you do not need it—that you have insulted Divine Wisdom by saying that it has provided what you do not require! You must admit that you have insulted Divine Justice and Truth, for both of these denounce you and condemn you—and yet you say you do not deserve condemnation! O Man, the poorest soul that is trembling at the feet of Christ is in a more hopeful state than you are, with all your morality and all your boasted righteousness! Your only right to Christ lies in your need of Christ! But, according to your description of yourself, you evidently do not feel that you need Him. Very well, then, you have no right to Him and if you remain as you are, you will certainly perish in your sin!

Possibly someone else says, "Ah, Sir, I do not trust in my good works, for I have something better to trust to. When I was quite a little one, I was taken to church and the parson put some water on my face—I do not know whether there is anything about that in the Bible, by the way, but that made me 'a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven'—at least, so the Catechism says. And, a long while after that, I went to the church again and a bishop put his hands on my head—I do not know what it all meant, and I had never felt anything very particular—but then they told me to come to the Communion and I did, and nobody ever refused me. I have heard that there is a great deal of meaning in coming to the Sacrament and I intend, when I get ill, to look into these matters a little more. But, for the present, I am quite satisfied with what our clergyman tells me. They do say that he is bit of a Puseyite, but we need not bother our heads about that. If we attend to the ordinance of the church, I daresay it will be all right with us."

Well Friend, let me tell you plainly, in the name of the Most High, that your refuge is a refuge of lies and your confidence is a deception! If I speak to others of you and you tell me that you were immersed according to the Apostolic fashion, and that you come and commune at the Lord's Table, and that you are trusting in this for salvation, I would say the same to you—that your hope is equally a lie!—

***"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven!"***

If you rest on these things and think that you are whole as the result of having done so, then you practically say that you have no need of the

Great Physician and, consequently, you have no claim upon Him for His aid. O Brothers and Sisters, our plea with Christ must be our wounds! That is His plea with His Father—His wounds! And that must be our plea with Him—our sins, our needs, our unrighteousness—not our goodness, nor our resolves to be better! We must bring before the Lord our sins!

But I am quite conscious, though I try to describe their cases as clearly as I can, that some who think themselves whole, will still escape. One will say, “The preacher could not mean *me*.” Perhaps your character has been accurately sketched, yet you say, “The preacher could not mean *me*! I am such an honest and upright man! Do you mean to tell me, Sir, that I am to be saved in the same way as a chimney-sweep or a poor fallen woman?” Yes, that is exactly what I mean! There is no other way to Heaven for you than there is for such people as you have mentioned. You must come just as the vilest of the vile come—just as empty-handed as they come, you, also, must come to Christ—and if you do, He will receive you.

III. Our time has flown so rapidly that I can only speak briefly of THE PHYSICIAN.

If anyone asks, “What is His diploma?” It is here—“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted.” God the Father sent Him to heal sin-sick souls. Where did He study? He studied in the great hospital of human disease! For 33 years, “He went about doing good.”

What practice has He had? He has had the most extensive practice that a physician could have. Millions of happy souls above have been cured by Him and millions here on earth have also been healed by Him—and all of them will gladly speak His praises!

If you want to know what His medicine is, I may tell you that He has two medicines. This is one—“He sent His word and healed them”—His word of promise, His word of invitation, His word of command. But He also has another medicine. That is, His own blood. Unlike other physicians who give bitter potions to their patients, the great Physician drank all the medicine Himself!

But you will ask, “What is His fee? He gives healing “without money and without price.” You may ask, “Where is His dispensary?” To every creature under Heaven who trusts Him, Christ presents a free and complete cure. And you will ask, “What are His hours? Any hour, and every hour, by night or by day. But you will say, “Where can I find Him,” Just wherever you are now sitting or standing, you can find Him if you will but breathe this prayer, “God be merciful to Me a sinner.” If you trust Him with your soul, then the honor of this great Physician is engaged to make a sure and certain cure of you. Blessed Physician, would that we had time and ability to speak of You and of the wonders You have worked! You can heal the vilest, the most diseased, the most helpless and hopeless of sinners!

I want to conclude by earnestly inviting you to come to this Great Physician at once. I know that many of you will say that you are unworthy.

That is true, but no one was ever saved because he was worthy. Even though you are unworthy, have you not a need of a Savior? And being conscious of such a need is all the fitness and worthiness He requires! If you need Christ, you are fit to come to Christ. If you need to have sin forgiven, you are a fit subject for Christ to deal with. You need not talk about your unworthiness, for Christ bids you come unto Him. Possibly you say that your case is such a very complicated one that you do not understand it yourself—but He understands it. You cannot tie a knot of sin which Christ cannot untie! Christ can cure your disease whatever it is, even if it has become chronic with you. Christ can cure habitual sinners. He can cure the sin that was born with you and He can do it this very hour! He can make the drunkard sober in a moment. He can turn the very chief of transgressors from the error of his ways and set his feet in the right path—and that in a moment!

The sin of twenty thousand years—if it could be possible for anyone to have sinned so long—He can take away in a moment when we believe on Him! “Well, but,” says one, “I am such an old sinner.” I have read that a young lad of the age of 15 heard Mr. Flavel preach and, soon after, he moved to America and settled in a quiet village there. He lived 85 years after that, an unconverted man and, one day, sitting in the field, thinking, he remembered Mr. Flavel’s sermon and the earnest way in which he spoke. Old men often remember the things of their youth better than those of yesterday. What Mr. Flavel had preached 85 years before was blessed to that sinner over a hundred years old—and he sought and found mercy! And he lived some years after that to tell what Divine Love and faithfulness could do! You are not a hundred yet, but if you had wasted a whole century in sin, God’s Grace could enable you to begin another century walking in the paths of righteousness to your life’s end!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 5:1-32.**

Verses 1, 2. *And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.* Before folding them up, as if they intended to do no more with them just then, as they had been working all night in vain.

3. *And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would put out a little from the land.* It is very difficult to speak effectively when the people come too close to the speaker and, sometimes, a little inconvenience like that may interfere with the flow of the speaker’s thoughts and words. Even the Savior seems to have felt that He needed a little breathing space between Himself and His audience.

3. *And He sat down and taught the people out of the ship.* That was what some people would have called an unconsecrated place, but Chr-

ist's Presence consecrated it, as it does every place where He condescends to meet with us—

***“Where're we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

4. *Now when He had stopped speaking, He said unto Simon, launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.* Whenever He borrows a pulpit, or anything else, He pays good interest for the loan! Christ will not be in even a boatman's debt. For every cup of cold water given to His disciples in His name the Master will take care to pay.

5. *And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.* Out of personal respect and obedience to Christ, having, perhaps, but a slender hope of any good coming of it, yet, nevertheless, he will let down the net.

6, 7. *And when they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net broke. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them.* For they had launched out so far into the sea to scarcely to be within hearing, so they beckoned to their partners in the other ship—and they rowed out to help them.

7. *And they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.* We can have too much of a good thing, yes, too much, even, of the best things, for our poor frail vessel cannot hold all that God would be willing to put into it.

8. *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* Not knowing what he said, though he knew what he meant—feeling as if he, so sinful, had come too close to the Lord who was so gracious, so he must not dare to stay near Him. Have you never felt the same as that? If not, I think you have neither known your Lord, nor yourselves, for the knowledge of Christ, combined with the knowledge of ourselves, is sure to produce this holy shrinking in which we have no need for anyone to say to us, “Take off your shoes” for we are almost ready to take off our very body, for we can scarcely bear the Glory of the Presence of the Lord!

9, 10. *For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth you shall catch men.* He seemed to imply that he should catch them after the same rate, too, and so he did, for the first throw of the net brought in 3,000 and very soon the number caught was increased to five thousand. That was good fishing by those first Gospel fishermen! Oh, that we could throw the net as they did!

11, 12. *And when they had brought the ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him. and it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy.* That is a characteristic touch of Luke, who, as a physician, with a glance of his eyes, took in the condition of the man, not as merely a leper, but as one “full of leprosy.”

12, 13. *Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord if You will, You can make me clean. And He put forth His hand, and touched him.* The perfectly Pure One touched the leprous man without Himself becoming contaminated. In any other house, the man who touched a leper would have been defiled, but when Christ comes into contact with impurity, He is not defiled—He removes it! This is what the Gospel is meant to do to the world. We are to go and seek the good of the most fallen and abandoned of men and those who do so ought to have so much of the spirit of Jesus Christ in them, and so much vitality in their piety, that they will not be tempted by the sin upon which they look! But, on the contrary, will overcome that sin and impart spiritual health instead of receiving infection. May we be in such a state of health as Jesus was! Then shall we be able to touch the leper and not be defiled. Jesus touched Him—

13. *Saying, I will: be you clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.*—Ask Him to touch you, also, poor leprous Soul—you who are full of sin, you who are deeply conscious that the deadly disease of sin is incurably upon you! Ask Him but to touch you, for the touch of His finger shall make you clean in a moment! Christ's cures are often instantaneous. He who could speak a world into being with a word, can also speak a man into perfect spiritual sanity with a word.

14, 15. *And He charged him to tell no man, but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him.* Some fires burn the more fiercely for being dampened—and such was the fame of Christ—it was not to be kept under. The more He bade men be quiet, “so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him.”

15. *And great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.* Two words that I long to see linked together in this house—“to hear, and to be healed by Him.” You come to hear. Can you not also come “to be healed by Him of your infirmities”?

16. *And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.* The tense of the verb implies that He often did this. It was His habit to withdraw Himself for private prayer even in His busiest times and when He could occupy every minute with great advantage to the people. Thus He gathered new strength from above for each day's work—and when there was most to be done, then He took most time to pray. It is an evil economy that tries to take time for other things that should be spent in prayer, for the shortening of prayer will be the weakening of our power.

17. *And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* Not the Pharisees and doctors of the Law—they do not often get healed by Christ—but “the power of the Lord was present to heal the multitude.” The only people for whom there seems to be *no* power to heal are these Pharisees and doctors, as will appear by the following narrative.

18. *And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy.* He had had a stroke of paralysis.

18, 19. *And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop. By the external staircase—*

19. *And let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.* Probably into the courtyard of the house where Jesus was preaching.

20. *And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you.* Laying the axe at the root—not healing the paralysis, at first, but forgiving the sin which depressed the man’s spirit and so was, in a measure, the cause of the paralysis. By removing the sin, He raised the man’s spirits and with his renewed spirits, there same back strength. Note that it was when He saw their faith that He said unto the man, “Your sins are forgiven you.”

21. *And the scribes and the Pharisees.* Here they are, these quibbling gentlemen, these Pharisees and doctors of the Law.

21-23. *Began to reason, saying, Who it this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answering said unto them, What do you reason in your hearts? Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Rise up and walk? He that could do the one could do the other! He who bids the paralyzed man walk is Divine—He, therefore, can forgive sin!*

24-26. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, He said unto the sick of the palsy, I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, we have seen strange things today.* May we often see such “strange things” spiritually!

27-32. *And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him. And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But the scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* The murmuring of those Pharisees and doctors of the Law had one good result, for it led the Savior to declare the purpose of His mission to the earth—“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

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

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

SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER

NO. 798

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 1, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.**

***“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”
Luke 6:12.***

IF any man of woman born might have lived without prayer it was surely the Lord Jesus Christ. To us poor weak erring mortals, prayer is an absolute necessity. But it does not at first sight seem to be so to Him who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” In some parts of prayer our Lord Jesus Christ could take no share. As for instance in that most important department, namely, personal confession of sin, He could take no portion. There were no slips in His outward life. There were no declensions in His inward heart. “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” is a very suitable prayer for Him to *teach* us, but He could not use it Himself.

Nor had He any need to pray against inward corruptions, seeing He was born without them. We wrestle hard each day with original sin, but Jesus knew no such adversaries. It is as much as we can do, with all the weapons of our holy war, to keep down the foes of our own household, but our Lord had no sinful nature to subdue. The inner life is a daily struggle with some of us, so that Paul’s exclamation, “O wretched man that I am!” is exceedingly familiar to our lips. But our Lord said truly of Himself, “The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me.” Moreover, our Lord had not to seek some of the things which are exceedingly needful to His disciples. One desire which I trust is ever present with us, is for growth in Divine Grace and for advancement in the Divine life—but our Lord was always perfect in holiness and love. I see not how there could have been any advancement in purity in Him—He was always the spotless lily of innocence, incomparable, faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Our Lord had no need to make self-examination each night. When He retired for prayer there would be no need to scan the actions of the day or to detect shortcomings and flaws. There would be no necessity to investigate secret motives to see whether He might not have been actuated by sinister principles. The deep wellsprings of His being were not of earth, but altogether Divine. When He bowed His knee in the morning He had no need to pray to be protected from sin during the day. He went forth to His daily labor without the infirmities which we bear within us, and was free from the tendencies to evil which we bear about us. Tempted He was in all points as we are, but the arrows which wound us glanced harmlessly from Him.

Yet mark carefully, although our glorious Master did not require to pray in some of those respects in which it is most needful to us, yet never was

there a man who was more abundant in prayer and in supplication, nor One in whom prayer was exercised with so much vehemence and importunity! He was the greatest of preachers, but His prayers made even a deeper impression on His disciples than His sermons—for they did not say, “Lord, teach us to *preach*,” but they did exclaim, “Lord, teach us to pray.” They felt that He was Master of that heavenly art, and at His feet they desired to sit that they might learn how to move Heaven and earth with sacred wrestling. Brethren, since our sinless Lord was this mighty in prayer, does not His example say to us, with a voice irresistibly persuasive, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation”?

You are to be conformed to the image of Christ—be conformed in this respect—that you are men of *prayer*. You desire to know the secret of His power with men—seek to obtain His power with *God*. You wish to obtain the blessings which were so copiously bestowed upon Him—seek them where He sought them—find them where He found them. If you would adorn His doctrine and increase His kingdom, use the weapon of all-prayer which insures victory to all who use it as the Captain did! Our Lord Jesus Christ was most constant in His perpetual devotions. Devout men are used to set apart times for extraordinary supplication. Yet a man who does not pray *regularly*, is but a hypocrite when he pretends to pray *specialy*.

Who would care to live in a miser’s house who starved you all the year round, except that now and then on a feast day he fed you daintily? We must not be miserly in prayer, neglecting it regularly and only abounding in it on particular occasions when ostentation, rather than sincerity, may influence us. But even he who keeps a bounteous table sometimes spreads a more luxurious feast than at other times—and even so must we, if we habitually live near to God—select our extraordinary seasons in which the soul shall have her fill of fellowship. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the text before us, has set us an example of extraordinary devotion, supplying us with all the details and minutiae of the exercise.

Notice the place which He selected for it. He sought the solitude of a mountain. He was so popular that He could not hope in any city or village to be free from innumerable followers. He was so great a benefactor that He could never be without sick folk entreating healing at His hands. He knew no leisure, no, not so much as to eat bread, and therefore, to obtain a little respite He sought the hollow of some lofty hill where foot of man could not profane His loneliness. If you would draw near to God in an extraordinary manner, you must take care to be entirely undisturbed. I know not how it is, but if ever one desires to approach very near to God there is sure to be a knock at the door, or some matter of urgent business, or some untoward circumstance to tempt us from our knees.

Is it so, that Satan knows how soul-fattening retirement and devotion are, and therefore, if he can by any method stir up friend or foe to call us out of our closets he will surely do so? Here our Lord was beyond call—the mountain was better than a closet with bolted doors. Far off was the din of the city and the noise of those who clamored with their merchandise. Neither the shout of triumph nor the wail of sorrow could reach Him there. Beloved Friends, carefully seek, if you can, a perfect solitude, but if

not, reach as near to it as you can and as much as possible keep out the sound and thought of the outer world.

Did not our Lord resort to the mountain in order that He might be able to pray aloud? I cannot speak for others, but I often find it very helpful to myself to be able to speak aloud in private prayer. I do not doubt but that very spiritual minds can pray for a great length of time without the motion of the lips, but I think the most of us would often find it a spur and assistance if we could give utterance to our cries and sighs, no one being present to hear. We know that our Lord was accustomed to use strong cries and tears, and these it would not have been desirable for a human ear to listen to. In fact, His natural modesty would have put Him under a restraint. He therefore sought mountains far away, that He might, in His Father's Presence, and in the presence of no one else, pour out His entire soul—groaning, struggling, wrestling, or rejoicing—as His spirit might be moved at the time.

Did He not also seek the mountain to avoid ostentation? If we pray to be seen of men we shall have our reward, and a pitiful reward it will be—we shall have the admiration of shallow fools and nothing more. If our object in prayer is to obtain blessings from God we must present our prayers unspoiled by human observation. Get alone with your God if you would move His arm. If you fast, appear not unto men to fast. If you plead personally with God, tell none of it. Take care that this is a secret between God and your own soul—then shall your Father reward you openly. But if you gad about like a Pharisee and sound your trumpet in the corner of the streets, you shall go where the Pharisee has gone—where hypocrites feel forever the wrath of God!

Jesus, therefore, to prevent interruption, to give Himself the opportunity of pouring out His whole soul, and to avoid ostentation, sought the mountain. What a grand oratory for the Son of God! What walls would have been so suitable? What room would have worthily housed so mighty an Intercessor? The Son of God most fittingly entered God's own glorious temple of Nature when He would commune with Heaven. Those giant hills and the long shadows cast by the moonlight were alone worthy to be His companions. No pomp of gorgeous ceremony can possibly have equaled the glory of Nature's midnight on the wild mountain's side where the stars, like the eyes of God, looked down upon the Worshipper, and the winds seemed as though they would bear the burden of His sighs and tears upon their willing wings. Samson, in the temple of the Philistines, moving the giant pillars, is a mere dwarf compared with Jesus of Nazareth moving Heaven and earth, as He bows Himself alone in the great temple of Jehovah!

For purposes of extraordinary devotion, the *time* selected by our Master is also a lesson to us. He chose the silent hours of night. Now it may so happen that if we literally imitated Him we might altogether miss our way, for, no doubt, He chose the night because it was most convenient, congenial and in every way appropriate. To some of us the night might be most inappropriate and unsuitable. If so, we must by no means select it, but must follow our Lord in the *spirit* rather than in the letter. We should give to heavenly things, that part of the day in which we can be most quiet—

those hours which we can most fairly allot to it without despoiling our other duties of their proper proportion of time.

By day our Savior was preaching—He could not cease from preaching even to spend the day in prayer. By day the multitude needed healing—our Lord would not suspend His benevolent work for His private communions. We are to take care never to present one duty to God stained with the blood of another—but to balance and proportion our different forms of service so that our life-work may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. Usually, however, night will be the favored season for wrestling Jacobs. When every man had gone to his own home to rest, the Man of Nazareth had a right to seek His solace where best He could, and if sleep refreshed others, and prayer more fully refreshed Him, then by all means let Him pray. Against this not a dog shall move his tongue.

Set apart, for remarkably protracted intercession, seasons which answer to this description, when the time is your own—not your master's. Your own—not your families. Not pilfered from family devotion. Not abstracted from the public assembly or Sunday school. Set apart the time of quiet, when all around you is in repose—the time congenial to solemnity, and the awe of a spirit hushed into reverent subjection, yet uplifted to rapt devotion. Such time, with many, may be the night. With others it may be the day. Let sanctified common sense be your direction.

Again, our Lord sets us a good example in the matter of extraordinary seasons of devotion in the protracted *character* of His prayer. He continued *all night* in prayer. I do not think that we are bound to pray long as a general rule. I am afraid, however, there is no great need to make the remark, for most of Christians are short enough, if not far too short in private worship. By the aid of the Holy Spirit it is possible to throw, by holy energy and sacred zeal, as much prayer into a few minutes as into many hours, for *prevalent* prayer is not measured by God by the yard or by the hour. *Force* is its standard rather than *length*.

When the whole soul groans itself out in half-a-dozen sentences there may be more real devotion in them than in *hours* of mere wire drawing and word spinning. True prayer is the soul's mounting up to God, and if it can ride upon a cherub or the wings of the wind, so much the better. But, in extraordinary seasons, when the soul is thoroughly worked up to an eminent intensity of devotion, it is well to continue it for a protracted season. We know not that our Lord was *vocally* praying all the time, He may have paused to contemplate. He may have surveyed the whole compass of the field over which His prayer should extend, meditating upon the Character of His God, recapitulating the precious promises, remembering the needs of His people, and thus arming Himself with arguments with which to return to wrestle and prevail.

How very few of us have ever spent a whole night in prayer, and yet what gifts we might have had for such asking! We little know what a night of prayer would do for us—its effect we can scarcely calculate. One night alone in prayer might make us new men—changed from poverty of soul to spiritual wealth—from trembling to triumph! We have an example of it in the life of Jacob. Previously the crafty shuffler—always bargaining and calculating, unlovely in almost every respect—yet *one night* in prayer

turned the supplanter into a prevailing prince and robed him with celestial grandeur! From that night he lives on the sacred page as one of the nobility of Heaven. Could not we, at least now and then, in these weary earthbound years, hedge about a *single night* for such enriching traffic with the skies?

What? Have we no sacred ambition? Are we deaf to the yearnings of Divine love? Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, for wealth and for science, men will cheerfully quit their warm couches! Cannot we do it now and then for the love of God and the good of souls? Where is our zeal, our gratitude, our sincerity? I am ashamed while I thus upbraid both myself and you. May we often tarry at Jabbok, and cry with Jacob, as he grasped the Angel—

**“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”**

Surely, Brothers and Sisters, if we have given whole *days* to folly, we can afford a space for heavenly wisdom! Time was when we gave whole *nights* to chambering and wantonness, to dancing and the world’s revelry—we did not tire, then—we were chiding the sun that he rose so soon, and wishing the hours would lag awhile that we might delight in wilder merriment, and perhaps deeper sin. Oh, why should we weary in heavenly employments? Why do we grow weary when asked to watch with our Lord? Up, sluggish Heart, Jesus calls you! Rise and go forth to meet the heavenly Friend in the place where He manifests Himself!

Jesus has further instructed us in the art of special devotion by the *manner* of His prayer. Notice He continued all night in prayer to God—to God! How much of *our* prayer is not prayer to God at all! It is nominally so, but it is really a muttering to the wind, a talking to the air—for the Presence of God is not realized by the mind. “He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Do you know what it is, mentally, to lay hold upon the great Unseen One, and to talk with Him as really as you talk to a friend whose hand you grip? How heavenly to speak right down into God’s ear, to pour your heart directly into God’s heart, feeling that you live in Him as the fish live in the sea, and that your every thought and word are discerned by Him! It is true pleading when the Lord is present to you, and you realize His Presence and speak under the power and influence of His Divine overshadowing.

That is to pray, indeed, but to continue *all night* in such a frame of mind is wonderful to me, for I must confess, and I suppose it is your confession, too, that if for awhile I get near to God in prayer, yet distracting thoughts will intrude—the ravenous birds will come down upon the sacrifice—the noise of archers will disturb the songs at the place of drawing of water. How soon do we forget that we are speaking to *God* and go on mechanically pumping up our desires, perhaps honestly uttering them, but forgetting to Whom they are addressed! Oh, were He not a gracious God, the imperfection of our prayers would prevent so much as *one* of them ever reaching His ear!

But He knows our frailty and takes our prayers, not as what they *are*, but as what we *mean* them to be! And beholding them in Jesus Christ He

accepts both us and them in the Beloved. Let us learn from our Master to make our prayers distinctly and directly appeals to *God*. That gunner will do no service to the army who takes no aim, but is content so long as he does but fire. That vessel makes an unprofitable voyage which is not steered for a port, but is satisfied to sail here and there. We must direct our prayers to *God*, and maintain soul-fellowship with Him or our devotion will become a nullity, a name for a thing which is not.

The Ethiopic translation reads, "in prayer *with God*." Truly this is the highest order of prayer, and though the translation may be indefensible, the meaning is correct enough, for Jesus was eminently with God all night. To pray with God—do you know what that is? To be the echo of Jehovah's voice! To desire the Lord's desires and long with His longings! This is a gracious condition to be in, when the heart is a tablet for the Lord to write upon, a coal blazing with celestial fire, a leaf driven with the heavenly wind! Oh, to be absorbed in the Divine will, having one's whole mind swallowed up in the mind of God! This for a whole night would be blessed—this forever bliss itself.

Note too, that some have translated the passage, "in the prayer *of God*." This is probably an incorrect translation, though Dr. Gill appears to endorse it, and it brings out a precious meaning. The most eminent things were in the Hebrew language ascribed to God, so that by it would be meant the noblest prayer, the most intense prayer, the most vehement prayer—a prayer in which the whole man gathers up his full strength and spends it in an agony before the Eternal Throne. Oh, to pray like that! The great, deep, vehement prayer of God! Brothers and Sisters, I am afraid that as a rule in our Prayer Meetings, we are much too decorous, and even in our private prayers feel too much the power of formality. Oh, how I delight to listen to a Brother who talks to God simply and from his heart!

And I must confess I have no small liking to those rare old-fashioned Methodist prayers which are now quite out of date. Our Methodist friends, for the most part, are getting too fine and respectable nowadays—too genteel to allow of prayers such as once made the walls to ring again. O for a revival of those glorious violent prayers which flew like hot shot against the battlements of Heaven! O for more moving of the posts of the doors in vehemence—more thundering at the gates of mercy! I would sooner attend a prayer meeting where there were groans and cries all over the place, and cries and shouts of "Hallelujah!" than be in your polite assemblies where everything is dull as death and decorous as the whitewashed sepulcher. O for more of the prayer of God—the whole body, soul and spirit working together—the whole man being aroused and stirred up to the highest pitch of intensity to wrestle with the Most High! Such, I have no doubt, was the prayer of Jesus on the cold mountain's side.

Once more, we may learn from Jesus our Lord the occasion for special devotion. At the time when our Master continued all night in prayer He had been upbraided by the Pharisees. He fulfilled the resolve of the man after God's own heart. "Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in Your precepts." So David did, and so did David's Lord. The best answer to the slanderers of the ungodly is to be more constant in communion with God! Now, has it

been so with any of you? Have you been persecuted or despised? Have you passed through any unusual form of trial? Then celebrate an unusual season of prayer! This is the alarm bell which God rings. Hasten to Him for refuge. See to it that in this, your time of trouble, you betake yourself to the Mercy Seat with greater diligence.

Another reason is also noticed in the context. Christ had said to His disciples, "Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." What He told them to do He would be sure to do, Himself. He was just about to choose 12 Apostles, and before that solemn act of ordination was performed He sought power for them from the Most High. Who can tell what blessings were vouchsafed to the 12 in answer to that midnight intercession? If Satan fell like lightning from Heaven, Jesus' prayer did it rather than the Apostles' preaching. So, Christian man, if you enter upon a new enterprise, or engage in something that is weightier and more extensive than what you have done before, select a night or a day and set it apart for special communion with the Most High.

If you are to pray, you must work—but if you are to work, you must also pray. If your prayer without your work will be hypocrisy, your work without your prayer will be presumption—so see to it that you are especially in supplication when especially in service. Balance your praying and working, and when you have reached the full tale of the one, do not diminish any of the other. To any man here who asks me, "When should I give myself especially to a protracted season of prayer?" I would answer those occasions will frequently occur. You should certainly do this when about to join the Church. The day of your public profession of faith should be altogether a consecrated day. I remember rising before the sun to seek my Master's Presence on the day when I was buried with Him in Baptism. It seemed to me a solemn ordinance not to be lightly undertaken, or flip-pantly carried out—a duty which, if done at all, should be performed in the most solemn and earnest manner.

What is Baptism without fellowship with Christ? To be buried in Baptism, but not with Him, what is it? I would say to you young people who are joining the Church now, mind you do not do it thoughtlessly, but in coming forward to enlist in the army of Christ, set apart a special season for self-examination and prayer. When you arrive at any great change of life do the same. Do not enter upon marriage, or upon emigration, or upon starting in business without having sought a benediction from your Father who is in Heaven. Any of these things may involve years of pain, or years of happiness to you—seek, therefore, to have the smile of God upon what you are about to do.

Should you not also make your times of peculiar *trial* to be also times of special prayer? Wait upon God now that the child is dying. Wrestle with Him as David did about the child of Bathsheba. Draw near to God with fasting and prayer for a life that is specially dear to you if, perhaps, it may be preserved. And when the axe of death falls and the tree beneath which you found shelter is cut down, then again, before the grave is closed and the visitation is forgotten, draw near to God with sevenfold earnestness. And if you have been studying the Word of God, and cannot master a pas-

sage of Scripture—if some truth of Revelation staggers you—now, again, is a time to set yourself like Daniel by prayer and supplication to find out what is the meaning of the Lord in the Book of His prophecy.

Indeed, such occasions will often occur to you who are spiritual, and I charge you by the living God, if you would be rich in Divine Grace, if you would make great advances in the Divine life—if you would be eminent in the service of your Master—attend to these occasions. Get an hour alone, an hour, yes—*two* hours a day if you can—and go not away from the Master's Presence till your face is made to shine as once the face of Moses did when he had been long upon the mount alone with God.

And now, having thus brought out the example of Christ as well as I can, I want to make an application of the subject to this Church which at this juncture has set apart a long season for special devotion. My words shall be few, but I earnestly desire that God may make them weighty to each member of this Church. A Church, in order to have a blessing upon its special times of prayer, must abound in constant prayer at *other* times. I do not believe in spasmodic efforts for revival. There should be special occasions, but these should be the outgrowths of ordinary, active, healthy vigor! To neglect prayer all the year round, and then to celebrate a special week—is it much better than hypocrisy? To forsake the regular Prayer Meetings, but to come in crowds to a special one—what is this? Does it not betray superficiality or the effervescence of mere *excitement*?

The Church ought *always* to pray! Prayer is to her what salt and bread are to our tables. No matter what the meal, we must have salt and bread there. And no matter what the Church's engagements, she must have her regular constancy of prayer. I think that in London our Churches err in not having morning and evening prayer *daily* in every case where the Church is large enough to maintain it. I am glad that our zealous Brethren have here for some years maintained that constant prayer. I am thankful that in this Church I cannot find much fault with you for non-attendance at the Prayer Meetings. There are some of you who never come, and I suppose you are such poor things that you are not of much good whether you come or stay away. But on the whole the most of the people who fear God in this place are abundant in their attendance at the means of Divine Grace—not to be blamed in any measure whatever for forsaking the assembling of themselves together—for they do draw near to God most regularly. And such Prayer Meetings have we every Monday as I fear are not to be found anywhere else. But we must see to it that we keep this up, and moreover, those who are lax and lagging behind must ask forgiveness of their heavenly Father, and endeavor henceforth to be more instant in supplication. If, Brothers and Sisters, men ought always to pray and not to faint, much more should Christian men!

Jesus has sent His Church into the world on the same errand upon which He Himself came, and that includes intercession. What if I say that the Church is the world's priest? Creation is dumb, but the Church is to find a mouth for it. Ungodly men are dumb of heart and will, but we who have the will and the power to intercede dare not be silent. It is the Church's *privilege* to pray. The door of Divine Grace is always open for her petitions and they never return empty-handed. The veil was rent for her,

the blood was sprinkled upon the altar for her, God constantly invites her! Will she refuse the privilege which angels might envy her? Is not the Church the bride of Christ? May she not go in unto her King at any time, at *every* time? Shall she allow the precious privilege to be unused?

The Church ever has *need* for prayer. There are always some in her midst who are declining, and frequently those who are falling into open sin. There are the lambs to be prayed for that they may be carried in Christ's bosom. There are the strong to be prayed for lest they grow presumptuous, and the weak lest they become despairing. In such a Church as this is, if we kept up Prayer Meetings 24 hours in the day, 365 days in the year, we might *never* be without a special subject for supplication. Are we ever without the sick and the poor? Are we ever without the afflicted and the wavering? Are we ever without those who are seeking the conversion of their relatives, the reclaiming of backsliders, or the salvation of the depraved?

No, with such congregations constantly gathering, with such a densely peopled neighborhood—with *three million* sinners around us, the most part of them lying dead in trespasses and sins! With such a country beginning to be benighted in superstition—over whom the darkness of Romanism is certainly gathering! In a world full of idols, full of cruelties, full of devilries—if the *Church* does not pray, how shall she excuse her base neglect of the command of her loving Lord and Covenant Head? Let *this* Church, then, be constant in supplication! There should be frequent Prayer Meetings—these Prayer Meetings should be constantly attended by all. Every man should make it a point of duty to come as often as possible to the place where prayer is to be made. I wish that all throughout this country the prayers of God's Churches were more earnest and constant.

It might make a man weep tears of blood to think that in our Dissenting Churches in so many cases the Prayer Meetings are so shamefully attended. I could indicate places that I know of, situated not many miles from where we now stand, where there are sometimes so few in attendance that there are scarcely praying men enough to keep up variety in the Prayer Meeting! I know towns where the Prayer Meeting is put off during the summer months—as if the devil would take off during the summer! I know of agricultural districts where they always put off prayer during the harvest, and I make some kind of excuse for them because the fruits of the earth must be gathered in—but I cannot understand large congregations where the Prayer Meeting and lecture are amalgamated because there will not be enough persons coming out to make two decent services in the week.

And then they say that God does not bless the Word! How can He bless the Word? They say "Our conversions are not so numerous as they were," and they wonder how it is that we at the Tabernacle have so large an increase month by month! Do you wonder, Brothers and Sisters, that they have not a blessing when they do not seek it? Do you wonder that *we* have it when we *seek* it? That is but a natural law of God's own government, that if men will not pray, neither shall they have—and if men will pray, and pray vehemently—God will deny them nothing! He opens wide His hands and says, "Ask what you will, and it shall be given to you."

I wish our denomination of Baptists, and other denominations of Christians were greater believers in prayer, for this mischief of Ritualism and Rationalism which is coming upon us—this curse which is withering our nation—this blight and mildew which are devouring the vineyard of the Lord has all come upon us because public prayer has almost ceased in the land as to its constancy, vehemence, and importunity! The Lord recover us from this sin! But let the Church be as diligent in prayer as she may on regular occasions, she ought still to have her *special* seasons. A thing which is regular and constant is sure to tire, so a little novelty is lawful. A little specialty may often tend to revive those who, otherwise, would be given to slumber.

The Church should have her special praying times because she has her special needs. There are times when spiritual epidemics fall upon Churches and congregations. Sometimes it is the disease of pride, luxury, worldliness. At other times there are many falling into overt sin. Sometimes a vile form of vice will break out in the very midst of the Church of God! At other times it is a heresy, or a doctrine carried to excess, or ill will, or a lack of brotherly love, or a general lethargy. At such special times of trial a Church should have her extraordinary Prayer Meetings. When she is engaging in new enterprises and is about to break up new ground she needs fresh strength, and she should seek it. Let her call her members together, and with heart and soul let them commend the work to God.

There should be special seasons of prayer because the Holy Spirit prompts us to it. "I believe in the Holy Spirit," is a sentence of the Creed, but how few really believe it? We seem to fancy that we have no motions of the Holy Spirit now among godly men as before. But I protest before the living God that such is not the case! The Holy Spirit at this day moves in those who are conversant with Him and who are content to regard His gracious monitions. And He prompts us to special fellowship. We speak what we know! We declare what we have tasted and handled! The Holy Spirit, at certain times, prompts us to come together with peculiar earnestness and special desires.

And then, if this suffices not, God has been pleased to set His seal to special *seasons* of prayer—therefore they ought to be held. There have been more ingatherings, I was about to say, under special efforts of a month than under ordinary efforts of 11 months. I am sure that, last year, we saw very clearly God's blessing upon us during the month of February. All the year round—my dear Brothers, the deacons and elders can bear me out in it—there were always cases coming forward who said, "We were decided for Christ during the February meetings." God has always blessed the ministry here. I say it not to boast, but to the glory to God! I do not know of any sermon preached here without conversions. But yet those times of special meeting—those solemn assemblies—have always been a hundred-fold blessed of God, so that we have good reason to say we will continue them with renewed zeal because the Lord is with them.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I must have just a word with you upon another matter, namely, that it should be our endeavor to bring *power* into these special meetings. They are lawful. They are necessary. Let us make

them profitable. The way to do so is to draw near to God as Christ did! When He prayed it was a Son talking to His Father—the Son of God talking with the Father God—and unbosoming His heart in close communion. Come up tomorrow, my Brethren, as sons of God to your Father! Speak to Him as to One who is very near akin to you. There will be no lack of power if such is the case. Jesus drew near to God in His prayer as a priest, the High Priest making intercession for the people. You are all priests and kings unto God if you believe in Christ.

Come with your breastplates on tomorrow! Come that you may intercede before the Throne of God pleading the merit of the precious blood. There will be no flagging if every man puts on his priestly miter. Jesus came before God with a burning zeal for His Father's glory. He could say, "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." Burn and blaze, my Brethren, with love to God! Wait upon Him this afternoon—let that be a special private season of prayer—and ask Him to teach you how to love Him, show you how to reverence Him and fire you with an intense ambition to spread abroad the savor of His name! Jesus Christ drew near to God in prayer with a wondrous love to the souls of men. Those tears of His were not for Himself, but for others! Those sighs and cries were not for His own pangs, but for the sorrows and the sins of men!

Try to feel as Christ did. Get a tender heart, an awakened conscience, quickened sympathies—and then if you come up to the House of God, the Prayer Meetings cannot be dull. Seek to be bathed in the blood of Christ! Go, my Brothers and Sisters, to the wounds of Christ and get life! Get blood for your prayers! Sit down at Golgotha and gaze upon your dying Lord, and hear Him say, "I have loved you, and given Myself for you." Then rise up with this resolve in your soul—

***"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss,"***

and go forward determined in His strength that nothing shall be lacking on your part to win for Him a kingdom, to gain for Him the hearts of the sons of men! If such shall be your state of mind, I am quite sure there will be power with God in prayer.

In closing, I shall say to you, we, above all the Churches of this country, have a special need and a special encouragement to make our prayers things of power. For, in the first place, my Brothers and Sisters, what a multitude we are now! I often wish, though I beg to be pardoned of the Lord for it, that I had never occupied the position that I now fill because of its solemn responsibilities. I tell you, when I feel them, they crush me to the ground and I can only manage to sustain my spirits by endeavoring to cast them upon the Lord. Why, 3,700 of you in Church fellowship, or thereabouts—what can *I* do? Somebody complains that this sick one is not visited, or that that sinning one is not rebuked. How can I do it? How can one man, how can 20 men, how can a hundred men do the work? God knows I would, if I could, cut myself in pieces, that every piece might be active in His service. But how can we rule and minister fully in such a Church as this?

God has supplied my lack of service very wonderfully. Still, there are things that make my heart ache day and night, as well as other matters

that make my soul leap for joy. O pray for this great Church! Where our power utterly fails us, let us implore the Divine power to come in, that all may be kept right. We have *need* to pray, for some have fallen. We have to confess it with a blush that crimson our cheek—some have fallen shamefully. O pray that others may not fall, and that the good men among us may be upheld by the power of God through faith unto salvation! Think, my Brethren, of the agencies which we are employing. If we do not pray for these they will be so much wasted effort!

Every week the sermons preached here are scattered by tens of thousands all over the globe—not in this language only, but in all the languages of Christendom are they read! Pray that God's blessing may rest upon the Word which He has blessed before. Our sons, our young ministers whom this Church has trained at her feet, are now to be counted by hundreds—scattered all over this country and elsewhere. Intercede for them! Forget not your own sons—turn not your hearts away from your own children whom God has sent forth to be heralds of the Cross!

In your Sunday schools, in your tract distributions, in your city missions, in your street preaching, in your offering of spiritual literature, in your orphanage—everywhere—seek to glorify Christ! Do not, I beseech you, forget the one thing needful in all this. Do not be foolish builders who will buy marble and precious stones at great cost, and then forget to lay the cornerstone securely. If it is worth while to serve God, it is worth while to pray that the service may be blessed! Why all this labor and cost? It is but offering to the Lord that which He cannot accept—unless by prayer you sanctify the whole.

I think I see you as a Church standing by the side of your altar with the victims slain. The wood placed in order but there is, as yet, still lacking the fire from on high. O intercede, you Elijahs—men of like passions with us, but yet earnest men, upon whose hearts God has written prayer—intercede mightily! Intercede till at last the fire shall come down from Heaven to consume the sacrifice and to make all go up like a pillar of smoke unto the Most High! I cannot speak unto you as I would. The earnestness of my heart prevents my lips uttering what I feel, but if there are any bonds of love between us—above all, if there are any bonds of love between us and Christ—by His precious blood, by His death-sweat, by His holy life, and by His agonizing death I do beseech you to strive together with us in your prayers that the Spirit of God may rest upon us, and to God shall be the glory. Amen and Amen.

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THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST NO. 3178

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1909,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.”
Luke 3:21, 22.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”
Luke 6:12, 13.

“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.”
Luke 9:28, 29.

“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.”
Matthew 14:23-25.

“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me.”
John 11:41, 42.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.”
Luke 22:31, 32.

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.”
Luke 23:46.

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preach-

er, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spoke like this Man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to *preach*, but we are told that, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior's life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the *preparatory prayers of Christ*—the prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all times—and yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual service—we shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22—"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying," (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faith—about to take up the soldier's life under the great Captain of our salvation—about to start out as pilgrims to Zion's city—I say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is

about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, “the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.” There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore *audible testimony to Christ*. And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christ’s prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Father—and if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your life—you must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, “Behold, he prays,” before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.”

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, “in a bodily shape like a dove,” to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! “Draw near

to God, and He will draw near to you,” not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayer—more power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Savior’s preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication *on our part in similar circumstances*. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayer—and so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirit’s blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13—“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14—SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, “I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them.” He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of God—but being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutes—but His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest

in heart and holy in life—and that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap it—as long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Father’s ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Father’s authority and the Spirit’s power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the session—or an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one another—but when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with God’s blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Savior’s example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination—

***“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”***

When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satan’s long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 dis-

ciples did when they returned to Him with joy, “Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!”

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29—“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” You see that it was *as He prayed that He was transfigured.*

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayer—only there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabor’s top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grass—but when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pastures—and get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Life—but that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORD’S PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25—“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.” He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and

then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of God's blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, "He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a man's hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42—"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me." He did not cry, "Lazarus, come forth," so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until *first* He had prayed, "My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead," and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETER'S FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34—

PETER'S RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34—PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter *before he was tempted*. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mind—and He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may *not* fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

“But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purse-proud.” Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not be—and do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

“Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him.” Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel—we do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgments—and let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him right—go and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts' hearts—and that pens need sharpening every now and then—but even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than

before! Do so, dear Friends—do not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORD'S PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." [See Sermons #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His people's Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, "He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem" and, in due time, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of John's Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayer—an example well worthy of His people's imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physically—you will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourself—body, soul and spirit—into His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumption—pray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordan's swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Cross—and pray even as He did—"Not my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconverted—who have imagined that prayer is the way to Heaven—yet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that *a saved man does is to pray*—and the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write—

***“Prayer is the contrite sinner’s voice,
Returning from his ways
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, ‘Behold, he prays!’
Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air!
His watchword at the gates of death
He enters Heaven with prayer!”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:1-14.**

Verse 1. *And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43—WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] An old writer says that many of Christ’s parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by it—“that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” And this is the parable.

2. *Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man.* It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear God—where they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this land—God grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. *And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.* She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. *And he would not for a while.* He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.

4, 5. *But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.* She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kind—but the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon him—for he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God,

nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted it—and though he was but little troubled about it—he said, “that I may not be worried to death by this woman’s continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary.”

6, 7. *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?* [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6—PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He is no unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose His people from eternity! “Shall not God avenge His own elect?” Yes, that He will—only let them persevere in prayer and “cry day and night unto Him.”

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* [See Sermon #1963, Volume 33—THE SEARCH FOR FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find it—although if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. *And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* It seems as if these two things went together—as our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes down—the scales seem to work that way.

10. *Two men went up into the Temple to pray.* [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41—THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in *these* days—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. *The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.* It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocrite—and if what he said was true—there was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer—but what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Temple—“or even as this publican.” What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in God’s sight!

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off*—Just on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* [See Sermon #1949, Volume 33—A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That was *all* prayer—it was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, “a sinner.” He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publican’s prayer, it is, “God be propitious to me,” that is, “be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice.” And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayer—while the Pharisee’s boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. *I tell you, this man*—This publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee did—this man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, “this man”—

14. *Went down to his house justified rather than the other.* He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justification—he had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46—TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

14. *For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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

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

ZEALOTS

NO. 639

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 16, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Simon called the Zealot.”
Luke 6:15.***

SIMON called the Zealot has apparently two surnames in Scripture but they mean the same thing. He is called Simon the Canaanite in Hebrew—not because he was an inhabitant of Cana or a Canaanite, but that word, when interpreted, means precisely the same as the Greek word, Zelotes. He was called Simon the Zealot. I suppose that he had this name before his conversion. It is thought by some that he was a member of that very fierce and fanatical political sect of the Jews called the Zealots, by whose means the siege of Jerusalem was rendered so much more bloody than it would have been.

But this does not seem very probable, for the sect of the Zealots had scarcely arisen in the time of the Savior. And therefore we are inclined to think with Hackett in his exposition of the Acts, that he was so called because of his zealous attachment to his religion as a Jew. There were some in the different classes of Jewish society who were so excessively full of zeal as to gain the name of zealot. But it strikes me that he must have been a zealot after conversion, too, for within that sacred circle which surrounded our Lord, every word was truth and the Master would not have allowed any of His disciples to have worn a surname which was not expressive or truthful.

He was Simon the Zealot while in the darkness and blindness of his mind he knew not the Messiah. He surely could not have been less Simon the Zealot when, gifted with the Holy Spirit, he went forth to cast out devils, heal the sick and to proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. I should be glad if many among us would earn the same title by so living that men would call us zealots, or even “fanatics,” for this is so sleepy an age concerning religious things, that to be called fanatic, nowadays, is one of the highest honors a man can have conferred upon him! May we so act and live that we might truthfully wear the title of Christian zealots.

We shall occupy your time, this morning first of all by some like description of the *unconverted* zealot and then, secondly, by some few remarks upon the Christian zealot.

I. LET US PORTRAY THE UNCONVERTED ZEALOT. Zeal frequently expends itself on other things than religion. You will find many zealots not religious in any sense of the word. We have seen lately a few political zealots. The one important matter of their lives is the defense of the Whig or the Tory interest. It appears as if they would sacrifice their business, no, in their furor they think everything a trifle so long as they can but vindicate some favorite opinion. Such was Saul, the king of Israel. He was such a zealot for Israel and for Judah that in his zeal he slew the Gibeonites.

He was politically a zealot. He thought that the Gibeonites, being in the land, ate the bread which belonged to the sons of Israel and occupied the cities which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. Therefore, violating all covenants and solemn oaths—and bringing upon the nation a great judgment—he slew the Gibeonites. Many are *scientific* zealots. They will sacrifice health in sitting over mixtures of deleterious drugs to examine chemical combinations. Or they will pass through feverish countries among savage men to discover the source of a river, or measure the height of a mountain.

We can readily find *business* zealots—their shop windows scarcely need shutters, for business is never over. Sunday itself is not enclosed for worship. They steal that day for keeping their books. They make haste to be rich and they are not innocent. They plunge into this speculation and the other. They often bring their bodies to sickness and their minds to madness in their zeal for riches. You do not find that the world cries out against zeal in business and in science and in politics!

No, men can admire it *there*, but the moment you bring it into the court of the Lord's House, then straightway they hold up their hands with astonishment, or open their mouths with blasphemy! Men cannot endure that we should make *eternal* things *real* and spend our strength for them. They would have us reserve our energies for the matters in which *they* take so deep an interest. Brethren, we would not condemn the use of zeal in the common affairs of life, for zeal is essential to success. We only wish that Christians would copy worldly men and be half as earnest and half as ambitious to maintain and increase the kingdom of their Lord and Master as some men are after petty trifles or selfish aggrandizements.

Understand, then, that a man may be a zealot and yet there may not be a trace of religion in him for his zeal may run in quite a different channel. The unconverted zealot, should his zeal expend itself upon religion, is generally exceedingly boastful. Look at Jehu, as he bids Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, ride with him in his chariot vain-gloriously exclaiming, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." He cannot kill the worshippers of Baal without someone standing by to admire how he devotes himself entirely to Jehovah. Unconverted men, when full of zeal, are almost all

Jehus. They must have some admiring eyes. The clap of approbation is essential to the life and vigor of their earnestness.

Not so the true Christian! He is as zealous for his Master when he stands alone or in the midst of derision as in the time when religion is honorable. Let us take care to ever avoid all boastfulness! Let us serve our Master as Jehu did and better than he, but let us never say, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord."

As you travel over the mountains and become thirsty you look for the cooling stream. But the traveler who has often passed the hills never stoops to drink of the little streamlets which run uncovered down the mountain side—he knows that their exposure to the heat of the sun has warmed the water and taken away its grateful freshness and coolness! He looks for the trickling rill which gushes fresh from the rock or bubbles up as a spring, or has found its way under the moss and great stones all hidden from the light. He loves to satisfy himself there!

It is thus with our gifts and graces. If we expose them to public view they lose their acceptability with the Most High God. But if we keep ourselves as much as possible from all ostentation and seek to serve God humbly and quietly, Jehovah Himself finds delight in the gracious works of His own beloved people. May the Lord keep us, then, from being boastful zealots! The unconverted zealot is generally an ignorant zealot. "I bear them witness," says Paul, "that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

The Pharisees were very fanatical. They were ignorant of God's righteousness and they went about to establish their own. They had not learned the feebleness of the principle of the Law, and therefore they struggled on and on to attain eternal life by it. They did not know the force and strength of the great principle of Divine Grace working through faith and therefore they neglected it—and with all their struggling they came short of the kingdom of Heaven. Let us beware of an ignorant zeal. How much there is of it nowadays. Probably there is more zeal to be found among the professors of false doctrine than among the followers of the Truth!

How they will garnish their churches as of old the Pharisees garnished their sepulchers! How diligently will they bedeck their altars and load them with ornaments and millinery! To what an extent of effort do they go! What asceticism will they practice! What infamy, what abuse are they not willing to endure in defending the cause of their idols and bringing back again the old superstitions of Rome! If those who are orthodox had as much zeal as the Papist and the Puseyite, it would be well for England. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, shun an ignorant zeal! And at the same time labor to blend zeal with your knowledge lest your knowledge, lacking force, should cease to be operative in the land!

Let it be forever remembered that if we are ever so zealous in a wrong faith, that zeal does not make the false true nor make us right in its prosecution. I may drink poison, devoutly believing it will do me good, but it will poison me, no matter what I believe! And so I may believe a lie ever so earnestly, but it will be a lie nevertheless and the poison of the lie will work my soul's ruin just as surely as if I had not been so fervent in its belief.

Do not believe in the idea that every man who is sincere in his religion will be right at last. Not so. If a man is sincere and travels due North he will not reach a town in the South—and if he spurs his horse ever so much towards the East, he will not arrive at his destination, if that destination is a city in the West. Seek to be right. Get an understanding of the Truth as God has revealed it—otherwise all your zeal will be but wildfire which will do mischief rather than good. The zeal of unconverted men is generally partial. It may be a zeal for something good, but not for *everything* that is good.

How zealous the Pharisee was for frequent ablutions—he would not eat bread, if ever so hungry—till he had washed his hands. How excessively zealous he was to tithe the mint—it did not come to three farthings in a year—and the anise and the cummin—all these little matters must be attended to! I think I see the man looking earnestly while he strains at the gnat! How he shudders lest by any means that horrid and monstrous insect should get into his wine! If it should possibly go down his throat, what pollution he would incur!

But mark the hypocrite as he turns his head the other way and he swallows a camel in the twinkling of an eye! While he can pay his mint and his anise and his cummin in full tithe, he can at the same time devour a widow's house and cry out against the Lord of Life and Glory and plot and plan against the Savior till he has dragged Him to the Cross! This is the unconverted zealot! Zealous he is for sect and party when the whole that the sect may hold is not of more value than the gnat and yet great fundamental doctrinal Truths of God are forgotten, as though they were of no value whatever. Brethren, may we be earnest men of God, but I pray that we may be zealous for all the Truth of God!

We must count no Truth of God to be despicable, but take the whole Word of God as far as the Spirit of God shall reveal it unto us and stand up for it in its entirety and completeness—and not be willing that the very least of Christ's Commandments should be neglected or despised. The zealot, again, while unconverted, is generally, (if it is in his power), a persecutor. "Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church." Paul verily thought that he was doing God a service when he drove men and women to prison and to death. And I doubt not there are many in this age most sincere zealots, who, if they would not quite delight in the sweet sacrifices of

Smithfield, would, at any rate, like to pass a few repressive laws to put down “those wicked Dissenters” and ordain one or two salutary penalties by which “those quarrelsome Baptists” might have their tongues clipped a little shorter—that they might not speak out quite so plainly concerning the infamies of the State Church!

Doubtless there is a tendency with us all to wish to impose our own opinions upon others by all available means. The exaggeration of anxiety for our fellow men would lead us to adopt wrong means to make them of a right opinion! We forget that men’s consciences and judgments are never touched by such rude or vulgar means as threats or penalties. We should always feel that consciences and hearts are under the jurisdiction of the Most High and in no sense whatever are they to be brought under the jurisdiction of Pope or potentate, or of any of us, no matter how orthodox we may conceive ourselves to be. Strive earnestly for your faith, but strive *lawfully*. Contend zealously for the Truth, but let the only fire you use be *love* and the only sword the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

But zealots without Grace are generally persecutors. Without Divine Grace zealots are very bitter towards their professed Brethren. We read in the Epistle of the Apostle James of some who were full of strife and envy and were yet members of the Church. From such zeal may the Lord of Hosts deliver us! Our Brethren in the fellowship with us are not to be convinced of their errors by being knocked on the head, but by having the candle held to their eyes. If we can teach them the Truth as it is in Jesus, it shall be well. But as for carnal contention and persecution—let it be far from us.

This picture of the zealot without Christ is not complete unless we remark that often his aims are sinister. We read of some in the Epistle to the Corinthians who did zealously affect the Corinthians, but not well, for they slandered the Apostle Paul. They denied his Apostleship. They said that his bodily presence was weak and his speech was contemptible. And yet they appeared very zealous, indeed—far more zealous than Paul—because they wanted to alienate the mind of the Corinthian Church from the Apostle and get themselves to be made masters in God’s heritage. Let us beware of a zeal for lifting up ourselves.

Brethren, if we preach Christ with a view to get ourselves honored by it we prostitute the sacred things of God and are guilty of that very sin which was accursed in Belshazzar, when he took the golden cups of the sanctuary to drink in them to his own delight. Zeal must be pure. It may be fire, but it must be fire from off the altar or else if we minister with any other fire, like Nadab and Abihu, we may be slain before the Lord. O that we would search our heart so as to be quite sure that we have no aim in all the world but Christ—“God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

You may shoot well, you brave archers, but if you aim at the wrong target you will not win the prize. If you aim at anything but your Lord's honor you shall never hear it said, "Well done, good and faithful servant." To close this very sorry account of the unconverted zealot—he is generally but *temporary* in his zeal. If the zeal is good, it dies out before long. The Apostle Paul says, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." Some of you are mightily zealous at a Prayer Meeting and grow intensely warm-hearted after a season of revival—you are consecrated to God most marvelously for a month or two! You live consistently for a few weeks—you are diligent in the use of the means of Grace for a short time.

And then—well, you have had enough of it, I suppose, and you think enough to be as good as a feast and so you would have done with heavenly things—the wind blows from another quarter and therefore, like the weathercock, you are turned by it in another way. Some of you would go to Heaven, but you get plucked by the sleeve Hell-wards and cannot bear a hard pull—and so you turn away from Christ. One would think when you are sick that you were ripe for Heaven, but when you get well, ah, how different! "When he was sick," says an old legend, "the devil a monk would be," but when he got well you know how he gave up his fine intentions.

There are many now of the same sort. For a time they threaten to take the kingdom by storm! They censoriously rebuke the coldness of others. They vow to conquer Hell and enter Heaven, pushing the world before them and dragging the Church after them! But in a short time where are they? They have relapsed into their former lethargy, or perhaps they have taken their zeal with them into the camp of the adversary. Such is the unconverted zealot.

Suffer two or three more words before we leave him. There is much about him to imitate. Unconverted as he is, mischievous as his zeal may be—if we could pluck that sword out of his hand—of how great a use might it be to us! If sinners are zealous in their sins, should not saints be zealous for their God? If the things of time can stir the human passions, should not the realities of *eternity* have a greater and more tremendously moving force? If these men will spend and be spent, and stretch every nerve and run the race merely for the crown of politics or of ambition, where are we? What idlers, what laggards we are that we pursue the things of God with but half a heart!—

***"Dear Lord and shall we always live
At this poor dying rate?"***

Bear this other word, also, namely that we ought to look upon these zealots with hopefulness. When a man serves Baal thoroughly, it is a great pity and a thing to be deplored. But I think he is a man worth catching and to be sought after. We know a sort of people who will never make

much at anything. They are not very forward in sin. The devil himself cannot respect them much, they are such poor servants to him. If they ever become Christians, into the rear rank they must go. They need to be pressed forward and receive from the strength of the Church, for they can never impart power to it.

But when you get a man who is vigorous in the cause of Satan and when Sovereign Grace brings him down—what a trophy he becomes of its power and how gloriously he contends for the Gospel of Christ! Look at Saul of Tarsus! No man more zealous against the Gospel than he, and he is second to none when he becomes a preacher of the Word! Look at John Bunyan on the village green—never second, always the leader! Whether it was the game of cat on Sunday, or ringing the Church bells, or blasphemy—he was a prince in the devil’s camp! And when he became a Christian there was none like John Bunyan in thundering out the Law, or preaching—fearless of pains and penalties—the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Master Bunyan says in his “Grace Abounding” that he was very hopeful for England because the young men of his age were so very bad, since if God would convert them, they would make such good Christians by-and-by. And I feel a little of his mind—when I see a man come in here who is known to be a down-right sinner, I hope he may make an upright saint. Some have come in here who have been ringleaders and have exceeded others in their sin, but instead of saying, “Their case is hopeless,” I have thought—now let us pray with might and main that Sovereign Grace may overcome his sin—who knows what he may be able to accomplish for the Church if he is converted?

II. Now for a more pleasing picture, namely, THE TRUE CHRISTIAN ZEALOT—how his zeal manifests itself, how it is kept up, and what is to be said in commendation of it. The Christian zealot—how his zeal manifests itself! First, it manifests itself in his private dealings with God. The unconverted zealot is a hypocrite—he does not come to God in private. He may use a form of private prayer, but he has no true communion with God alone. The unconverted zealot has a religion on the surface, but there is no Divine Grace within.

How different is it with the Christian! That is a remarkable passage in the Revelation where zeal is coupled with repentance. “Be zealous, therefore, and repent.” I may take this as an indication that when a true Christian is zealous he is zealous in repentance—his tears come welling up from his heart! Sin is not a *little* distasteful, but is *exceedingly* disgusting to him. His faith, too, is not merely a trembling recognition of the Truth of God, but it is a firm grasp of everlasting verities. The Christian zealot, when he is alone with God, throws his whole heart into his service. What-

ever may be the Grace which is in exercise, he seeks to have it thoroughly and actively at work.

If his heart is given to God, it is a heart full of holy fire, like a sacred censer. If he devotes himself in private to any hallowed deed of fellowship or communion with God, his heart wanders not—or if it wanders, he contends with it until he has bound it with cords—even with cords to the horns of the altar! Brothers and Sisters, I wish you and I were more zealous! Alas, I have to complain of myself that when I try to pray, full often I cannot. When I would do good in the closet, evil is present with me. I wish I had power to walk with God as Enoch did, but the cares of the Church, let alone the vanities of life, will creep in and the soul comes out of the closet unrefreshed, very much because it has had no zeal in its closet exercises.

The true Christian zealot seeks, above all things, to make his private religion intensely energetic, knowing that it is the vital point of godliness. The Christian zealot may be recognized very manifestly by his prayers. Hear his utterances in the Prayer Meeting. It is no repetition of a set of sacred phrases, no going over the metaphors which have become time-worn and tedious—he prays like a man who means it—he comes up to Heaven’s gate, grasps the knocker and knocks and knocks and knocks again, waiting until the door is opened! He gets hold of the gates of Heaven and labors to shake them to and fro as though he would pull them up—bolts and bars and all, as Samson did the gates of Gaza—rather than not prevail with God.

These men, like Elijah, have power to shut up Heaven or to open its gates. Oh, that we had more of such in our midst! We have a few who, as soon as they stand up to pray, fire our hearts by their earnestness—may they be multiplied! The like is true, of course, of the *private* prayers of the Christian as well as of his public ones. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we need more resolve when we go before God that we will have the blessing! We need more determination that we are asking what is according to His mind and we will take no denial, but will say to the angel, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” Christians, seek to be zealots in prayer—pouring out your hearts like water before the Lord and crying out with sighs and tears till, like your Master, you have been heard in that which you have petitioned.

But the zealot does not stop here. The Christian zealot is manifested in his jealousy for God’s honor. The word jealous in its sound and sense is akin to the word zealous. Hear how Elijah uses it. He says, “I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts.” He saw Baal worshipped everywhere throughout Israel and his heart was ready to break. So the stern old man said, “Let me die—I am no better than my fathers.” How sternly he slew Baal’s priests! What a spectacle was that when, after having

mocked them because no fire came on their sacrifice, he stretched out his hands and cried, "Let it be known who is God"! And when the flame had come and his own sacrifice had been consumed, he said with a rough voice, "Take the Prophets of Baal. Let not one of them escape."

Here was zeal for the Lord of Hosts springing from an awful overwhelming jealousy for God's honor and a hatred of the idols which usurped His Throne. See the same in Moses. With holy jealousy he dashes the tablets of stone upon the ground, takes the golden calf, grinds it to powder and makes a rebellious people drink of the bitter draught. Look at Phineas, again, when he saw the people committing adultery as a part of the unclean rites with which they worshipped the gods of Moab! He seized a javelin and ran them through—and so it is said the zeal of Phineas made an atonement before the Lord.

We want something of that kind—a zeal for God which will smite all error with a ruthless hand! The iconoclastic zeal which will break to pieces images of silver and of gold, however prettily they may be cast or engraved—which will tear down the toys of Popery and tread the whole in the mire as things worse than worthless because they come in the way of the Lord God of Hosts. Away with the softness which will not let some of my brethren denounce an error lest they should violate charity! The velvet in their mouths prevents their dealing with Antichrist as it ought to be dealt with. The day is come in which the Romish and Anglican Antichrists are to have no tender words used towards them!

It must be war to the knife for God and for His Truth against the lie which in modern times has impudence enough to show its face again—I mean the lie that the sacrament can save—that Baptism can regenerate, or that the Lord's Supper is a channel of salvation! Up with Divine Grace and down with Sacramentarianism! Up with the Truths of God forever and down with falsehood! A man is no zealot and cannot be called Zelotes unless he has a holy jealousy for the honor of Christ and His crown and His Truth!

Nor is this all. True zeal will show itself in the abundance of a man's labors and gifts. Paul commends the zeal of the Corinthians because they were always ready to minister to his necessities. He says, "Concerning the ministering of the saints, you have no need that I speak unto you." Zeal labors for Christ. My Brethren, if you want a picture of zeal, take the Apostle. How he compasses sea and land! Storms cannot stop him! Mountains cannot impede his progress! He is beaten with rods, he is stoned—he is cast into prison—but the invincible hero of the Cross presses on in the holy war until he is taken up to receive a crown of glory! We do little or nothing, the most of us—we fritter away our time. O that we could live while we live!

But our existence—that is all we can call it—our existence, what a poor thing it is! We run like shallow streams—we have not force enough to turn the mill of industry and have not depth enough to bear the vessel of progress! We have not flood enough to cheer the mends of poverty. We are dry too often in the summer's drought and we are frozen in the winter's cold. O that we might become broad and deep like the mighty stream that bears a navy and gladdens a nation! O that we may become inexhaustible and permanent rivers of usefulness through the abundant springs from where our supply comes—even the Spirit of the living God!

The Christian zealot may be known by the anguish which his soul feels when his labors for Christ are not successful—the tears that channel his cheeks when sinners are not saved! Do not tell me of zeal that only moves the tongue, or the foot, or the hand! We must have a zeal which moves the whole *heart*! We cannot advance so far as the Savior's bloody sweat—but to something like it the Christian ought to attain when he sees the tremendous clouds of sin and the tempest of God's gathering wrath! How can I see souls damned, without emotion? How can I hear Christ's name blasphemed, without a shudder? How can I think of the multitudes who prefer ruin to salvation, without a pang?

Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, if you never have sleepless hours, if you never have weeping eyes, if your hearts never swell as if they would burst, you need not anticipate that you will be called zealous! You do not know the beginning of true zeal, for the foundation of Christian zeal lies in the heart. The heart must be heavy with grief and yet must beat high with holy ardor! The heart must be vehement in desire, panting continually for God's Glory, or else we shall never attain to anything like the zeal which God would have us know.

And to close this point of how zeal manifests itself, let me say that it is always seen, where it is genuine, in a vehement love and attachment to the Person of the Savior. This is why we have not more zeal—because often the Christ preached is not a *personal* Christ. Have not I frequently said in this pulpit that nothing can make a man zealous like attachment to a person? When Napoleon's soldiers won so many victories, and especially in the earlier part of his career, when against such deadly odds they earned such splendid triumphs, what was the reason?

The "little corporal" was there, and whenever it came to a desperate rush he was the first to cross the bridge or charge the enemy, always exposing himself to danger. And their attachment to his person and their love and admiration of his valor made them follow at his heels, swift to victory! Have not we heard of those who threw themselves in the way of the cannon ball to save his life? There could not have been such triumphs if there had not been a man who knew how to govern men by attaching them to himself.

And oh, the Person of the Savior! What attachment can there be equal to that which binds a Christian to his Lord? What person can there ever be out of whose lips come such golden chains to bind all hearts? When we see Him our hearts glow with sacred fervor! When we think of Him our soul is all on fire! What can we not do in His Presence? What will we not suffer when He cheers us? There are no impossibilities—no, even difficulties have ceased to be when Jesus Christ shall come and our hearts are full of love to Him! It is a constant and unfailing sign of a true zealot that his attachment to his Master's Person is deep and fervent and he cannot forget Him who redeemed him by blood.

This brings us now, in the next place, to think awhile of how this zeal is maintained and kept up. To keep up a good fire of zeal we must have much fuel. The fire will partake of the quality of the fuel so that it must be good firing to make holy zeal. If I understand aright, zeal is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and genuine zeal draws its life and vital force from the continued operations of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Next to this, zeal feeds upon truths like these—it is stirred by the ruin of sinners. The very sight of sinners makes a right-hearted man zealous for their conversion.

Ride mile after mile through our streets. Turn down the narrower streets, enter the courts, go down the alleys—do not be disgusted with those tumbling houses—go in and go upstairs! See how many there are in one room. Mark what poverty, what squalor, what filth! Go into certain quarters and see what ignorance, what crime! I think the city missionary has constantly before him enough to keep his zeal at fever heat and if we, ourselves, went more often into some of the lowest dens of this huge city we should go back to our closets, crying, “Gracious God! I have not thought of these people as I ought to do, for instead of being up and doing with all my might, I have been trifling and wasting my time.”

Well, but what is London? This *nation* of London—what is it? It is only a drop in the bucket compared with the millions that are still in darkness. Let any man think upon Hindustan. Let him reflect, if he will, upon China. Let him take any one country and consider that there is not a missionary to a million in many of those places and that the missionaries who are there might, many of them, as well have been at home—for they are missionaries who Christianize people by baptizing them and know little about the Spirit's work upon the soul!

What is said about many of the converts made by mere ritual preaching and by baptismal ceremonies? Why it is well known that in some parts of heathendom the worst scoundrels are the nominal Christians—the reason being because they were not made Christians by being *converted*—but by being *baptized* and so an indelible dishonor is put upon Christ by carrying on missionary operations on the principle of baptizing people who are not Christians and labeling them the people of Christ while in their hearts

they are more deceitful than the heathen themselves! We must think only of the need there is for a sound, honest preaching of the Gospel—the preaching of the doctrines which really do change the soul—and the coming down of the Holy Spirit to deal personally with individuals.

All wholesale conversion of tribes and nations by calling them Christians when they are merely *civilized* is an evil and an abomination! The needs of the age are enough, if a man has any sense of what eternal realities are, to make us zealous—zealous to the highest pitch. And next, Christian zeal feeds itself upon a sense of *gratitude*—

**“Loved of my God, for Him again,
With love intense I burn,
Chosen of Him before time began,
I choose Him in return.”**

Look to the hole of the pit from where you were dug and you will see abundant reason why you should spend and be spent for God! Zeal for God feeds itself upon the thought of the eternal future. It looks with tearful eyes down to the flames of Hell and it cannot slumber—it looks up with anxious gaze to the glories of Heaven and it cannot but bestir itself. Zeal for God thinks of death and hears the hoofs of the white horse with the skeleton rider close behind. Zeal for God feels that all it can do is little compared with what is needed, and that time is short compared with the work to be done—and therefore it devotes all that it has to the cause of its Lord.

Above all, zeal for God feeds itself on love to Christ. Lady Powerscourt says somewhere, “If we want to be thoroughly hot with zeal, we must go near to the furnace of the Savior’s love.” Get to know how Christ loved you and you cannot but love Him! Do but know how He was spit upon and despised and how He bled and died for us and we cannot but feel that we can do and bear all things for His name’s sake. Above all, Christian zeal must be sustained by a vigorous inner life. If we let our inner life dwindle, if it begins to be dwarfish—if our heart beats slowly before God—we shall not know zeal! But if all is strong and vigorous within, then we cannot but feel a loving anxiety to see the kingdom of Christ come and His will done on earth, even as it is in Heaven.

I have to close by commending zeal. Let my words be few, but let them be weighty here. In commending zeal, let me say I think it should commend itself to every Christian man and woman without a word of mine. But if you must have it, remember that God Himself is zealous. We read that when Christ comes as the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, then the government is to be upon His shoulders and of His kingdom there is to be no end. But Scripture adds, “The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.”

God has been zealous in judgment. Ezekiel tells us that God was zealous when He came forth to destroy His foes, but oh, how zealous He is in

Divine Grace! It is a wonderful thing that we should use such language, but the Scripture is our warrant! When God puts His hands to the work of saving the elect He is filled with zeal! There is no slumber, no lack of diligence with God in the work of conversion and saving! For Zion's sake He never rests! Nor will He rest till Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. God is earnest, God is zealous! Children of God, be imitators of Him!

Christ was zealous. We read of Him that the zeal of God's House had eaten Him up and when He took the scourge of small cords and purged the temple, John tells us that it was written of Him, "The zeal of Your House has eaten Me up." A Prophet tells us that He was clothed with zeal as with a cloak. He had not zeal over a *part* of Him, but was clothed with it as with some great cloak covering Him from head to foot. Christ was all zeal. "Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" is one of His utterances, while yet a *Child*. And from the very first to the last it was His meat and His drink to do His Father's will.

At what a rate He drove! How swift the chariot wheels of duty went with Him till the axles grew hot with speed! Brethren, you have Christ for an example. Does not this suffice you? Surely I can only *descend* in argument, but not *ascend*—see the holy angels who are to be your blessed companions—are they not flames of fire? Are they not called seraphs because they fly like flames upon their Master's errands? Be not slow where angels are like flashes of lightning if we would see any success come to the Church—and I know that is dear to us! If we would see souls converted—and I know it is the object of our daily prayers! If we would hear the cry that "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ"—and I know that this is our passionate desire!

If you would see crowns put upon the head of the Savior and His Throne lifted high—and I know this is your great ambition! If you would see Jehovah, your Father, glorified even to the ends of the earth—then be filled with zeal! Under God, the way of the world's conversion must be by the zeal of the Church. Simon the Zealot must lead the van. The rest may follow in their places—knowledge, patience, courage, prudence, every grace shall do exploits—but this shall be first, this shall bear the standard high! Zeal for God, zeal for His Truth—this shall be in the van, and may you stand side by side with the most zealous in the day of conflict, that you may be there in the hour of victory.

I cannot, this morning, address you as I would desire, for I cannot feel my own zeal to be what I would have it be. O for the zeal of Wesley and Whitfield! The zeal of men who were always preaching or praying, men who seemed as if they knew no weariness, or shook it off as dust from off their feet! Oh, to have the zeal of apostolic times again, when the very least among you should be ready to be martyrs for Christ if need be! And

when all of you should testify of Him, wherever you were called to go. Oh for more zeal in the household, that you might seek more anxiously the conversion of your children! More zeal in the workshop, that you might communicate to your fellow workmen the spirit which actuates and moves you!

Oh for more zeal in the Church and Church Meetings and Prayer Meetings, that everything might be done with spirit! Above all, oh, for more zeal in the pulpit! Holy fire come down! We have the wood, we have the altar, we have the sacrifice—but we need the fire! Have you not remarked, Brothers and Sisters, how much a man may do who is clothed with zeal? Some of our Brethren in the ministry to whom we have listened have stirred our passions, have made our blood boil after a sacred fashion and yet their talents have been very few and we felt while they were speaking that they made better use of one talent than some have made of ten.

Believe me, it is not the extent of your knowledge, though that is useful. It is not the extent of your talent or tact, though these have their place. It is your zeal—your ZEAL that shall perform God's work! May I entreat you, as members of this Church, not to let your zeal die out. What Prayer Meetings we have had! Shall we ever forget Park Street—those Prayer Meetings when I felt compelled to let you go without a word from my lips because the Spirit of God was so awfully present that we felt bowed to the dust—and any language of mine would have been a mere impertinence?

What zeal you have had! Some of you have sought for the conversion of souls. When I look upon some of you I know you are spiritual mothers and fathers in Israel—not to ones or twos, but scores! Shall your zeal relax? We have, by God's Grace, lived to see many of our enemies clothed with shame. We have preached the Word till that Word begins to tell and make the solid rocks of error shake. Will you draw back? Will you lose your force? Will you slacken in prayer? Will you refuse to receive the blessing which awaits you? Will you take your heads from the crown when it is ready to descend? I pray you do not so! Let us be banded together as one man! Let us contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints! Let us pray with fervor! Let us live in holiness! Let us preach constantly and preach with fire! And let us so live that we may impress our age and leave our footprints on the sands of time.

As for some of you who never were zealous—who are the fathers of no spiritual children. As for some of you—whose religion gets into a very narrow compass and is good for very little when it gets there—I pray you bestir yourselves. If your religion is a lie, do not profess it! If it is a farce, do not enslave yourselves to it!

But if there is anything in religion, it is worth everything! It cannot sit second at the table—it must have the first place. The Christian man is to be, first of all, a Christian man! Next to that a tradesman or what you

will—but first of all a Christian man. The first thing with the Believer is his Lord. Christ will be nowhere if He is not first and chief and that religion is vain and void which does not fill the soul and take up the throne of the heart.

May God allow us, then, to wear the character, if not the name of Simon the Zealot, and then we will wait at His footstool and serve Him after such sort as He shall help us to do and His shall be all the praise. But, ah, we must be converted first! So let the sinner remember that his first business is with *this* text—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”—that is, trust Jesus, for it is written, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” God grant you Divine Grace to trust Christ and then to be zealous for Him. Amen.

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NO. 1584

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY-MORNING, FEBRUARY 20, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For if you love them which love you, what credit is that to you?
For sinners also love those that love them. And if you
do good to them which do good to you, what credit
is that to you? For sinners also do even the
same. And if you lend to them of whom
you hope to receive, what credit
is that to you? For sinners also
lend to sinners, to receive as much again.”*
Luke 6:32-34.

BRETHREN in Christ, every Word which proceeds out of our Master's lips is precious to us. We make no distinction between His promises and His precepts, but prize every syllable above rubies. A doctrine from Him we value beyond the much fine gold and a command is equally high in our esteem. Whether His teaching is practical or doctrinal, whether it is intended to guide the feet or to encourage the heart, we are equally rejoiced at it—

*“All His words are music, though they make us weep;
Infinitely tender, infinitely deep.”*

All the discourses of Jesus are the Words of God to our soul, whether they convey to us instruction, warning, rebuke, invitation or consolation. As all His garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia, so are all His words most sweet to our taste. We have not so learned Christ as to be pickers and choosers when the fruits of His lips are before us. Yet I have known professors of that sort, who would gladly tear the Master's vesture that they might have only the softest part of it to be a pillow for their idle heads.

“That,” they say, “was a Gospel sermon, sweet food for our souls,” because it happened to tell of what Christ has *done* for us. But on the next occasion they cry out, “That was not a Gospel sermon! It was legal! It laid a burden upon our shoulders,” because it dared to tell of what Christ has commanded us to *do* for Him. Those men, it seems to me, accept Christ for a servant rather than for a Master! They are glad that He shall do this or that for them—that He shall, in fact, gird Himself and wait at their table while they sit down to meat. But if they had learned better, they would have chosen Christ for a Master and would have been willing to gird themselves at *His* command and wait on their Lord, counting it their honor to be servants of so Divine a Prince!

Feeling certain that you are not of that order of religious cavilers, but that you will accept anything that comes from Christ, I am glad to have a practical subject this morning. The Sermon on the Mount is as full of the Light of God to you as the Transfiguration on the Mount. You are as glad to hear what the Son of God has to say by way of precept as to hear what the Father had to say by way of recognition of His Son. As for this sermon

in the plain, it was preceded by miracles, but it is as forcible to you as the signs and wonders could have made it had you seen them all! The sick touched His garment and were restored and those who were possessed of devils were healed—you rejoice at the miracles of Christ, but you see Him to be as mighty in word as in deed—and you adore Him for His gracious teachings which remain to us after His miracles have ceased.

Here you have certain of the Words of Christ and may His Spirit bless them to your hearts. Brothers and Sisters, in the matters of which I shall have to speak this morning in the name of the Lord, taken, as I am quite certain, from His own Words, there will be some things strange and unusual which may possibly sound harshly in your ears. Be not astonished, for the Gospel is one of those thoughts of God which is not our thought—the whole system which Christ has ushered in is foreign to men, being as far above them as the heavens are above the earth! Our Lord's Kingdom is not of this world, otherwise His servants would do many things which now they forbear to do. The conduct of the subjects of that Kingdom must not be measured by the manners of others, for they are a people as peculiar as the Kingdom to which they belong.

We have heard persons say, "I do not see it to be my duty to be so precise; it is not customary." What have you and I to do with *custom*? If things are right, but not in fashion, let us start the fashion! And when it is the fashion to do wrong, let us be desperately unfashionable! Our Master, evidently, from the verses before us, did not come into the world to teach us to conform to the ways of our fellow men! He would have us go far beyond the ordinary conduct of our fellows. He asked in His Sermon on the Mount, "What do you more than others?" He ordains a standard far above the common standard of mankind when He says, again and again, "What credit is that to you? For sinners also do even the same."

"Oh," one may say at the close of my sermon, "the preacher demands more of us than can reasonably be expected from flesh and blood." Your charge is correct! But then, the preacher is not addressing himself to you as to flesh and blood, but as to those who are possessed of a far higher principle, namely, the indwelling Spirit of God! True Believers walk not after the flesh, nor do they mind the things of it, for they are clothed with the energy of the Spirit of God and by His power their lives are lifted above the common walks of men. If it is so that the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are of another nature than the men of this world—and it is to be *expected* that you should live after a nobler fashion.

What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness? We live under a spirit whose Law is perfection and, therefore, a little fault causes us much self-condemnation. We judge ourselves by a severer rule than we would apply to others, for our privileges and responsibilities are exceptionally great. I allow in other men what I would denounce in myself. I could approve in some men actions which, to me, also, would be lawful but would not be expedient upon the higher rule of glorifying God in all things! When I have heard of certain deeds of unconverted and unenlightened men, I have excused them, saying, "Poor souls, considering who they are and where they are, their conduct is not so heavily

to be blamed.” And yet if I had behaved one half as badly, there would have been rebellion and presumption in the deed!

For favored children there is a different law from that which governs common subjects. That which is passed over in strangers is atrocious when it comes from a bosom friend. You are not under Law, but under Grace and, being under Grace, you feel the force of a constraint even holier and higher than mere Law could put upon you. If you are what you profess to be, my Brothers and Sisters, more is expected from you than from any other men beneath the sun and, therefore, I shall throw aside all hesitancy in setting before you a supreme standard and asking of you what we never can get from sinners, nor from men of the world. Know you not that your Lord has said, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the Kingdom of Heaven”?

If I were called to address an ordinary company of men and women upon feats of valor, I might speak with bated breath if I exhorted them to heroism in war. But if I had lived some thousands of years ago and had been called upon to talk to Spartan warriors all equipped for battle—men engraved and scored with the scars of conflict—I should set no bounds to my exhortations! I would bestir them as a lion arouses the young lions and urges them to the prey. I should tell them that their name and parentage should not be disgraced by the idea of defeat, but that they must *expect* victory and seize it as their right! No orator would have spoken to Spartans as to Baeotians—it was their very life and business to fight—and deeds of prowess were, therefore, to be expected of them.

Is it not so with you, you followers of the Crucified? Your martyrs and confessors call upon you to lead a life beyond that of common men. I say all this because to certain of you a sort of apology may seem necessary for the strong things that may be said before you at this time. May God’s Holy Spirit come upon you and make you strong enough for all the strong things, glorifying Himself in your weakness!

I. Our first observation in plunging into our discourse is this. MUCH THAT IS NATURALLY GOOD MAY FALL FAR SHORT OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. Do not make the mistake of saying that moral excellence is not good. Some have broadly declared that there is no good thing in an unconverted man, but this is scarcely true. It will generally be so understood that its meaning will be false and this is a great pit—we must not utter falsehoods in order to honor God. There is a great deal of good—good under certain senses and aspects of the term, “good”—in many unconverted people. Many who are total strangers to the Grace of God exhibit sparkling forms of the human virtues in integrity, generosity, kindness, courage, self-sacrifice and patience.

I could wish that some who call themselves Christians were, in certain respects, as good as others whom I know of who have never borne the Christian name! It is always right to speak the truth and truth obliges me to say as much as this. This ought to make professors very seriously in earnest to judge themselves lest they should mistake *natural* amiability and morality for the fruit of the Spirit of God. If the question is whether our character is the offspring of Nature or of Grace, it will be a sad thing if

the verdict should turn out to be that it is the dead child of Nature finely dressed, but not the living child of Divine Grace!

We may be decorated with gems which glitter and glow and yet they may be mere paste and none of them the work of God's Spirit. We may be adorned from head to foot with that which is lovely and of good repute, but, for all that, we may come short of what God requires of us because inwardly our heart is not in accordance with our outward array. The platter is clean, it could not be cleaner—but while the filth remains *within*—it cannot be acceptable with God. Observe the three things mentioned in the text against which there is no law, but of which much is to be spoken in commendation. These acts are good, but they do not come up to Christ's standard.

The first is, "If you love them which love you." It is very proper and seemly that kindly feelings should awaken kindly feelings in return. To those who are friendly to us, we should also be friendly. We say, "Love begets love," and it is natural that it should do so. Yet I am sorry to say that though this is no more than a *natural* excellence, it is not, by any means, so common as to be universal. There are children who do *not* love parents who toiled and slaved for them in their childhood—they grow up to exhibit a strange hardness of heart to the authors of their existence. I know brothers who do not love the most affectionate and amiable of sisters and it is grievous to have to add that there are many husbands, brutal husbands, who do not love their wives who are sacrificing their lives out of love to them and their little ones.

I blush to think of the many instances which I could quote, but there is no need—you know it is so! Thousands have never reached so high as this standard, "If you love them which love you." But even if we reach as high as that, it is by no means a great attainment, is it? Our Lord says that sinners also love those that love them. Divine Grace is not needed to make a man the loving husband of a tender wife! Divine Grace is not needed to make affectionate sons and daughters—we see them all around us! I am sure it does not require Grace in the hearts of the bulk of you to make you feel kindly towards those who treat you in a friendly manner! "For sinners also love those that love them."

You have all come as far as that and such feeling is good—the more of it the better! Yet it is not up to the mark of Christ's teaching if it stands alone! It is not that for which the Holy Spirit has begotten us again! It is not that for which Christ has shed His precious blood! Higher virtue exists than that which loves them that love you! And here it is—we are to love them that *hate* us and treat us spitefully! Can you love those who will not mention your name without grinding their teeth in envy, or sneering in scorn? Can you love those who have belied your character, who have done the best they can to ruin you and who will do the same again?

Can you feel towards them an earnest desire for their present and eternal welfare? If you could do them good, would you delight to do it and repeat the deed until you had made them too happy to be malicious, too much indebted to continue at enmity? This would be glorious, indeed, especially if you could keep clear of all selfish motives in such a contest of love and would do it all, not because you want to seem a hero or to be

something great, but simply because you delight to do good and feel it to be a pleasure to do that good where it is most needed, namely, where the spirit of enmity has the greatest power. This is high and I think I hear someone say, "I cannot attain it! I can love those who love me, but loving those that *hate* me is another matter! I shall have to look at the matter two or three times before I attempt it." I dare say you will, my Friend, and that is why it needs the work of God, Himself, to make us Christians! It needs Father, Son and Holy Spirit to work miracles of Divine Grace within as before we become Godlike. Godliness is Godlikeness and this is not easy to attain.

The next thing, in the verses before us, is grateful return. "If you do good to them which do good to you, what credit is that to you?" It is a very right thing that if persons have served us, we should endeavor to repay the benefit. By common consent, "one good turn deserves another." I am sorry to say that though this is a very ordinary sort of virtue, it is not the most common thing in the world, for you may help others if you like, but I have heard that they do not always help you in return! I cannot speak from any painful experience, here, for all have been kind to me and I have had good measure, pressed down and running over, poured into my bosom. But I have met with men who have bitterly bewailed the ingratitude of those whom they had benefited. They claim to have helped others generously, but when their turn has come to need assistance they have not received it—I do not feel very sure about the aforesaid claim—but that is the way in which they talk.

It is certainly a horrible thing that men should be ungrateful but yet, supposing that you, dear Hearer, are grateful and have lately taken special pains to do good to one who was good to you, what credit is that to you? You have done what you ought to have done and no more! You have paid an old debt as every honest man should do, but this does not prove you to be a *Christian*, for Christianity includes this and rises above it like the Alps above the surrounding plain! Followers of Jesus are called upon to do good to those who have done them *harm*. You know the old saying, "Evil for good is devil-like, evil for evil is beast-like, good for good is man-like, good for evil is God-like"? Rise to that God-like point! If a man has taken the bread out of your mouth, seize the first opportunity to help him to a livelihood. If he has bespattered you, be ready to forgive him, but say not a word against him! Watch for a time when, by great kindness, you may heap coals of fire on his head.

"Hard teaching," says one. I know it is and harder *doing*, but it is *blessed* doing! It is sweet to render good for evil! There is a self-conquest about it which ennobles the soul more than the conquest of an empire! There is a getting near to Christ in such actions that has about it more of Heaven than all besides! That patient, persevering rendering of benefits for injuries, returning of favors for enmity gives us fellowship with Him who, when we were enemies, laid down His life for us! Oh, taste of this sweet Grace of forgiveness and see if it is not good! If you have before now never known Christian joy, you shall know it then! It is a high virtue. Nevertheless, to this we must come if we are to be the followers of Christ.

Again, you note in the 34th verse that mention is made of helping others in a neighborly way with the expectation of their returning the friendly deed. "If you lend to them of whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you?" Temporary help is often rendered in the expectation that if ever we are in the same need, we shall only need to ask and receive the same aid. I lend you an axe and you will, one day, lend me a saw. You borrow my pail and you will lend me your flat iron—a neighborly sort of barter which goes on all around and *ought* to go on—but there is nothing very wonderful in it, for, after all, it is a sort of laying by in store—making your neighbor your banker for a while! I help you and you help me—a very proper thing to do and the more of such brotherly and neighborly co-operation, the better—but still, there is nothing so very virtuous in it.

"What credit is that to you? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again." You as a Christian are to rise to something higher than this—namely, to be ready to help without the expectation of being helped again—ready to aid those who you are certain could *not* help you! You must be ready to help those who are too poor, even, to come to your rescue, yes, and ready to help those who would not help you if they could—who may even return your kindness with words of falsehood and acts of unkindness! Can you rise to this? For this is to be a Christian! This is to be like your heavenly Father who sends His rain upon the just and upon the unjust; who causes His sun to shine upon the fields of the churl as well as upon the gardens of the liberal! This is to be like your Master who gives and gives and gives and receives nothing in return!

It is the Glory of God that He is too great, too full, too glorious to be dependent upon us! He is an ever-flowing Fountain, pouring forth incalculable torrents of infinite blessings upon the sons of men! After our measure we are to be the same—we are to aspire to the higher happiness of which our Lord said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Here is the dignity, the heavenliness of happiness—not to be receiving from others—but to be freely distributing to them. May God help us to imitate our God in doing good, hoping for nothing in return! Thus, Brothers and Sisters, I think I have shown you that there are certain good things in the world which, nevertheless, do not reach to the standard of Christian virtue. This holds good of *all* religions actions. You go to the House of God—so do the heathens go to the house of *their* god. You spend certain times in prayer—so do the Muslims.

You are very devout—so are Parsees. You are known to be a religious man—so were a great many who have turned out to be rogues. You are a deacon, or other Church officer—yes, so were certain bank directors who were none the more honest for that. But you are a preacher, yes, and so was Judas who hanged himself and so went to his own place. Religious acts count for *nothing* unless there is a true heart at the back of them! These things ought we to have done, but if we leave *heart* work undone, nothing is done! Sinners also perform their religious acts and besides these, some of them exhibit many external virtues and yet they manifestly fail to approach the standard of Christian virtue. The road is the same and men may travel in it apparently in the same direction—and yet they may be journeying with totally different motives—the first may be on the

King's business, the next may be a footpad and the third an escaped convict running from justice.

The same thing may be done by a hundred different men and apparently done in the same way and yet only one of them may be doing it in God's way and doing it with the sincere motive of honoring and glorifying God—the 99, though studiously aiming to make the outward action correct, may, nevertheless, fail as to acceptance with God because their motive and spirit are altogether wrong. Oh, it shames me when I sit down and look over my life and enquire, "Is this a life a Christian ought to live?" Does not the same question arise in *your* minds? Do you not feel, in many points, that even unconverted men have excelled you? Do you not know some persons who are not Christians who are, nevertheless, more patient than you in the endurance of pain? Do you not know unbelievers who are generous to a high degree and show much of self-sacrifice in helping their poor neighbors? Do you not know men whose devotion to science is greater than your devotion to Christ?

Are there not within your knowledge persons who have loved their country better than you have loved your Lord? Do not these thoughts provoke you to something better? They make me blush and cause my heart to weep! What manner of person ought I to be, when those who do not profess to know the mysteries of everlasting love rise to such courage in battle, such endurance in pushing over seas of ice? What ought I to become when my Lord calls me to be His disciple? Where are the fruits of my discipleship? What am I doing to bring Him honor? If even a text like this staggers me and I say it is a hard lesson, where, where must I be in the sight of God who sees *all my failures*?

II. Secondly, dear Friends, I want you to notice that CHRISTIAN VIRTUE IS, IN MANY RESPECTS, EXTRAORDINARY AND MIGHT BE CALLED HEROIC. To illustrate this, I will confine myself to the Gospel according to Luke. In the passage that we have been reading we evidently have a form of virtue which is quite out of the ordinary range of men's thoughts. It concerns love. "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." In the point of love, kindness, consideration for men's needs and desire to do good, the Christian life is to rise above every other till it becomes sublime! Heathen moralists *recommended* kindness, but they did not suggest its being lavished upon enemies.

I have been somewhat amused by the caution of Cicero. He says, "Kindness must not be shown to a youth, nor to an old man—not to the aged, because he is likely to die before he can have an occasion to repay you the benefit—and not to the young man, for he is sure to forget it." Those of us who are middle-aged may value the orator's generosity as we like, but we may reflect that he only recommends its exercise towards *us* because we are likely to be good debtors and pay back what we receive, perhaps, with interest! That gentle laugh which ripples over the congregation is the best refutation of such barefaced selfishness! Our Lord bids us seek no reward from men and He assures us that then a greater reward will come! We shall, by shunning it, secure it! We shall find a reward in being unrewarded!

See how our Lord puts it—“When you make a dinner or a supper, call not your friends, nor your brethren, neither your kinsmen, nor your rich neighbors lest they, also, bid you again and a recompense be made you. But when you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind: and you shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense you: for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” Next, read Luke 9:54, 55 and you will see that the Christian is to rise above human passion in the matter of gentleness. James and John, when Christ was not received by the Samaritan villagers, said, “Will You that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them?” But Jesus rebuked them and said, “You know not what manner of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not com to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”

A Christian should be ready to give way. He should be quiet, peaceable, gentle. If, in trying to do good, he wishes to bless certain people and they refuse to hear him, let him not grow indignant and denounce the offenders, but let him *change the scene* and carry his message to those who, perhaps, are hungering for it! He may go round, again, very shortly to those who repulsed him and find them in a better mind. Be gentle, Brother—soft words are hard to answer. They refused you at first, try them again! At any rate, be not provoked, for then they will have conquered you. Christians ought to be the gentlest beings under Heaven—they are sent forth as lambs among wolves—and they are called to be harmless as doves. Such meekness will astonish and amaze their adversaries and crown the religion of Jesus with honor.

In the elevation of his joy, the Christian is also to rise above all other men. He may rejoice as they do in the common bounties of Providence, but that joy is to hold very secondary rank. Even in his own success as a Christian worker he takes but measured satisfaction. Read Luke 10:20 and see what is the source of his truest delight—“Notwithstanding in this, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.” Is not a Believer a wonderful being, since even spiritual power and victory over the devil do not excite him, but he finds his joy in a fact which is quite out of himself and fixed by the unchangeable decree of God?

The Christian is heroic, next, in his fearlessness. Turn to the 12th chapter, verse 4 and there find Christ saying to His disciples—“Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell.” The genuine Christian stands not in fear of public opinion and dreads not the frown of those whom God frowns upon. The true Believer is to be willing to bear reproach, yes, and to bear much *more* than reproach, as saints of God have done time out of mind. So far from flinching from suffering, we are not even to give it a thought as to how we shall speak if we are brought before kings and rulers, for a part of the Christian’s heroism is to lie in his calm self-possession.

See how the Lord puts it in the 11th verse: “When they bring you unto the synagogues and unto magistrates and powers, take you no thought how or what thing you shall answer, or what you shall say: for the Holy

Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what you ought to say.” The same man who is so gentle that if men will not listen to him, he goes elsewhere, is so steadfast that he cannot be silenced! Bold as a lion he stands before his accusers and he is not troubled as to how he shall put his words together, for he relies upon the indwelling Spirit whom the world cannot receive because it sees Him not, neither knows Him! Relying upon that Spirit, he speaks when the time comes to speak and it is the right word, as his adversaries are compelled to confess! Or he is silent while it is time to be silent and even in that silence there is an awe which is felt by those round about him. After this fashion is he to play the man.

See how far the true Believer is lifted up above the world, as you turn to Luke 12:22 where the Lord bids us cultivate a holy ease of heart as to all temporal things. The rich man finds his wealth in his bursting barns, but the Believer finds his treasure in the all-sufficiency of His God. The Savior says, “Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that you have need of these things.” See, Brothers and Sisters, the Spirit of God is to lift us up above all fretful cares—we are to feel that the Father will provide for us in this world and that Jesus will never leave us comfortless.

Because He is our Shepherd and we cannot want, we are to dwell at ease and lie down in green pastures like a peaceful, restful flock. Covetousness is not to approach us, for a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. The desire to heap together a vast mass of wealth prevents the enjoyment of that which is already gained and this must not come near an heir of Heaven! As to temporal things, we are to be constantly calm, content, grateful and trustful, relying upon the bounty of our God. This freedom from anxiety constitutes a main part of the Christian character and is so uncommon as to lift its possessor far above men of the world.

Another point in which Christian heroism is seen is in humility and in delight in service. Turn to the 14th chapter and see our Lord’s directions to His disciples not to seek out the highest, but rather the lowest place, for, He says, “Whoever exalts himself shall be abased and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.” Habitually a Christian man is to have a modest esteem of himself. He is never to be known as one who is forward, self-seeking, self-asserting. Men who are highly esteemed of themselves are seldom justified by the verdict of their fellow men. No, a Christian man is to be one who is ready to do *anything* for the good of others, however lowly the service. He will wash the saints’ feet. He will be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord, if he may but serve his Brothers and Sisters and glorify his Master.

“Where are these Christian people?” asks a hearer. “Where are these good and humble people? I cannot find them!” Are you not one of them, yourself? If you are not, make the confession and go before God and ask Him to set you right. And when you are of a lowly, loving spirit, yourself, you will find others of a like mind! I must admit that they are not easy to come by, but when you are meek and lowly you will find them on the

principle that like draws to like and birds of a feather flock together. That is *not* the Christian spirit which turns even the kingdom of Heaven into an arena for ambition, but that man has the mind of Christ who becomes the *servant* of all for Christ's sake. That is not the Christian spirit which, under pretense of seeking liberty in the Church, craves after lordship and self-display. Those who are under this influence will have no rule in the Church of God except their own rule—they are too heady and high-minded to submit themselves to those who are over them in the Lord. The spirit of Christianity is lowly, yielding, easily to be entreated, seeking not itself. This is a chief point in the peculiarity of the peculiar people.

Furthermore, there should be about the Christian a faith which there is not in an other. (See Luke 17:6). He should have an eye to see that which is invisible and an arm to lean on that which he cannot feel. He should act upon facts which others may accept as theories but would never dream of risking a shilling upon. Believers, you are to be the men and women who can say to mountains, "Become plains," and to sycamine trees, "Be you plucked up by the roots." You are to work miracles, not physical and material, but spiritual and mental which are no less, but even *more* marvelous than wonders of healing or resurrection!

The next verse of this 17th chapter shows us that Christians are to be men of service. They are not to think that they came into the world to sit at a banquet, but they are to wait on their Master while He sits at the table. Too many appear to consider that the services of the sanctuary are intended merely to feed *them*—they never look upon the House of God as a barracks for soldiers, or a place where workmen come together to sharpen their tools—they only regard it as a sacred buttery, a spiritual larder, or a heavenly refectory where much is to be received and little or nothing returned. O Brothers and Sisters, we must get out of the cramping influence of the spirit which makes even religion a selfish provision for ourselves! We must scorn that skulking away from trouble and fatigue which creeps over men of growing years and increasing wealth!

We are to SERVE, not to recline at our ease! What are we doing that we are so anxious to rest ourselves and benefit ourselves? The Lord Jesus Christ would not have us always be asking, "How can I be happy? How can I obtain spiritual enjoyment?" Servants are not supposed to spend their time in doing their own pleasure and seeking their own profit. A man-servant whose whole time was taken up with watching his own wealth would be of small value to his employer. Even so, we have something else to do beyond watching over our own inward feelings! To snatch a brand from the burning is better than to warm your own hands! To feed a hungry soul with the Bread of Heaven is a far higher deed than to eat the fat and drink the sweet yourself! There is more plunging your arm up to the elbow in the mire to find a jewel for Christ than in washing one's idle hands with the scented soap of respectable propriety.

Oh, to get clean away from all ideas of self-seeking in religion! We are, first of all, saved by Grace like drowning mariners snatched from the deep—but afterwards we are taught to man the lifeboat, ourselves, for the rescue of others from destruction! Christianity finds me a soldier wounded in battle and it heals my wounds—but it does far more than *that*—it girds

me with armor, it gives me a sword, it teaches me to *fight* and it makes a hero of me if I yield myself to its full power! God grant it may do this for every one of us!

III. I will now close with the reflection that THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION SUPPLIES DUE NOURISHMENT FOR THE MOST HEROIC LIFE. Bear with me while I show you this in a few sentences. First, the economy of Grace requires it. You and I must have been chosen to lead a life higher than that of ordinary men or else why all this noise and stir at all? We see Heaven and earth and Hell in motion. God vacates His Throne and becomes a Man. Immortality puts on flesh and blood and dies! The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in these bodies of clay while angels look on and wonder! Surely here is the groundwork and argument of something supremely good!

Look at that angel, bright and sparkling like a flame of fire! What trouble did it cost the Creator to make him? A *thought* sufficed to do it. God willed it and there stood the helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim before Him in all their glittering ranks. What will that creature be which has been the subject of eternal purposes, which has cost the Father the heart-pang of giving up His only Son—cost the Son a bloody sweat—cost the Spirit the exercise of His Omnipotence? Such a creature you and I shall yet become. We are on the road to it! Great things ought to come of us if that is what we are and are growing to. May this thought nourish us to the highest life.

Think again, Brethren, we are helped to holy heroism by the reward which it brings, for our blessed Master, though He bids us spurn the thought of reward on earth, yet tells us that there is a reward in the thing itself! Just follow my text in the 35th verse—“Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great.” What reward? Why, the reward of having done good! That is quite enough. If you go to your brother who has treated you so badly, and say, “Brother, we are going to be friends,” and you manage to heal all wounds, you will not need any other reward! You will sleep sweetly at night and the music that awakes you in the morning will be sweet as the bells of Heaven.

Suppose you have an enemy and persistently do him all the good you can? You will not wish to be paid for it—it is such a grand thing to have acted like a Christian that you will be blessed in the deed! I believe that martyrs at the stake, when they stood and burned for Christ, felt in every pang thousand times rewarded by possessing the Grace which enabled them to endure to the end! They felt, “We are doing the right thing. We are testifying to the Truth of our beloved Lord.” And if they had possessed a thousand lives, they would cheerfully have laid all down for Jesus! Therefore, do not be so mercenary as to expect to be paid in dirty bronze and tarnished silver, but ask to find your recompense in the Spirit by which you are led to do good and in the smile of your heavenly Father!

Then, remember this to fire your ambition—you shall be children of the Highest! Those who can rise into the heroic life shall be as God! The gentle, patient, peaceable, kind, loving, forgiving, affectionate—these shall be known to be the sons of God and is this nothing? Oh, if there is a grain of nobility in your natures, you will make this the highest ambition of your

lives—to be like God! What is more than that? We are expected to be like God because we are His children! “You shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” We expect to see something of the father in the child. If we are children of God, we ought to do what others never think of. If you are the children of God, remember what a Brother you have and what an example He has set for you. He disdained to live unto Himself, for He left the Throne of Glory to come down to Bethlehem’s manger, to a carpenter’s shop and to a servant’s life!

The other night I heard read at family prayer the story of our Lord at the supper table. Jesus, knowing that He came from God and went to God, took a towel and girded Himself and began to wash His disciples’ feet. Ah, when I thought of Him whom all Heaven worships—our blessed, blessed Master—actually coming round with a basin to wash the disciples’ feet, I felt my eyes fill with tears and I sympathized with Peter when he cried, “Do You wash *my* feet?” It seemed a stoop too great for our Lord and King thus to act a menial’s part. Is there anything which can seem too mean for you and me after beholding such condescension?

If that sight touches you not, let me remind you of a further scene—He went into Gethsemane and there He knelt and prayed for you and me until He was covered with a gory sweat and great drops of blood followed each other to the ground! Is there *any* pain that we would not face? Is there *any* reproach we could not bear after this, for His dear sake? Does not that awaken you? Will you, after this, be proud and claim honor from your brethren and grow angry if it is refused? Come with me once again, for He goes to the Cross and there He hangs. It is your Lord, remember! See, the iron pass through His hands—it is your Lord who is thus maimed! The nails tear through His feet—the feet of your Lord! He wears a diadem as monarch, but it is a coronet of *thorns*—it is your Lord who is thus crowned! He wears crimson, too, but it is His own blood—and He is your own Lord!

He has not a rag, for they have stripped Him, yes, stripped and scourged your Lord! And they are hissing at Him, jesting at His prayers and scoffing at His cries—all this at your Lord! And what of you? The other day you were ashamed to acknowledge that you were His disciple. Are you not disgusted at such cowardice? You were silent the other day when sinners were blaspheming Him—you were stingy when His poor people needed help! You refused to give when His Church and His cause knocked at your door! You would not forgive a fellow Christian the other day and you parted company with one who had been your friend for years—and all for a hot word!

And yet you call yourself a Christian? Yes, and I, too, am a Christian and have my own private cause for self-humiliation—and that is *our* Master bleeding there. How can we bear to look Him in the face? What sorry disciples we are! O blessed Master, let Your blood drop on us till You have blotted out these many faults of ours and made us like Yourself! Amen and amen!

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THE CHOICE OF A LEADER

NO. 1248

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And he spoke a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind?
Shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master:
but everyone that is perfect shall be as his master.”
Luke 6:39, 40.***

MAN can hardly be retained in the place of wisdom, even if brought there. Truth lies between two extremes and man, like a pendulum, swings either too much this way or that. He abides not long in one place, but tosses from side to side, never, except by Divine Grace, finding rest in the middle point of wisdom. Two extremes exist in reference to the pilgrimage and scholarship of life. Some assert that man needs no guide whatever. Is he not a noble creature, gifted with high intelligence? Can he not reason and judge, and understand and discern? He can surely find his own way without direction from without. As a learner, why does he need a teacher? He can instruct himself! Is he not possessed of science? Has he not already found out many inventions?

Such self-sufficient boasters will not, therefore, condescend to sit at the feet of a master, or follow the track of a guide—and, consequently, they frequently become erratic, singular, lawless and unreasonable in their modes of thought and action. Into the mazes of infidelity and atheism such pilgrims wander! Into foolishness and strong delusion such teachers of themselves conduct their own minds. This scheme is dangerous, but its opposite pole is not less so. Deliver a man from rationalism and he often swings into superstition, and says, “I see that I need a guide, I will take the one nearest to me.”

Finding a guide constituted by this authority or that, the man who has ceased to use his judgement surrenders himself, at once, to his leadership and reckons that to question is to be guilty of wicked unbelief. Without considering whether the guide is a seeing man or blind, or the teacher an instructed and qualified instructor, the credulous yield themselves up to priests or leaders and are sorely misled. Weary of thinking, they beg others to think for them and there they leave the matter. This is the religion of a great many and they find much in it—the peace of slumbering stupidity! They meet with a church which claims to be venerable for antiquity and then they believe whatever that church chooses to teach!

They consider that they have no right any longer to judge or to use their understanding. They hang conscience and reason in a sling, as if they were broken arms, no longer usable, and give themselves up to be wheeled about like invalids in the chairs of tradition and dogmatism. They do not dare to question—that would spoil the whole thing—they shut their eyes and let other people see for them. No, they shut their eyes to be

guided by blind men! They give up thinking, to be directed by those who have also given up thinking, who have long ago shut their eyes and opened their mouths to take in whatever a supreme council or a pope may please to put into them.

Between these two extremes there is a narrow path of right, and happy is he who finds it—namely, the honestly and sincerely judging of whom the leader and teacher should be. This leads to the discovery that a Leader has been appointed in the Person of the Lord Jesus and a teacher in the Divine Spirit—and then a complete, willing and believing submission of the whole man to this Infallible guidance! Happy is that man who, in the pride of intellect, determines not to be a guide to himself—and so to be guide to a fool! Happy is that man who, in the indolence of superstition, refuses to surrender himself up to be guided by his fellow man, call him priest, or pope, or minister, or what you will—but who, having found that God has sent His Son into this world of ours to be the Captain of salvation, who shall bring many sons into Glory, follows where his Commander leads the way!

Happy is the man, having seen this same Jesus appointed to be the Prophet of His people, delights to sit at His feet and receive of His words, reason, affection, contemplation and will—finding perfect rest in Him. He, with his eyes open, follows the All-Seeing One and, with his mind illuminated, becomes a disciple of the Eternal Light! It is clear that the most important thing, if we are agreed that we need a guide, is to examine the claims of those who aspire to the office. Some take a guide because, as I have said before, he is appointed by *authority*—he happens to be the parson of the parish, or the family minister—and he is at once accepted without consideration.

He would be a very foolish person who would, in climbing the mountains of Switzerland, take a guide merely because he professed to be one and carried the usual certificates, if upon looking at him it was clear that the man was stone blind! Would you say that does not matter, he says he is appointed by authority? Would you go to the top of Mont Blanc with him? If so, he would soon conduct you into a crevasse and there would be an end to your folly! Yet multitudes resolve upon taking their *religion* by prescription, feeling confident that what is patronized by the great, and established and endowed by the nation, must, of course, be right!

Whether the guide can see or not seems to be a trifle. What matters is that he is properly ordained and duly inducted. If that is settled, the unthinking many ask no more. For my part, I like to look at my guide's eyes. I like to know whether he has ever traversed the country and whether he has had experience of the way. If he cannot satisfy me on those points I look elsewhere, to one who has all sight and has had all experience, even the Lord Jesus! His authority I cannot question. I take for granted all that He teaches me. I am glad to be a seeing man following a seeing Leader, and I endeavor to be an intelligent scholar learning of a wise and sympathetic Teacher.

Our text has much wisdom about it as to this matter, for, first, *it announces to us a great general principle*, as a warning, namely, that a disci-

ple does not get above his Master, but becomes like he is. Secondly, *it gives a special application* of the great general principle to Christ, that as we are perfected we shall become like He is, even as in the case of all other disciples who grow like their masters. After these points, I shall try to use the text for the encouragement of those who desire Christ as their Master, by saying that *we may put the facts mentioned in the text to a practical test.*

I. Let us take THE GREAT GENERAL PRINCIPLE as a warning. Several Truths of God are involved in the text, and these all illustrate the main point. It is evident that *the disciple is generally drawn to the master who is most like himself*—the blind man is led by the blind. It is not merely that birds of a feather flock together and, therefore, men of kindred minds form association with each other, but there is about us all a natural tendency to admire our own image and to be willing to submit to any who are superior to us, and yet are of our type.

A teacher who does not shock our prejudices, but shows a sympathy with our tastes, we are at home with at once. The priest is like the people because the people are pleased to have him so. It is true of teachers as of idols, “they that make them are like unto them.” If the blind man could only see, he would not choose a blind man to be his guide. But as he cannot see, he meets with one who talks as blind men talk, who judges things as they are in the dark, and who does not know what sighted men know and, therefore, never reminds the blind man of his infirmity. And at once he says, “This is my ideal of a man, he is exactly the leader I require! I will commit myself to him.” So the blind man takes the blind man to be his guide—and this is the reason why error has been so popular.

No error would live if it did not chime in with some evil propensity of human nature, if it did not gratify some error in man to which it is congruous. Idolatry is a prevailing sin because man is alienated from God who is a Spirit, and in his carnal folly demands a god whom his senses can apprehend. When you hear of crowds going over to Popery, do not wonder at it! Popery is the religion of depraved human nature put into shape by Satan and, therefore, it is no marvel that the nations are fascinated by it! What they love and what the god of this world sweetens to their tooth must go down with them. Popery and other forms of Sacramentarianism are a soft bed for idle limbs and as surely as a lazy man lies down, so surely does a superstitious man take to these systems.

Give a superstitious man the information contained in the Bible and a pair of scissors to cut his coat according to his shape, and Popery, in some shape or other, will be the religion which he will cut out for himself. Consequently it is popular. You cannot, at first, understand how the blind man who sets up for a guide could expect to find clients. Neither would he, only there are so many other blind people about who know nothing about his blindness and are sure to come to him! Mind you that you are not so blind, yourself, as to follow their example. Young man, mind who it is you choose for a guide. Your tendencies will be to select a wrong one, because your tendencies, themselves, are wrong. Pray that you may begin aright the journey of life, having Divine Grace infixed into your hearts,

that you may choose the Christ of God who is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

O Lord, let no soul here be so blind as to choose blind atheism, blind skepticism, or blind superstition to be his leader! You take the blind in the hand and lead them by a way that they know not and by paths which they have not seen. Do these things unto them, and do not forsake them! *Having chosen his tutor, the student gradually becomes more and more like his master*, or, having taken his guide, the tendency is to tread more closely in his footsteps and obey his rules more fully every day. We must be all conscious that we imitate those whom we admire. Love has a strange influence over our nature, to mold it into the form of our beloved.

A true disciple is like clay on the wheel and his master fashions him after his own image. We may be scarcely conscious of it, but we are most surely being conformed to the likeness of those to whose influence we submit ourselves. Whoever, then, your master may be, dear Friend, you are changing into his image. If you choose to be led by the votary of pleasure, you will become more and more frivolous. If you admire the slave of avarice, you will become avaricious. If you feel the sway of the minion of vice, you will, yourself, grow vicious. If a man who despises the Word of God becomes your hero, you will, before long, despise it, too. While you are gazing upon him with admiration, a kind of photography is going on, and you, like a sensitive plate, receive his image. I charge you, therefore, to be careful who becomes your guide.

And mark, *the pupil does not go beyond the tutor*, nor does the man who submits to be led go beyond his guide. Such a case is very rarely found. Indeed, I may say, never, for when the one who is led goes beyond his leader, he is not, in truth, *led* any longer—rarely enough does it ever come to that. Men, if they outstrip their leaders, generally do so in the wrong direction. They seldom exaggerate their *virtues*—*those* they frequently omit—they usually exaggerate peculiarities, follies, failings and faults. It is said that in the court of Richard III, because the king was round-shouldered, the courtiers gradually became humpbacked. And we have seen a whole country idiotic enough, not in the last century, but in *this* century, to have almost all its women limping because a popular princess was afflicted with a temporary lameness.

It is the way of mankind! They imitate each other as if by instinct. This is the only excuse I know of for Darwin’s theory of our having descended from the ape. Imitativeness is well developed in us, but if left to itself it works with a bias the wrong way, and the imitation is most forcible in the direction of deformity and defect. In music, painting, poetry and literature, men of a school seldom excel their master, or, if they do, they leave him. But the habit is to perpetrate the master’s mannerisms and weaknesses. It is even more so in the art of living. Young men, in the task of choosing a master for your faith, I beseech you be careful to have none but the best, for you will not excel, but rather fall behind the master you follow. You are choosing a leader—choose one who knows the road—for if he has made some blunders you will make 10 times as many, and in all probability you will exaggerate each one of his mistakes.

The most solemn truth remains to be noted. *When a man chooses a bad leader for his soul, at the end of all bad leadership there is a ditch.* A man teaches error which he declares he has drawn from Scripture, and he backs it up with texts perverted and abused. If you follow that error and take its teacher for a leader, you may, for a time, be very pleased with yourself for knowing more than the poor plain people who keep to the good old way, but, mark my word, there is a ditch at the end of the error! You do not see it, yet, but there it is, and into it you will fall if you continue to follow your leader. At the end of error there is often a moral ditch and men go down, down, down—they scarcely know why—till presently, having imbibed doctrinal error, their moral principles are poisoned and like drunken men they find themselves rolling in the mire of sin.

At other times the ditch beyond a lesser error may be an altogether damnable doctrine. The first mistake was comparatively trifling, but, as it placed the mind on an inclined plane, the man descended almost as a matter of course, and almost before he knew it, found himself given over to a strong delusion to believe a lie. The blind man and his guide, whatever else they miss, will be sure to find the ditch—they need no sight to obtain an entrance into that! Alas, to fall into the ditch is easy, but how shall they be recovered? I would earnestly entreat, especially professing Christians, when novelties of doctrine come up, to be very cautious how they give heed to them. I bid you remember the ditch!

A small turn of the switch on the railway is the means of taking the train to the far east or to the far west. The first turn is very little, indeed, but the points arrived at are remote. There are new errors which have lately come up which your fathers knew not, with which some are mightily busy! And I have noticed when men have fallen into them, their usefulness ceased. I have seen ministers go only a little way in speculative theories and gradually glide from latitudinarianism into Socinianism or Atheism. Into these ditches thousands fall.

Others are precipitated into an equally horrible pit, namely, the holding nominally of all the doctrines in theory and none of them in fact. Men hold truths nowadays with the heart taken out of them, and the very life and meaning torn away. There are members and ministers of evangelical denominations who do not believe evangelical doctrine, or if they do believe it, they attach but little importance to it! Their sermons are essays on philosophy tinged with the Gospel. They put a quarter of a grain of Gospel into an Atlantic of talk—and poor souls are drenched with words to no profit. God save us from ever leaving the old Gospel, or losing its spirit and the solid comfort which it brings!

Yet into the ditch of lifeless profession and philosophic dreaming we may soon fall if we commit ourselves to wrong readerships. All this should prevent us, as I think, from taking any *man* whatever as our leader, for if we trust to any mere man, though he may be right in 99 of the hundred, he is wrong, somewhere, and our tendency will be to be more influenced by his one wrong point than by any of his right ones. Depend upon it, in matters of religion, that ancient malediction is abundantly verified, “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.”

There *is* one whom you may follow implicitly, and one only! There is one whom you may trust without reserve and only one—the Man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God! But if you do not wish to be led into errors of heart and practice, beware of men, and follow none but Jesus! Follow no footprints but the footprints of that flock which follows at His heel. You will do best not even to follow the sheep, but to follow the Shepherd, only, and to do that even if you walk alone! May the Holy Spirit be given you to lead you into all truth. Thus much upon the great principle—let it act as a warning.

II. ITS SPECIAL APPLICATION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST is our encouragement! If we have the Lord Jesus Christ as our Leader we certainly cannot go beyond *our* Leader, but we shall be privileged to grow more and more like He and we shall be perfected, according to our text, as our Leader is. First, *this is what we might have expected*. We see ordinarily, as we have said, that the disciple grows like his Master, but with such a Master the process becomes more sure!

With such a Master, of whom these lips cannot speak well enough, a Master the laces of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, it may well come to pass that we are melted down with love and poured out into the mold of *obedience*. He is the Creator, can He not create in us His image? From such an One as He is, we confidently expect it. For, observe, the teaching, itself, is such that it must have power over hearts that yield to it. His doctrine is almighty Love—all His teaching is Divine and yet so broken down to human capacity that it exactly suits the man who has taken the yoke of Christ upon him and determined to learn of Him!

Other masters teach us crooked and doubtful lessons. And when learned, too often the best wisdom is to unlearn them. But with our Lord, the teaching is most sure, most heavenly, most potent—and we feel within ourselves that it is so true, so noble, so grand—that it comes to us with authority and not as the word of man. If I knew only what Jesus teaches, I would conclude that a teacher who gives forth such doctrines and such precepts must influence His disciples. But it is not in His teaching, alone, that His influence lies. The most potent charm is *Himself*. When He spoke here below they said, “Never man spoke like this Man,” and the reason was because, “never man *lived* like this Man.”

His Word was with power, but then He, Himself was THE WORD. If you view the precepts of Christ as embodied in His life, they glow with beauty and flash with power. You can bear from such a Teacher what you could not have endured from anybody else, for His Character gives Him a right to speak. Many of His precepts would have seemed perfectly preposterous had they first fallen from the lips of fallible men, for their hearers would have cried out, “Physician, heal yourself.” Coming from Him, they come naturally as good fruit from a good tree—they are the necessary fruit of such a Nature and such a life. Who can help being persuaded when the arguments *live* before our eyes? We are overpowered by the grandeur of the Redeemer’s goodness, by the splendor of His love, the infinity of His self-sacrifice!

Jesus commands our faith by the revelation of Himself and by that same revelation He conforms us to Himself. Was ever such a life as His? Was ever such a death? Was ever such an altogether lovely Person as His? Was ever such perfection as His? In life He was so outspoken and yet so gentle, so courageous and yet so kind, so unflinching and yet so tender, wearing His heart upon His sleeve in the transparency of truth, but prudent and guarding Himself with Infallible Wisdom! He was a match for all, however they might assail Him, and yet apparently never on His guard at all, but as a child among them, the Holy Child Jesus. Oh, if you sit at Jesus' feet you will not only learn of Him and His teaching will have power over you, but you will learn *Him*, for He, Himself, is His own best lesson!

Never did eyes look up into those dear eyes of Jesus, which are "as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk and fitly set," but they were, themselves, cleansed and purified till they became "like the fish pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-rabbim." Who could bear the Lord Jesus on his heart, like a cluster of myrrh, and not be perfumed by His Presence? Who could be with Him and not be like He is? We feel quite sure that the disciples will grow like their Master in the case of Jesus because He inspires them with an intense love to Himself which flames forth in enthusiasm for Him! Get a teacher whom all the scholars love and admire, and they will soon learn. Make them enthusiastic for him, and no lesson will be too hard. This, our dear and blessed Lord, of whom these lips cannot speak as they should, has done.

We admire, we love, no, we *adore* Him! He is our God, our All in All, and therefore we desire to be molded at His will. Live for Him? Yes, we find it to be our joy, for the love of Christ empowers us! Die for Him? Yes, His saints in all ages have rejoiced to lay down their lives for Him. Full of fervor and fired with enthusiasm, they have suffered losses and reproaches for His name's sake. If the Teacher inspires such enthusiasm, doubtless He will fashion the disciples in His likeness. Best of all, our Great Teacher has a Spirit with Him, a mighty Spirit, God, Himself, the Holy Spirit! And when He teaches, He teaches not with words alone, but with a power which goes beyond the ear into the heart itself!

Other teachers, except as they follow Christ, must depend upon the charms of eloquence, or the force of argument. But our Lord, though most eloquent of all, for His lips are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh—though full of arguments, for His is the Wisdom of God—relies upon the energy which He felt when He said, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for the Lord has anointed Me." The Divine Spirit casts a light into the soul of such a brilliance that things not seen stand out in clearest evidence! And things hoped for are grasped in their very substance! With that Light there comes, also, Life to feel, power to realize and discernment to judge. And so the soul is led into all Truth and the scholar receives the lessons of his lord in their life and energy.

Who else can give this Spirit? By what other teacher can the Holy Spirit be breathed into us? Who would not sit at the feet of a Master so transcendently above all others in possessing such an infinite gift? I would to God, while I am speaking thus, that some here present would say, "Gladly

would I commit myself to that great Teacher.” Remember, Beloved, if you want Him to be your Master, He equally longs for you to be His disciple! I think I have now shown that it was to be expected that with such a Master, disciples should become like He is.

Now let me observe that *this was virtually promised*. It is promised to us, in effect, in the great decree of predestination, “for whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” This is the great purpose of God, that Christ may be the First-Born among many Brethren, and that the Brethren may be a company in whose faces the Lord shall discern the image of the Only Begotten. What God predestinates we may confidently expect. It is promised to us in the very name of Jesus Christ, for that name is Jesus, “for He shall save His people from their sins.”

But saving men from their sins is the bringing of them back into a condition of purity and holiness. This, indeed, is the salvation which we preach—not the mere forgiveness of sin, as some think—but the *conquering* of sin, the driving out of sin, the making of men like the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of God! The very name of Jesus tells us that He means to make His disciples as free from sin as He is. We know, also, that this was our Lord’s objective, for the design of Christ’s life is clearly seen in His last prayer when He prayed, “Sanctify them through Your truth; Your word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they, also, might be sanctified through the truth.”

You can see that His one objective is to make His people holy, as He is holy, to keep them from evil even as He was kept, and to make them conquerors over sin even as He conquered. All His life He labored at this with the 12 and with others who followed with Him and His last prayer breathes this, “I pray not that You should take them out of the World, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.” Everywhere this is seen to be true. The relationships which He assumes suppose it, for brethren are like their brother, and friends are like their friend. The metaphors which He uses imply the same thing, for the engrafted branch drinks in the nature of the stem, the spouse grows like her husband and the members of the body are of the same nature as the head.

The mystical Christ is not like the image of the Babylonian monarch’s dream with head of gold, and feet of clay, but Christ is one throughout. The Grace which dwells in the Head, transforms the whole body. It is our delightful expectation that “we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is,” and then we shall be satisfied, for we shall wake up in His likeness.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, what we might have expected, and what God has thus virtually promised, *has been actually seen*, for the disciples have been like their Lord, and this is where I want to lay the most stress. Have not the disciples been like their Lord in points of character? It would be very absurd for me to say that the Old Testament saints were disciples of Christ in a *literal* sense, and yet in spirit they all were not, for the Gospel is the same in all ages, and it is the same light which lightens every man that comes into the world. The inner teaching of the Spirit was the

same to Abel and to Noah as it was to John and Paul. And while Apostles looked *back* to Jesus and were enlightened, Patriarchs looked *forward* and had light, too.

Now each of the saints in the olden time had some likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of a few of them and you will see some of His beauties. Abel reveals His righteousness and Enoch His walking with God. Job shows His patience and Abraham His faith. Moses His meekness and Samuel His power of intercession. Daniel is like He in His integrity and Jeremiah in His weeping. Like drops of morning dew, all these reflected the light of the Sun of Righteousness. In the New Testament we see the transforming power of His teaching in many instances. Peter and John were like their Master, for we read that when their enemies “saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.” The likeness was so striking that they were obliged to confess it!

Take John alone, for a minute, and who can read his Epistles without saying, “Even thus his Master spoke?” John was far behind his Lord, but yet how marvelously like He! You have smiled at your children, sometimes, when you have seen your own ways repeated in them. You have beheld your own peculiarities as in a mirror! Almost unconsciously they have been yourself in miniature. So was it evidently with John. If it is true, as tradition says, that he was carried into the assembly when he was too old to walk, and was in the habit of saying to them, “Little children, love one another: little children, love one another”—it was so like our Lord Jesus Christ, you might have thought the Master had returned to earth!

As for Paul, in many aspects he is the counterpart of his Lord, and as I read that strange passage in Romans which staggers some, where he says, “I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, according to the flesh,” I am led to say, “Herein he resembles that Blessed One who was actually made a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.” Now, all the saints of God, more or less, according as they have fully been disciples of Jesus, display His characteristics. I cannot stop, this morning, to tell you what characteristics I see in you which are like my Lord. I rejoice that I do know Brothers and Sisters here of whom I have often said to myself, “I can see their Master in them.” I wish I could say so of *all* of you, but still, I am glad to see in so many the points of true likeness to Jesus, the family characteristics which mark all the children of God.

There are little touches of their Father in all the heirs of salvation which make us feel that they belong to the same family as Jesus. They could not have *learned* those ways—they must have been imparted by a birth from above. It is a very noteworthy thing that those who are disciples of Christ, each become like He as to their life story. Going back to the old saints as being really disciples of the doctrine of the Redeemer, there is Melchizedek bringing forth bread and wine to refresh Abraham—would you not have thought it was Christ Himself? There is Isaac gently submitting to his father while he draws the knife to slay him—could you not have said that it was Jesus? There is Joseph making himself known to his brethren and

ruling all Egypt for their good—might we not have thought that it was our Lord come on earth before His time to bless His chosen ones?

Yonder is David coming back with Goliath's head, while all the maidens of Israel rejoice around him—could you not have thought it was our Master returning from Edom with dyed garments from Bosra? The saints are types of Him because they are of the same type as He is. As for the disciples *after* Christ came, you will often find them in positions which set forth Jesus Christ most evidently. See Stephen boldly declaring the Gospel until his enemies stone him. Have you not read of his Master many times, "They would have stoned Him, but He conveyed himself out of their sight"? Look at Paul at Lystra. They are about to sacrifice to him—it makes you think of days when the crowd cried, "Hosanna, Hosanna." Lo, the Apostle rebukes the throng, and now are they stoning him—and it recalls to your memory the time when the crowd shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him! Away with such a Fellow from the earth."

Read the story of Paul in the shipwreck, when he says to the captain of the ship, and to the officer of the troops, "Be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you." You might almost have thought it was the Savior, Himself, saying to the winds and waves, "Peace, be still." Indeed, Christ is in all His members! His life is written out again in their lives. Beloved, I could mention many saints of modern times in whose lives we may see Jesus. That poor woman who dropped into the treasury her two mites, which were all her living—is she not very much like Jesus who gave up all for us, and became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich?

Others are like the woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment, to give their best things to her Lord. Do they not remind you of the lover of our souls, who broke the precious alabaster box of His body and filled all earth and Heaven with the perfume? Everyone who gives up self for God's Glory is Jesus in miniature! Look at John Howard going about among the dungeons of Europe, spying out poor prisoners to do them good. Is not that Christ all over again, with glad tidings for the captives? Or John Williams landing at Erromanga with his life in his hands, to convert cannibals—was not that laying down his life for the sheep?

Now, dear Friends do you think if we had *your* life before us we could make out anything like Jesus Christ in it? If you are His disciple it will be so. There will it be in your biography as your children will read it—for they will read it better than anybody else. There it will be as your wife will read it and as those you work with will read it—something which looks as if it were extracted from the life of Jesus. Students in Christ's College must be like their Tutor, and they are! I dare say the Brother is present, here, of whom I am about to speak. And if so, he will be sorry to hear me tell the story and would stop my mouth if he could!

I will, however, make bold to go on. I know a house painter who was working with other men over the top of the Great Northern Railway, at a great height. One of his fellow workmen had been drinking very heavily and was unsteady on the lofty scaffold. He said to himself, "That man will never get down alive," and rather than he should perish, he actually of-

ferred to carry him down on his back. I believe it would have been death to them both if the attempt had been made, but he cheerfully offered. He said, "My soul is safe. I am a Christian. I am afraid you will be killed and, if you are, your soul will be lost. I will carry you down if you will only keep quiet."

The man rejected the kind offer, though persuaded again and again, and alas, in trying to descend he fell into the middle of the railway, from a dreadful height, and was taken up dead. When I heard of my good Brother, a humble member of this Church, doing that, I thought, "There is our Master, revealed in His disciple!" Our life is a painting, and if we are in Christ's Studio, there will be traces of His hand, and men will exclaim, "That was no common Painter! That stroke, that line, is just the line that the great Master used to make! I am sure He has put in those touches." O Brothers and Sisters, we need none of us wish to be originals—let us plagiarize Christ—and that will be the grandest original! God help us in this.

Now I was going to say, but time has fled, that Christ's disciples grow like He in their struggles and in their temptations. They are met by Satan as Christ was. They are tried by the world as Christ was. They are assailed by Sadducee unbelief and Pharisaic superstition as Christ was. They have to go through the same fight and, blessed be God, they win the same victories! Christ's disciples overcome sin. By their Master's help they rise above doubt, they vanquish the world and they stand in purity and faith. By-and-by they shall be like He in their rewards. "To him that overcomes," He says, "I will give to sit upon My throne, even as I have overcome and have sat down with My Father upon His throne."

It is a beautiful subject! I wish I had the power to work it out, the way in which the disciple of Jesus thus, by sure steps, becomes perfected into the image of Christ, till the likeness is so near and so close that even the clear eyes of this wicked world in the dim atmosphere of its ignorance cannot help seeing that the man is like the Master!

III. Now, lastly, we will dwell for two or three minutes upon this encouraging fact, that WE MAY PUT ALL THIS TO THE TEST this morning if we will. Brothers and Sisters, if you are *not* disciples of Jesus Christ, remember, He *will* receive you! He will receive you though you have been to other masters and learned a great deal under them, all of which you will have to unlearn. It is a very easy thing to take a man and teach him if his mind is clear and clean. But you have learned a great deal that you will have to forget.

O you of 40, 50, or 60, what a world of mischief there is in you that will have to come out! Well, my Master will take you for pupils, though you have been with other masters all this while. And, though you do not know even the rudiments of what He is going to teach, He will take you. My Lord Jesus keeps an A B C school—He begins with the infants. What a mercy it is that He takes such poor, stupid heads as ours, who know nothing except what we ought *not* to know! And I will add, if you have but very little capacity, or none at all, it does not matter—

***"He takes the fool, and makes him know
The wonders of His dying love."***

Not many great men, not many mighty are chosen, but God has chosen the poor of this world, and things that are not, and things that are despised, yes, and weak things and foolish things, has God chosen. Come to Him, for if you are incapable, He is not, and His capacity will soon overcome your incapacity. You say, "I cannot learn." Ah, but you do not know how well He can teach, for He can teach so well that even those who *think* they cannot learn are soon instructed in His school!

Stand not back, dear Friend, because you cannot pay the fee, for my Master's is a *free* school! He takes nothing *from* us, but He gives everything *to* us. The only admission ticket that you need is simply to be willing to be taught, to be conscious that you need teaching and guiding, and to submit yourself to His guidance and instruction. Are you willing to do so? "Oh," you say, "I shall grieve Him till He gives me up." Well, I have often thought so. I do not wonder that you are troubled with *that* thought—it has often come across *me* when I see what little progress I have made after being so many years in His school.

If I had a *human* master, he would have been out of patience with me long ago. But the Lord Jesus Christ never gives up a scholar—having once commenced to teach, He continues His Divine lessons till they are fully learned—and the more difficult it is for Him to teach, the more honor it will be when He gets all His scholars educated for the skies! He will not allow a defeat in this matter—He will overcome ignorance, sin, hardness of heart, infirmity and incapacity till He shall have instructed us in the lore of Heaven and made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

Come, dear Brothers and Sisters, you that are scholars of Christ, let us sit at His feet! Let us follow in His ways more closely than ever! And you, dear Friends, who as yet are not in His school, He says to you, "Who is simple let him turn in here. As for him that needs understanding let him eat of My bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." May the good Lord incline your hearts to learn of Him, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 6:20-40*.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—852, 262, 705.**

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ON LAYING FOUNDATIONS NO. 1702

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 21, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings, and does them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man which built a house, and dug deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that hears, and does not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”
Luke 6:46-49.

THESE parables describe two classes of hearers, but they say nothing of those who are *not* hearers. Their position and prospects we must infer from what is said of hearers. Our Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to tell us of the Father's love. And never man spoke as He spoke and yet there are many who refuse to hear Him. I do not mean those who are far away, to whom the name of Jesus is well-near unknown, but I mean persons in this land and especially in this great and highly-favored city who willfully refuse to hear Him whom God has anointed to bring tidings of salvation! Our Lord Jesus is proclaimed, I was about to say, upon the housetops in this city, for even in their music halls and theaters, Christ is preached to the multitude! And at the corners of our streets His banner is lifted up—and yet there are tens of thousands to whom the preaching of the Gospel is as music in the ears of a corpse!

They shut their ears and will not hear, though the testimony is concerning God's own Son, eternal life and the way to escape from everlasting wrath! To their own best interests, to their eternal benefit, men are dead—nothing will secure their attention to their God. To what, then, are these men like? They may fitly be compared to the man who built no house whatever and remained homeless by day and without shelters by night. When worldly trouble comes like a storm, those persons who will not hear the Words of Jesus have no consolation to cheer them. When sickness comes, they have no joy of heart to sustain them under its pains. And when death, that most terrible of storms, beats upon them, they feel its full fury, but they cannot find a hiding place.

They neglect the housing of their *souls* and when the hurricane of Almighty Wrath shall break forth in the world to come they will have no place of refuge. In vain will they call upon the rocks to fall upon them and the mountains to cover them! They shall be, in that day, without a shelter from the righteous wrath of the Most High. Alas, that any being who wears the image of man should be found in such a plight! Homeless wan-

derers in the day of tempest! How my soul grieves for them! Yet, what excuse will those men invent who have refused, even, to *know* the way of salvation? What excuse can the most tender heart make for them?

Will they plead that they could not believe? Yet they may not say that they could not *hear*—and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God! Oh my Friend, if the Word of God comes to you and you decline to hear it and, therefore, do not believe in Jesus, but die in your sins—what is this but soul-suicide? If a man dies of a disease when infallible medicine is to be had, must not his death lie at his own door? If a man perishes of hunger when bread is all around him and others feed to the full, but he will not have it, will any man pity him? Surely not a drop of pity will be yielded to a lost soul with which he may relieve the torment of his conscience, for all holy intelligences will perceive that the sinner chose his own destruction!

This shall ever press upon the condemned conscience, “You knew the Gospel, but you did not attend to it: you knew that there was salvation and that Christ was the Savior, and that pardon was proclaimed to guilty men, but you would not afford time from your farm and from your merchandise, from your pleasures and from your sins, to learn how you could be saved. That which cost God so dearly, you treated as a trifle.” Ah, my dear Friends, may none of you belong to the non-hearing class!

It is not to such that I shall, this morning, address myself, and yet I could not enter upon my discourse without a word of loving exhortation with them. Let me part with them by quoting the warning Words of the Holy Spirit, “See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven.” Our earnest attention will now be given to those who are hearers of the Word of God and are somewhat affected by it. All hearers are builders of houses for their souls—they are, each one, doing something to set up a spiritual habitation.

Some of these go a considerable distance in this house-building and even crown the structure by publicly confessing Christ. They say unto Him, “Lord, Lord!” They meet with His followers and join with them in reverence to the Master’s name, but they do not *obey* the Lord. They hear Him, but they fail to do the things which He says. Therefore they are mistaken builders, who fail in the foundation, and make nothing sure except that their house will come down about their ears! Others there are, and we trust they will be found to be many among us, who are building rightly, building for eternity—constructing a dwelling place with a foundation of rock and walls of well-built stone—of which the Lord Christ is both Foundation and Cornerstone.

I am anxious to speak, at this time, to those who are just beginning to build for eternity. I am indeed happy to know that there are many such among us. May the Holy Spirit bless this sermon to them!

I. Our first subject will be A COMMON TEMPTATION WITH SPIRITUAL BUILDERS. A common temptation with hearers of the Word of God, according to the two parables before us, is to neglect foundation work—to get hurriedly over the first part of the business—and run up the building

quickly. They are tempted to assume that all is done which is *said* to be done—to take it for granted that all is right which is *hoped* to be right and then to go on piling up the walls as rapidly as possible. The great temptation, I say, with young beginners in religious life, is to skimp on the foundation and treat those things lightly which are of the first importance.

The same temptation comes to us throughout the whole of life, but to young beginners it is especially perilous. Satan would have them neglect the fundamental principles upon which their future hope and character are to rest, so that in a future trying hour, from need of a solid foundation, they may yield to evil and lose the whole of their life building. This temptation is all the more dangerous, first, because these young beginners have no experience. Even the most experienced child of God is often deceived—how much more the pilgrim who has but just entered the wicket gate! The tried saint sometimes mistakes that for a virtue which is only a gilded fault and he fancies that to be genuine which is mere counterfeit! How, then, without any experience, whatever, can the mere babe in Grace escape deception unless he is graciously preserved?

Newly awakened and rendered serious, earnest hearts get to work in the Divine life with much hurry, seizing upon that which first comes to hand, building in heedless haste, without due care and examination. Something must be done and they do it without asking whether it is according to the teaching of the Lord. They call Jesus, “Lord,” but they do what *others* say, rather than what Jesus says. Satan is sure to be at hand at such times that he may lead the young convert to lay, in place of Gospel repentance, a repentance that needs to be repented of—and instead of the faith of God’s elect—a proud presumption or an idle dream. For that love of God which is the work of the Spirit of God, he brings mere natural affection for a minister and he says, “There, that will do! You must have a house for your soul to dwell in. There are the materials, pile them up.”

Like children at play upon the beach, the anxious heap up their sand-castles and please themselves with them, for they are ignorant of Satan’s devices. I am, for this reason, doubly anxious to save my beloved young friends from the Deceiver! The common temptation is, instead of really repenting, to *talk* about repentance. Instead of heartily believing, to say, “I believe,” *without* believing. Instead of truly loving, to talk of love, without loving! Instead of coming to Christ, to speak about coming to Christ, and profess to come to Christ, and yet not to come at all! The character of Talkative in Pilgrim’s Progress is ably drawn. I have met the gentleman many times and can bear witness that John Bunyan was a photographer before photography was invented!

Christian said of him “He talks of prayer, of repentance, of faith and of the new birth, but he knows but only to talk of them. I have been in his family and his house is as empty of religion as the white of an egg is of savor.” We have too many such persons around us who are, as to what they say, everything that is to be desired and yet they are proven to be mere shams. As tradesmen place dummies in their shops, papered and labeled to look like goods, while yet they are nothing of the sort, so are these men marked and labeled as Christians, but the Grace of God is not in them!

Oh that you young beginners may be on the alert, that you be not content with the form of godliness, but are made to feel the power of it!

There is this to help the temptation, too, that this plan for the present saves a great deal of trouble. Your mind is distressed and you need comfort—well, it will comfort you to say, “Lord, Lord,” though you *do not* the things that Christ says. If you admit the claims of Jesus to be Lord, even though you do not believe on Him for salvation and so neglect the main thing which He commands, you will find some ease in the admission. He bids you repent of sin, trust His blood, love His Word and seek after holiness—but it is much easier to admire these things without following after them in your life. To feign repentance and faith is not difficult, but genuine godliness is *heart* work and requires thought, care, sincerity, prayerfulness and watchfulness.

Believe me, real religion is no sport! He that would be saved will find it to be no jesting matter. “The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence,” and he that is easy about the thing, and thinks it is nothing more than the magician’s, “Heigh, presto, done,” has made a fatal mistake! “Strive,” says Christ, “to enter into the strait gate.” The Spirit strives in us mightily and often works us to an agony. The crown of eternal Glory is not won without fighting, nor the prize of our high calling received without running—yet, by just making a holy profession, and by practicing an outward form—a man imagines that the same result is produced as by seeking the Lord with his whole heart and believing in the Lord Jesus. If it were so, there would be a fine broad road to Heaven and Satan, himself, would turn pilgrim! Believe me, dear Hearers, this saving of trouble will turn out to be a *making* of trouble and, before matters end, the hardest way will turn out to be the easiest way!

This kind of building without a foundation has this advantage to back up the temptation—it enables a man to run up a religion very quickly. He makes splendid progress! While the anxious heart is searching after the Truth of God in the inward parts and begging to be renewed by Grace, his exulting friend is as happy as he can be in a peace which he has suddenly obtained without question or examination. This rapid grower never asks, “Has my religion changed my conduct? Is my faith attended by a new nature? Does the Spirit of God dwell in me? Am I really what I profess to be, or am I but a bastard professor, after all?” No, he puts aside all enquiry as a temptation of the devil! He takes every good thing for granted and votes that all is gold which glitters!

Look how fast he goes! The fog is dense, but he steams through it, heedless of danger! He has joined the Church—he has commenced work for God! He is boasting of his own attainments—he hints that he is perfect! But is this mushroom building safe? Will it pass muster in the last, great survey? Will it stand should a tempest happen? The chimney shaft is tall, but is it safe? Yes, there’s the rub! This is the question which makes an end of much of the boasting which is all around us. It is better to tremble at God’s Word than boldly to presume. It is better to be fearful, lest, after all, we may be castaways, than to harden one’s forehead with vain confidence. When a man travels upon a wrong road, the faster he runs, the further he will go astray.

Remember the advice to go slowly and the old proverb which says, "The more haste the less speed." If you build quickly because you build without a foundation, your time and toil are thrown away. How common, how deceptive is this temptation! The young beginner, the man who is just awakened to seek the Lord, will find a great many to help him in his mistake, should he neglect the foundation. Kind, good, Christian friends often, without a thought of doing so, help to mislead seeking souls. "Yes," they say, "you are converted," and so, perhaps, the person would be if all he said were true! But it is said without feeling; it comes from the lips, only, and does not come from the heart! And, therefore, it is ruinous to encourage him. A kindly assurance from a Christian friend may breed false confidence if that assurance was mistakenly given.

In these days, we do not meet with many Christians who err by dealing too severely with converts—the shot strikes the other target. Our forefathers were possibly too suspicious and jealous, but nowadays we nearly all err in the opposite direction—we are so anxious to see everybody brought to Christ that our wish may tend to delude us into the belief that it is so. We are so willing to cheer and comfort those who seek the Lord, that we may fall into the habit of prophesying smooth things and thus shun everything which tends to probe and test, lest it should also discourage. Let us beware lest we cry, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace! It will be a sad thing to breed hypocrites when we were looking for converts.

I have heard of one who had been into the Enquiry Room a dozen times and when, on another occasion, she was invited to go there, she said, "I really do not know why I should go, for I have been told that I was saved 12 times, already, and I am not a bit better than before they told me so." It would be better to send some home weeping rather than rejoicing! Many a wound needs the knife more than the plaster. You may be comforted by well-meant assurances of tender friends and yet that comfort may be all a lie! I therefore warn you against any peace except that which comes from doing that which Jesus commands, or, in other words, against any confidence except that which rests in only Jesus and is attended with repentance, faith and a life of obedience to your Lord.

No doubt man are encouraged in slight building by the fact that so many professors are making a fair show and yet their building is without foundation. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that in all Churches there are persons who have no depth of spiritual root and, we are afraid, no real spiritual life. We cannot root them up, though we fear that they are tares, for we are assured that we would unavoidably root up the wheat with them—and this our Master forbids. There is nothing about their outward conduct which we could lay hold upon as a proof of their being deceivers, and yet a cold chill runs through us when we talk with them, for they have no warmth, no life and nothing of the Lord about them.

We miss in their conversation that sweet spirituality, that holy unction, that blessed humility which are sure to be present when men are truly familiar with the Lord and have entered into living union with Him. People of this order mix up with us in our holy convocations—and when they come across the newly-awakened ones—they talk of Divine things in such

an off-hand and flippant manner that they do serious mischief. They speak about conversion as if it were a mere trifle, a matter as easy as kissing your hand—and those who are hopeful, and over whom our hearts are yearning—are turned aside by them. Young people are apt to think, “So-and-So is a member of the Church and he is never very precise. If a lukewarm profession satisfies him, why should it not satisfy me!”

Ah, my dear Friends, you would not say so in business! If you knew a man was trading without capital and likely to come to bankruptcy, you would not say, “I may do the same.” If you saw a man venturing into deep water who could not swim, and you felt sure that he would ultimately drown, you would not follow his example and drown, too. No, no! Do not let these frothy professors be beacons to you. Get away from Mr. Talkative, lest he make you as hollow a drum as he is! Beware of loose professors who are as wreckers’ lights that lure men upon the rocks. Make sure work for eternity and bid triflers be gone.

Again, there is always, at the back of all this, an inducement to build without a foundation because it will not be known and possibly may not be found out for years. Foundation work is quite out of sight—and the house can be built up and be very useful in a great many ways—and it may stand a good while without the underground work, for houses without foundations do not tumble down at once—they will stand for years. Nobody knows how long they may stay up. Perhaps they may even be inhabited with comfort till the last great flood. Death, alone, will discover some impostors. Therefore, because the ill-founded house will do for the present—and can be used and may bring immediate comfort—many people consider it economical to leave out the foundation as a needless superfluity.

If they are questioned as to their vital godliness, they grow angry—“What business have you to enter into my private business? Why should you meddle with the secrets of my soul?” Ah, dear Friend, if we were cruel to you and wished you to be deceived, we would hold our tongues, or speak to you with the voice of flattery! But as we love you and as we hope to be blessed, in years to come, through your true and holy consecration to Christ, we are intensely earnest that you should begin aright. We would have you build that which will not need to be pulled down, again—work that will stand when the waters are out and the stream beats vehemently upon it! I dread that any man should perish without religion, but I dread far more that any man should perish *with* it, finding his faith to have been false, after all!

If you build, build what is worth building! If you must be builders for your souls, and surely you must, or else be shelterless, then take heed on what foundation you build and be careful what you build, lest, after all, you suffer the loss of all your labor in that last tremendous day! How sad it will seem to dwell near the gates of Heaven—and spend your lives among those who are to be its future inhabitants—and then for lack of sincerity and truth, to be shut out of the Celestial City! How terrible to find out by experience that there is a back way to the gates of Hell even from the gates of Heaven! God grant it be not so with one of us here present.

O you builders, care not merely for the present, but build for death, judgment and eternity! This part of our discourse is not only for young people, but for us all—for old as well as young. Depend upon it, there is not one man among us but what has need to search himself and see whether the foundation of his faith has been truly laid or not.

II. So I advance to the second step, where we will consider—A WISE PRECAUTION WHICH SAFE BUILDERS NEVER FORGET. They dig deep and never rest till they have a good substantial foundation—they are glad to get to the bottom of all the loose earth and to build on the rock. Let me commend this wise precaution to all of you. Follow the text and learn to see to your sincerity. The Lord Jesus says, “Why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” May the Holy Spirit make you true to the core. Be afraid to say a word more than you feel. Never permit yourself to speak as if you had an experience of which you have only read. Let not your outward worship go a step beyond the inward emotion of your soul. If Christ is truly your Lord, you will obey Him—if He is not your Lord, do not call Him so.

It is a great point in all your religious thoughts, beliefs, words and acts to have the heart moving in all. It is an awful thing to make a high profession of sanctity and yet live in the indulgence of secret vice. Such persons will listen to my observation and commend me for my faithfulness and yet continue in their hypocrisy! This is most painful. These men can speak the Jew’s language and yet the tongue of Babylon is more natural to them—they follow Christ, but their hearts are with Belial. Ah, me! My soul is sick at the thought of them. Be true! Be true! If truth will carry you no further than despair, better that you stop in despair than gain a hope by a lie! Do not live on fiction, profession, presumption. Eat that which is good and feed only upon the Truth of God. Remember that when you build with wood, hay and stubble of mere notion, you are only gathering materials for your own funeral pile in that day when the fire shall devour all lovers and makers of a lie. Be true as steel! Every wise builder for his soul must mind that.

The next thing is thoroughness. For observe, according to our Lord, the wise builder dug deep. You cannot do a right thing too well. Dig deep if you dig a foundation. If it is repentance, let it be an intensely earnest repentance, including a vehement hatred of every form of sin. If you make confession before God, confess with your very soul and not only with your lips—lay bare your spirit before the glance of Deity. If it is faith that you talk of, believe right up to the hilt. Do not go in for that kind of skeptical believing which is so common, nowadays. If you believe, believe! If you repent, repent! In the purging of the soul, there is nothing like sweeping out every particle of the old leaven of falsehood. And in bringing in the good things into the heart, there is nothing like bringing in everything that Christ prescribes—so that of His fullness we may receive not only Grace, but Grace for Grace, Grace upon Grace, all the Grace that is needed!

Be downright in everything. The wise builder dug through the earth and continued his digging till he reached rock. And then he dug into the rock and struck out a trench in which he might lay his foundation, for he could not be content unless he made sure and thorough work of it. Sin-

cerity and thoroughness are fine building materials! Next to that add self-renunciation, for that is in the parable. When a man digs a deep foundation, he has much earth to throw out. So he that builds for eternity has a great deal to get rid of. Self-trust must go at the beginning! Love of sin must follow—worldliness, pride, self-seeking, all sorts of iniquity—these must be cast aside. There is very much rubbish and the rubbish must go! You cannot make sure work for eternity without clearing away much which flesh and blood would like to retain. See to this and count the cost.

Then must come solid principle. The man who is determined that if he does build, he will build securely, digs down to the rock. He says, “I believe in God, He is my Helper. I believe in Christ Jesus and on His atoning sacrifice and living intercession I build my eternal hopes. I also build on the Doctrine of Grace, for the Lord has said it—By Grace are you saved, through faith. I build on Scripture—nothing but the warrant of the Word of God will do for me.” What God has said is a rock—what man teaches is mere shifting sand! What a blessed thing it is to get down to the eternal principles of Divine Truth! You that pick up your religion from your mothers and fathers—you that follow it because it happened to be in the family—what are you worth in the day of trouble? You are blown down like a booth, or a hut of twigs!

But you that know *what* you believe and *why* you believe it—you who, when you put your foot down, know what you are standing upon and are persuaded that you have firm rock beneath you—you are the men and women who will stand fast when mere pretenders are burled out of their place! Oh, my dear seeking Friends, fix upon true principles and be not content with lies! These truthful principles must be firmly adhered to. Bind your building to the rock. A house will not stand merely because it is on the rock—you must get its *foundation* into the rock. The house must take a grip of the rock and the rock must grasp the house. The more you can get the house to be a bit of the rock and the rock, as it were, to grow up into the house, the more secure you are.

It is of no use saying, “Yes, I confide in Christ, in Grace, in Revelation,” unless your very life enters into these things and they enter into you! Hypocrites, Job says, are stolen away in the night. They are easily removed. The inventor of some new notion comes along, cracks up his novel wares, and silly souls are at once taken in by him. Christ may go, Grace may go and the Bible may go, too—their new master has them wholly in his power. We do not need such unsubstantial men! We care not for these speculating builders whose carcasses are all around us! We have had enough of castles in the air—we need true men who will stand fast like the mountains—while errors, like clouds, blow over them! Remember the huge shaft at Bradford and how many were slain by its fall? Let it teach you to hold hard to foundation Truths of God and never depart from them.

The man in the second parable did not build as he should. What may I say of him? I will say three words. First, he was a man who had nothing out of sight—you could see all his house when you looked at it. If you can see all a man’s religion at a glance, he has no religion worth having! Godliness lies most in secret prayer, private devotion and inward Grace. The wise builder had the most costly part of his house buried in the ground,

but the other man showed all that *he* had *above* ground. He is a poor tradesman who has no stock but that which he puts into the window. He will not last long who has no capital. He cannot long stand who has no backbone within. Beware of a religion of show!

Next, this man had nothing to hold to. He built a house, but it stood upon the loose soil. He easily dug into that and stuck up his house but his walls had no holdfast. Beware of a religion without holdfasts! “But if I get a grip upon a doctrine, they call me a bigot” you say. Let them do so! Bigotry is a hateful thing and yet that which is now abused as bigotry is a great virtue and greatly needed in these frivolous times! I have been inclined, lately, to start a new denomination, and call it, “the Church of the Bigoted.” Everybody is getting to be so oily, so plastic, so untrue, that we need a race of hard-shells to teach us how to believe!

Those old-fashioned people who, in former ages, believed something and thought the opposite of it to be false, were truer folk than the present time-servers. I should like to ask the divines of the broad school whether *any* doctrine is worth a man’s dying for it. They would have to reply, “Well, of course, if a man had to go to the stake or change his opinions, the proper way would be to state them with much diffidence and to be extremely respectful to the opposite school.” But suppose he is required to deny the Truth of God? “Well, there is much to be said on each side, and probably the negative may have a measure of truth in it as well as the positive. At any rate, it cannot be a prudent thing to incur the odium of being burned, and so it might be preferable to leave the matter an open question for the time being.”

Yes, and as these gentlemen always find it unpleasant to be unpopular, they soften down the hard threats of Scripture as to the world to come and put a color upon every doctrine to which worldly-wise men object! The teachers of doubt are very doubtful teachers! A man must have something to hold to, or he will neither bless himself or others. Bring all the ships into the pool but do not moor or anchor one of them—let each one be free! Wait for a stormy night and they will dash against each other—and great mischief will come of this freedom! Perfect love and charity will not come through our being all unmoored, but by each having his proper moorings and keeping to them in the name of God. You must have something to hold to!

But the builder in the parable had not, and so he perished. The foolish builder had nothing to resist outward circumstances. On summer days his house was a favorite resort and was considered to be quite as good as his neighbor’s in all respects. Frequently he rubbed his hands and said, “I do not see but what my house is quite as good as his and perhaps a little better! The fact is, I had a few pounds to spare which I did not bury in the ground, as he did, and with it I have bought many a little ornament, so that my habitation has a finer look than his building.” So it seemed—but when the torrent came raging down the mountain side, his building, having nothing with which to resist the violence of the flood, fell down at once—and not a trace of it remained when the storm had ceased. Thus do men fail because they offer no resistance to forces which drive them into sin—the great current of evil finds in them *victims*—not opponents.

III. Thirdly, we will now gather from our text A SET OF ARGUMENTS URGING US TO TAKE CARE OF THE FOUNDATION. I will glance over these arguments, wishing much that I had time to enforce them. The first is this. We ought to build with a good foundation at the beginning, because otherwise we shall not build well in any other part of the house. Bad work in the foundation influences all the rest of the courses. In the Revised Version, at the end of the 48th verse, instead of, "For it was founded upon a rock," we read, "Because it had been well built." The house was built well at the bottom and that led the workman to put in good work all the way up, so that all through, "it had been well built."

The other man built badly underground and did the same up to the roof! When you get into the habit of slovenly work in secret, the tendency is to be slovenly in public, too. If the underground part of our religion is not firmly laid upon Christ, then in the upper part there will be rotten work, half-baked bricks, mud instead of mortar and a general skimping of everything. When a great Grecian artist was fashioning an image for the temple, he was diligently carving the back part of the goddess, and one said to him, "You need not finish that part of the statue, because it is to be built into the wall." He replied, "The gods can see in the wall." He had a right idea of what is due to God! That part of my religion which no man can see should be as perfect as if it were to be observed by all. The Day shall declare it! When Christ shall come, everything shall be made known and published before the universe. Therefore see to it that it is fit to be thus made known.

See, again, that we ought to have good foundations when we look at the situation where the house is to be built. It is clear from this parable that both these houses were built in places not far from a river, or where streams might be expected to come. Certain parts of the South of France are marvelously like Palestine and, perhaps at the present moment, they are more like what the Holy Land was in Christ's day than the Holy Land is now. When I reached Cannes, last year, I found that there had been a flood in the town. This flood did not come by reason of a river being swollen, but through a deluge of rain. A waterspout seems to have burst upon the hillside tearing up earth, rocks, stones and then hurrying down to the sea. It rushed across the railway station and poured down the street which led to it, drowning several persons in its progress.

When I was there a large hotel—I should think five stories high—was shored up with timber and was evidently doomed, for when this stream rushed down the narrow street it undermined the lower courses of the building and, as there were no foundations at all able to bear such a test, the whole structure was rendered unsafe. The Savior had some such case in His mind's eye. A torrent of water would come tearing down the side of the mountain—and if a house were built on the mere earth, it would be carried away—but if it were fastened into the rock so that it became part and parcel of it, then the flood might rush all around it, but it would not shake the walls.

Beloved builder of a house for your soul, your house is so situated that one of these days there must come great pressure upon it. "How do you know?" Well, I know that the house in which *my* soul lives is pitched just

where winds blow, waves rise and storms beat. Where is yours? Do you live in a snug corner? Yes, but one of these times you will find that the snug corner will be no more shielded than the open riverside, for God so orders Providence that every man has his test sooner or later! It may be that you think yourself past temptation, but the idea is a delusion, as time will show! Perhaps from the very fact that you seem quite out of the way, a peculiar temptation may befall you. Therefore, I pray you, because of the exposed condition of your life's building, build upon a good foundation!

The next argument is, build deep, because of the ruin which will result from a bad foundation. The foolish builder's house was without a foundation. Notice that word, "without a foundation." Write down the expression and see whether they apply to you or not. What happened to this house without a foundation? The stream beat vehemently on it! The river's bed had long been dry, but suddenly it was flooded and the torrent rolled with tremendous power. Perhaps it was persecution. Perhaps it was prosperity. Perhaps it was trouble, or temptation. Perhaps it was prevalent skepticism or death, but, whatever—the flood beat vehemently upon that house!

And now we read the next word—"And immediately it fell." It did not stand a prolonged assault! It was captured at once. "Immediately it fell." What? In a minute all that fair profession gone? "Immediately it fell." Why, that is the man I shook hands with the other Sunday and called him, "Brother," and he has been seen drunk! Or he has been in the frivolous assembly, using unhallowed language! Or he has become an utter doubter all on a sudden! It is sorrowful work burying our friends, but it is much more sorrowful work to lose them in this fashion—and yet so they vanish. They are gone! Even as Job says "the east wind carries him away and he departs." "Immediately" they fall and yet we thought so highly of them—and they thought so highly of themselves. "Immediately it fell"—their profession could not endure trial—and all because it had no foundation!

Then it is added, "And the ruin of that house was great." The house came down with a crash and it was all the man had. The man was an eminent professor and, therefore, his ruin was all the more notable. It was a great fall because it could never be built up, again. When a man dies a hypocrite, certainly there is no hope of restitution for him. By the stream the very debris of the ruined house was swept away. Nothing was left. Oh, men, if you lose a battle, you may fight, again, and win another. If you fail in business you may start, again, in trade and realize a fortune. But if you lose your *souls*, the loss is irretrievable! Once lost, forever lost! There will be no second opportunity! Do not deceive yourselves about that. Therefore, dig deep and lay every stone most firmly upon the foundation of rock.

For lastly, and perhaps this will be the best argument, observe the effect of this good, sure building—this deep building. We read that when the flood beat upon the wise man's house, "it could not shake it." That is very beautiful. Not only could it not carry it away, but, "it could not shake it." I see the man—he lost his money and became poor, but he did not give up his faith—"It could not shake it." He was ridiculed and slandered. And many of his former friends gave him the cold shoulder—but, "It could not shake it." He went to Jesus under his great trial and he was sustained—

“It could not shake it.” He was very sick and his spirit was depressed within him, but he still held to his confidence in Christ—“It could not shake it.”

He was near to death. He knew that he must soon depart out of this world, but all the pains of death and the certainty of dissolution could not shake him. He died as he lived—firm as a rock, rejoicing as much as ever, nay—rejoicing *more* because he was nearer to the Kingdom and to the fruition of all his hopes! “It could not shake it.” It is a grand thing to have a faith which cannot be shaken! I saw, one day, a number of beech trees which had formed a small forest—they had all fallen to the ground through a storm. The fact was they leaned upon one another, to a great extent, and the thickness of the forest prevented each tree from getting a firm hold of the soil. They kept each other up and also forced each other to grow up tall and thin, to the neglect of a strong root growth. When the storm forced down the first few trees, the others readily followed one after the other.

Close to that same spot, I saw another tree in the open, bravely defying the blast, in solitary strength. The hurricane had beaten upon it, but it had endured all its force unsheltered! That lone, brave tree seemed to be better rooted than before the storm. I thought, “Is it not so with professors?” They often hold together and help each other to grow up, but if they have not firm *personal* roothold, when a storm arises they fall in rows. A minister dies, or certain leaders are taken away—and over go the members by departure from the faith and from holiness! I would have you be self-contained, growing, each man, into Christ for himself, rooted and grounded in love and faith and every holy Grace. Then when the worse storm that ever blew on mortal man shall come, it will be said of your faith, “It could not shake it.”

I beseech you who are now seeking Christ to take care that you build well, that you may stand long in our Zion, steadfast and unmovable. God grant it for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE CENTURION—OR, AN EXHORTATION TO THE VIRTUOUS NO. 600

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

“And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom He should do this: for he loves our nation and he has built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when He was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying unto Him, Lord, trouble not Yourself: for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof: why neither thought I myself worthy to come unto You: but say in a word and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers and I say unto one, Go and he goes. And to another, Come and he comes. And to my servant, Do this and he does it. When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him and turned Him about and said unto the people that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”
Luke 7:4-9.

THIS Centurion certainly had a high reputation. Two features of character blend in him which do not often meet in such graceful harmony. He won the high opinion of others and yet he held a low estimation of himself. There are some who think little of themselves. And they are quite correct in their feelings as all the world would endorse the estimate of their littleness. Others there are who think great things of themselves—but the more they are known the less they are praised—and the higher they carry their heads the more the world laughs them to scorn!

Nor is it unusual for men to think great things of themselves because the world commends or flatters them. They robe themselves with pride and cloak themselves with vanity because they have by some means, either rightly or wrongly, won the good opinion of others. There are very few who have the happy combination of the text. The elders say of the centurion that he is worthy. But he says of himself, “Lord, I am not worthy!”

They commend him for building God a house. But he thinks that he is not worthy that Christ should come under the roof of his house. They plead his merit. But he pleads his demerit.

Thus he appeals to the power of Christ apart from anything that he felt in himself or thought of himself. O that you and I might have this blessed combination in ourselves! To win the high opinion of others, so far as it can be gained by integrity, by uprightness and by decision of character and yet at the same time to walk humbly with our God! Now there are three things I shall speak about tonight and may God make them profitable. First, here is a high character. Secondly, here is deep humility. And, thirdly, here is, notwithstanding that deep humility, a very mighty faith.

I. To begin, then, dear Friends, here is A HIGH CHARACTER. Let us thoroughly appreciate it and give it a full measure of commendation. When preaching Jesus Christ to the chief of sinners, we have sometimes half dreamed that some who are moral and upright might think themselves excluded—they ought not to think so, nor is it fair for them to draw such an inference. We have heard the whisper of some who have said they could almost wish that they had been more abandoned and dissolute in the days of their unregeneracy so they might have a deeper repentance and be witnesses of a more palpable and thorough change and that they might never have cause to doubt of the triumph of Grace in their experience!

We have even heard some say, “I could have wished that I had groveled in the very mire of sin—not that I love it—on the contrary, I loathe it. But because had I then to be rescued from such a course of life, the change would be so manifest and apparent that I should never dare to ask myself whether I was a changed man or not. I should *feel* it and *see* it in my daily course and conversation.” Dear Friends, if anything we have ever said should have led you into this mistake we are sorry for it—it was never our intention. While we would open the gates of mercy so wide that the greatest blasphemer, the most unchaste and the most debauched may not be without hope—yet we never want to shut those gates in the face of such as have been brought up in a godly manner—those who through the Providence of God and the checks of education have been kept from the grosser vices.

On the contrary, we thought that when we opened it for the worst there would be room for the best! And if Noah’s ark took in the unclean, certainly the clean would not be afraid to enter. If Jesus Christ was able to cure those who were far gone in sickness, you might infer that He would certainly be able to heal those who, though they were sick, might not be so far advanced in disease! Besides, a little reflection may suggest to you that the penitence of contrite Believers is not regulated by the extent of their crimes against what you call the moral code. It is one thing to estimate sin by its apparent turpitude and another and an infinitely better

thing to have the eyes of the understanding enlightened—to see sin in its infinite malignity as it appears in the light of heavenly purity and perfection which proceeds from the Throne of God, or as it is reflected from Mount Calvary where the amazing Sacrifice of Christ was offered.

What? Do you think the whitewashed sepulcher of a Pharisee's heart is less loathsome to the Almighty than the open pollution of a Magdalene's life? Or, in the matter of experience, could the recollection of a thousand debaucheries give such a melting sense of contrition as a sight of the Crucified One? O Friends, let me remind you of the words of Jesus, "When He"—the Spirit of Truth—"is come, He will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me."

That one sin of unbelief is such a concentration of all wickedness that it could outweigh the crimes of Sodom and Gomorrah and make them more excusable in the Day of Judgment than the men of Capernaum who saw the mighty works of Christ and did not repent! That one sin of unbelief is so heinous that the groans of the whole creation were but pitiful sighs to deplore it! And rivers of tears were but a weak tribute to lament it. However, as mistakes do arise and misapprehensions will take place, let us have a few words concerning a high character in the sight of men. Such a character among your fellow creatures may be gained in any situation.

The centurion was a soldier—a profession of life not altogether the most favorable for moral excellence—though there have been in the army some of the brightest saints that ever lived. He was a soldier, moreover, in a foreign country—not the place where he was likely to win esteem. He was there as one of the representatives of a power which had conquered Judea and had treated it with great cruelty. Yet, notwithstanding the prejudices of race and nationality, this man's kindness of disposition and goodness of conduct had won for him the esteem of others.

Moreover, being a commander of soldiers, he, naturally, would be blamed for every act of violence committed by his soldiers. Whatever might be done by his hundred men would be laid to the captain, so that his was a condition of peculiar difficulty and yet, notwithstanding this, the elders said, "He is worthy." Let none of you despair! Wherever you may be placed, a noble character may be earned. You may serve God in the most menial capacity but you may compel your very foes to admit your excellence! You may stand without blame before men and you may walk so uprightly before God that those who watch for your stumbling may bite their lips with disappointment—while they shall not have a single word to say against you except it is about the religion of your God and King.

Let no man, wherever he may be thrown—though he is surrounded by those who tempt him—despair, especially if the Grace of God is in him. Let him pray like Joab that he may have favor in the eyes of his Master and expect to win it. This centurion must have been a man of sterling

worth. He was not merely quiet and inoffensive like some men who are as dull as they are harmless. Though a high character may be won, it cannot be won without being *earned*. Men do not get character among their fellows by indolence and listlessness, or by pretensions and talk. Action! Action!—this is what the world wants!

And there is more truth than we have dreamed of in Nelson's opinion—"England expects every man to do his duty." Certainly men will not speak well of you unless you do well. This centurion did so, for you will observe that they said he was worthy—which must have signified that he was just in his dealings and generous in his habits—or they would not have thought him worthy. It would appear, too, that his private temperament as well as his public spirit contributed to the estimation in which he was held. You will notice in the circumstances which bring him before us, how his tender feelings and his intense anxiety were drawn out on behalf, not of a child, but of a *servant*—perhaps of a slave!

And then we might have thought it had been enough to have said that the man was highly valued by his master—but the expression is one of fondness—he was, "dear unto him." The fidelity of the servant may be implied, but it is the *amiability* of the master which is most prominent and chiefly arrests our attention. Nor need we overlook the fact that Matthew lays an emphasis upon the servant being, "at home," under his master's roof. We know that the Romans were not remarkable for the kindness they showed to their dependants—often they were merely looked upon as slaves.

Why, in our own days and in the midst of our boasted civilization, when Christianity has exerted a salutary influence upon all our social relations, I suppose it is not uncommon for a domestic servant to go home to her parents' house in the case of sickness. It is not every good man among us, I fear, whose gentleness would equal that of the centurion in the love which he bears to his servant and the comfort he provided for him in his own house!

Next to this you will observe his generosity. It is not, my dear Friends, by occasional deeds of showy luster but by the habitual practice of lovely virtues that a worthy character is built up. A thousand kindnesses may be nestling beneath the soil like the many-fibred root of a gigantic tree, when it is said, "He loves our nation," and then the conspicuous fruit appears in its season—"He has built us a synagogue." This example of liberality is spoken of as a mere supplement. The Jewish elders do not say, "He loves our nation" *for*—but they say, "he loves our nation *and* he has built us a synagogue." This last was a visible token of innumerable good offices which had already won their secret esteem before it bloomed in an open reputation.

I have heard all sorts of men praised and I have noted the qualities which win the plaudits of the crowd. Even the high and haughty have

some to praise them. But I think I never heard a niggardly man praised, or one who was perpetually guilty of meanness. Let him have whatever virtues he may, if he lack liberality, few, if any, will speak well of him. Let me commend liberality to the Christian—in all his actions and benevolence—in all his thoughts. This may sound commonplace, but I am persuaded that the little tricks in trade—those little savings of the pence, those sharp dealings—are just the things which bring religion into disrepute. It were infinitely better that the Christian should pay too much than too little. He had better be blamed for an excess of generosity than take credit to himself for a rigid stinginess.

Rather let him become, now and then, the dupe of an imposter than shut up the heart of his compassion against his fellow man. I would seek, Christian man, to win a noble character. I cannot see how you can do so except you should put generosity into the scale and enroll it in the list of your virtues. A high character, when earned, is very useful. I am saying this because some might imagine that in the preaching of the Gospel we put the base and the wicked before those who have walked uprightly. A good character, a good reputation in the esteem of men, when earned, may win for us as it did for this centurion, kind thoughts, kind words, kind acts, kind prayers.

There is many a man who will pray for you if he sees you walk uprightly. Yes, and your very adversary who would otherwise have cursed you, will find the curse trembling on his tongue. Though he would gladly scorn, yet does he bate his breath, abashed at your excellencies. Let the Christian labor so to live that he shall not lack a friend. “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,” is one of Christ’s own precepts. If to stoop, to cringe, to lie, wins you friends, do not do it! But if with uprightness before God you can still mingle such affection and such generosity towards men that you shall win their support, do it, I pray you. The time may come when their sympathy shall befriend you.

But remember, and here I close this point, however good your character or however excellent your reputation, not one word of this is ever to be mentioned before the Throne of the Most High. Job could say when he was talking with his adversaries, “I am not wicked.” He could boast in his excellencies, as he did. But in the Presence of God how he changed his note—“Now my eyes see You: why I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Coming before the Lord, we must all come as sinners. When on your knees you have nothing to boast of more than the worst rogue or the man who has sinned against his country’s laws. There, at the foot of the Cross, one needs the cleansing blood as much as the other. At mercy’s gate we must alike knock and we must be fed by the same generous hand. There are no degrees here—we enter by the same door. We come to the same Savior.

And we shall ultimately—Glory be to His name!—sit together in the same Heaven whether we have earned a good reputation or not! Whether we have crept into Heaven, as the thief did at the eleventh hour, or through forty and five years of public service earned the applause of men, as did Caleb the son of Jephunneh—

**“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling,”**

must be the common footing and the like confession of both before the God of Mercy. Thus much by way of tribute to the high character of the centurion and the high motives to emulate it.

II. Secondly, in the centurion we see coupled with this high and noble repute, DEEP HUMILIATION OF SOUL. “I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.” Humility, then, it appears, may exist in any condition. There are some men who are too mean to be humble. Do you understand me? They are too crouching, crawling, sneaky and abject to be humble. When they use humble words, they disgrace the words they use! You perceive at once that it is rather a rise than a stoop for them to be humble.

How could it be otherwise? It certainly is not for the least vermin that creep the earth to talk about humility. They must be low—it is their proper place. Such the creatures who cringe and fawn—“Whatever you please, Sir,” “Yes,” “No,” in the same breath. They have not a soul within them that would be worth the notice of a sparrow hawk. They are too little to be worthy of observation yet they say they are humble! A man, to be humble, needs to have a soul—to stoop, you must have some elevation to stoop from. You must have some real excellence within you before you can really understand what it is to renounce merit.

Had the centurion been unworthy, had he been ungenerous and an oppressor, he would have spoken the truth when he said, “I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.” But there would have been no true humility in what he said. It was because of his *excellence*, as acknowledged by *others*, that he could be humble in the modesty of his opinion of himself. We have heard of a certain monk who, professing to be humble, said he had broken all God’s Commandments. He said he was the greatest sinner in the world—he was as bad as Judas. Somebody said, “Why tell us that? We have all of us thought that a long time!” Straightway the holy man grew red in the face and struck the accuser and asked him what he had ever done to deserve such an accusation!

We know some of that kind—they will use the words of humility, appear very contrite and perhaps even at Prayer Meetings you would think them the meekest and most broken-hearted of men—but if you were to take them at their word, straightway they would tell you they use the language as some ecclesiastical personages do, in a non-natural sense! They do not quite mean what they were supposed to mean, but something very differ-

ent. That is *not* humility—it is a kind of mock-modesty which hankers after applause and holds out specious words as a bait for the trap of approbation.

Our centurion was truly humble. This a man may be, though possessing the highest excellence and standing in the most eminent position. I believe, in my soul, that no man had truer humility in him than John Knox and yet John Knox never cringed and never bowed. When Luther dared the thunders of the Vatican, no doubt many said how self-conceited, egotistical and proud he was. But for all that, God knew how humbly Martin Luther walked with Him. When Athanasius stood up and said, “I, Athanasius, against the world,” it had the ring of pride about it—but there was true and sound humility before God in it—because he seemed to say, “What am I? Not worthy of taking care of. And therefore I do not use the deceptions of cowardice for my own personal safety. Let the world do what it will to me, God’s Truth is infinitely more precious than I am and so I give myself up as an offering upon its altar.”

True humility will agree with the highest chivalry in maintaining Divine Truth and with the boldest assertion of what one knows in his own conscience to be true. Though it may be the lot of Christians to be thought proud, let it never be true or capable of being substantiated concerning them. The centurion, though worthy, was still humble. His friends and neighbors gauged him by what he said and what he did. He asked them to go for him, seeing he was not worthy. Then, finding that they asked too great a gift, he comes to stop them—“I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.”

You need not tell people that you are humble. You have no occasion to advertise that you have genuine humility—let it discover itself as spice does, by its perfume—or as fire, by its burning. If you live near to God and if your humility is of the right kind it will tell its own tale before long. But the place where humility does speak out is at the Throne of Grace. Beloved, there are some things we would confess of ourselves before God which we would not confess before men. There is an attitude of prostration at the Throne of the Most High which will never be so gracefully or graciously taken as by that man who would spurn to prostrate himself before his fellows.

That is not true humility which bends the knee at the tyrant’s throne—that is *true* humility which, having bearded the tyrant to his face, goes down on its knees before the God of Heaven—bold as a lion before men, but meek as a lamb before Jehovah! The true man, whom God approves, will not—dares not—turn aside the love he bears his sovereign Lord when he faces men. But when he is alone with his Maker he veils his face with something better than the wings of angels!

Wrapped all over with the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, he rejoices with fear and trembling that he is justified from all things. Yet,

conscious of the total defilement of his nature, with deep prostration of soul he uses the leper's cry, "Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!" Thus does he fix all his hope upon that cleansing blood and depends alone on that meritorious obedience of Jesus upon which every sanctified Believer exclusively relies. Seek, then, as much as lies in you, that high character which the Christian should maintain among men. But with it always blend that true humility which comes of the Spirit of God and ever behooves us in the Presence of the Lord.

III. The main thing I am aiming at, because, after all, the most practical, lies in my third point. However deep our humility, however conscious we may be of our own unworthiness, **WE SHOULD NEVER DIMINISH OUR FAITH IN GOD.** Observe the confession—"I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof." What then will be the inference? "I fear, therefore, my servant will not be healed"? No, no! But—"Say in a Word and my servant shall be healed"!

It is all a mistake that great faith implies pride. Beloved, the greater the faith, the deeper the humility. These are brothers, not *foes*. The more the Glories of God strike your eyes, the humbler you will lie in conscious abasement but the higher you will rise in importunate prayer! Let us take this principle and endeavor to apply it to a few cases. I say that a deep sense of our own nothingness is not to prevent our having strong faith. We will take a few instances. There is a minister here who has been preaching the Word of God—he has so proclaimed it that God has been pleased to own it in some degree.

But, it may be, he has stirred up strife. He has caused, I know not what amount of turmoil and of noise, as the faithful servant of God will in his measure. And now, coming before God, he is asking that a greater blessing than ever may rest upon his labors. But something checks his tongue. He remembers his many infirmities. He remembers, perhaps, how slack he is in his private devotions and how cold he is in his pleading with the sons of men. He has before Him the promise, "My Word shall not return unto Me void." But for all that, he is so conscious that he does not deserve the honor of being useful that he is half afraid to pray as he should pray and to believe as he should believe.

Dear Brother, may I press upon you the case of the centurion? It is right for you—it is right for *me*, to say, "Lord, I am not worthy to be made the spiritual parent of one immortal soul." It is right for me to feel that it is too great an honor to be permitted to preach the Truth of God at all and almost too high a thing for such a sinner to have any jewels to present to the Redeemer to fix in His crown! But, oh, we must not from this infer that He will not fulfill His promise to us and hear our prayers! "Lord, speak in a Word and, feeble though the instrument may be, the congregation shall be blessed! Say but the Word and the marvelous testimony,

though marred with a thousand imperfections, shall yet be ‘quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.’ ”

Let this comfort and cheer any desponding pastor—let him take heart from this and learn that it is not *himself* to whom he is look to, but that he is to look to God. And that it is not his own arm upon which he is to depend, but the promise of God and the strong arm of the Most High. Or, am I addressing some Brother or Sister in a somewhat similar perplexity of mind? In your private life, dear Friend, you have laid upon your heart some of your relatives and neighbors who are very dear to you.

Or perhaps, you teach a class in the Sunday school, or possibly you have a larger class of adults and sometimes Satan will be very busy with you. The more useful you are, the more busy he will be. And he will say to you, “What are *you*, that *you* should ever hope to see conversions? Other men and women have had them, but they were better than you are—they had more talent. They had more ability. They served God better. And God gave them a greater reward. You must not hope to see your children saved! You cannot expect it. How should such teaching as yours ever be useful?”

Friend, you are right in saying, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof.” The more you can feel that, the more hopeful shall I be of your success! You are right in feeling that David is not fit to meet the giant and that the stones out of the brook are scarcely fit weapons for such a warfare. But, oh, do not push the right into a wrong! Do not, therefore, mistrust your God! No matter what a fool you may be—God has confused wise things by the foolish long before now. No matter how weak you are—God has brought down the mighty by weak instrumentalities often enough before this time!

Have hope in Him and tonight in your prayers, when you have made your confessions, do not let your faith fail you, but say, “Lord, say in a Word and my class shall be blessed! Say in a Word and those stubborn boys and girls, those to whom I have talked so often, who seem to be none the better—shall be saved.” Have faith in God, beloved fellow workers! The result of all, under God, must rest with your *faith*! If you believe for little success, you shall have little success. But if you can believe for great things and expect great things, you shall certainly find your Master’s Words fulfilling your desire!

Do I now also address parents here who have been praying for their children? Or a husband who has been pleading for his wife? Or a wife who has been making intercession for her husband? God only knows what heart-rending prayers are often heard in families where only a part is saved! Ah, what grief is it to a truly godly father to see his sons and daughters still heirs of wrath! And what a pang to know that the partner of your bosom must be separated from you forever by the stroke of death! I marvel not that you pray for your friends! Should I not marvel at you if

you did not? And now, when you have been praying lately, a sense of your unworthiness has almost stopped you. And though, perhaps, there has been no public sin about you—before others you could have defended yourself—you have said in private, “Lord, I am not worthy of this blessing.”

You have said, “Lord, my children are not saved because my example is not as good as it should be. My conversation is not as upright as it should be.” You have felt, as I have sometimes, that there was no creature in the whole world so little and no man loved of God in all the world that was so great a wonder of ingratitude as you are. I say it is right that you should feel this—but do not let this stop your prayers! Offer your request! Depend upon the blood of Christ for its plea and upon the intercession of Christ for its prevalence! Do not be afraid!

An evil hand drops a letter into the post office, but the blackness of that hand will not hinder the dispatch of it. There is a stamp upon it and it will go. And your black hand drops a prayer before Christ’s feet, but that black hand will not stop its being heard, for there is a stamp upon it—Jehovah Jesus’ blood! It may be blotted and misspelled and there may be many blurs all over it, but do not be afraid, for God knows His Son’s signature and that will give a worth to your prayers. It is the bloody signature of Him whose hand was nailed to the Cross that will carry the day with God. Therefore do not, I pray you, give place to fear—your prayers shall return into your bosom with an answer of peace.

“Well, but,” says one, “I have prayed so long.” Ah, Brother, do not, “limit the Holy One of Israel.” Sister, do not let your doubts prevail. Renew your appeal to Jesus, “Say in a Word—only say one Word.” It is all done if He shall speak! Darkness fled before Him in the primeval chaos and order followed confusion. Do you think, if He shall say, “Let there be light” in a dark heart, that there shall not be light there? Angels fly at His bidding—at His Presence the rocks melt and the hills dissolve—Sinai is altogether on a smoke. And when He comes forth, dressed in the robes of salvation, there are no impossibilities with Him. He can win and conquer to your heart’s best desire. Therefore be humble, but be not unbelieving.

By your leave, I shall now turn the principle of my text to an account in another way. Concerning yourselves, Friends, what are the mercies which *you* want? If every man could write down his own peculiar prayer, what a variety we should have upon the paper as it just went round the front row of that gallery. If it went round to all, it would not be like Jeremiah’s roll, written within and without with lamentations, but it would be filled within and without with many petitions! But now just imagine what your own case is and the case of others and let us apply this principle to it—we are utterly unworthy to obtain the temporal or spiritual mercy which, it may be, we are now seeking—we may feel this, but in asking anything for our-

selves we must still ask in faith in God—in His promise and in His Grace—and we shall prevail.

This blessed principle may be turned to all sorts of uses. Whatever your desire may be, only believe and it shall be granted unto you if it is a desire in accordance with His will and in accordance with the promises of His Word—or else God's Word is not true. Be humble about it, but do not be *doubtful* about it. The case I have in my mind's eye is this—there is an unsaved soul here tonight. It happens to be one whose character has been morally admirable. Nobody finds any fault with you, and, as I said before, you almost wish they could! You cannot feel, as some do, the terrors of the Lord. Your heart is not broken with conviction as the hearts of some are, but there is this desire in it, "Lord, save me, or I perish!"

Now, dear Friend, it is well that you should feel that there is nothing in you to commend you to Christ. I am glad that you feel this. Though before the eyes of men and even of your own parents there is nothing which can cause you a blush, I am glad that you feel that before God you have nothing whatever to boast of. I think I see you now—you are saying, "My Church goings, my Chapel goings, I do not trust in them—I would not give up attendance at the means of Grace, but, Sir, I have no reliance upon all this. As for my Baptism, or my confirmation, or my taking the sacrament, I know that all this has nothing whatever in it which can save my soul. And though I love God's ordinances, yet I cannot trust in them. Sir, I have fed the poor. I have taught the ignorant. In my measure I would do anything to assist those who need my aid. But I do solemnly renounce all this as a ground of trust. I have nothing of which to glory."

Well now, dear Friend, there remains only one thing to give you perfect peace tonight! And may the Master give you that one thing! Lift up this prayer to Him, "Say in a Word and I shall be made whole." Christ can do it! The offering is made. The precious blood is spilt. There is an almighty efficacy in it—He can put away your sin. Christ lives to intercede before the Throne and "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Doubt not, then, but now, trusting yourself with Jesus Christ, remember you are saved!

I am not now looking for the vilest of the vile. How many times have we said from this place that none are excluded? None but those who exclude themselves. No mountains of sin nor height of vileness can shut a man out of Heaven if he believes in Jesus—but just now we are after you. I know you are a numerous class. You are, in some respects, our dear Friends. And though not of us, you hover round us. If there is anything to be done for the cause of God, you are, perhaps, first in it. And yet you, yourselves, are not saved! I cannot bear the thought of your being cast away—to be so near the gates of Heaven and yet to be shut out after all! Why should it be? The voice speaks to you now—the Spirit of the living God speaks through that voice.

There is life in a *look* for you as well as for the chief of sinners! Without the strong convictions, without the terrors of conscience, without a sense of any aggravated crimes—if you rest on Jesus, you are saved! There is no amount of sin specified there. You are lost in the Fall—wholly lost—even if you had no sin of your own. But your own actual sin has irretrievably ruined you apart from the Grace of Christ. You know this and to an extent you feel it. You will feel it all the more when you have believed in Jesus. But now the one message of mercy is, “Believe and you shall live.” I feel as if I cannot get at you. My soul will not go out as I desire and yet you know that I am talking about you and about your case.

When we are firing our shots at sin we hardly ever strike you. You have become so used to our appeals that there seems no likelihood of our getting at you. Oh, there are some of you whom I would not find fault with if I could. You make your mother glad with your industry. You make your sister’s heart rejoice at your many virtues. But yet there is one thing which you lack! Remember that when the strength of a chain is to be measured, it is measured at its one weakest link. If you have that one weak link, the vital union is snapped.

You may have anything and everything else, but you will be only a child of nature and not a living son! I am only telling you over and over Truths of God which you have known for many years. You will not dispute these things. And sometimes you feel an earnestness about your eternal portion, though, like so many others, you are putting off and putting off. But death will not put off! The Judgment Day will not be postponed for you. O may you be brought in now! What a happy Church we should be if such as you should be brought in. We rejoice over the chief of sinners—we make the place ring when the prodigals come in. But elder Brother, why will *you* not come in?

You who have not been standing all the day in the market idle, but only the first hour—say not, no man has hired you. O come in, that the house of mercy may be filled! God grant the desire of our hearts and to His name shall be the praise. Amen and Amen.

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THE CENTURION'S FAITH AND HUMILITY

NO. 800

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 15, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Then Jesus went with them. And when He was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying unto Him, Lord, trouble not Yourself: for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Why neither thought I myself worthy to come unto You: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.”
Luke 7:6-8.

THE greatest light may enter into the darkest places. We may find the choicest flowers blooming where we least expected them. Here was a Gentile, a Roman *soldier*—a soldier clothed with absolute power—and yet a tender master, a considerate citizen, a lover of God! Let no man, therefore, be despised because of his calling, and let not the proverb, “Can any good come out of Nazareth?” be ever heard from the wise man’s lips. The best of pearls have been found in the darkest caves of the ocean. Why should it not be so, still, that God should have even in Sardis a few that have not defiled their garments—who shall walk with Christ in white—for they are worthy.

Let no man think that because of his position in society he cannot excel in virtue. It is not the *place* which is to blame, but the *man*. If your heart is right, the situation may be difficult but the difficulty is to be overcome! Yes, and out of that difficulty shall arise an excellence which you had not otherwise known. Say not in your heart, “I am a soldier, and the barracks cannot minister to piety—therefore I may live as I wish because I cannot live as I should.” Say not, “I am a working man in the midst of those who blaspheme, and therefore it were vain for me to talk of holiness and piety.” No, rather remember that in such a case it is your *duty* specially not only to talk of these precious things, but to wear them about you as your daily ornament! Where should the lamp be placed but in the room which else were dark? Rest assured your calling and your position shall be no excuse for your sin if you continue in it. Neither shall your condition be any apology for the absence of integrity and virtue if these are not found in you.

Concerning the centurion, we may remark that perhaps we had never heard of him though he loved his servant. Perhaps we had never read his

name, though he tenderly nursed his slave. Perhaps he had found no place in the record of Inspiration, though he loved the Jewish nation and built them a synagogue—nor had we read the story of his life, though he had become a proselyte to the Jewish faith. The one thing which gives him a place in these sacred pages is this—he was a believer in the Messiah—he was such a believer in the Son of God that Jesus said concerning him, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

There is the vital point. *There*, my Hearer, is the notable matter which shall enroll you among the blessed! If you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, your name is in the Lamb's Book of Life! But if you believe not in Him, your outward excellencies, however admirable, shall avail you little. The faith of the centurion is described both in the eighth chapter of Matthew, and in the chapter before us as being of the highest kind. But the remarkable point in it is that it was coupled with the very deepest *humility*. The same man who said, “Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed,” also said, “I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.”

In bringing before you this noble soldier's example, these are two pivots upon which the discourse shall turn. I shall direct you to this double star shining with so mild a radiance in the sky of Scripture. This man's deep humility was not injurious to the strength of his faith, and his gigantic faith was by no means hostile to his deep humiliation.

I. To begin, then, THE HUMILITY OF THE CENTURION WAS NOT AT ALL INJURIOUS TO THE STRENGTH OF HIS FAITH. Observe his humble expressions—he avowed that he was not worthy to come to Jesus. “Neither,” said he, “thought I myself worthy to come unto You.” And then he further felt that he was not worthy that Jesus should come to *him*. “I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.” Was this self-abasement occasioned by the remembrance that he was a Gentile? That may have contributed to it. Was it because he was penitent on account of sundry rough and boisterous deeds which had stained his soldier life? It may be so.

Was it not far rather because he had had a deep insight into his own *heart* and had learned to see sin in its true colors? And therefore he who was worthy, according to the statement of the Jews, was most unworthy in his own apprehension. You may have noticed in the biography of some eminent men how badly they speak of themselves. Southey, in his “Life of Bunyan,” seems at a difficulty to understand how Bunyan could have used such depreciating language concerning his own character. For it is true, according to all we know of his biography, that he was not, except in the case of profane swearing, at all so bad as the most of the villagers. Indeed, there were some virtues in the man which were worthy of all commendation.

Southey attributes it to a morbid state of mind, but we rather ascribe it to a return of spiritual health! Had the excellent poet seen himself in the

same heavenly light as that in which Bunyan saw himself, he would have discovered that Bunyan did not exaggerate but was simply stating, as far as he could, a truth which utterly surpassed his powers of utterance. The great light which shone around Saul of Tarsus was the outward type of that inner light above the brightness of the sun which flashes into a regenerate soul and reveals the horrible character of the sin which dwells within. Believe me, when you hear Christians making abject confessions, it is not that they are worse than others, but that they see themselves in a clearer light than others.

And this centurion's unworthiness was not because he had been more vicious than other men—on the contrary, he had evidently been much more virtuous than the common run of mankind—but it was because he saw what others did *not* see, and felt what others had not felt. Deep as was this man's contrition, overwhelming as was his sense of utter worthlessness, he did not doubt for a moment either the power or the willingness of Christ. As for the question of willingness, it does not come under remark at all! The leper had said, "If You will," but the centurion was so clear about Christ's willingness to relieve suffering humanity that it does not occur to him to mention it. He has long ago settled *that* matter—and now takes it for granted as a very axiom in the knowledge of Jesus—for such a One as He *must* be willing to do all the good which is asked of Him.

Nor is he at all dubious about our Lord's power. The palsy which afflicted the servant was a remarkably grievous one—but it did not at all stagger the centurion. He felt not only that Jesus could heal it—could heal it at once, could heal it completely—but that He could heal it without moving a step from the place where He stood. Let but the *word* be uttered and in an instant his servant shall be healed! O glorious Humiliation, how low you stoop! O noble Faith, how high you soar! Brothers and Sisters, if we can imitate this noble character in *both* respects—in the depth of his foundation and in the height of his pinnacle—how near to the model of the temple of God shall we be built up!

Empty, indeed, he was, having nothing of his own. Not worthy to receive, much less indulging a thought of giving anything to Christ, and yet confident that all things are possible with the Master and that He both can and *will* do according to our faith—and that in a manner gloriously unveiling His kingly power. My dear Friends, especially you who are under concern of soul, you feel unworthy—that is *not* a mistaken feeling—you are so! You are much distressed by reason of this unworthiness, but if you knew more of it you might be more distressed still, for the apprehension which you already have of your sinfulness, although it is very painful, does not at all reach to the full extent of it. You are much more sinful than you think you are. You are much more unworthy than you yet know yourself to be.

Instead of attempting a foolish and wicked soothing of your dark thoughts, and saying, "you have morbid ideas of yourself, you ought not so to speak," I rather pray you to believe that yours is an utterly *hopeless* case *apart from Christ*—that in your spiritual nature the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. I want you not to film the horrible ulcer of your depravity with specious hopes and professions. I desire you not to look upon this disease as though it were but skin deep—it lies in the *source* and fountain of your life—and poisons your heart! The flames of Hell must assuredly wrap themselves about you unless Christ interposes to save you. You have no merit of any kind or sort—nor will you ever have any.

And more, you have no power to escape from your lost condition unaided by the Savior's hand. Without Christ you can do *nothing*, for you are abjectly poor, hopelessly bankrupt and you cannot by the utmost diligence make yourself any other than you are! No words that I can utter can exaggerate your deplorable condition, and no feelings which you can ever experience can represent your real state in colors too alarming. You are not worthy that Christ should come to you! You are not worthy to draw *near* to Christ! But, and here is a glorious contrast—never let this for a single moment interfere with your full belief that He who is God but who took our nature—that He who suffered in our stead upon the Cross—that He who now rules in the highest heavens is able to do for you, and *willing* to do for you, exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think!

Your inability does not prevent the working of His power! Your unworthiness cannot put fetters to His bounty or limits to His Grace. You may be an ill-deserving sinner but that is no reason why He should not pardon you! You may be, in your own apprehension, and truthfully so, the most unworthy that He ever stooped to bless! Yet that is no reason why He should not condescend to press you to His bosom—to accept and to save you! I wish that as the first Truth of God has impressed itself deeply upon you, the second Truth may with equal force take up the possession of your heart, that Jesus Christ is "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him"—and He is as *willing* as He is able!

Your emptiness does not affect His fullness! Your weakness does not alter His power! Your inability does not diminish His Omnipotence! Your vileness does not restrain the heart of His love which freely moves towards the very vilest of the vile! By some means Satan almost always manages it this way—that when we get a little hope it is generally a self-grounded hope—a vain idea that we are getting better in ourselves. It is a mischievous conceit—proud flesh which hinders the cure and which the Surgeon must cut out—it is no sign of healing, it *prevents* healing. On the other hand, if we obtain a deep sense of *sin*, the Evil One manages to put his hoof in there and to insinuate that Jesus is not able to save such as we are.

That is a great falsehood, for who shall say what the limit of Christ's power is? But if these two things could but meet together—a thorough sense of sin and an immovable belief in the power of Christ to grapple with sin and to overcome it—surely the kingdom of Heaven would then have come near unto us in power and in truth! And then it would be again said, “I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel.” Now, you troubled hearts, I have this word for you, and then I shall pass on to another point. Your sense of your unworthiness, if it is properly used, should drive you *to* Christ. You are unworthy, but Jesus died for the unworthy! Jesus did *not* die for those who profess to be by nature good and deserving, for the whole have no need of a physician.

It is written, “In due time Christ died for the ungodly.” “Who gave Himself for our”—what? “Excellencies and virtues?” No—“who gave Himself for our *sins*, according to the Scriptures.” We read that He “suffered, the Just for the”—for the “just?” By no means, “the Just for the *unjust*, to bring us to God.” Gospel pharmacy is for the sick! Gospel bread is for the hungry! Gospel fountains are open to the unclean! Gospel water is given to the thirsty! You who need not shall not have—but you who need it may freely come. Let your huge and painful needs impel you to fly to Jesus! Let the vast cravings of your insatiable spirit compel you to come to Him in whom all fullness dwells! Your unworthiness should act as a wing to bear you to Christ, the sinner's Savior.

It should also have this effect upon you—it should prevent your raising those scruples and making those demands which are such a hindrance to some persons finding peace. The proud spirit says, “I must have signs and wonders, or I will not believe. I must feel deep convictions and horrible tremors—or I must quake because of dreams or threatening texts applied to me with awful power.” Ah, but, unworthy one, if you are truly humbled, you will not dare to ask for these! You will have done with *demands* and *stipulations*! You will cry, “Lord, give me but a word! Speak but a word of promise, and it shall be enough for me. Do but say to me, ‘Your sins are forgiven you.’ Give me but *half* a text! Give me *one* kind assuring word to sink my fears against, and I will believe it and rest upon it.”

Thus your sense of unworthiness should lead you to a simple faith in Jesus and prevent your demanding those manifestations which the foolish so eagerly and impudently require. Beloved, it has come to this—you are so unworthy that you are shut out of every hope but Christ! All other doors are fast nailed against you. If there is anything to be done for salvation, *you* cannot do it. If there is any fitness needed, you have it not. Christ comes to you and tells you that there is no fitness needed for coming to Him, but that if you will but *trust* Him He will save you! I think I hear you say, “Then, my Lord, since it has come to this—

***I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try
For if I stay away,***

I know I must forever die.'

And so, sink or swim, upon Your precious Atonement, I cast my guilty soul persuaded that You are able to save even such a one as I am. And I am so thoroughly persuaded of the goodness of Your heart that I know You will not cast away a poor trembler who comes to You and takes You to be his only ground of trust."

II. I shall want you, for a moment, to attend while we shift the text to the other quarter. THE CENTURION'S GREAT FAITH WAS NOT AT ALL HOSTILE TO HIS HUMILITY. His faith was extraordinary. It ought not to be extraordinary. We ought all of us to believe as well in Christ as this soldier did. Observe the form it took—he said to himself, "I am a subordinate officer, under authority. I am not the Commander-in-Chief, I am merely the commander of a troop of a hundred men, and yet over those hundred men I exert unlimited control. I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes. I say to the other, 'Come,' and he comes.

"And my servant, my poor sick servant (his tender heart comes back to him, and he puts him into the illustration), I say to him, 'Do this,' and he does it at once. I am simply a petty officer, under authority myself; but yet such is the influence of discipline that there are no questions raised, no deliberations tolerated. No soldier turns round and tells me that I have set him too difficult a task. No one, out of all the troops, ever dares to say to me, 'I shall not do it.'" The power of discipline among the legions of Rome was exceedingly great. The commander had but to say, "Do it," and it was done, though thousands bled and died.

"Now," argued the centurion, "This glorious man is the Son of God. He is *not* a subordinate—He *is* the Commander-in-Chief. If He gives the word, His will most surely must be done. Fevers and paralysis, good influences and bad, they must all be under His control—He can, therefore, heal my servant in a moment. Who can resist the great Caesar of Heaven and earth?" That was, I believe, the centurion's idea. Jesus has therefore but to will it, and to the utmost bounds of the earth those influences which are under His control will at once set to work to perform His will. The centurion pictured himself as sitting down in the house and effecting his desires without rising, by merely issuing an order. And his faith placed the Lord Jesus in the same position.

"You need not come to my dwelling. You can stand here and if You will but say it, the cure will be worked at once." He did in his heart enthrone the Lord Jesus as a Captain over all the forces of the world, as the general issue of Heaven and earth—as, in fact, the Caesar—the imperial Governor of all the forces of the universe. It was graciously thought. It was poetically embodied. It was nobly spoken. It was gloriously believed—but it was the truth and nothing more than the truth—for universal dominion is really, today, in the power of Jesus. If He were a true Caesar before He died, while He was despised and rejected of men, much more *now* that He

has trod through the winepress and stained His vesture with the blood of His vanquished enemies!

Much more now that He has led captivity captive and sits enthroned by filial right at the right hand of God, even the Father! Much more now that God has sworn that He will put all things under His feet, and that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of things in Heaven, and things on earth and things that are under the earth! Much more, I say, can He now work according to His good pleasure. He has today but to speak and it is done—to command, and it shall stand fast. Beloved, see whether this truth bears us as on eagle's wings. Caesar has but to say, "Absolute," and his guilty subject is acquitted. Caesar has but to speak, and a province is conquered, an army routed. Stormy seas are navigated at Caesar's bidding—mountains are tunneled, the whole world shall be girded with military roads—Caesar is absolute and his will is law.

So on earth, but so much more in Heaven. Let the imperial Caesar of Heaven but say, "I forgive," and the devils of Hell cannot accuse you. Let Him say, "I will help you," and who shall oppose? If Emmanuel is for you, who shall be against you? Let Him speak and the bonds of sinful habit must fall off, and the darkness in which your soul has long been immersed must give place to instantaneous light. He reigns as King, Lord over all! Let His name be blessed forever! Let each one of us, by our faith, give Him the honor that is due unto His name. All hail! great Emperor, once slain, but now forever Lord of Heaven and earth!

Here is one point to which I remind you—this man's faith did not for a moment interfere with his thorough personal humiliation. Interfere with it? My Brethren, it was the *source* of it! It was the very foundation on which it rested. Don't you see, the higher his thoughts of Christ, the more unworthy he felt himself to be of the kind attentions of so good and great a Personage? If he had thought *less* of Jesus, he would not have said, "I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof." There was, of course, a sight of himself to humble him, but the far more wondrous vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus was the true root and parent of his self-abasement. Because Christ was so great he felt himself to be unworthy either to meet Him or entertain Him.

Observe, my Brothers and Sisters, his faith acted upon his humility by making him content with a word from Christ. His faith said, "A word is enough—it will work the cure." And then his humility said, "Ah, how unworthy I am even of so little a thing as a word. If a word will work a miracle, it is so great and powerful a thing that it is more than I deserve. Therefore," said he, "I will not ask for more. I will not ask for footsteps when a *sound* will suffice. I will not clamor for His Presence when His *wish* can restore my servant to health." His believing that a word was enough made him humbly decline to pray for more—so that his confi-

dence in Christ, instead of interfering with his sense of unworthiness—aided its manifestation.

Brothers and Sisters, never think for a moment, as many foolish persons do, that strong faith in the Lord is necessarily pride—it is the reverse. It is one of the worst forms of pride to question the promise of God. When a man says, “Christ has promised to save those who trust Him. I have trusted Him, therefore I am saved. I know I am. I am sure of it, because God says so and I do not need any better evidence,” that assurance is *humility* in action. But if a man says, “God has said that those who trust Him shall be saved. I *do* trust Him, but still I do not *know* that I am saved,” why, you do as much as say you do not know whether God is a *liar* or not! And what more impertinent, what more proudly insulting thing than that?

I know it is a most common thing to say, “It seems so presumptuous to say I know I am saved.” I think it far more presumptuous to *doubt*, when God speaks positively, and to mistrust where the promise is plain! God says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” If you believe and are baptized, if God is true, you shall be saved—you *are* saved! There is no hoping about it—it is so. Let God be true and every man a liar—and far off from these lips the insinuation of a doubt that perhaps God can be false to His promise and may break His word. If you question anything, question whether you trust Christ! But that settled, the question is ended. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. If you rest alone on Him, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Take God at His word as your child takes you at *your* word. It is not too much for God to ask—you ask it of your child.

Though you are a poor fallible creature, you would not have your child mistrust you. Shall you be believed, and not your *God*? Shall your little one be expected to confide in you, though you are evil, and will not you believe the voice of your heavenly Parent to be the very Truth of God, and rest upon it? Ah, do so, I beseech you, and the more you do it, the more you will feel your unworthiness to do so! It astounds me to think that I shall be saved! It amazes me to think I shall be washed from my every sin in the precious blood of Christ—that I shall be set upon a rock and a new song shall be put into my mouth. It astounds me, and as I think of it, I say, “How unworthy I am of such favors! I am less than the least of all the benefits which You have bestowed upon me.”

Your faith will not murder your humility. Your humility will not stab at your faith—the two will go hand in hand to Heaven like a brave brother and a fair sister—the one bold as a lion—the other meek as a dove. The one rejoicing in Jesus—the other blushing at self. Blessed pair, gladly would I entertain you in my heart all the days of my pilgrimage on earth!

I have thus, as best I could, brought before you the example of the centurion with a few incidental lessons. Now for the APPLICATION, with as

much earnestness and brevity as we can summon. The application shall be to three sorts of people. First, we speak to distressed minds deeply conscious of their unworthiness. Jesus Christ is able and willing to save you this very morning! What is the form of your distress? Is it that your sins are great? Believe, I charge you, and may God the Holy Spirit help you—believe that all your sins Christ can pardon now! Do you see Him upon yonder Cross? He is Divine, but how He bleeds! He is Divine, but how He groans! He smarts! He dies!

Do you believe that any sin is too great for those sufferings to put away? Do you think the Son of God offered an inadequate Atonement? An Atonement of which you can say there is a limit to its efficacy beyond which it cannot operate for the salvation of Believers, so that after all, sin is greater than the sacrifice, and the filth is more full of defilement than the blood is of purification? O crucify not Christ afresh by doubting the power of the eternal God! My Brothers and Sisters, when in the stillness of the starry night we look up to the orbs of Heaven and remember the marvelous truths which astronomy has revealed to us of the magnificence, the inconceivable majesty of creation—if we then reflect that the infinite God who made all these became *Man* for us, and that as *Man* He was fastened to the transverse wood and bled to death for us—why, it will appear to us that if all the stars were crowded with inhabitants and all those inhabitants had, everyone, been rebellious against God and had steeped themselves up to the very throat in scarlet crimes, there must be efficacy enough in the blood of such a One as God Himself Incarnate to take all their sins away!

For this great miracle of miracles—God Himself paying honor to His own justice by suffering a substitutionary death—is an exhibition of infinite severity and love which far down eternity must appear so glorious as utterly to swallow up the remembrance of creature sin and to put it altogether out of sight! Yes, Sinner, believe that this *moment* the sins of 50 years can drop from off you, yes, of 70 or 80 years—that in an instant, you who are as black as Hell can be pure as Heaven if Jesus says the word! If you believe in Him it is done—for to trust Him is to be clean.

Perhaps, however, your difficulty is to get rid of a hardness of heart. You feel that you cannot repent—but cannot Jesus make you repent by His Spirit? Do you hesitate about that question? See the world a few months ago hard bound with frost, but how daffodil and crocus, and snowdrop have come up above that once frozen soil. See how snow and ice have gone and the genial sun shines! God does it readily with the soft breath of the south wind and the kind sunbeams, and He can do the same in the *spiritual* world for you. *Believe* He can, and ask Him now to do it, and you shall find that the rock of ice shall thaw—that huge horrible devilish iceberg of a heart of yours shall begin to drip with showers of crystal penitence which God shall accept through His dear Son.

But, perhaps, it is some bad habit which gives you trouble. You have been long in it and can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? You cannot get rid of it! I *know* you cannot! It is a desperate evil. It drags you downward like the hands of demons pulling you from the surface of life's stream down into its black and horrid depths of death and defilement. Ah, I know your dreads and despairs, but Man, I ask you, cannot Jesus deliver? He has the key of your heart and He can turn it so that all its wheels shall revolve otherwise than now. He who shakes the earth with earthquakes, who sweeps the seas with tornados, can send a heart-quake and a storm of strong repentance, and tear up your old habits by the roots! He whose every act is wonderful can surely do what He will within this, the little world of your soul, since in the great world outside He rules as He pleases. Believe in His power and ask Him to prove it. He has but to say, in a word, and this matter of present distress shall be taken away.

Still I hear you say, "I cannot." A horrible inability hangs over you. But it is not what *you* can do or cannot do—these have nothing to do with it—it is what *Jesus* can do! Can there be anything too hard for the Lord? Can the Eternal Spirit ever be defeated when He wills to conquer in a man? Can He who "bears the earth's huge pillars up, and spreads the heavens abroad," who once was crucified, but who now ever lives—can He fail? Put your care into His hands, poor unable wretch, and ask Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself—and according to your faith so shall it be unto you.

A second application of our subject shall be made to the patient workers who are ready to faint. I know that in this house there are many who incessantly plead with God for their unconverted relatives and neighbors that they may be saved. You have pleaded long for your husband, or your son, or your daughter—but they have gone yet further into sin. Instead of answers to prayer, it seems as though Heaven laughed at your importunity. Take heed of one thing—do not suffer *unbelief* to make you think that the object of your care cannot be saved! While there is *life* there is *hope*. Yes, though they add drunkenness to lust, and blasphemy to drunkenness, and hardness of heart and impenitence to blasphemy, Jesus has but to say the word and they shall be turned, every one, from his evil way.

Under the use of the means of Divine Grace it may be done, or even *without* the means it may be done. There have been men at work, or at their amusements—all in their wickedness—who have had impressions which have made them new men when it was least expected such a thing would occur! And those who have been the ringleaders in Satan's rebellious crew have frequently become the boldest captains in the army of Christ! There is no room for doubt as to the possibility of the salvation of *anybody* when Jesus gives the word of command. You are unchristian

when you shut out the harlot from hope—when you exclude the thief from repentance or when you even despair of the murderer—for the big heart of God is greater than all your hearts put together! And the great thoughts of the loving Father are not as your thoughts when they climb the highest, neither are His ways your ways when they are at their utmost liberality.

Oh, if your friend, your child, your wife, your husband, is a very devil incarnate—or if there are seven devils, or a legion of devils within him, while Christ lives never mutter the word, “despair”—for He can cast out the legion of evil spirits and impart His Holy Spirit instead! Therefore have faith. You are unworthy to receive the blessing, but have faith in Him who is so able to bestow it. Many of you are going to your classes this afternoon. Others of you will be engaged this evening in preaching the Gospel, and you are getting very faint-hearted because you do not see the success you so much desire. Well, perhaps it is *good* for you to feel how little you can do apart from Divine ministrations. May this humiliation of soul continue—but do not let it degenerate into a distrust of Him.

If Christ were dead and buried, and had never risen, it were a horrible case for us poor preachers! But while Christ lives endowed with the residue of the eternal Spirit which He freely gives, we ought not so much as fear, much less despair. May the Church of God pluck up heart and feel that with a living Christ in the midst of her armies, victory shall before long wait upon her banners.

The last application I shall make is the same as the second, only on a wider scale. There are many who are like watchers who have grown weary. We have heard that Christ comes—the great coming Man—and the Lord knows right well that there is pressing need for someone to come, for this poor old machine of a world creaks dreadfully and seems as though it were so laden with the sheaves of human sin that its axles would snap. God's infinite longsuffering has kept a crazy world from utter dissolution by a thousand helps and stays, but it is poor work, and seems to get worse and worse. Our state is rotten at the very core, both in business and politics. No man seems to succeed so well as he who has dispensed with his conscience and laughs at principles. All things are come to that point that there is need for some deliverer to come or else I do not know where we shall all go.

And He will come, so the promise stands, and to those who wait for Him, His coming shall be as the beams of the day-star proclaiming the dawn. He is coming and at His coming there shall be a glorious time, a millennium, a period of light, and truth, and joy, and holiness, and peace! We are watching and waiting for it. But we say, “Ah, it is hopeless to think of converting the world! How is the Truth to be preached? Where are the tongues to speak it? How few proclaim it boldly! Where are the men to carry Christ's Cross to the utmost bounds of the globe and conquer na-

tions for Him?" Ah, say not in your heart, "the former days were better than now." Write not a book of lamentation and say, "The Prophets, where are they? And the Apostles have gone and all the mighty confessors who lived and died for Christ have disappeared."

At the lifting of His finger the Lord can raise up a thousand Jonahs for every city throughout the land! A thousand bold Isaiahs to declare His glory. He has but to bid it and companies of Apostles and armies of martyrs shall start up from the quiet nooks of old England's villages, or shall pour forth from the workshops of her cities. He can do wonders when He wills it! The worst plight of the Church is but the time when her flood has ebbed in order that it may return in the fullness of its strength! Have confidence, for even should the instruments fail and the ministry become a dead and effete thing, yet His coming shall accomplish His purposes. And when He appears, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

Jesus is not under authority. He has soldiers under Him and He has but to say to this spirit or to that, "Go," or "Come," and His will shall be done. He has but to quicken His Church by His Holy Spirit, and say, "Do this," and the impossible task shall be accomplished. What seems beyond all human skill or mortal hope shall be worked, and worked at once! When He says, "Do," it shall be done, and His name shall be praised! O for more faith and more self-abasement—twin angels to abide in this assembly evermore! Go forth with us to battle and return with us from the victory! O Lord, the lover of humility, and the Author of faith, give us to be steeped in both for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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YOUNG MAN, IS THIS FOR YOU? NO. 2003

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 15, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And it came to pass the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him and much people. Now when He came near to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother and she was a widow:
and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still.
And He said, Young man I say unto you, Arise.
And he that was dead sat up and began to speak.
And He delivered him to his mother.
And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God has visited His people. And this rumor of Him went forth throughout all Judea and throughout all the region round about.”
Luke 7:11-17.*

BEHOLD, dear Brethren, the overflowing, ever-flowing power of our Lord Jesus Christ! He had worked a great work upon the centurion's servant, and now, only a day after, he raises the dead. “It came to pass the day after, that He went into a city called Nain.” Day unto day utters speech concerning His deeds of goodness. Did He save your friend yesterday? His fullness is the same. If you seek Him, His love and grace will flow to you today. He blesses this day and He blesses the day after. Never is our Divine Lord compelled to pause until He has recruited His resources. Virtue goes out of Him forever. These thousands of years have not diminished the greatness of His power to bless.

Behold, also, the readiness and naturalness of the outgoings of His life-giving power. Our Savior was journeying and He works miracles while on the road—“He went into a city called Nain.” It was incidentally, (some would say *accidentally*), that He met the funeral procession. But at once He restored to life this dead young man. Our blessed Lord was not standing still, as one professionally called in—He does not seem to have come to Nain at anyone's request for the display of His love. But He was passing through the gate into the city for some reason which is not recorded.

See, my Brethren, how the Lord Jesus is always ready to save! He healed the woman who touched him in the throng when He was on the road to quite another person's house. The mere spilling and droppings of the Lord's cup of grace are marvelous. Here He gives life to the dead when He is en route. He scatters His mercy by the roadside and anywhere and everywhere His paths drop fatness. No time, no place can find Jesus unwilling or unable. When Baal is on a journey, or sleeps, his deluded wor-

shippers cannot hope for his help. But when Jesus journeys or sleeps, a word will find Him ready to conquer death, or quell the tempest.

It was a remarkable incident, this meeting of the two processions at the gates of Nain. If someone with a fine imagination could picture it, what an opportunity he would have for developing his poetical genius! I venture on no such effort. Yonder a procession descends from the city. Our spiritual eyes see death upon the pale horse coming forth from the city gate with great exultation. He has taken another captive. Upon that bier behold the spoils of the dread conqueror! Mourners, by their tears, confess the victory of death. Like a general riding in triumph to the Roman capitol, death bears his spoils to the tomb. What shall hinder him?

Suddenly the procession is arrested by another—a company of disciples and much people are coming up the hill. We need not look at the company but we may fix our eyes upon One who stands in the center, a Man in whom lowliness was always evident and yet majesty was never wanting. It is the living Lord, even He who only has immortality and in Him death has now met his destroyer. The battle is short and decisive—no blows are struck—for death has already done his utmost. With a finger the chariot of death is arrested—with a word the spoil is taken from the mighty and the lawful captive is delivered.

Death flies defeated from the gates of the city, while Tabor and Hermon, which both looked down upon the scene, rejoice in the name of the Lord. This was a rehearsal upon a small scale of that which shall happen by-and-by, when those who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live—then shall the last enemy be destroyed. Only let death come into contact with Him who is our life and it is compelled to relax its hold. Whatever may be the spoil which it has captured, soon shall our Lord come in His glory and then before the gates of the New Jerusalem we shall see the miracle at the gates of Nain multiplied a myriad times.

Thus, you see, our subject would naturally conduct us to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which is one of the foundation stones of our most holy faith. That grand Truth of God I have often declared to you and will do so again and again. But at this time I have selected my text for a very practical purpose. It concerns the souls of some for whom I am greatly anxious. The narrative before us records a fact, a literal fact—but the record may be used for spiritual instruction. All our Lord's miracles were intended to be parables—they were intended to instruct as well as to impress—they are sermons to the eyes, just as His spoken discourses were sermons to the ears. We see here how Jesus can deal with spiritual death. And how He can impart spiritual life at His pleasure. Oh, that we may see this done this morning in the midst of this great assembly!

I. I shall ask you first, dear Friends, to reflect that **THE SPIRITUALLY DEAD CAUSE GREAT GRIEF TO THEIR GRACIOUS FRIENDS.** If an ungodly man is favored to have Christian relatives, he causes them much anxiety. As a natural fact, this dead young man, who was being carried out to his burial, caused his mother's heart to burst with grief. She showed by her tears that her heart was overflowing with sorrow. The Sa-

rior said to her, "Weep not," because He saw how deeply she was troubled. Many of my dear young friends may be deeply thankful that they have friends who are grieving over them. It is a sad thing that your conduct should grieve them—but it is a hopeful circumstance for you that you have those around you who do thus grieve.

If all approved of your evil ways, you would, no doubt, continue in them and go speedily to destruction. But it is a blessing that arresting voices do at least a little hinder you. Besides, it may yet be that our Lord will listen to the silent oratory of your mother's tears and that this morning He may bless you for her sake. See how the Evangelist puts it—"When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said unto her, Weep not." And then He said to the young man, "Arise."

Many young persons who are in some respects amiable and hopeful, nevertheless, being spiritually dead, are causing great sorrow to those who love them most. It would perhaps be honest to say that they do not intend to inflict all this sorrow. Indeed, they think it quite unnecessary. Yet they are a daily burden to those whom they love. Their conduct is such that when it is thought over in the silence of their mother's chamber, she cannot help but weep. Her son went with her to the House of God when he was a boy, but now he finds his pleasure in a very different quarter.

Being beyond all control now, the young man does not choose to go with his mother. She would not wish to deprive him of his liberty, but she laments that he exercises that liberty so unwisely. She mourns that he has not the inclination to hear the Word of the Lord and become a servant of his mother's God. She had hoped that he would follow in his father's footsteps and unite with the people of God. But he takes quite the opposite course. She has seen a good deal about him lately which has deepened her anxiety—he is forming companionships and other connections which are sadly harmful to him. He has a distaste for the quietude of home and he has been exhibiting to his mother a spirit which wounds her.

It may be that what he has said and done is not meant to be unkind. But it is very grievous to the heart which watches over him so tenderly. She sees a growing indifference to everything that is good and an unconcealed intention to see the vicious side of life. She knows a little and fears more as to his present state and she dreads that he will go from one sin to another till he ruins himself for this life and the next. O Friends, it is to a gracious heart a very great grief to have an unconverted child. And yet more so if that child is a mother's boy, her only boy, and she a desolate woman, from whom her husband has been snatched away.

To see spiritual death rampant in one so dear is a sore sorrow which causes many a mother to mourn in secret and pour out her soul before God. Many a Hannah has become a woman of a sorrowful spirit through her own child. How sad that he who should have made her the most glad among women has filled her life with bitterness! Many a mother has had to grieve over her son as almost to cry, "Would God he had never been

born!” It is so in thousands of cases. If it is so in your case, dear Friend, take home my words to yourself and reflect upon them.

The cause of grief lies here—we mourn that they should be in such a case. In the story before us the mother wept because her son was dead. And we sorrow because our young friends are spiritually dead. There is a life infinitely higher than the life which quickens our material bodies. And oh, that all of you knew it! You who are unrenewed do not know anything about this true life. Oh, how we wish you did! It seems to us a dreadful thing that you should be dead to God, dead to Christ, dead to the Holy Spirit. It is sad, indeed, that you should be dead to those Divine Truths which are the delight and strength of our souls—dead to those holy motives which keep us back from evil and spur us on to virtue.

Dead to those sacred joys which often bring us very near the gates of Heaven. We cannot look at a dead man and feel joy in him, whoever he may be—a corpse, however delicately dressed, is a sad sight. We cannot look upon you, you poor dead souls, without crying out, “O God, shall it always be so? Shall not these dry bones live? Will You not quicken them?” The Apostle speaks of one who lived in pleasure and he said of her, “She is dead while she lives.” Numbers of persons are dead in reference to all that is true and noble and most Divine. And yet in other respects they are full of life and activity. Oh, to think that they should be dead to God and yet so full of happiness and energy! Marvel not that we grieve about them.

We also mourn because we lose the help and comfort which they ought to bring us. This widowed mother no doubt mourned her boy not only because he was dead but because in him she had lost her earthly stay. She must have regarded him as the staff of her age and the comfort of her loneliness. “She was a widow”—I question if anybody but a widow understands the full sorrow of that word. We may put ourselves by sympathy into the position of one who has lost her other self, the partner of her life. But the most tender sympathy cannot fully realize the actual cleavage of bereavement and the desolation of love’s loss. “She was a widow”—the sentence sounds like a knell.

Still, if the sun of her life was gone, there was a star shining. She had a boy, a dear boy, who promised her great comfort. He would, no doubt, supply her necessities and cheer her loneliness and in him her husband would live again and his name would remain among the living in Israel. She could lean on him as she went to the synagogue. She would have him to come home from his work at evening and keep the little home together and cheer her hearth. Alas, that star is swallowed up in the darkness. He is dead and today he is carried to the cemetery.

It is the same spiritually with us in reference to our unconverted friends. With regard to you that are dead in sin we feel that we miss the aid and comfort which we ought to receive from you in our service of the living God. We want fresh laborers in all sorts of places—in our Sunday school work, our mission among the masses and in all manner of service for the Lord we love! Ours is a gigantic burden and we long for our sons to put their shoulders to it. We looked forward to seeing you grow up in the

fear of God and stand side by side with us in the great warfare against evil and in holy labor for the Lord Jesus.

But you cannot help us, for you are yourselves on the wrong side. Alas, alas, you hinder us by causing the world to say, "See how those young men are acting!" We have to spend thought and prayer and effort over you which might usefully have gone forth for others. Our care for yonder great dark world which lies all around us is very pressing but you do not share it with us—men are perishing from lack of knowledge and you do not help us in endeavoring to enlighten them.

A further grief is that we can have no fellowship with them. The mother at Nain could have no communion with her dear son now that he was dead, for the dead know not anything. He can never speak to her, nor she to him, for he is on the bier, "a dead man carried out." O my Friends, certain of you have dear ones whom you love and they love you. But they cannot hold any spiritual communion with you, nor you with them. You never bow the knee together in private prayer, nor mingle heart with heart in the appeal of faith to God as to the cares which prowl around your home. O young man, when your mother's heart leaps for joy because of the love of Christ shed abroad in her soul, you cannot understand her joy. Her feelings are a mystery to you.

If you are a dutiful son, you do not say anything disrespectful about her religion. But yet you cannot sympathize in its sorrows or its joys. Between your mother and you there is upon the best things a gulf as wide as if you were actually dead on the bier and she stood weeping over your corpse. I remember, in the hour of overwhelming anguish when I feared that my beloved wife was about to be taken from me, how I was comforted by the loving prayers of my two dear sons—we had communion not only in our grief but in our confidence in the living God. We knelt together and poured out our hearts unto God and we were comforted.

How I blessed God that I had in my children such sweet support! But suppose they had been ungodly young men? I should have looked in vain for holy fellowship and for aid at the Throne of Grace. Alas, in many a household the mother cannot have communion with her own son or daughter on that point which is most vital and enduring because they are spiritually dead—while she has been quickened into newness of life by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, spiritual death soon produces manifest causes for sorrow. In the narrative before us the time had come when her son's body must be buried. She could not wish to have that dead form longer in the home with her. It is a token to us of the terrible power of death that it conquers love with regard to the body. Abraham loved his Sarah. But after a while he had to say to the sons of Heth, "Give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." It happens in some mournful cases that character becomes so bad that no comfort in life can be enjoyed while the erring one is within the home circle.

We have known parents who have felt that they could not have their son at home so drunken, so debauched had he become. Not always wise-

ly, yet sometimes almost of necessity, the plan has been tried of sending the incorrigible youth to a distant colony in the hope that when removed from pernicious influences he might do better. How seldom so deplorable an experiment succeeds! I have known mothers who could not think of their sons without feeling pangs far more bitter than those they endured at their birth. Woe, woe to him who causes such heartbreak! What an awful thing it is when love's best hopes gradually die down into despair and loving desires at last put on mourning and turn from prayers of hope to tears of regret!

Words of admonition call forth such passion and blasphemy that prudence almost silences them. Then have we before us the dead young man carried out to his grave. A sorrowful voice sobs out, "He is given unto idols, let him alone." Am I addressing one whose life is now preying upon the tender heart of her that brought him forth? Do I speak to one whose outward conduct has at last become so avowedly wicked that he is a daily death to those who gave him life? O young man, can you bear to think of this? Are you turned to stone? I cannot yet believe that you contemplate your parents' heartbreak without bitter feelings. God forbid that you should!

We also mourn because of the future of men dead in sin. This mother, whose son had already gone so far in death that he must be buried out of sight, had the further knowledge that something worse would befall him in the sepulcher to which he was being carried. It was impossible for her to think calmly of the corruption which surely follows at the heels of death. When we think of what will become of you who refuse the Lord Christ we are appalled. "After death the judgment." We could more readily go into details as to a putrid corpse than we could survey the state of a soul lost forever. We dare not linger at the mouth of Hell. But we are forced to remind you that there is a place, "where their worm dies not and the fire is not quenched."

There is a place where those must abide who are driven from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. It is an unendurable thought that you should be, "cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death." I do not wonder that those who are not honest with you are afraid to tell you so and that you try yourself to doubt it. But with the Bible in your hand and a conscience in your bosom you cannot but fear the worst if you remain apart from Jesus and the life He freely gives. If you continue as you are and persevere in your sin and unbelief to the end of life, there is no help for you but that you must be condemned in the Day of Judgment.

The most solemn declarations of the Word of God assure you that, "he that believes not shall be damned." It is heartbreaking work to think that this should be the case with any of you. You prattled at your mother's knee and kissed her cheek with rapturous love—why, then, will you be divided from her forever? Your father hoped that you would take his place in the Church of God—how is it that you do not even care to follow him to Heaven? Remember, the day comes when, "one shall be taken, and the

other left.” Do you renounce all hope of being with your wife, your sister, your mother at the right hand of God? You cannot wish them to go down to Hell with you—have you no desire to go to Heaven with them?

“Come, you blessed,” will be the voice of Jesus to those who imitated their gracious Savior. And “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” must be the sentence upon all who refuse to be made like the Lord. Why will you take your part and lot with accursed ones? I do not know whether you find it easy to hear me this morning. I find it very hard to speak to you because my lips are not able to express my heart’s feelings. Oh that I had the forceful utterance of an Isaiah, or the passionate lamentations of a Jeremiah with which to arouse your affections and your fears! Still, the Holy Spirit can use even me, and I beseech Him so to do. But I have said enough on this point. I am sure you see that the spiritually dead cause great grief to those of their family who are spiritually alive.

II. Now let me cheer you while I introduce the second head of my discourse, which is this—FOR SUCH GRIEF THERE IS ONLY ONE HELPER—BUT THERE IS A HELPER.

This young man is taken out to be buried. But our Lord Jesus Christ met the funeral procession. Carefully note the “coincidences,” as skeptics call them but as we call them—“Providences”—of Scripture. This is a fine subject for another time. Take this one case. How came it that the young man died just then? How came it that this exact hour was selected for his burial? Perhaps because it was evening. But even that might not fix the precise moment. Why did the Savior that day arrange to travel five-and-twenty miles, so as to arrive at Nain in the evening? How came it to pass that He happened just then to be coming from a quarter which naturally led Him to enter at that particular gate from which the dead would be carried?

See, He ascends the hill to the little city at the same moment when the head of the procession is coming out of the gate! He meets the dead man before the place of sepulture is reached. A little later and he would have been buried. A little earlier and he would have been at home lying in the darkened room and no one might have called the Lord’s attention to him. The Lord knows how to arrange all things—His forecasts are true to the tick of the clock. I hope some great purpose is to be fulfilled this morning. I do not know why you, my Friend, came in here on a day when I am discoursing on this particular subject. You did not think to come, perhaps, but here you are. And Jesus has come here, too. He has come here on purpose to meet you and quicken you to newness of life. There is no chance about it—eternal decrees have arranged it all and we shall soon see that it is so. You spiritually dead are being met by Him in whom is life eternal.

The blessed Savior saw all at a glance. Out of that procession He singled out the chief mourner and read her inmost heart. He was always tender to mothers. He fixed His eye on that widow. For He knew that she was such, without being informed of the fact. The dead man is her only son—

He perceives all the details and nothing is hid from His infinite mind. O young man, Jesus knows all about you. Jesus, who is invisibly present this morning, fixes His eyes on you at this moment. He has seen the tears of those who have wept for you. He sees that some of them despair of you, and are in their great grief acting like mourners at your funeral.

Jesus saw it all and, what was more, entered into it all. Oh, how we ought to love our Lord that He takes such notice of our griefs and especially our spiritual griefs about the souls of others! You, dear Teacher, want your class saved—Jesus sympathizes with you. You, dear Friend, have been very earnest to win souls, know that in all this you are workers together with God. Jesus knows all about our travail of soul and He is at one with us therein. Our travail is only His own travail rehearsed in us, according to our humble measure. When Jesus enters into our work it cannot fail. Enter, O Lord, into my work at this hour, I pray You, and bless this feeble word to my hearers! I know that hundreds of Believers are saying, “Amen.” How this cheers me!

Our Lord proved how He entered into the sorrowful state of things by first saying to the widow, “Weep not.” At this moment He says to you who are praying and agonizing for souls, “Do not despair! Sorrow not as those who are without hope! I mean to bless you. You shall yet rejoice over life given to the dead.” Let us take heart and dismiss all unbelieving fear. Our Lord then went to the bier and just laid His finger upon it and they that carried it stood still of their own accord. Our Lord has a way of making bearers stand still without a word. Perhaps, today, yonder young man is being carried further into sin by the four bearers of his natural passions, his infidelity, his bad company, and his love of strong drink. It may be that pleasure and pride, willfulness and wickedness are bearing the four corners of the bier. But our Lord can, by His mysterious power, make the bearers stand still. Evil influences have become powerless, the man knows not how.

When they stood quite still, there was a hush. The disciples stood around the Lord, the mourners surrounded the widow and the two crowds faced each other. There was a little space and Jesus and the dead man were in the center. The widow pushed away her veil and gazing through her tears wondered what was going on. The Jews who came out of the city halted as the bearers had done. Hush! Hush! What will HE do? In that deep silence the Lord heard the unspoken prayers of that widow woman. I doubt not that her soul began to whisper, half in hope and half in fear—“Oh, that He would raise my son!”

At any rate, Jesus heard the flutter of the wings of desire if not of faith. Surely her eyes were speaking as she gazed on Jesus, who had so suddenly appeared. Here let us be as quiet as the scene before us. Let us be hushed for a minute and pray God to raise dead souls at this time. [Here followed a pause, much silent prayer and many tears.]

III. That hush was not long, for speedily the Great Quickener entered upon His gracious work. This is our third point—JESUS IS ABLE TO WORK THE MIRACLE OF LIFE-GIVING.

Jesus Christ has life in Himself and He quickens whom He will (John 5:21). Such life is there in Him that “he that lives and believes in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” Our blessed Lord immediately went up to the bier. What lay before Him? It was a corpse. He could derive no aid from that lifeless form. The spectators were sure that he was dead, for they were carrying him out to bury him. No deception was possible, for his own mother believed him dead and you may be sure that if there had been a spark of life in him she would not have given him up to the jaws of the grave. There was then no hope—no hope from the dead man, no hope from anyone in the crowd either of bearers or of disciples. They were all powerless alike.

Even so, you, O Sinner, cannot save yourself—neither can any of us—or can any of us save you. There is no help for you, dead Sinner, beneath yon skies. No help in yourself or in those who love you most. But, lo, the Lord has laid help on One that is mighty. If Jesus wants the least help, you cannot render it, for you are dead in sins. There you lie, dead on the bier and nothing but the sovereign power of Divine omnipotence can put heavenly life into you. Your help must come from above.

While the bier stood still, Jesus spoke to the dead young man, spoke to him personally—“Young man, I say unto you, Arise.” O Master, personally speak to some young man this morning. Or, if You will, speak to the old, or speak to a woman. But speak the Word home to them. We mind not where the Lord’s voice may fall. Oh that it would now call those around me, for I feel that there are dead ones all over the building! I stand with biers all about me and dead ones on them. Lord Jesus, are You not here? What is wanted is Your personal call. Speak, Lord, we beseech You!

“Young man,” said He, “Arise.” And He spoke as if the man had been alive. This is the Gospel way. He did not wait till He saw signs of life before He bade him rise. But to the dead man He said, “Arise.” This is the model of Gospel preaching—in the name of the Lord Jesus, His commissioned servants speak to the dead as if they were alive. Some of my Brethren laugh at this and say that it is inconsistent and foolish. But all through the New Testament it is even so. There we read, “Arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light.” I do not attempt to justify it. It is more than enough for me that so I read the Word of God. We are to bid men believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, even though we know that they are dead in sin and that faith is the work of the Spirit of God.

Our faith enables us, in God’s name, to command dead men to live and they do live. We bid unbelieving man believe in Jesus and power goes with the Word and God’s elect do believe. It is by this Word of faith which we preach that the voice of Jesus sounds out to men. The young man who could not rise, for he was dead, nevertheless did rise when Jesus bade him. Even so, when the Lord speaks by His servants the Gospel command, “Believe and live,” it is obeyed and men live.

But the Savior, you observe, spoke with His own authority—“Young man, I say unto you, Arise.” Neither Elijah nor Elisha could thus have spoken. But He who spoke thus was very God of very God. Though veiled

in human flesh and clothed in lowliness, He was that same God who said, "Let there be light" and there was light. If any of us are able by faith to say, "Young man, Arise," we can only say it in His name—we have no authority but what we derive from Him. Young man, the voice of Jesus can do what your mother cannot. How often has her sweet voice wooed you to come to Jesus but wooed in vain? Oh, that the Lord Jesus would inwardly speak to you! Oh, that He would say, "Young man, Arise."

I trust that while I am speaking, the Lord is silently speaking in your hearts by His Holy Spirit. I feel sure that it is even so. If so, within you a gentle movement of the Spirit is inclining you to repent and yield your heart to Jesus. This shall be a blessed day to the spiritually dead young man, if now he accepts his Savior, and yields himself up to be renewed by Divine Grace! No, my poor Brother, they shall not bury you! I know you have been very bad and they may well despair of you. But while Jesus lives we cannot give you up.

The miracle was worked straightway—for this young man, to the astonishment of all about him, sat up. His was a desperate case but death was conquered, for he sat up. He had been called back from the innermost dungeon of death, even from the grave's mouth. But he sat up when Jesus called him. It did not take a month, nor a week, nor an hour—no, not even five minutes. Jesus said, "Young man, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." In an instant the Lord can save a sinner. Before the words I speak can have more than entered your ear, the Divine flash which gives you eternal life can have penetrated your breast and you shall be a new creature in Jesus Christ, beginning to live in newness of life from this hour—no more to feel spiritually dead—or to return to your old corruption.

New life, new feeling, new love, new hopes, new company shall be yours, because you have passed from death unto life. Pray God that it may be so, for He will hear us.

IV. Our time has gone and although we have a wide subject we may not linger. I must close by noticing that THIS WILL PRODUCE VERY GREAT RESULTS. To give life to the dead is no little matter.

The great result was manifest, first, in the young man. Would you like to see him as he was? Might I venture to draw back the sheet from his face? See there what death has done? He was a fine young man. To his mother's eye he was the mirror of manhood! What a pallor is on that face! How sunken are the eyes! You are feeling sad. I see you cannot bear the sight. Come, look into this grave where corruption has gone further in its work. Cover him up! We cannot bear to look at the decaying body! But when Jesus Christ has said, "Arise," what a change takes place!

Now you may look at him. His blue eyes have the light of Heaven in them. His lips are coral red with life. His brow is fair and full of thought. Look at his healthy complexion, in which the rose and the lily sweetly contend for mastery! What a fresh look there is about him, as of the dew of the morning! He has been dead but he lives, and no trace of death is on him. While you are looking at him he begins to speak. What music for his

mother's ear! What did he say? Why, that I cannot tell you. Speak yourself as a newly-quickened one and then I shall hear what *you* say.

I know what *I* said. I think the first word I said when I was quickened was, "Hallelujah." Afterwards, I went home to my mother and told her that the Lord had met with me. No words are given here. It does not quite matter what those words are, for any words proved him to be alive. If you know the Lord, I believe you will speak of heavenly things. I do not believe that our Lord Jesus has a dumb child in His house—they all speak to Him and most of them speak of Him. The new birth reveals itself in confession of Christ and praise of Christ. I warrant you that his mother, when she heard him speak, did not criticize what he said. She did not say, "That sentence is ungrammatical."

She was too glad to hear him speak at all, that she did not examine all the expressions which he used. Newly-saved souls often talk in a way which after years and experience will not justify. You often hear it said of a revival meeting that there was a good deal of excitement and certain young converts talked absurdly. That is very likely—but if genuine grace was in their souls and they bore witness to the Lord Jesus, I, for one, would not criticize them very severely. Be glad if you can see any proof that they are born again and mark well their future lives. To the young man himself a new life had begun—life from among the dead.

A new life also had begun in reference to his mother. What a great result for her was the raising of her dead son! Henceforth he would be doubly dear. Jesus helped him down from the bier and delivered him to his mother. We have not the words He used. But we are sure that He made the presentation most gracefully, giving back the son to the mother as one presents a choice gift. With a majestic delight which always goes with His condescending benevolence, He looked on that happy woman and His glance was brighter to her than the light of the morning, as He said to her, "Receive your son."

The thrill of her heart was such as she would never forget. Observe carefully that our Lord, when He puts the new life into young men, does not want to take them away with Him from the home where their first duty lies. Here and there one is called away to be an Apostle or a missionary—but usually He wants them to go home to their friends and bless their parents and make their families happy and holy. He does not present the young man to the priest but He delivers him to his mother. Do not say, "I am converted and therefore I cannot go to business any more, or try to support my mother by my trade." That would prove that you were not converted at all.

You may go for a missionary in a year or two's time if you are fitted for it. But you must not make a dash at a matter for which you are not prepared. For the present, go home to your mother and make your home happy and charm your father's heart and be a blessing to your brothers and sisters and let them rejoice because, "he was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found."

What was the next result? Well, all the neighbors feared and glorified God. If yonder young man who last night was at the music-hall and a few nights ago came home very nearly drunk. If that young man is born again, all around him will wonder at it. If that young man who has got himself out of a situation by gambling, or some other wrong-doing, is saved, we shall all feel that God is very near us. If that young man who has begun to associate with evil women and to fall into other evils, is brought to be pure-minded and gracious, it will strike awe into those round about him. He has led many others astray and if the Lord now leads him back it will make a great hubbub and men will enquire as to the reason of the change and will see that there is a power in religion alter all.

Conversions are miracles which never cease. These prodigies of power in the moral world are quite as remarkable as prodigies in the material world. We want conversion, so practical, so real, so Divine—that those who doubt will not be able to doubt—because they see in them the hand of God.

Finally, note that it not only surprised the neighbors and impressed them but the rumor of it went everywhere. Who can tell? If a convert is made this morning, the result of that conversion may be felt for thousands of years, if the world stands so long. Yes, it shall be felt when a thousand, thousand years have passed away, even throughout eternity. Tremblingly have I dropped a smooth stone into the lake this morning. It has fallen from a feeble hand and from an earnest heart. Your tears have shown that the waters are stirred. I perceive the first circlet upon the surface.

Other and wider circles will follow as the sermon is spoken of and read. When you go home and tell what God has done for your soul, there will be a wider ring. And if it should happen that the Lord should open the mouth of one of this morning's converts to preach His Word, then no one can tell how wide the circle will become. Ring upon ring will the Word spread itself, until the shoreless ocean of eternity shall feel the influence of this morning's Word. No, I am not dreaming. According to our faith so shall it be. Grace this day bestowed by the Lord upon one single soul may affect the whole mass of humanity.

God grant His blessing, even life forevermore. Pray much for a Blessing, my dear Friends, I beseech you, for Jesus Christ's sake. And pray much for me. Amen.

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“A friend of publicans and sinners.”
Luke 7:34.

THIS title was given to our Divine Lord and Master by those who were disposed to quibble at Him and were unwilling to be convinced that He was the Messiah. John the Baptist's self-denial was pushed much too far for them. They could not understand a man wearing a garment of camel's hair, with a leather belt about his loins and whose food was locusts and wild honey. The man was either too good for this world, or he was not in his right mind. “He has a devil,” they said, as they turned away from him. But they could not say this of the Savior, for He ate and drank as others ate and drank, and made no difficulty at all about meats and drinks—so they said of Him—“He is a gluttonous Man and a winebibber—a friend of publicans and sinners.” Thus our text comes to us as the language of certain gentry who said, even of the Savior, that they could not listen to Him because He seemed to be a Man who went in and out with ordinary people and did not distinguish Himself by being an ascetic.

I also heard a man say, some time ago, that he could not listen to a certain preacher because, unhappily for him, he happened to be very stout—he could profit by the ministry of a man who was very *thin*, for the objector thought he looked more saintly! Well, it may be so with some people, but, for my part, if anybody can do me good, whether he is stout or thin, I shall make no question about that matter! Whether he is an inch or two shorter or taller will not be a question for me to consider. I think that I should never refrain from consulting with an eminent physician because he happened to have black hair, or light hair, or any peculiarity of that kind! Yet people are often so indifferent about their *soul affairs* that the littlest trifle in a service, the tiniest accidental thing will often keep them from listening to the most weighty Truths of God that concern their immortal interests!

Now let us come to this title of our Master. They called Him, “a friend of publicans and sinners.” It is somewhat noticeable that He quotes this saying Himself. Probably neither Matthew, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John would have told us that they called Jesus, “a friend of publicans and sinners” if He had not repeated it, Himself. It is clear from this fact that He was not in the least ashamed of the title! He repeats it almost as if He enjoyed it, as if He took the title home to Himself and wore it as some distinction which He was glad to have! He, Himself, says it and He takes

care to say it again and to bid both Matthew and Luke record it, that He was called, “a friend of publicans and sinners.” What He was not ashamed to repeat, we are not ashamed to think of at this service! So, first of all, let us notice that *this saying, in the sense in which they meant it, was not true*. But, secondly, *in a higher and better sense than they understood it, it was true*. When we have thought over these two points, we will, in the third place, ask one another, “*Since it is true that Christ is a friend of publicans and sinners, what then?*”

I. First, then, IN THE SENSE IN WHICH THEY MEANT IT, THIS SAYING WAS NOT TRUE.

The Lord Jesus Christ was *not* “a friend of publicans and sinners” *in the sense of being in the least like them*. Our proverb says, “A man is known by the company he keeps,” but you could not have known the Lord Jesus Christ by the company *He* kept. It would be strictly true to say of Him that He was “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners”—that even when He was present with them and received them, and ate with them—yet still there was a grave distinction between Him and them so that you could never consider Him to be of the same class with them. No, Brothers and Sisters, His bitterest enemies could not truly lay any sin to His charge! They had to hire false witnesses to make up an accusation against Him and when they had made it up, there was really nothing in it. The quick-eyed prince of this world, Satan, himself, could find nothing sinful in Him. And the princes of this world, whose eyes, through their malice, had become like the eyes of lynxes, yet could not discover anything for which they could blame Him. He was not like they were. He was not like any sinner, He was not like the drunkard, He was not like the adulterer, He was not like the thief, nor was He in the least like the hypocritical Pharisee who, with all his attempts to appear righteous, was not really like the Savior. So, Christ was *not* “a friend of publicans and sinners” in the sense of being like they were.

And, in the second place, He was not “a friend of publicans and sinners” *in the sense of aiding or abetting them in evil*. He never said a single word that could encourage any man to sin. He never did a single act by which any man would have said that he was helped to be a transgressor. I do not suppose that any other man ever lived who could be truthfully said to be harmless, for all of us do *some* harm, even if unconsciously. Our example, either in its defects or in its excesses, must be injurious to *somebody*. Even those who endeavor to keep their example as pure, clean and worthy of imitation as possible, yet, perhaps, sometimes lose their temper, or occasionally speak unadvisedly with their lips, or, now and then forget what they ought to have remembered and thus incidentally do harm. But our Lord Jesus Christ never did. No one among us here was ever led by the example of Christ to do harm. His example is matchless in this respect that if we copied it as far as it is imitable, we would only have copied *perfection* and followed on after the highest virtue! There may be some who join with publicans and sinners, so eating and drinking with them as to encourage gluttony and drunkenness—so singing and laughing with them as to multiply wantonness and uncleanness—but this could never be said of the Savior. He was not like they

were nor did He aid them, so He was not, in that sense, a “friend of publicans and sinners.”

And, furthermore, *He never uttered principles which would encourage persons in sin*, or which would help their consciences to be quiet while they indulged their vices. Alas, in modern times there have been some who, even from the pulpit, have taught men that sin is a trifle and, with regard to the future state, they have either denied its existence, or have tried to make it so pleasant to the ungodly that it seems if you followed the preacher’s leading, you might as well die impenitent as fall asleep a Believer in Jesus! They have either denied that there is any wrath to come, or they have smoothed it over and made the descent to the Pit to be *pleasant* to men. This is setting a trap to catch men’s souls—but Christ never did that. Such as He loved the sinner, He denounced his sin and proclaimed the judgment to come in words most striking and terrible! Where can you find, in all the books you may read—even in the writings of those mediaeval preachers which are so generally condemned, or in the works of those old-fashioned Puritan preachers who are so sneered at, nowadays—words that equal in their crash of terror the sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ? O Sirs, if you do not care to read the Epistles, read the records of the four Evangelists and note what Jesus said! He never made the way of sin to appear pleasant, nor tried to minimize the dread result of iniquity. No, He was not, in that sense, “a friend of publicans and sinners.” He was a better friend to them than He would have been if He had acted like that! He dealt more honestly with them and did not smooth their path with flatteries.

And once again, Jesus was not “a friend of publicans and sinners” *in the sense that He ever courted popularity among them*. Many of them would have taken Him by force and made Him a king, but He hid Himself from them. They “drew near to Him for to hear Him,” but He never said a single syllable to pander to their depraved tastes, or to ease them in their consciences while continuing in their sins! He aimed at winning their souls, but not at winning their applause. I heard of one who, at the election, advertised himself as, “the friend of the working man.” I daresay the working man would find it difficult to discover any particular friendship in him, now that he has become a Member of Parliament! It is very easy to profess to be a friend of anybody when there is something to be gained by it! But our Lord and Savior had nothing to get out of those He met while here on earth. He had everything to *give* to them and He *did* give all that He had, yes, and Himself, also! But He never cajoled them, or sought their friendship, that He might win their acclamations. So it was not true that He went about among men trying to ingratiate Himself with the lowest of the low and the vilest of the vile. Nothing of the kind! Christ always stands out before us as the advocate and pattern of everything that is pure, true, right and noble, so that, *in the sense intended by these quibblers*, He was *not* “a friend of publicans and sinners.”

II. But now, dear Friends, I have a much more pleasant matter to speak of when I say that IN A HIGHER AND BETTER SENSE, THIS SAYING WAS TRUE and it is *still* true that Jesus Christ is “a friend of publicans and sinners.”

He was, first of all, *a most hearty and affectionate friend to guilty men*. His whole soul was filled with love to men while they were yet sinners and enemies to Himself. It was this that made Him leave His Father's court and all the royalties of Heaven to come and be born in a stable, and laid in a manger—and to labor in a carpenter's shop and to become the poorest of the poor and the most despised and rejected of men! All this was because He loved men, not only as men, but as *guilty* men. Their guilt excited His pity, for He knew the misery which lies concealed behind the apparent pleasure of sin. And to deliver guilty men from the consequences of their sin, He came to live where He could not have a place to lay His head, where, at the last, He did not even have a garment with which to cover His naked body! Our Lord Jesus was a truly sincere, intensely affectionate, earnest Friend—never before or after did any man have a nature so intensely affectionate as had the Lord Jesus Christ! He always seems to me as if He combined in His blessed Person both the sexes of our common humanity, as if He were the perfection of all that can be found in man and woman, too—so tender and so gentle, and yet so strong. The masculine, with all its force, and the feminine, with all its gentleness and sympathy, were united in Christ! He never thought of sinners without love, never looked at them without pity, never heard their cruel words without returning them good wishes, never saw their miseries without being moved with compassion. He was a model of gentleness such as you and I may well desire to imitate, but shall never reach. He was “a friend of publicans and sinners” in the intense affection of His heart.

You need not wonder, therefore, that I add, in the next place, that He was “a friend of publicans and sinners” *in a very practical manner*, for intensity of heart is sure to bring forth fruit. Tell me that you love me and it will come to very little if you only love me in words. But if there is true love, there will be corresponding *action*, there will be *proofs* of that affection. Our Savior proved His love to men in His very coming to this earth, as I have already said, but when He was here, He went about doing good. He never was invited to do good to any and refused, however lowly—and, let me add, however polluted they might be, they were always welcome to His benediction. He went about preaching the Gospel which could elevate those who were fallen and comfort those who were despairing and, at the last, He proved His love in the highest conceivable manner. If a good shepherd laid down his life for his sheep and, in doing so, was proved to be good, did not Jesus do so? Let me quote those blessed words of the Apostle Peter—there is more music in them than in all Homer's poetry—“Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” That we might live, He died! That we might be cleansed from our iniquities, the Lord has laid them all on Him! O Sinners, Christ is, indeed, your Friend, since, by His death, He has already done for you all that Almighty Love could suggest and Omnipotent Love could carry out! Yes, and rising from the grave and mounting to His Throne, He made intercession for the transgressors and He continues to prove His love to sinners by daily pleading for them! The prayer He commenced on earth has never closed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Oh, yes, He is in-

tensely, deeply affectionate within Himself, but He is abundantly and practically the Friend of sinners by what He does for them! How I wish that some of you would prove this by going to Him, that He might exercise upon you all the matchless skill of His inimitable Grace!

Further, Beloved, I call your attention to this fact, that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Friend of sinners *in the wisest possible sense*. He is affectionate and practical, but He is also wise. You know that there are several ways of proving yourself a man's friend. There is a man who calls upon one whom he regards as his friend and he says, "Friend, I need you to give me some drink." And his friend says to him, "There is the bottle—take as much as you like." A man who acts like that is only worthy to be called a foe! The poor fellow has another friend upon whom he calls and, to his request, his other friend replies, "I cannot give you strong drink, for I believe that it would greatly injure you. I look upon it as a mischievous thing and I am afraid the habit of drinking is growing upon you. Excuse me, but I cannot give it to you." I think you will all agree that this last is much the wiser friend! I know persons to whom, if you go and hint to them what advice you would like them to give you, they will give you that advice, directly. When people come to me to ask for advice, I generally know that they have made up their minds as to the advice I am to give them and, if they find that I advise what they wish, they think me very wise! A wise friend knows that though he might ingratiate himself for a moment by giving congenial advice, yet, by-and-by, when it turns out for evil, he would have done his friend an ill turn and would be blamed for having done so. The wise friend often throws cold water on our plans and says, "You are quite wrong," although we would have wished him to have said, "You are right."

The Lord Jesus Christ is such a wise Friend that He says to the sinner, "Come, Friend, if you would be happy, you must give up that sin." He does not say, "I will be your friend and help you through the scrapes into which you have got through your sin." "No," says Christ, "I will help you *out* of your sin if you will trust Me, but if you will keep your sin, you will have to smart for it and I will not help you out of that sorrow." He comes to you, my dear Friend, and He says, "You want to be happy, but that is not the most important point—you must first be *holy* before you can be happy." "O Lord Jesus!" says the sinner, "I want peace." "No," says Jesus, "you do not need peace—it would be injurious to you to have peace in your present condition—you must have, first, *purity*. I must, first of all, show you where you are wrong and set you right." As He does it, sometimes we cry out, "It is very rough treatment, Lord!" I have known, in cases of surgery, that a patient has been very anxious for the healing of the wound. "No," says the skillful surgeon, "not yet. There is much proud flesh which must first be taken away. We must not close this wound yet. It must be left open, for there is much that must still come forth from it if we are to have a permanent cure." Thus does the Lord Jesus Christ often deal with sinners. He is their true Friend even when He lays the axe to the root of their tree of self-righteousness and begins to cut it down! He means to make sure work and abiding work, so He bids the sinner renounce his sin, repent of his transgressions and

seek that complete change of heart which will produce a radical change of life. Christ is “a friend of publicans and sinners” in a very wise sense.

And, Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ is “a friend of publicans and sinners” *in a very intense sense*. There is an old proverb which says, “A friend in need is a friend, indeed.” Christ is the Friend of sinners in their time of need. You, Sir, have gone on in profligacy and extravagance till you are brought to beggary. Yet even now you may come to Christ! You have ruined your health by sin, yet you may still come to Christ! Possibly you have even disgraced your character by some overt crime, yet you may come to Christ and Christ will come to you! “Oh, but nobody speaks to me!” *He* will speak to you! He will find you alone in your shame and will speak words of saving power to you. Do I address some poor woman who has lost her character and is shunned by everybody? Jesus Christ comes even to you as you stand alone and He says, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more.” The Lord Jesus likes to catch us when we are down at our very lowest. When others say, “Now he is down, keep him down,” Christ says, “Now he is down, up with him!”

There is a story told about the Savior. I do not suppose that it is true, but it ought to be, for it is just what might have happened. It is an old tradition that one day, in the streets of Jerusalem, there lay a dead dog and one kicked the body and said that it had the mange. Another kicked it and said, “How its bones stick out! What a cur it is!” But there came One who stood by this dead dog and said, “What white teeth it has!” He had spied out the only good thing that could be found in the dead dog and, as He went on His way, the people asked, “Who was that?” And others answered, “It was Jesus of Nazareth.” As I have said, I do not suppose that story is true, yet it is just as Christ would have acted and that is the way He does with people—He spies out some good thing or other, if there is any in them—or if there is no good thing in them, He still loves them till He loves them into goodness! He knows the blessed art of getting hold of people at their worst and then and there putting into them some point of brightness of character which delivers them from being utterly cast away! My blessed Master likes picking sinners off the very dunghills of sin! How many poor captives has He fetched from prisons and set them free! How many has He gathered whom the devil, himself, had cast away as worn-out and good for nothing! These are the very persons that He takes and makes to be His beloved ones, who shall wash His feet with their tears and wipe them with the hairs of their head. Yes, Christ Jesus is a Friend of great intensity for He is a Friend in need.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is also the Friend of sinners *for constancy*. He is the friend of the sinner when he begins his sin and He checks him. He is the Friend of the sinner when he goes on in his sin and He warns him. He is the Friend of the sinner when he has grown old in sin and still He holds him back. He is the Friend of the sinner when the sinner gets to be, as it were, farthest gone of all—not only ripe, but rotten! Still does Jesus follow him—the wonderful perseverance of Divine Mercy is a theme that may well excite the marvel of angels! O Sirs, I wish you who have gone far into sin could but feel that still, in His pity, He looks upon you and still, in His love, He pursues you! He is, indeed, the Friend of sin-

ners! You wrote “sinners” in very small letters, once, and then you might have written, “friend,” in equally small letters. But now you write in large capitals—“SINNERS.” Oh, what a size the letters would be if they truly described you! But larger than all is that blessed word, “FRIEND.” As you seem to grow in sin, He seems even more to grow in *friendship* and so you sing to Him—

**“Still does Your good Spirit strive—
With the chief of sinners dwell.”**

Oh, that He would lead you to believe this even now, so that you might fly into His arms! He is the Friend of sinners for His constancy.

I have nearly exhausted my time, so I can only say, my Lord Jesus is the Friend of sinners *in the largest conceivable sense*. There never was a sinner to whom He was not willing to be a Friend! If you, poor Sinner, will but seek Him, He will be found of you. In a revival, perhaps, there may be hundreds coming to Christ—do not think that you will be one too many. And in dull times there may seem to be *none* coming to Christ—do not think that He will refuse you because you are a lonely one! Where do you dwell, my Hearer? Perhaps on some lone moor, or in some far-away glen, or out in the bush—yet Christ is there—so seek Him in the silence of the evening. Or do you work in the midst of the busy city where all is noise and turmoil? Yet He will hear you amidst the hum of labor and the din of traffic—your whispered prayer will reach His ear and heart—

**“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill,
And receives poor sinners still,”**

and that at all hours of the night and all moments of the day! If He should refuse you when you go to Him, you will be the first whom He ever refused—and I am sure He will not begin with you! That cannot be, for Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He also said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” No, that will never be your case nor mine, Beloved, if we come to Him! It is impossible! So let us rejoice that throughout all time, as long as there is a sinner out of Hell, Christ is ready to be that sinner’s Friend!

III. So I shall close my discourse when I have asked and answered one more question, AS CHRIST IS THE FRIEND OF SINNERS, WHAT THEN?

Well, first, let us do as the sinners used to do in His time, *they drew near to Him*—“Then drew near to Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” There is a great crowd of people—what a dense throng! Who is that in the middle? It is Jesus of Nazareth, the great Messiah Prophet preaching! Who are those gentlemen standing on the edge of the crowd, wearing broad phylacteries, discussing among themselves and sneering at the doctrine that is being taught? Those are the very respectable people who never do anything wrong—the Scribes and Pharisees—the learned men who know all that can possibly be known by anybody! These people always stand at the very outside of the ring. But who are those in the middle of the throng? And, straightway, some Pharisee holds up his hands in disgust and says, “It is perfectly shocking! Wherever the Nazarene goes, there is always a pack of the riff-raff round Him! Whenever He speaks, you notice that He is surrounded by a lot of tax-gatherers—the scum employed to gather the money for the Romans—for no Jew would do that unless he was very far gone. Do you not see that there is one of

them close to His side just now, listening to Him, and the tears are running down his checks? That is the kind of wretch to whom He preaches! And see that woman over there, that is the style of His hearers.”

Now, why did men and women of that kind always get so close to Christ? It was because they felt that He was their Friend. No, Rabbi Simeon, they will never come round *you*, so you need not trouble yourself upon that point. You can gather up your skirts and go home. They will not offend you by getting too close to your heels, for you are no friend of theirs. They know that and, somehow, sympathy draws people, while coldness repels them. I pray the Lord Jesus Christ to exercise that drawing influence over you, my dear Friends. Knowing that you are sinners, come and listen to the sinners' Friend. Read the writings of the four Evangelists and see what He has said to you—and whenever His Gospel is preached, or anything is said about Him—try to understand it and accept it. You will do so if you are wise.

Next, not only draw near to Him, but *test Him as often as need arises*. There is nothing like putting Christ to the test! In a side street, not far from here, you may have seen in a window this notice, “If any poor girl upon the streets desires to escape from her sinful way of living, she will find a friend inside.” I felt very pleased when that notice in the window was pointed out to me and I think that if I were a poor girl in that sad case, and wished to escape, I would go inside to see what the friend could do for me. The Lord Jesus Christ has put in His window a message of this kind, “Any sinner of any sort who desires to be saved, let Him come to Me.” Now, do not merely stand at the window and read it, but come inside, my poor Brother! Come inside, my Sister! Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus just now!

To get at Him, there is only this to be done—*just trust Him*. Trust Him implicitly, wholly, solely. Trust Him now. When you trust Him, then you are saved, for it is written, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” If you have trusted Christ, you have everlasting life! That act of faith proves that everlasting life has dropped into your bosom and that Christ has said to you, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Go, and sin no more.”

When you have trusted Christ and proved Him to be your Friend, *proclaim to others what you know of Him*. Whisper it about. You will find some more poor sinners who will be glad to hear the good news! You remember the dog at the hospital that went of his own accord and had his broken leg set—and then he went again with another broken-legged dog? He was a sensible animal and oh, let every poor soul that has received Christ go and find another soul and bring him to Christ! In the depth of winter, at a time when I had a balcony to my study, I put some crumbs out upon it and there came a robin redbreast, first, and he pecked and ate all he could. I do not know his language, but I fancy I can tell what he said, for he went away and came back with ever so many sparrows and other birds! He had said to them, “There are crumbs up here, come and get them.” And they all came and they came in greater numbers every day—and I do not know how it was except that they told one another. One day, whether it was the robin or the sparrows, I do not know,

but some of them told a blackbird and he was a bigger fellow than any of them. When he came, he stood near, for I should think, a minute, and then he spied me inside and flew away, for he thought, "That good man does not like blackbirds." But he did not know me! I was pleased to see him and I should have liked to see a lot of such birds. So the robin went up to him and told him that he had been there for the last three or four days and I had never even threatened him. And, after being persuaded a little, the blackbird came back and the robin seemed to me to be quite pleased to think that he had converted this fellow and brought him back, for they dropped down together on the crumbs, and they had such a joyful feast that they came again and again!

Oh, there are some of you, dear robin redbreasts, that have been here ever so long and have been eating my Master's crumbs! You have brought some sparrows to the feast—now try to entice a blackbird and if there is one blackbird bigger and bleaker than another, go and fetch him and bring him, for Jesus says that He will cast out none that come to Him by faith—and you may be sure that it is true, for He is "a friend of publicans and sinners." God bless you all, dear Friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 7:24-50.**

Verse 24. *And when the messengers of John were departed, He began to speak to the people concerning John. What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? Certainly not! John could never be compared to a reed shaken by the wind, for he was strong, sturdy, firm and steadfast. He was not like so many preachers, nowadays, who are swayed by the ever-changing opinion of the age—the thought of these modern times—and so prove themselves to be mere reeds shaken by the wind.*

25. *But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment! Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.* John had been preaching in the desert with all his might, warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come. He was no court preacher, but a minister to the multitude, who delivered his Heaven-Inspired message in his own straightforward earnest style.

26, 27. *But what did you go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I say to you, and much more than a Prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, which shall prepare Your way before You.* John was the morning star and Christ the glorious Sun! John was the herald proclaiming the coming of Christ and Christ, Himself, followed close at his heels!

28. *For I say to you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist.* His was the highest office of all, immediately to precede Messiah, Himself.

28. *But he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.* We have a fuller Gospel to preach than John had and we may expect to see greater results from the preaching of that Gospel than John could hope to see.

29-32. *And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. And the Lord said, Unto what, then, shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling, one to another, and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and you have not wept.* These children could not agree as to what game they would play. "Come," they said, "let us imitate a wedding. We will pipe and you can dance." But the others would not dance. "Well," they said, "let us play at *something*. Let us imitate a funeral—we will be the mourners." Then the others would not weep. They would agree to nothing that was proposed and that is the point of the Savior's analogy—that there are multitudes of men who always quarrel with any kind of ministry that God may send them. This man's style is much too ornate—he has a superabundance of the flowers of oratory. That other man is much too dull—there is nothing interesting about his discourses. This man is too coarse—he is so rough as even to be vulgar. That other man is too refined and uses language which shoots over people's heads. It is easy to find fault when you want to do so. Any stick will do to beat a dog and any kind of excuse will do to allow your conscience to escape from the message of an earnest ministry. Our Lord told the people that this was the way they had acted towards Himself and John the Baptist.

33. *For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine—* An ascetic of ascetics—

33. *And you say, he has a devil.* "He is out of his mind altogether, possessed by the devil."

34. *The Son of Man is come eating and drinking—* That is the Lord Jesus, Himself. He comes as a Man among men, and sits with you at your feasts, and does not lead the life of an ascetic.

34. *And you say, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!* There was no pleasing them either way! Whichever form of preacher the Lord sent, whether an ascetic or one like themselves, they found fault.

35. *But wisdom is justified of all her children.* There shall come a day when it shall be seen that, after all, God knew best what style of preacher to send. He had work for each man to do and He adapted the man for the work He had entrusted to his charge.

36. *And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to eat.* Invitations from Pharisees were rather scarce—they did not often ask Christ to their houses. Even before this meal is over, there will be sure to be something like a quarrel, depend upon it!

37. *And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner—* Her name is not given and there are good reasons why it should not be given. Certainly she was not Mary, the sister of Lazarus, nor Mary Magdalene, we may be quite sure of that. Our Savior leaves her in an anonymous condition and it is usually best that converts of this character should not be exhibited and their names made known. I believe that much cruel wrong

has been done to reclaimed sinners when they have been pushed to the front. “Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner.”—

37, 38. *When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him, weeping—His feet probably lay towards the door as He reclined at the table. And she could readily get at them without becoming too conspicuous in the room—she “stood at His feet behind Him, weeping.”—*

38. *And began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.* What a blessed amalgam of humility, penitence, gratitude and love! All these are seen in what she did, especially in that unbinding of the tresses of her beauty which had been her nets in which she had taken the souls of men. Now she uses these for a towel. She “began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”

39. *Now when the Pharisee which had bid Him, saw it, he spoke within himself—He did not like to say it in so many words, but he spoke loud enough for himself to hear it and for Christ to hear it, too.*

39-44. *Saying, This Man, if He were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches Him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said to him, You have rightly judged. And He turned to the woman and said to Simon, Do you see this woman? “You did see this woman and you looked upon her with a frowning face. Now take another look at her by the light of My parable.” “Simon, Do you see this woman?”*

44. *I entered into your house—“Therefore you were bound by the obligations of a host.”—*

44. *You gave Me no water for My feet.—An ordinary commonplace courtesy in the East, almost a necessity for those who have walked far and whose feet are weary and dusty—“You gave Me no water for My feet.”—*

44. *But she has washed My feet with tears—Costly water this! “She has washed My feet with tears.”*

44. *And wiped them with the hairs of her head.* “She has done it, she has done it better than you would have done it! She has done it best of all—she has done what you ought to have done—she has done it when there seemed to be no claim upon her to do it.”

45. *You gave me no kiss.—Though that was the ordinary mode of salutation to an honored guest—*

46. *But this woman, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.* “You said in your heart that if I had been a Prophet, I would have known who and what manner of woman this was. I do know and I am telling you. If you had given Me a kiss, you would only have coldly kissed My brow, but she has found it in her heart to honor Me by kissing My

feet. Since I came in, she has not ceased to kiss them, unwashed as they were, and she has not only kissed them, but she has also washed them with her tears.”

46. *My head with oil you did not anoint*—“You, the host, whose duty it was to anoint the head of your guest, did not do it.”—

46. *But this woman has anointed My feet with ointment.* The best oil she possessed or could procure.

47, 48. *Therefore I say to you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said to her, Your sins are forgiven.* “Not because she has done this, but this is an *evidence* that her sins are forgiven. This act of greater love is the proof that she must be conscious of the greater forgiveness—‘she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.’” It is always like that! Your converted Pharisees have to be made to feel like this woman before they will render love like hers. And if Simon is ever made to feel that his sin, in a certain light, is as great as the sin of this fallen woman, then he will love as much as she does, but not till then. Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Oh, the marvelous music of that short sentence! If I had to choose from all language the choicest sentence that my ears could hear when under a sense of sin, it would be these four words which the Master addressed to this woman who was a notable public sinner, “Your sins are forgiven.”

49. *And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that also forgives sins?* Now, you see, they begin to mutter and to quibble. What is this poor woman to do? Probably she felt ready to speak up for her Master, but, sometimes, it happens that the Lord Jesus Christ will not permit certain, even of His forgiven ones, to be very prominent.

50. *And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.* She was best out of the way of all controversy. She would honor Him most by going home and there sweetly singing to His praise and drinking deep draughts of His love. If any of you converts are meeting with those who laugh at you, do not stop where they are, but go about your business with these sweet words of your Master ringing in your ears—“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—551, 568, 499.

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PENITENCE, PARDON AND PEACE

NO. 3359

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 1913.

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

“And, behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet and she anointed them with the ointment.”
Luke 7:37-38.

THIS is a marvelously vivid Gospel incident. Every detail is plainly and forcefully set forth, so that we can picture the scene, making it live before us, without much mental effort. And yet, in some respects, there is a great reticence, a Divine delicacy, gloriously characteristic of so tender a book as the New Testament. The Evangelist—“the beloved physician,” Luke—does not lay bare the minute particulars of this woman’s life’s sins, but delights to dwell rather upon the story of her penitence and its fair fruits, and so makes her to shine resplendently as a wonder of redeeming Grace! The symptoms of her soul’s horrible malady he reveals in a single phrase—and that of general description—but upon the details of her gracious cure he delights to dwell.

We will consider the life of this famous penitent, as the Holy Spirit shall help us, under three heads, and notice, first, *her former character*. Then, *her deed of love which showed her new character*. And, thirdly, *our Lord’s treatment of her*. Let us very briefly look at—

I. THE WOMAN’S CHARACTER, to begin with, in order that we may see the horrible pit out of which she was taken.

We do not know much about her. Romish expositors generally insist upon it that she was Mary Magdalene, but this appears to other writers to have been quite impossible. Certainly it does not seem probable that a woman possessed with seven devils should follow the trade of “a sinner.” Demoniacal possession was akin to madness and it was frequently accompanied by epilepsy. And one would think that Magdalene was more fit to be a patient at an infirmary than an inmate of a reformatory. Some have even been so mistaken as to suppose this woman to have been Mary of Bethany, but this will never do. One cannot associate with the lovely household of Martha and Mary the horrible course of pollution implied in the vice which earned for this woman the special name of “a sin-

ner.” Besides, although both women anointed our Lord, yet the place, the time, the manner were all different. I need not stay to show you the difference, for that is not the point in hand.

This woman was distinguished by the title of “*a sinner*,” and her touch was regarded by Simon the Pharisee as defiling. We are all sinners, but she was a sinner by profession—sin was her occupation and probably her livelihood. The name in her case had an emphatic sense which involved shame and dishonor of the worst kind. The city streets wherein she dwelt could have told you how well she deserved her name. Poor fallen daughter of Eve, she had forsaken the guide of her youth and forgotten the Covenant of her God. She was one of those against whom Solomon warns young men, saying, “Her house inclines unto death, and her paths unto the dead.” Yet as Rahab was saved by faith, even so was she, for Grace covers even a harlot’s sins!

She was *a well-known sinner*. Ill-fame had branded her so that Simon the Pharisee recognized her as one of the town’s unhallowed sisterhood. Her way of life was common town talk—persons of decent character would not associate with her—she was cut off from respectable society and, like a leper, put outside the camp of social life. She was a sinner marked and labeled. There was no mistaking her—infamy had set its seal upon her.

She was one who had evidently *gone a great way in sin*, because our Savior, who was far from being prejudiced against her, as Simon was, and never uttered a word that would exaggerate the evil in anyone, yet spoke of “her sins which are many.” She loved much, for much had been forgiven. She was the five hundred pence debtor as compared with Simon, who owed but fifty. It is not difficult to imagine her unhappy story because that story is so commonly repeated around us. We know not how she was first led into evil ways. Perhaps her trustful heart was deceived by flattering words and promises. Perhaps the treachery of one too dearly loved led her into sin and afterwards deserted her to loneliness and shame. Perhaps her mother’s heart was broken and her father’s head was bowed down with sorrow, but she became bold enough to pursue the sin into which she had at first been betrayed and became the deceiver of others. That long hair of hers, I fear, is rightly called by Bishop Hall, “the net which she was known to spread to catch her amorous companions.” She was a sinner of the city in which she dwelt and, though her name is not mentioned, it was far too well known in her own day. She had lived an evil life we know not how long, but, certainly, she had greatly sinned, for her own flowing tears, as well as the Savior’s estimate of her life, prove that she had been no ordinary offender. Let equal sinners be encouraged to go to Jesus as she did!

But *all her sin was known to Jesus*. I mention this, not at all as a fact you do not know, but as one which any trembling sinner may do well to

remember. If you have fallen into the same vice in a greater or lesser degree, whether others know it or not, Jesus knows all about it. Our Lord allowed her to wash His feet with her tears, but He knew well what those eyes had looked upon. When He allowed those lips to kiss His feet, He knew right well what language those lips had used in years gone by. And when He allowed her to show her love to Him, He knew how foul her heart had been with every unhallowed desire. Her evil imaginations and unchaste desires, her wanton words and shameless acts were all before the Savior's mind far more vividly than they were before her own, for she had forgotten much—but He knew all. With all her tender sense of sin, she did not apprehend all the heinousness of her guilt as the perfect mind of Jesus did—and yet though she was a sinner, a well-known sinner, and known best of all to the Savior to be such, yet, glory be to Divine Grace, she was not cast out when she came to Jesus, but she obtained mercy and is now shining in Heaven as a bright and special star to the glory of the love of Christ!

When this woman stood in the house of Simon she was *a believing sinner*. We do not know how she became a convert, but, according to the harmony of the Gospels, this particular incident fits in just after Matthew 11—that is to say, if Luke has written his story with the intent of chronological correctness—and if the harmonies are right, this passage comes in after the following blessed words, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” Did this woman hear this gracious invitation? Did she feel that she was laboring and heavy laden? Did she look into the face of the great Teacher and feel that He spoke the truth and did she come to Him and find rest? Doubtless her faith came by hearing—did she hear in some crowd in the street the sweet wooing voice of the Sinner's Friend? Was this the means of making “the woman that was a sinner” into the woman that anointed Jesus' feet? We are not informed as to the particular means, nor is it of any consequence. She was converted and that is enough—how it came about is a small matter. Perhaps even she, herself, could not have told us the precise words which impressed her mind, for many are most assuredly brought to Jesus, but the work has been so gentle, gradual and gracious that they feel themselves renewed, but hardly know how it came about! On the other hand, from the marked change in her character, it is highly probable that she did know the day, the hour and the precise means—and if so, dear were the words which called her from the ways of folly, sin and shame! I do not suppose that our Savior had, at that time, delivered the memorable parable of the prodigal son, but it may have been some similar discourse which won her attention when she made one of a crowd of publicans and sinners who drew near to hear the Lord Jesus. Pressing

forward among the men to catch those silver tones, so full of music, she wondered at the Man whose face was so strangely beautiful and yet so marvelously sad—whose eyes were so bright with tears and whose face so beamed with love and earnestness. The very look of that mirror of love may have affected her! A glance at that holy countenance may have awed her and His tones of deep pity and tender warning—all these held her fast and drew her to abhor her sin and accept the joyful message which the great Teacher had come to proclaim! She believed in Jesus. She was saved and, therefore, she loved her Savior!

When she came to the Pharisee's house she was a *forgiven sinner*. She carried an alabaster box in her hand with which to anoint Him because she felt that He had been a priest to her—and had cleansed her. She brought her choicest treasure to give to Him because He had bestowed on her the choicest of all gifts, namely, the forgiveness of sin. She washed His feet because He had washed her soul. She wept because she believed—and loved because she trusted. She was, when she entered the room, in a condition of rest as in her forgiveness, for men are seldom deeply grateful for mercies which they are not sure of having obtained. Though after that deed she rose a step higher and became fully assured of her acceptance, even at her first coming she was conscious of forgiven sin—and for that reason she paid her vows unto the forgiving Lord whom her soul loved.

Our text begins with a, “behold,” and it may well be so, for a forgiven sinner is a wonder to Heaven, earth and Hell! A forgiven sinner! Though God has made this round world exceedingly fair, yet no work of Creation reflects so much of His highest Glory as the manifestation of His Grace in a pardoned sinner! If you range all the stars around and if it is so that every star is filled with a race of intelligent beings, yet, I think, among unfallen existences there can be no such marvel as a forgiven sinner. At any rate, he is a wonder to himself and he will never cease admiring the Divine Grace which pardoned and accepted him. What a miracle to herself must this woman have been. For a case like hers she had seen no precedent and this must have made it the more surprising to her! When your case also appears to stand out by itself, alone, as a towering peak of Grace, refrain not from wondering and causing others to wonder. “All Glory to God,” may some say, “I, whose name could not be mentioned without making the cheek of modesty crimson, I am washed in the blood of the Lamb! I who was a blasphemer, who sat on the drunkard's bench, who gloried in being an infidel and denied the Godhead of Christ, I, even I, am saved from wrath through Him! I who played a dishonest part, who respected not the laws of man any more than those of God, I who went to an excess of riot—even *I* am made whiter than snow through faith in Christ Jesus!—

**“Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am saved from Hell.”**

Let all know it upon earth and let Heaven know it—and let the loud harps ring in yon celestial halls because of matchless Grace! Behold, then, this woman's character, and remember—however fallen you may have been—the Grace of God can yet save you! Now, secondly, let us consider, at some length—

II. THE DEED OF LOVE WHICH INDICATED HER CONVERSION.

Her conduct as a convert was wide as the poles asunder from that of her unregenerate state—she became as evidently a penitent as she had been a sinner. One of the expositors upon this passage says that he cannot so much expound it as weep over it—and I think every Christian must feel very much in that humor. O that our eyes were as ready with tears of repentance as were hers! O that our hearts were as full of love as hers and our hands as ready to serve the forgiving Lord! If she has exceeded some of us in the publicity of her sin, yet has she not exceeded all of us in the fervency of her affection!

Let us notice what she did. And the first of 12 matters to which I shall call your attention is *the earnest interest which she took in the Lord Jesus*. “Behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table.” She had a quick ear for anything about Jesus. When she heard the news, it did not pass in one ear and out the other, but she was interested in the information and immediately went to the Pharisee's house to find Him. There were hundreds in that city who did not care a farthing where Jesus was. If they heard the general gossip about Him, it did not concern them in the least—He was nothing to them. But when she knew it, she was in motion at once to come even to His feet! Jesus will never again be an object of indifference to a forgiven sinner. If the Lord has pardoned you, you will henceforth feel the deepest interest in your Savior and in all things which concern His Kingdom and work among men. Now, if you have to move to any place, you will want to know first, “Where can I hear the Gospel? Are there any lovers of Jesus there?” If you are informed about a town or country, the information will not be complete till you have enquired, “How is the cause of God prospering there?” As you look upon your fellow men, the thought will strike you, “How do they stand towards Christ?” When you attend a place of worship, it will not matter much to you whether the edifice is architecturally beautiful, or the preacher a learned man and a great orator—you need to know whether you can hear of Jesus in that place and be likely to meet with Him in that assembly! Your cry will be, “Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed?” If you perceive a sweet savor of Christ in the place, you feel that you have had a good Sabbath, but if Jesus Christ is lacking, you consider everything to be lacking—and you groan over a lost Sabbath. A soul that has tasted Christ's love cannot be put off with anything short of Him—it hungers and thirsts after Him and any good word about Him is sweet unto the taste. Is it so with you?

Notice, next, *the readiness of her mind to think of something to be done for Jesus*. “When she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster box of ointment”—she was quick and ready in her thoughts of service. She would not appear before the Lord empty, but the resolve to bring an offering and the selection of that offering were quickly made. She would get that alabaster box of aromatic ointment, the daintiest and costliest perfume that she had, and she would anoint His feet to do Him honor. Many minds are inventive for the things of the world, but they seem to have no quickness of thought in reference to the service of Christ—they proceed with dull routine, but never flash out with spontaneous deeds of love. This woman showed an original genius in her love. She was no copier of a former example—her plan of service had the dew of freshness upon it. Mary of Bethany did something like it, but that was afterwards—this was the woman’s own original idea. Her thoughtful soul struck out this new path for itself. We need more contriving, inventing and planning for Christ! See how we act towards those we love—we consider what will please them and plot and plan some pleasant surprise for them. We put our heads together and ask, “What shall it be? Let us think of something new and original.” That thoughtfulness is half the beauty of the act.

Notice, thirdly, *her promptness of action*. She did not merely think that she had an alabaster box to give, but she took it at once and hastened to pour out its contents. Dear Friend, you have been saved by Grace and you have an alabaster box upstairs which you have long meant to bring down—but it is still there. Half-a-dozen times or more, when you have had your heart warmed by the love of Christ, you have felt that now was the time to bring out the box, but it still remains sealed up! You were so pleased with yourself for having such earnest feelings and generous resolutions that you stopped to admire yourself and forgot to carry out your resolutions! You have done nothing, though you have intended a great deal. Do you not sometimes feel as self-contented as if you had done something wonderful when, after all, you have only mapped out what you *think* you may possibly do at some future time? Indeed, it is a mighty easy thing to make yourself believe that you have really done what you have only dreamed about! This is wretched child’s play and the woman before us would have none of it! She saw the occasion and she seized it. Jesus might not be in her city, again, and she might not be able to find Him for many a day. The thought struck her and she struck the thought while yet the iron was hot and fashioned it into a fact!

Observe, in the fourth place, her *courage*. She knew that Jesus was at the table in the Pharisee’s house. And she soon found Him reclining, in the Oriental fashion, with His feet near the door, for Simon was so uncivil that he was sure to give Him a poor place at the table. Seeing the Lord, she ventured in. It needed no small bravery for her to enter the

house of a Pharisee, who, above all things, would dread to be touched by such a character! In her bad times she had seen the holy man gather up his garments and leave her a broad space on the streets, for fear that she should pollute his sacred person! She must have felt, as all penitent sinners do, an inward shrinking from the cold, hard, self-righteous professor of purity! She would have gone anywhere in that city rather than into Simon's house. It must have cost her a great struggle to face his frowns and severe remarks. Perhaps, however, I am wrong. Indeed, I think I am, for she was so full of the desire to show her love and to honor the Lord Jesus that she forgot the Pharisee! Yes, and if the devil had been there, instead of Simon, she would have dared even him in his den, to reach her Lord! Still, there was much courage needed for one so lowly in her penitence to be able to bear the cold, contemptuous look of the master of the house. Conscious that she had been a castaway from society, yet she courageously fulfilled her mission, fearless of cruel remarks and taunting charges. O poor, timid seeking Soul, the Lord can also give *you* the courage of a lion in His cause, though now you are timid as a hare!

When, then, the penitent had reached the Master's feet, note well how one Grace balanced another and observe *her humility* tempering her courage. Her boldness was not forwardness nor indelicate impertinence—no, she was as bashful as she was brave! She did not advance to our Lord's head, or thrust herself where He would readily see her—much less did she presume to address Him—but she stood at His feet behind Him, weeping. She was probably but a little way in the room. She courted no observation. She was near Jesus, but it was near His feet, and weeping there. To weep at His feet was honor high enough for her—she sought no uppermost seat at the banquet. Ah, dear Friends, it is a blessed thing to see young converts bold, but it is equally delightful to see them humble! And they are none the worse for being very retiring if they have been great sinners.

I have been very sorry when I have seen a lack of modesty where it ought to have superabounded. There is more Grace in a blush than in a brazen forehead, far more propriety in holy shamefacedness than in pious impudence. Good Bishop Hall says, "How well is the case altered! She was known to look boldly in the face of her lovers, and now she dares not behold the awful Countenance of her Savior! She had been accustomed to send alluring beams forth into the eyes of her paramours, but now she casts dejected eyes to the earth and dares not so much as raise them up to see those eyes from which she desired commiseration." Lowliness goes well with penitence. One would not wish humility to be corrupted into cowardice, nor courage to be poisoned into pride. This repenting sinner had both excellences in proper proportion and the two together put her exactly in the place where a woman that was a sinner ought to be when saved by Grace!

We see before us our reclaimed Sister looking down upon the Lord's blessed feet. And as we mark her flowing tears, we pause to speak of *her contrition*. She gazed upon our Lord's feet and I wonder whether that sight suggested to her how her feet had wandered—and how travel-worn had become the feet of the Lord, who had sought and found her—

***“She knew not of the bitter way
Those sacred feet had yet to tread,
Nor how the nails would pierce, one day,
Where now her costly balms were shed.”***

But she saw those feet to be all unwashed, for Jesus had been neglected where He ought to have been honored. And she saw therein the memory of her own neglect of Him who had so freely loved her soul. She wept at the memory of her sins, but she wept over *His* feet. She grieved most because she had grieved Him. She wept because she had sinned so much and then wept because He had forgiven her so freely! Love and grief in equal measures made up those precious tears. The Divine Spirit was at work within her, dissolving her very soul, even as it is written, “He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow.” And again, “He smote the Rock and the waters gushed out.” Do you marvel that she stood and wept? Thinking of herself and then thinking of Him, the two thoughts together were far too much for her—and what could she do but both relieve her heart and express it in a shower of tears? Wherever there is a real forgiveness of sin, there will be real sorrow on account of it. He who knows that his sin is pardoned, is the man who most acceptably exercises repentance. Our hymn puts it on the right footing when it points, not to the horrors of Hell, but to the griefs of Immanuel, by which our pardon is certified to us as the deep source of sorrow for sin—

***“My sins, my sins, my Savior,
How sad on You they fall!
Seen through Your gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven,
But all their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.”***

After admiring this woman's contrition, notice her love. The Holy Spirit took delight in adorning her with all the Divine Graces and she came behind in nothing—but she excelled in love. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when He translated her act of anointing His feet, expressed it in the one word, “love.” He said, “She loved much.” I cannot speak much with you concerning love, for it is rather to be felt than to be described. Words have no power to bear the weight of meaning which lies in love to Christ. Oh, how she loved! Her eyes, her hair, her tears—herself—she counted all as nothing for His dear sake! Words failed her, as they fail us and, therefore, she betook herself to deeds in order to let her heart have vent. Alabaster box and ointment were all too little for Him—the essence of her heart was

distilled to bathe His feet—and the glory of her head was unbound to furnish Him with a towel! He was her Lord, her All-in-All! If she could have laid kingdoms at His feet, she would have rejoiced to do so! As it was, she did her best and He accepted it.

This love of hers led her to *personal service*. Her hands were the servants of her heart and did their part in the expression of her affection. She did not send the alabaster box to Jesus by her sister, or ask a disciple to pass it to Him, but she performed the anointing with her own hands, the washing with her own tears and the wiping with her own hair. Love cannot be put off with proxy service! She seeks no substitute, but offers her own person! I grant, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we can serve the Lord a great deal by helping others to serve Him, and it is right and proper to help those who are able to labor better and more widely than we can. But still, it is not right that we should rest content with that—we ought to be ambitious to render tribute to our Lord with our own hands. We cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of doing some little thing for our Beloved Lord. Suppose this loving woman had had a sister who loved the Master even as she did? And suppose, like a loving sister, she had said to her, “I fear it will be too heavy a task for you to face cold-hearted Simon—I will take the box and anoint our blessed Lord and tell Him that I did it for you—and so He shall know your love.” Do you think she would have consented to the proposal? Ah, no, it would not have answered the purpose at all. Love refuses sponsors. She must anoint those blessed feet *herself*. Now, dear Friends, you who hope that you have been forgiven, are you doing anything for Jesus? Are you, on your own, serving Him? If not, let me tell you, you are missing one of the greatest delights that your souls can ever know and, at the same time, you are omitting one of the chief fruits of the Spirit! “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” is the question, and if you wish to answer it with proof positive, then go, and with your own hands, feed the Savior’s sheep! Surely you cannot love Him as you should, unless each day has its deed of love, its sacrifice of gratitude!

Observe, next, that *her service was rendered to the Lord Himself*. Read the passage and place an emphasis upon the words which refer to the Lord. “She stood at *His* feet, behind *Him*, weeping, and began to wash *His* feet, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed *His* feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment.” It was not for Peter, or James, or John that she acted as servitor. I have no doubt she would have done anything for any of His disciples, but at this time all her thoughts were with her Lord—and all her desire was to honor *Him*. It is a delightful thing for Christian people to lay themselves out distinctly for the Lord Jesus. There should be more ministering unto Him, more definite aiming at His Glory. To give money to the poor is good, but sometimes it is better

to spend it upon Jesus more distinctly, even though some Judas or other should complain of waste—

***“Love is the true economist!
She breaks the box and gives her all,
Yet not one precious drop is missed,
Since on His head and feet they fall.”***

One is glad to serve the Church—who would not wait upon the bride for the bridegroom’s sake? One is glad to go into the streets and lanes of the city to gather in poor sinners, but our main motive is to honor the Savior. See, then, how she who was once a harlot has become a zealous lover of the Lord and is ready to wash her Lord’s feet, or perform any service which may be permitted her, if she may work a good work upon Him!

Further, note that what she did, she did very *earnestly*. She washed His feet, but it was with tears. She wiped them, but it was with those luxurious tresses which were all unbound and disheveled that she might make a towel of them for His blessed feet. She kissed His feet and she did it again and again, for she did not cease to kiss His feet, or if she made a moment’s pause, it was only that she might pour on more of the ointment. She was altogether taken up with her Lord and His work! Her entire nature concurred in what she did and awakened itself to do it well. True love is intense—its coals burn with vehement heat—it makes all things around it living. Dead services cannot be endured by living hearts!

Furthermore, notice the woman’s *absorption in her work*. There she stood, anointing His feet with ointment and kissing them again and again. Simon shook his head, but what of that? He frowned and cast black looks at her, but she ceased not to wash His feet with her tears! She was too much occupied with her Lord to care for scowling Pharisees. Whether anyone observed her or not, or whether observers approved or censured, was a very small matter to her—she went quietly on—accomplishing the suggestion of her loving heart!

And *what she did was so real, so practical*, so free from the mere froth of profession and pretence. She never *said* a word—and why not? Because it was all act and all heart with her. Words! Some abound in them, but what wretched things words are with which to express a heart. As in a glass, darkly, can we see the reflection of a soul’s love in its most passionate utterances? Actions are far more loud and have a sweeter tone than words! This woman had done with speech, for the time being, at any rate, and tears and disheveled hair and poured-out ointment must speak for her! She was too much in earnest to call anyone’s attention to what she was doing, or to care for anyone’s opinion, much less to court commendation, or to answer the ugly looks of the proud professor who scorned her! This thorough oblivion of all except her Lord constituted, in a measure, the charm of her deed of love—it was wholehearted and entire loyalty which her homage revealed. Now, dearly Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, I do pray that you and I, as pardoned sinners, may be so tak-

en up with the service of our Lord Jesus Christ that it may not matter to us who smiles or who frowns! And may we never take the trouble to defend ourselves if people find fault, or ever wish for anybody to commend us, but be so taken up with *Him* and the work He has given us to do, and with the love we feel to *Him*, that we know nothing else! If all others run away from the work. If all discourage us, or if they all praise us, may we take but small notice of them, but keep steadily to our loving service of Jesus! If Grace enables us to do this, it will be greatly magnified.

See, dear Friends, what Divine Grace made of “the woman that was a sinner.” Perhaps you thought her worse than yourselves in her carnal state—what do you think of her as a penitent? What do you think of yourselves if you stand side by side with her? Do you not blush for very shame and ask for forgiveness of your Lord for the slenderness of your affection? Lastly, let us see—

III. THE SAVIOR’S BEHAVIOR TO HER.

What did He do? First, *He silently accepted her service*. He did not move His feet away, did not rebuke her, or bid her to leave. He knew that reflections were being cast upon His Character by His allowing her to touch Him, yet He did not forbid her, but, on the contrary, continued quietly enjoying the feast of repentance, gratitude and love which she spread for Him. He was refreshed by seeing such Grace in one who had before been so far from God. The perfumed ointment was not so grateful to His feet as her love was to His soul—for Jesus delights in love—especially in penitent love! Her tears did not fall in vain—they refreshed the heart of Jesus, who delights in the tears of repentance. The applause of a nation would not have solaced Him one-half as much as this woman’s pure, grateful, contrite, humble love! His silence gave consent, yes, even approbation! And she was happy enough to be allowed to indulge herself in expressions of adoring affection.

Then the Lord went a little farther, He turned round and *looked at her*, and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman?” That glance of His must have encouraged her and made her heart dance for joy! As soon as ever those eyes of His lighted on her, she could see that all was right—she knew that whoever frowned, there were no frowns on that brow—and she was filled with supreme contentment!

Next, *the Lord spoke, and defended her triumphantly*, and praised her for her deed! Yes, and He went beyond that and *personally spoke to her* and said, “Your sins are forgiven you,” setting a seal to the pardon which she had received and making her assurance doubly sure! This was a joy worth worlds—

**“Oh, might I hear Your heavenly tongue
But whisper, ‘You are Mine,’
The heavenly word should raise my song
To notes almost Divine.”**

She had a choice blessing in hearing from His own lips that her faith was firmly based and that she was, indeed, forgiven! Then she received a direction from Him as to what to do—"Go in peace." A forgiven sinner is anxious to know what he may do to please his Lord. "Show me what You would have me to do," was Paul's prayer. So our Lord Jesus seemed to say, "Beloved, do not stay here battling with these Pharisees. Do not tarry in this crowd of cavilers. Go home in perfect peace and as you have made home unhappy by your sin, make it holy by your example."

That is just, I think, what the Lord Jesus would have me say to my dear friends who have followed me in this discourse. You see what Grace can do—go home and let your family see it! If any of you are conscious of great sin—and have received great forgiveness—and, therefore, wish to show your love to Jesus, do what is on your heart! But at the same time remember that He would have you go in peace. Let a holy calm abide in your breast. Do not enter into the vain jangling and endless controversies of the hour. Do not worry yourself with the battles of the newspapers and magazines that are everlastingly worrying poor souls with modern notions. Go in peace! You know what you know—keep to that. You know your sin and you know Christ, your Savior! Keep to Him and live for Him. Go home into the family circle and do everything you can to make home happy, to bring your brothers and sisters to Christ and to encourage your father and mother if they have not yet found the Savior!

Home is especially a woman's place. There she reigns as a queen! Let her reign well. Around the hearth and at the table, in the sweets of domestic relationships and quiet friendships, a woman will do more for the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ than by getting up to preach! In the cases of men, also, many who long to flash in public had better by far shine at home! Go home in peace and, by a happy, holy life, show to others what saints God can make out of sinners! You have seen what sin and the devil can do to degrade—go and prove what Grace and the Holy Spirit can do to elevate—and may many, cheered by your example, come and trust your Lord!

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

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

THE WOMAN WHICH WAS A SINNER NO. 801

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 22, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”
Luke 7:37-38.*

THIS is the woman who has been confused with Mary Magdalene. How the error originated, it would not be easy to imagine, but error it certainly is. There is not the slightest shadow of evidence that this woman, who was a sinner, had even the remotest connection with her out of whom Jesus cast seven devils. In delivering you a sermon a few Sabbaths ago, upon the life of Mary of Magdala, [#792, *Mary Magdalene*, January 26, 1868] I think I showed you that it was hardly possible, and most improbable that she could have been a sinner in the sense here intended. And now I venture to affirm that there is as much evidence to prove that the woman in the narrative now before us, was the Queen of Sheba, or the mother of Sisera, as that she was Mary Magdalene—there is not a figment or fraction of evidence to be found! The fact is, there is no connection between the two.

Further, the sinner before us is not Mary of Bethany, with whom so many have identified her. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, did anoint our Savior, but this is a *previous* anointing, by quite a different person, and the two narratives are altogether distinct. There is a great likeness, certainly, between the two. The principal persons were both women, full of ardent love to Christ. They both anointed the Lord with ointment—the name of *Simon* is connected with both, and they both wiped the Savior’s feet with their hair. But it ought not to astonish you that there were *two* persons whose intense affection thus displayed itself—the astonishment should rather be that there were not *200* who did so, for the anointing of the feet of an honored friend was by no means so uncommon a token of respect among the Orientals as to be an unprecedented marvel.

Loved as Jesus deserved to be, the marvel is that He was not more often visited with these generous tokens of human love. It is a pity to fuse two occasions into one, as though we grudged a double unction to the Anointed of the Lord. That both events should happen in the houses of persons named Simon is not at all remarkable—remember that the one was Simon the Pharisee, and the other Simon the *leper*—and that Simon is one of the most common of Jewish names. In our day a thing having happened in the house of a “John,” and another thing like it in the house of another “John,” would not be remarkable since Johns are exceedingly common among us, as were Simons in the days of our Lord.

But that the two, or perhaps I should say three, anointings (for I am inclined to think there were three) are not the same is evident from the following reasons: they differ in time. Our Lord lived at least six months after His anointing by this woman, and if you follow the narrative you read in the very next chapter, "And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the Twelve were with Him." But when Mary anointed Him at Bethany, He said, "She did it for My burial," and our Lord was then within a very few days of His Crucifixion.

The anointing by Mary, the sister of Lazarus, took place at Bethany (Matthew 26:6), but this occurred in *Galilee*, which is quite another quarter. Moreover, the fact itself was really a very different one, for although both women anoint Christ with ointment, yet there was a peculiar preciousness and power of perfume about the spikenard of the wealthier Mary which is not mentioned in the ointment of this woman of a lower position in life. Mary, according to John (John 12:3), poured out a whole pound of the costly nard, but such is not said of the humble offering of the woman that was a sinner.

Matthew tells us that a woman poured the ointment on His head, but this poor penitent is only said to have anointed His *feet*. Tears are not mentioned in connection with Mary by either Matthew, Mark, or John, while they make a conspicuous feature in the love of the gracious mourner now before us. After the transaction there was an objection raised in both cases, but mark the great difference! In this case, Simon the Pharisee objected because she, being a sinner, was allowed to have such familiarity with the Lord. In the other case no such objection was raised to the *person*, but Judas Iscariot objected to her having been so profuse and extravagant in the abundance and costliness of the anointing, and murmured, saying that this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor.

If you confuse these two occurrences, you not only make an flagrant mistake, but you lose a precious lesson. This case now before us is the offering of a poor *returning* wanderer, who, under a deep sense of gratitude, brings the best she has to her Lord and is accepted by His Divine Grace. In the case of Mary of Bethany, it was an *advanced* saint—one who had sat at Jesus' feet and heard of Him, and had before chosen the good part which should not be taken away from her—and she brings a costly tribute as the offering of her deep, sincere affection which had grown and deepened by the receipt of many favors from His loving hand.

The advanced Believer is more bold than the new convert. She anoints His head when the other only anoints His feet, but she is not less *loving*, for if there are fewer tears, there is a more costly spikenard. Jesus defended the penitent, and bade her go in peace. But in Mary's case there was no need to say, "Your sins are forgiven," for she already possessed that priceless gift! Our Lord, instead of merely defending, warmly eulogized her love, and declared, "Wherever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her." Thus much will suffice to show you that "the woman which was a sinner" is neither to be confused with Mary of Mag-

dala on the one hand, or Mary of Bethany on the other. Let us learn to read our Bibles with our eyes open—to study them as men do the works of great artists—studying each figure and even each sweet variety of light and shade.

But too long have we been controverting on the threshold of the text! Let us now lift the latch. Lo, on the table I see two savory dishes, let us feed thereon. Here are two silver bells, let us ring them! Their first note is Grace, and the second tone is Love.

I. GRACE, the most costly of spikenard—this story literally drips with it—like those Oriental trees which bleed perfume, or as the spouse when she rose up to open to her Beloved, and her hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. Grace, that gentle dew of Heaven, is here plenteously distilled and falls like small rain upon the tender herb. Grace—Sovereign, Distinguishing, Omnipotent—is exceedingly magnified in this narrative. Lo, I see it exalted upon a glorious high throne, with the king's daughter waiting as an honorable woman among its courtiers!

1. First, Grace is here glorified in its object. She was “a sinner”—a sinner not in the flippant, unmeaning, everyday sense of the term—but a sinner in the blacker, filthier, and more obnoxious sense. She had forsaken the guide of her youth and forgotten the Covenant of her God. She had sinned against the laws of purity and had made herself as a defiled thing. She had fallen into that deep ditch concerning which it is written, “The abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.” According to our Lord's parable, she was in comparison with the Pharisee as a 500-pence sinner, while the Pharisee was but as fifty.

She was one of the scarlet sinners that we read of in Scripture—she sinned and made others to sin. Hers were offenses which provoke the Lord to jealousy and stir up His wrath. Yet, oh, miracle of miracles! she was an object of Distinguishing Grace, ordained unto eternal life! Why was this? On what legal grounds was *she* selected? For what merit was she chosen? Was this an extraordinary and out-of-the-way instance? By no means, dear Friends, for the Grace of God has frequently chosen the lowest of the low, and the vilest of the vile.

Recollect how, in the pedigree of our Lord, you find the name of the shameless Tamar, the harlot Rahab, and the unfaithful Bathsheba, as if to indicate that the Savior of sinners would enter into near relationship with the most degraded and fallen of our race! This is, in fact, one of the dearest titles of our Lord, though it was hissed at Him from the lips of contempt, “A friend of publicans and sinners.” This is Jesus' Character of which He is not ashamed: “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

Free Grace has made no distinction among men on account of merit, whether false or real, if real there is. The Law has concluded us all in unbelief, and then the abounding Grace of God, looking upon us all as equally cast away and ruined both by Adam's Fall and by our own personal transgression, has predestinated and called whomever it would. Do you not hear from the Throne of Mercy the echoes of that Sovereign proclamation, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. I will have com-

passion on whom I will have compassion”? Grace has pitched upon the most unlikely cases in order to show itself to be Grace! It has found a dwelling place for itself in the most unworthy heart—that its freeness might be the better seen.

Do I address one who has greatly fallen? Let this thought comfort you, if your heart bewails your sin—let this give you hope of mercy—that in the election of Grace some of the grossest blasphemers, persecutors, thieves, fornicators and drunkards have been included—and in consequence thereof they have been forgiven, renewed, and made to live sober, righteous, and godly lives! Such as these have obtained mercy so that in them, first, God might show forth all longsuffering as a comfort and encouragement to others to cry unto the Lord for mercy.

Grace reigns right majestically in the case before us, in that this particular sinner should be chosen. To choose a sinner was something, but to choose this one individual was even more astonishing! No doubt, she did in spirit ask herself, “Why me, Lord? Why me?” Had she been here this morning, she would sing as heartily as any of us—

**“Oh, gift of gifts!
Oh, Grace of faith!
My God, how can it be
That You, who has discerning love,
Should give that gift to me?
How many hearts You might have had
More innocent than mine!
How many souls more worthy far
Of that pure touch of Yours!
Ah, Grace! Into unlikeliest hearts
It is Your boast to come;
The glory of Your light to find
In darkest spots a home.”**

At yonder table sits Simon the Pharisee, a good respectable body, as he thinks himself to be, and yet no Divine choice has fallen upon *him*—while this poor *harlot* is elected by Distinguishing Grace! How can we account for this? Many there were in the city like to herself, some worse, some better—but Grace had marked *her* as its own. Oh strange, yet admirable Sovereignty!

Now, it is possible that you may not be much taken with the glory of Grace in selecting *her*, but I will ask you whether you are not delighted with the Grace which separated *you* to be the Lord’s? O Brothers and Sisters, when once a man discovers that God has chosen him—when he feels that Grace has broken his heart, has brought him to Christ and has covered him with a perfect righteousness—then he breaks out in wondering exclamations, “How could You have chosen *me*? What am I, and what is my father’s house, that I should be taken into such royal favor?” The more a Believer looks within, the more he discovers reasons for Divine *wrath* and the less he believes in his own personal merit. How is the heart of a true Believer filled with adoring gratitude that ever the Lord’s boundless love should have been pleased to settle and fix itself upon him!

This is not so much for me to discourse upon as it is for your private meditations. I earnestly commend to you that precious thought, that Jehovah loved you from before the foundations of the world and *chose* you

when He might have *left* you—chose you when He passed over thousands of the great and the noble, the wise, and the learned. The doctrine is not a dogma to be fought over, as dogs over a bone, but to be *rejoiced* in and turned to practical account as an incentive to reverent wonder and affectionate gratitude. Where sin abounded Grace did much more abound, and the “woman which was a sinner,” is now before us a weeping penitent. The sinner “of the city,” a public sinner, is now openly a follower of the Holy One!

2. Grace is greatly magnified in its *fruits*. Who would have thought that a woman who had yielded her members to be servants of unrighteousness, to her shame and confusion, should have now become—what if I call her a maid of honor to the King of kings?—one of Christ’s most favored servitors? She offered hospitalities to Jesus which the Pharisee omitted, and offered them in an infinitely better spirit and style than the Pharisee could have done if he had tried!

Let us remark that the Grace of God brought this woman in a way of Providence to listen to the Savior’s discourses. In a former part of this chapter it appears He had been preaching the Gospel, and more especially preaching it to the poor. Perhaps she stood in the street attracted by the crowd, and, as she listened to our Savior’s talk, it seemed to hold her fast. She had never heard a man speak after that fashion and when He spoke of abounding mercy, and the willingness of God to accept as many as would come to Him, then the tears began to follow each other down her cheeks.

And when she listened again to that meek and lowly Preacher and heard Him tell of the Father in Heaven who would receive prodigals and press them to His loving bosom, then her heart was fairly broken. She relinquished her evil traffic—she became a new woman, desirous of better things—anxious to be freed from sin. But she was greatly agitated in her heart with the question—*could* she, *would* she be really forgiven? Would such pardoning love as she had heard of reach even to *her*? She hoped so, and was in a measure comforted. Her faith grew, and with it an ardent love.

The Spirit of God still worked with her till she enjoyed a feeble hope, a gleam of confidence! She believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, that He had appeared on earth to forgive sins and she rested on Him for the forgiveness of her sins and longed for an opportunity to do Him homage, and if possible to win a word direct from His mouth. The Lord of Mercy came to the city where she lived. “Now,” she thought, “here is my opportunity. That blessed Prophet has come! The Man who spoke as never man spoke is near me and I have already derived such benefit from Him that I love Him better than all besides—I love Him as my own soul. I will steal into the house of the Pharisee that I may feast my eyes with the sight of Him.”

Now when she came to the door the Savior was reclining at His meat, according to the Oriental custom, and His feet were towards the door—for the Pharisee had but little respect for Christ and had not given Him the best and innermost place at the feast. But there He lay with His uncovered feet towards the door. And the woman, almost unperceived, came

close to Him. And, as she looked and saw that the Pharisee had refused Him the ordinary courtesy of washing His feet, and that they were all stained and travel-worn with His long journeys of love, she began to weep, and the tears fell in such plenteous showers that they even washed His feet. *Here* was holy water of a *true* sort. The crystal of penitence falling in drops, each one as precious as a diamond!

Never were feet bedewed with a more precious water than those penitent eyes showered forth. Then, unbinding those luxurious tresses which had been for her the devil's nets in which to entangle souls, she wiped the sacred feet with them. Surely she thought that her chief adornment, the crown and glory of her womanhood, was all too worthless a thing to do service to the lowest and meanest part of the Son of God. That which once was her vanity now was humbled and yet exalted to the lowest office—she made her eyes a pitcher and her locks a towel. "Never," says Bishop Hall, "was any hair so preferred as this! How I envy those locks that were graced with the touch of those sacred feet."

There a sweet temptation overtook her, "I will even kiss those feet, I will humbly pay reverence to those blessed limbs." She spoke not a word, but how eloquent were her actions! Better, even, than Psalms and hymns were these acts of devotion! Then she thought of that alabaster box containing perfumed oil with which, like most Eastern women, she was likely to anoint herself for the pleasure of the smell and for the increase of her beauty. And now, opening it, she pours out the costliest thing she has upon His blessed feet. Not a word, I say, came from her! And, Brothers and Sisters, we would prefer a single speechless lover of Jesus who acted as she did, to 10,000 noisy talkers who have no gifts, no heart, no tears!

As for the Master, He remained quietly acquiescent, saying nothing, but all the while drinking in her love and letting His poor weary heart find sweet solace in the gratitude of one who once was a sinner, but who was to be such no more. Grace, my Brethren, deserves our praise, since it does so much for its object. Grace does not choose a man and leave him as he is. My Brothers and Sisters, men rail at Grace, sometimes, as though it were opposed to morality—whereas it is the great source and cause of all *complete* morality—indeed, there is no real holiness in the sight of God except that which Grace creates, and which Grace sustains.

This woman, apart from Grace, had remained black and defiled, still, to her dying day—but the Grace of God worked a wondrous transformation, removing the impudence of her face, the flattery from her lips, the finery from her dress and the lust from her heart. Eyes which were full of adultery were now fountains of repentance! Her lips which were doors of lascivious speech, now yielded holy kisses—the profligate was a *penitent*, the castaway a *new* creature. All the actions which are attributed to this woman illustrate the transforming power of Divine Grace. She exhibited the deepest repentance. She wept abundantly. She wept out of no mere sentimentalism, but at the remembrance of her many crimes. She wept for sorrow and for shame as she thought over her early childhood, and how she had slighted a mother's training, how she had listened to the tempter's voice and hurried on from bad to worse.

Every part of her life story would rise before her as a painfully vivid dream. The sight of those blessed feet helped her to remember the dangerous paths into which she had wandered. The sluices of grief were drawn up and her soul flowed out in tears. O blessed Spirit of Grace, we adore You as we see the rock smitten and the waters gushing. "He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow." Note the woman's humility. She had once possessed a brazen face and knew no bashfulness, but now she stands *behind* the Savior. She did not push herself in before His face—she was content to have the meanest standing-place. If she might not venture to anoint His head, yet, if she might do service to His feet, she blushed as she accepted the honor. Those who truly serve the Lord Jesus have a holy bashfulness, a shrinking sense of their own unworthiness and are content to fulfill the very lowest office in His household.

That is no service for Christ when you would need ride the king's horse, and wear the king's garment and have it said, "This is the man whom the king delights to honor." That is serving *yourself* rather than Christ when you covet the chief place in the synagogue, and would have men call you Rabbi. But that is *real* service when you can care for the poor. When you can condescend to men of low estate and become a teacher of the ignorant and an instructor of babes. He serves well who works behind his master's back, unknown and unperceived—toiling in the dark, unreported, unapplauded, and happy to have it so. See, Beloved, how in a woman who was once so shameless, Grace plants and makes to flourish the fair and modest flower of true humility!

Yet was the woman courageous, for she must have needed much courage to enter into a *Pharisee's* house. The look of a Pharisee to this woman must have been enough to freeze summer into howling winter. Those Pharisees had an insufferable contempt of everybody who was not of their own clique—who did not fast twice a week, and tithe their mint, anise, and cumin. They said, by every gesture, "Stand by, I am holier than you." To a person of infamous character the pompous Pharisee would be *doubly* contemptuous, and a *woman* conscious of unworthiness would be sorely wounded by his manners. Besides, at a *feast* her tears would be much out of place, and therefore she would be the more rudely rebuked.

But how fearless she was! And how bravely she held her tongue when Simon railed! What will not men and women do when Divine Grace moves them to love, and love prompts them to courage? Yes, into the very jaws of Hell the Grace of God would make a Believer dare to enter if God commanded him. There is no mountain too high for a believing foot to scale, and no furnace too hot for a believing heart to bear. Let Rome and its amphitheatres, Piedmont and its snow, France and its galleys, Smithfield and its stakes, the Netherlands and their rivers of blood—let them all speak of what Divine Grace can do when once it reigns in the heart—what heroes it can make of the very weakest and most timid of God's children where it rules supreme!

I have said that in every part of this woman's action Grace is honored, and it is so more especially in this respect, that what she did was *practical*. Hers was not pretense, but real and expensive service. The religion of some professors stops short at their substance—it costs them nothing,

and, I fear, is worth nothing. They appear before the Lord empty. They buy no sweet cane with money, neither does the Lord receive the fat of their sacrifices. I must confess myself utterly at a loss to understand the piety of some people! I thank God I am not bound to understand it, and that I am not sent into the world to be a judge of my fellow creatures—but I do greatly wonder at the religion of many. There are to be found, and I have found them, persons whose love to Christ is of such a sort that they give to His cause the larger proportion of their substance, and do so gladly, thinking it a privilege! Yes, I know some who pinch themselves—some of the poor and needy who stint themselves that they may give to Christ!

Such are doubtless blessed in the deed. I do not understand those men who have thousands upon thousands of pounds, perhaps hundreds of thousands, and profess to love Christ, but dole out their gifts to Jesus in miserable fragments. I must leave them to their Master, to be judged at the last, but I confess I do not *understand* them or *admire* them. If I did love Christ at all, I would love Him so that I would give Him all I could, and if I did not do that, I think I would say, “He is not worth it, and I will not be a sham professor.” It is rank hypocrisy to profess love and then to act a miserly part. Let those who are guilty of it settle the account between God and their own souls. This woman’s alabaster box was given freely, and if she had had more to give she would have given it after the spirit of that other woman, that memorable widow, who had two mites which made a farthing—which were all her living—but she gave it all out of love to God.

Grace reigns, indeed, with high control when it leads men who naturally would be selfish to practice liberality in the cause of the Redeemer. Let these gleanings suffice—the vintage of the fruits of Grace is too great for us to gather it all this morning.

3. I would have you remark, in the third place, that Grace is seen by attentive eyes in our Lord’s acceptance of what this chosen vessel had to bring. Jesus knew her sin. The Pharisee wondered that Jesus did not shrink from contact with her. You and I may wonder, too. We sometimes feel it a task to have to commune with persons of a certain character even when they profess to repent—our Lord’s sensitiveness of the guilt of sin was much keener than ours, yet He rested still upon the couch and quietly accepted what she brought—He permitted her the fond familiarity of kissing His feet again and again and to bedew them with her tears—He permitted all that, I say, and *accepted* all that, and herein made His Grace to shine most brightly.

Oh, that Jesus should ever accept anything of me! That He should be willing to accept my tears, willing to receive my prayers and my praises! We cheerfully accept a little flower from a child, but then the flower is beautiful and we are not far above the child. But Jesus accepts from us that which is in its *nature* impure, and upbraids us not! O Grace, how condescending you are! See, Believer, Jesus has heard your prayers and answered them! He has blessed your labors, given you souls as your reward, and at this moment that which is in your heart to do for Him He receives, and He raises no objection, but takes what you bring to Him—

takes it with joy! O Grace, you are Grace, indeed, when the offerings of unworthy ones become dear unto Jesus' heart.

4. Further, Divine Grace is displayed in this narrative when you see our Lord Jesus Christ become the defender of the penitent. Everywhere Grace is the object of human mockery. Men snap at it like evening wolves. Some attack it at the fountain head—they cannot endure the doctrine of election. Some professors almost foam at the mouth at the very mention of the word “predestination.” They cannot bear it, and yet it is God's Truth! Let them say what they will, and there shall it stand. Let them kick against the pricks if they dare. “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.”

Would to God men would give up their rebellious questions and bow before the King of kings! On this occasion, Simon quibbled at Grace in that a sinful woman should be allowed to approach the Lord—he would have put her in quarantine at the least—if not in *prison*. Some object to Grace in its perpetuity—they struggle against persevering Grace. But others, like this Simon, struggle against the bounty of Grace. How could such a woman as she was be permitted to draw so near to Christ? Certain captious spirits will demand, “How should Jesus give to such unworthy ones such acceptance, such manifestations of Himself, such privileges?”

Our Lord took upon Himself to defend her, and therefore she might well afford to hold her tongue. So shall it be with you. If Satan accuses you and your enemies, with loud-mouthed accusations cry out against you, you have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who will certainly plead your cause and clear you! Jesus, by His defensive parable shows that He was justified in letting the woman approach, because great love prompted her. There was no *sin* in her approach, but much to *commend*, since her *motive* was excellent, and the motive is the true measure of a deed. She felt intense love and gratitude towards the Person who had forgiven her. Therefore her acts were not to be forbidden, but *commended*.

He justifies her and incidentally justifies Himself. Had He not done well in having won a sinner's heart to penitence and love? Was not election justified in having chosen one to such holy devotedness and fervency? At the Last Great Day the Lord will justify His Grace before the eyes of the whole universe, for He will allow the Grace-worked virtues of His chosen ones to be unveiled—and all eyes shall see that Grace reigns through righteousness! Then shall they forever be silenced who accused the Grace of God of leading to licentiousness, for they shall see that in every case free forgiveness led to *gratitude*, and gratitude to *holiness*. The chosen shall be made choice men. Grace chose them notwithstanding all their deformities—and when it has cast about them a supernal beauty—they shall be the wonder and admiration of the universe, evidently made to be the noblest and best of mankind.

Show me where Divine Grace ever created sin! You cannot, but lo, in what a manner has Grace created holiness! It is not ashamed to let its chosen sheep appear before the great dividing Shepherd's throne, for of them all it shall be said, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was

hungry and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink." Grace does not smuggle men into Heaven, but brings them up to Heaven's requirements through the Spirit and the blood!

5. Once more, my Brethren, the Grace of God is seen in this narrative in the bestowal of yet richer favors. Great Grace saved her, rich Grace encouraged her, unbounded Grace gave her a Divine assurance of forgiveness. It was proved that she was forgiven, for she loved much, but she had never received the full assurance of it. She was a *hopeful* penitent rather than a *confirmed* Believer. But the Master said, "Your sins are forgiven you." From that moment full assurance of faith must have occupied her soul.

And then He gave her that choice benediction, "Go in peace," by which the peace of God which passes all understanding henceforth kept her mind—so that even when she had to go out of this world into the unknown realm, she heard in the midst of Jordan's billows, the Divine sentence—"Go in peace." Ah, Beloved, you know not what Grace can do for you! God is not stinted in His Grace. If He has lifted you up out of the miry clay, He can do more—He can set your feet upon a rock! If on the rock you already stand, He can do more—He can put a new song into your mouth! And if already you lift the joyous hymn, He can do more yet—He can establish your goings! You do not yet know the exceeding bounty of your own heavenly Father! Unfathomable is His goodness! Arise and enjoy it!

Behold the whole land is before you, from Dan unto Beersheba—all the provisions of the Covenant of Grace belong to you. Have but faith and you shall yet comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Here, then, was Grace in its object, Grace in its fruit, Grace in the acceptance of that fruit, Grace in the defense which Jesus made of the gracious one and Grace in the blessings bestowed upon her. May Grace deal thus bountifully with us.

II. We have but two or three moments left for what requires far more space, namely, LOVE. The word blossoms with roses and suggests the voice of the turtledoves and the singing of birds. Our time, however, binds us to a narrow path which we must not leave, although the beds of lilies on either hand invite us. Love—its source—it bubbles up as a pure rill from the wellhead of Divine Grace. She loved much, but it was because much had been forgiven. There is no such thing as mere *natural* love to God. The only true love which can burn in the human breast towards the Lord is that which the Holy Spirit, Himself, kindles. If you truly love the God who made you and redeemed you, you may be well assured that you are His child, for none but His children have any love to Him.

Its secondary cause is faith. The 50th verse tells us, "Your faith has saved you." Our souls do not *begin* with loving Christ, but the first lesson is to *trust* Him. Many penitents attempt this difficult task—they aspire to reach the top of the stairs without treading the steps. They want to be at the pinnacle of the temple before they have crossed the threshold. First, *trust* Christ for the *pardon* of your sin—when you have done this, your sins are forgiven—and *then* love shall flash to your heart as the result of

gratitude for what the Redeemer has done for you. Grace is the *source* of love, but *faith* is the agent by which love is brought to us.

The food of love is a sense of sin, and a grateful sense of forgiveness. If you and I felt more deeply the guilt of our past lives we should love Jesus Christ better. If we have but a clearer sense that our sins deserve the deepest Hell—that Christ suffered what *we* ought to have suffered in order to redeem us from our iniquities—we should not be such cold-hearted creatures as we are. We are perfectly monstrous in our lack of love to Christ, but the true secret of it is a forgetfulness of our ruined and lost natural estate, and a forgetfulness of the sufferings by which we have been redeemed from that condition! O, that our love might feed itself this day and find a renewal of its strength in remembering what Sovereign Grace has done!

Love in the narrative before us shines in the fact that the service the woman rendered to our Lord was perfectly voluntary. No one suggested it, much less pressed it upon her. It takes the gloss off our service when we need to be dragged to it, or pushed forward by some energetic pleader. Brethren, the anointing was impromptu with her! Christ was there and it was at her own suggestion that she anointed His feet. Mary of Bethany had not then set the example—the woman who was a sinner was an original in her service.

In these days we have many inventors and discoverers for our temporal use and service—why should we not have inventors for Jesus who will bring out new projects of usefulness? We are, most of us, content to travel in the old rut, but if we had more love to Jesus we should be more eccentric and should have a degree of freshness about our service which at present is all too rare. Lord, give us the love which can lead the way! Her service to Jesus was personal. She did it all herself, and all to Him. Do you notice how many times the pronoun occurs in our text? “She stood at *His* feet behind *Him* weeping, and began to wash *His* feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed *His* feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”

She served Christ *Himself*. It was neither service to Peter, nor James, nor John, nor yet to the poor or sick of the city, but to the Master Himself! And, depend upon it, when our love is in active exercise, our piety will be immediately towards Christ—we shall sing to *Him*, pray to *Him*, teach for *Him*, preach for *Him*, live to HIM! Forgetfulness of the Personality of Christ takes away the very vitality of our religion. How much better will you teach, this afternoon, in your Sunday school class, if you teach your children for Christ! How much better will you go forth this evening to tell others the way of salvation, if you go to do it for His sake! Then you court no man’s smile—you fear no man’s frown. It is enough for you that you have done it for the Master, and if the Master accepts it, you have the reward in that very fact!

The woman’s service showed her love in that it was fervent. There was so much affection in it—nothing conventional—no following chilly propriety, no hesitating enquiry for precedents. Why did she kiss His feet? Was it not a superfluity? What was the good of it? Did it not look sentimental, affected, sensuous, indelicate? Little did she care how it looked—*she* knew

what she meant! She could not do otherwise! Her whole soul went out in love—she acted naturally as her heart dictated. And, Brothers and Sisters, she acted well. O for more of this guileless piety which hurls decorum and regulation to the winds! Ah, throw your souls into the service of Christ! Let your heart burn in His Presence, and let all your soul belong to Jesus!

Serve not your Master as though you were half asleep! Do not work with drooping hands and half-closed eyes, but wake up the whole of your powers and passions! For such love as *He* has shown *you*, give the most awakened and quickened love in return. O for more of this love! If I might only pray one prayer this morning, I think it should be that the flaming torch of the love of Jesus should be brought into every one of our hearts, and that all our passions should be set ablaze with love to Him.

One thought more and I am done. This woman's love is a lesson to us in the opportunity which she seized. She was evidently but just pardoned—she was rather a weeper than one who had learned to rejoice—and yet for all that, she would *serve* Him at the first dawn of her spiritual life. Now, you young converts, no longer say, “We will do something for Christ in a few years' time when we have made our calling and election sure. We will wait till we have grown in Grace, and then try to do what we can.” No, no! As soon as you are washed bring your offering to Jesus. The very day of your conversion enlist in His army, for speedy obedience is beautiful. Perhaps if this woman had lingered she had never anointed the Lord at all—but in the hot flush of her first love, she did well to perform at once this zealous, fervent act.

Young converts maintain, by God's Grace, the warmth of the blood which circulates in the Church's veins. Old Churches generally become diseased Churches when they cease to grow. I do not know a Church in all England without conversions which is at all in a happy spiritual state. The fact is, the fresh comers stir us all up by their fervor, their simplicity, their childlike confidence. Now, beloved Ones, we encourage you to show this. For our sakes, for your own sakes, for Christ's sake, do not hesitate—if there is anything you can do, though you are uneducated in the Divine school—do it. Though there may be a dozen blunders in the method, yet do it, for Christ will accept it!

The Pharisee may quibble—well, perhaps it may keep his tongue from other mischief—let him—you can bear it, Christ will defend you, Jesus will accept you! And as a reward for doing what you can, He may be pleased to give you Divine Grace to do more, and may breathe over you a full assurance of faith, which, had you been idle, you might not for *years* have attained. And He may give you a peace of conscience in serving Him which, had you sat still, might never have come to you at all.

I beseech all of you who love Jesus, do not hide the light you have under a bushel, but come out and show it! If you have but a little faith, use it! If you have only a *grain* of faith, turn it to account. Put the one talent out at interest and use it for the Master at once, and the Lord bless you in such a work by increasing your faith and love, and making you to be as this woman was—a highly favored servant of this blessed Master. May the Lord give every one of you His blessing, for Jesus' sake.

OUR PLACE—AT JESUS' FEET

NO. 2066

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 8, 1879**

***"At His feet."
Luke 7:38.***

THE Easterns pay more attention to posture than we do. They are demonstrative and express by outward signs much which we do not express, or express less energetically. In their courts certain positions must be taken up by courtiers. Oriental monarchs are approached in positions which indicate the greatness of the king and the submissiveness of the petitioner. So, in their worship, the Easterns abound in postures significant of the humility which should be felt in the Presence of God. The most of us think very little, indeed, of outward postures. Perhaps we do not even think enough of them. Inasmuch as in devotion we think little of the position of the body, let us pay all the more attention to the posture of the soul.

And if it seems to us to be a matter of indifference whether a man prays standing as Abraham did, or sitting as David did, or kneeling as Elijah did. Yet let us take care that the posture of the soul is carefully observed. One of the best positions in which our heart can be found is at Jesus' feet. Here we may fall, or here we may sit and follow excellent examples to our exceeding benefit.

The first thing that is necessary to spiritual life at all is to recognize the Presence of Jesus and to come into relationship with Him. To look at Him is salvation. As to look at the brazen serpent was healing, so to look at Jesus Christ brings life eternal to the soul. After we have come to look at Jesus and so there is a connecting link between us and Him through which salvation comes to us, we are described as being in various positions with regard to our Lord. We are on His heart. Just as the priest of old carried the names of the twelve tribes, so does Jesus carry all His people on His heart—and that is where we are at this time.

There are favored times when, like John, we are on His bosom. We feel His heart beating with true affection to us. We not only believe His love but there is a kind of sense—which I may not call sense either, for it belongs not to the grosser forms of sensation—but there is a kind of spiritual sensitiveness which causes us to feel that Jesus loves us. We seem to say, "God is love, I know, I feel." For in our very hearts the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit. Then are we raised to His bosom. And it is a blessed posture to be in—

***"Oh, that we could with holy John
Forever lean our heads upon
The bosom of our Lord!"***

We are described, also, as being in the *hands* of Christ. All His saints are in His hand. He gives unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, for He Says, “none shall pluck them out of my hand.” See your position in the hollow of His hand, while in the Father’s hand the hand of Christ is embraced and He tells us “none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

Then, too, we are described as being on His shoulders. Does not the Good Shepherd, when he finds the strayed sheep, cast it upon His shoulders and carry it home? When Aaron stood pleading before the Lord he not only carried the names of the tribes upon his breastplate but he had them in of gold upon his shoulders. Christ carries us on the heart of His love and on the shoulders of His power. Thus are we perfectly safe.

You see, then, where we are. And I do not want you to forget this, while I urge upon all the Lord’s people that they should seek to be “at His feet.” You can keep all the other positions and this, too. Though that were impossible for the body, it is quite possible for the spirit. The highest delight and the fullest assurance are perfectly consistent with the lowliest reverence. You may rise even to the Master’s lips, until you can say with the spouse, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine.” And yet you may still be lying at His feet, conscious of your unworthiness and bowed into the very dust under a sense of His love.

We must leave those other positions and consider the one in our text. And we have only two remarks to make—namely, first, that at His feet is a becoming posture. And, secondly, at His feet is a helpful posture.

I. First, AT HIS FEET IS A BECOMING POSTURE. This is proper because of the majesty of His Person. As He is Divine, “at His feet” is the creature’s becoming place. Jesus is “God over all, blessed forever.” Let us exhibit the lowliest reverence whenever we think of Him. He comes very near us and we sing at the communion table—

***“His sacred name a common word
On earth He loves to hear;
There is no majesty in Him
Which love may not come near.”***

But there is majesty—there is Divine majesty. Jesus is our Brother but He is the first-born among many Brethren. He has a human head but on that head are many crowns. He wears a nature like our own but that Nature is in union with His Godhead and we cannot think of Him without bowing with lowly adoration before Him. The sun and the moon and the eleven stars make obeisance to this star of Bethlehem. All the sheaves bow before this Joseph’s sheaf, as it stands upright in the midst. Jesus, You are He whom Your Brethren shall praise! All Your mother’s sons shall bow down before You, for You are exceedingly glorious. Behold, every tongue shall confess that You are Lord and every knee shall bow before You. Therefore with glad prostration of spirit we bow at Your feet even now.

We may well bow at His feet when we remember the unworthiness of ourselves. We are insignificant creatures. That is saying little. We are sin-

ful creatures. Even though we have been redeemed by His precious blood and shall never come into condemnation if we are, indeed, Believers, yet we “were by nature children of wrath, even as others.” Undeserved mercy has made us what we are. And if, even now, His Grace were withdrawn from us, we are fit fuel for the fires of Hell. There is nothing in ourselves of which we can glory. And, when we come near to Jesus, our place is “at His feet.”

There may be some—no, I think there cannot be among His people any that would aspire to any higher position than “at His feet” when they think of their sinnership—when they even *think* of their wanderings since they have known His love, of their shortcomings and coldness of heart towards Him. But if there are any that can take a higher place, I know that I cannot. Oh, if I may but sit forever at His feet! If I may only look up and bless Him, that He loved me and gave Himself for me, it shall be everlastingly Heaven to my spirit! And do you not say the same?

Oh, utter *nothingness*, you are something as compared with us. For we are less than nothing! The blank of nothingness stood not in God's way when He came to create. But in us there was an opposition to the Divine will—a something, I say, which was worse than nothing—which resisted our Lord's Grace. But He has triumphed, and He has saved us and now it is ours, with deep humiliation, to lie “at His feet.”

“At His feet,” again, is a place well suited to us, because of His well-beloved claims upon us. As many of us as have been renewed by Divine Grace we have been rescued from the slavery of Satan. And we have come into the sweet service of Christ and now it is our great joy to call Him Master and Lord. When we are right-minded we make a full submission of everything to Him. We place “at His feet” all our time, our talents, our substance. We desire to bring every thought into captivity to His dear sway.

Our ambition is that He would rule us entirely. It is a scepter of Divine Grace with which Jesus reigns over His trusting people, but it is quite as powerful as the iron scepter. Oh, that He would use it and crush our lusts with it and break our sinful desires with it like potter's vessels, till we should be wholly given up to Him!—

***“In my spirit rule and conquer,
There set up Your eternal throne;
Wean my heart from every creature,
You to love and You alone.”***

This is the Christian's desire. He would lie joyfully submissive at the Savior's feet, completely subjected by the conquering Lord.

Once more—He is All in All and we would lie at His feet to find salvation in Him and seek it nowhere else. Perhaps I am speaking to those who long after eternal life and are crying after salvation. Come, beloved Friend, I do not know you, but my Lord does. Come and lie at His feet and cry, “I never will depart until You speak peace to me.” You are not far from finding peace in Christ when you are satisfied that you cannot find it anywhere

else. When you are weaned from every hope except that which is found in Jesus, you will soon have a hope in Him.

Come, lie prostrate there and say, "If I perish here, I will perish 'at His feet.'" None perish there. Beneath the Cross, where the full sacrifice was offered, there I cast myself. I will never stir an inch beyond this. If the eternal thunderbolts can smite the Cross, they shall blast me at the same time, for here I will stay. At Jesus' feet, I lie, in despair as to all else but with strong resolve never to go away from Him, resolved with Him to live or die. This is what I mean, then, by the posture of being at Jesus' feet.

But now remember, dear Friends, that at Jesus' feet is the position which the very brightest of the saints delight to take up. When John was in the Isle of Patmos and saw His Master whom he loved, he did not essay to place his head upon His bosom. Remember his words—"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Now if such a one as John the Divine lay there, that is a high enough place for you and for me. "At His feet." Oh, let us get there! Down, down, down, high looks! Proud thoughts, down with you! Legal hopes, self-confidence, down with you! Away, away, with everything that lifts up man. And may Christ, alone, be exalted while we lie at His feet. For if we do not bow willingly, we shall have to come to it by a humbling experience.

The Lord has put all things *under* His feet. Let us put ourselves "*at* His feet." If we will not accept Him now to be our Master and Lord, we shall be flung into the winepress of the wrath of God and then shall He trample upon us in His wrath and crush us in His sore displeasure. God save us from such a doom and may we rejoice to be at His feet.

II. Now we shall attend to our second observation. We have shown, I think, that it is a becoming posture. But now, secondly, IT IS A VERY HELPFUL POSTURE.

Turn to my text and see that it is a very helpful posture for a weeping penitent. "Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at His feet behind Him weeping." It helps us to repent. Do not go and stand at Moses' feet. You will never repent there. To stand at the foot of Sinai and tremble may have its uses. But Gospel repentance does not spring from legal terror. Gracious tears are wept at Jesus' feet.

Oh, if you would have your heart broken till the rock shall gush with rivers of repentance, stand at Jesus' feet. Stand there now. If you would have a tender heart, think of the Beloved who died for you! Think of how those feet were pierced. This woman could not see that, for it was not then done. But you can see it and mark where the nail has bored each blessed foot.

"At His feet" is the best place for a penitent, for it helps faith. For as you look down at those dear feet and think, "He is God and He became a Man to suffer in my place and those dear feet were pierced that my heart might be delivered from death," you will find faith spring up in your soul at the sight of the great Substitute. Such faith will bring with it pardon.

Standing at His feet, you will find Him turn His head and say to you what He said to the woman, "Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you. Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Repentance, apart from Christ, will need to be repented of. Repentance at Christ's feet is the only repentance worth having. When you weep for sin, so that you cannot see Christ through your tears, away with them! Unbelieving tears are not such as God delights in. But it is a sweet, sweet thing to taste a salt repentance and then to taste the honey of a honeyed pardon—to have the soul smarting and then to have it rejoicing, too, because it stands at Jesus' feet.

And let me say to all weeping penitents—Get away to Jesus' feet, because it is there your love will flow and there you will begin to think of doing something for Him who will blot out your sin. Did not this woman unbind the luxuriant tresses of her head to make a towel? Did she not, instead of pitcher and basin, use the fountains of her eyes, no, the fountains of her heart, with which to bathe His feet? And then for ointment she broke the alabaster box and kissed, and kissed, and kissed, and kissed again, those dear, dear feet of Him who had brought salvation to her.

O Penitents, I pray you stand not outside in the cold porch with Moses but come indoors, where Jesus welcomes you. And stand at His feet and He will give you that blessed repentance after a godly sort, which shall bring you an answer of peace and shall nourish life in your soul. "At His feet," then, is a helpful posture to the weeping penitent.

Now you have got your Bibles open at Luke's seventh chapter, turn over to the eighth chapter and the thirty-fifth verse. You know the story of the man that had a legion of devils in him who used to cut himself and who lived among the tombs. Now we read, "They went out to see what was done. And came to Jesus and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus."

At Jesus' feet is the best place for a new convert. What a state of mind and body this poor man must have been in who was possessed of devils that carried him over hedge and ditch and field and flood—he knew not where! Men bound him with chains but like another Samson, he snapped them. He tore himself with flints and knives and thorns. Poor wretch! He rested not day nor night. And ever with his dolorous cry he made nights hideous, so that they that passed by the cemeteries startled, feeling that they had come near the gates of Hell.

A whole legion of devils dwelt within this poor wretch. And when Christ cast all the devils out of him, he must have been spent and exhausted, just as after a delirium there seems no life left. He wanted rest. Where was he to get it? He sat at Jesus' feet. Do you know why he rested there? It was because he felt the devils could not press on to Jesus' feet. He felt quite sure the devils would never enter into his body again while he sat at Jesus' feet. Why, no, the devils had been afraid of Jesus and had gone into the swine and rushed into the sea to escape from Him.

While he sat at the feet of that great One who had rescued him from so terrible a fate, he seemed to feel, "I am safe here." At Jesus' feet he plucked up courage and gathered strength! With his new clothes on (he had not worn any for many a day) and his tangled hair combed out again and his poor face, that had been covered with filth, all cleansed again, I can hardly imagine the pleasurable sensation and the happiness that he felt! Except I remember how I have sometimes felt myself, after sharp pains and long diseases, when I have come forth to breathe the air again, free from pain. Convalescence is very sweet and fairly pictures how souls feel when they get Christ at last. "He has saved me but, oh, I am weary, I am weary. I will sit at His feet." And as we sit at His feet, we feel all weariness pass away.

"Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new." We see a new Heaven and a new earth and we are made completely new creatures. Where should we sit but at His feet who makes all things new? You that have found Christ and now greatly need rest, do not try to find rest anywhere but in Him. Come and sit "at His feet." Have no more cries, no more fears, no more doubts, no more despairs. Christ has saved you. Sit still and remember what He has done and what He is doing. Sit still and look up at His dear face and say, "Blessed be the altogether lovely One who plucked me out of the jaws of Hell and delivered me from between the teeth of the dragon." O dear Friends, there is no rest like resting at Jesus' feet!—

***"Here it is I find my Heaven
While upon the Cross I gaze."***

Now, turn with your finger a little farther to the forty-first verse of the same chapter and you will find out that "at Jesus' feet" is a very helpful posture for a pleading intercessor—for one who is himself saved and is pleading for others. "Behold, there came a man named Jairus and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet and besought Him that He would come into his house: for he had only one daughter, about twelve years of age and she lay a dying."

Many of us know what it is to intercede with God for others. But there is no interceding that is so efficacious as that which is done at Jesus' feet. When your heart breaks—when you feel that you do not deserve the mercy that you are seeking for—when, like Abraham, you cry, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes," it is then that you prevail. Lie "at His feet." But do not lie there as if it were somebody else's feet. Let it be Jesus' feet, the feet of your dear Lord, who came to save you. Lie there and say, "Lord, save my daughter. Lord, save my wife," or, "Lord, have mercy upon my wandering, willful boy and save him, for Your mercy's sake." Plead with your whole soul. Plead importunately. But do not plead despairingly.

If you are at Jesus' feet, you are near to the Fountain of help. You are near to Him who tenderly loves you, One who would not have had feet if He had not loved mankind, for He took His body upon Him out of love and His feet are a part of His frame. Oh, to realize the presence of Christ when

we pray, for if not, we pray out into the open common, or across the cruel sea. I like praying right into the Mediator's ear. It is grand praying when Jesus is near and you speak to Him as a man speaks to his friend. Thus do I pray now—"Lord, have mercy upon my congregation. Save the people. Lord, have mercy upon those whom I have prayed for many a time, who still are not renewed in heart."

We always prevail when we pray so. When I know that I have gained Christ's ear I look out for the answer as confidently as I expect an answer to a letter that I send by post. Some of our prayers do not go that way for want of our believing that He is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. But when we believe that He will hear us, He does hear us. So, Jairus, if your daughter is sick, pray for her, but do it "at Jesus' feet." You have an ungodly relative and you have prayed often but perhaps you have not prayed at Jesus' feet and I urge you now to try that hallowed place.

This fourth time will you turn a little farther, to Luke 10:39. "She had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." So that "at Jesus' feet" is the fitting place for a willing *learner*. A lowly sense of our own ignorance so that we do not dare to sit higher than "at His feet," but a believing confidence in His infinite wisdom so that we sit "at His feet" to learn of Him—this is suitable. How much better scholars we should be if we tried to learn at Jesus' feet! Some even of the Lord's people are a deal too knowing. Many a boy at school does not learn anything of an excellent master, for he is conceited—he knows nothing and he teaches himself.

I am afraid we are like that scholar. We know nothing and we teach ourselves. We have prejudices—opinions of what the Truths of God ought to be. This is evil—but, oh, it is very sweet to feel, "I do not know anything. I come and take the Bible and ask it to photograph itself upon my heart"! Some minds are like stained glass windows. They shut out much of the light and the little light that does struggle through, they color after their own manner. It is better to be plain glass so that the Lord's light, with all its color and delicacy of shade, may come in just as it comes from Heaven, with nothing gathered from ourselves. Beloved, I pray the Lord to free us all from prejudice, from self-conceit and from opinions which originate with others.

We must learn at Jesus' feet. Not at the feet of man, when man goes away from Christ. At times the Lord may send a man whom He teaches and what we gather from him may be God's own voice to us. Still we must always be ready to discriminate between what the man says of himself and what he says in his Master's name. For there is a grave difference. "At Jesus' feet" we must take up our seat. Dear young men that are beginning to study theology and that wish to become teachers of others, do not give yourselves up to any system and say, "I follow this doctor, or that."

John Wesley is not our master—but Jesus Christ is. John Calvin is not our Master, but Jesus Christ. It does not matter how great and good these men were—they were worthy of the love of all the Church of God but we

call them not Rabbi. We may follow the man as far as the man follows Christ but not an inch farther. We must sit at Jesus' feet, humble, teachable, child-like, confidently believing what Jesus says but having no "know" of our own—taking it all from Him.

But my time fails me and so I must take you to the last instance that I will give you in Luke. Look at Luke 17—and the sixteenth verse—the chapter which I read to you. We find that the Samaritan who had been healed fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. Well, then, that position is most helpful to every grateful *worshipper*. I think I see the angels and the blood-bought ones commencing one of their celestial cho-ales. The eye of my imagination is almost smitten with blindness as I gaze upon the scene. They are all brighter than the sun and the whole company shines with the light of more than a thousand fold midday.

Hear them as they commence the rapturous strain! Their notes—how sweet, how seraphic—as they praise the eternal Father and the glorious Lamb of God! We hear the song. How it swells! Hearken to the soft touches of the harpers harping with their harps! Do you note how the singers and the players of instruments seem caught up in the ecstasy? But mark! As the song rises they begin to bow. As it rises higher they bow lower and lower and lower. Hark! The enthusiastic fervor of their love has made them lift their loudest hallelujah.

And lo, they cast their crowns at His sacred feet! The whole company is still lifting up the song to its utmost glory but soon they fall on their faces, prostrate before the Throne. "At His feet" is their loftiest position. Let us imitate them, and making the worship more ecstatic than before, bow before Him—

***"Lo, at His feet, with awful joy,
The adoring armies fall!
With joy they shrink to nothing there,
Before the eternal All."***

So let us praise Him for all that He has done for us. And, as we praise Him, let us sink lower and lower and lower, till in ourselves we are nothing and Christ alone lives in us. Let no thought of self, nor wish for self, nor dream of self intrude but let Jesus be All in All. "At His feet." There shall our Heaven be found. When our soul is deepest bathed in grateful praise we shall fall down on our faces and worship the Lamb. The Lord bless you, and keep you at His feet forever. Amen.

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

DEBTORS AND DEBTORS

NO. 2768

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 2, 1902.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON.
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1883.**

***“There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one
owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.”
Luke 7:41.***

I TRUST that the Lord has “somewhat to say” upon this subject to some who are like Simon the Pharisee. And if He has, I trust that those persons will be led by the Grace of God to say, as Simon did, “Master, say on.” Be ready to hear what the Lord Jesus Christ will speak to you! There are some who cover up the windows of their hearts with the shutters of prejudice—they are only prepared to hear what will please them—they cannot endure to listen to that which will grieve them and humble them. How many there are who want the preacher to prophesy smooth things! If he will say what they can agree with, they will go away and sing his praises, which is a poor result in any case. But let us be of a nobler sort than that! Let us be like the Bereans, who, after they had heard Paul and Silas preach, “received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed.” Let us say, as Eli bade young Samuel do, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” Let us say to Him, “Even if You speak that which will lay me in the dust, I will hear it. If You say that which will condemn me to Hell, I will give heed to it, for it is best for me to know the Truth of God, that, by knowing it, I may be stirred up to flee from the wrath to come. Let me know the worst of my case, O Lord God of Truth! ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’”

So far, I think, Simon the Pharisee may be an example to us. The Master said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And his answer was, “Master, say on.”

I am not going to expound the whole parable at this time. We may, perhaps, go on with it on another occasion. I intend now to take only this one verse—“There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.” There are two lessons for us to learn from this text. The first is that *all sinners are debtors to God.*

And the second is that *some sinners are greater debtors to God than others are*—"The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty."

I. First, ALL MEN ARE DEBTORS TO GOD. He is that "certain Creditor" mentioned in our text, of whom, I fear, many debtors think very little.

We are all indebted to God, first, in the matter of *obedience to Him, as His creatures*. He is our Creator, our Preserver, our Provider, our Benefactor. "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." He is "the living God" who gives us richly all things to enjoy." We owe to Him our continued existence. Every breath of our nostrils is His gift. Therefore, by our very creation, we are bound to serve Him according to the righteous demands of His holy Law, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." And that other "first and great commandment"—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This Law is not exacting. It does not go a hair's breadth beyond the righteous claims of Divine Justice.

But, as we have not rendered to God the obedience which is due Him, we have become further indebted because of *the penalty incurred by us as sinners*. All the Ten Commandments stand up in the court as witnesses against us, for we have broken them all. We have been guilty of sins of omission altogether innumerable—and of sins of commission more than the hair of our head. We are under obligation to obey God's command even though we are unable to obey it. Though we have not the power to keep God's Law perfectly, that inability by no means removes from us the liability to do so. If a man is in debt and cannot pay, the fact that he is unable to pay does not exonerate him from the duty of paying. He is still in debt. Debts are not discharged by pleading that you cannot pay them—that is no valid excuse and we are, all of us, bound to obey God perfectly, notwithstanding all that has happened in the past. What a debt, then, we must owe Him—a debt that is increasing every day—a debt that is already past all reckoning—a debt that will go on swelling as long as we live unless it can be removed by some power higher than our own!

That debt of penalty involves tremendous results to the body and the soul of man. "Fear not them which kill the body," said Christ, "but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell." You know that among all the terrible words spoken concerning the penalty of sin, the most terrible are those which were uttered by our Lord Jesus Christ, the most loving and tender of all teachers. Measure not a man's true tenderness of heart by his avoidance of the subject of "the wrath to come." It may be only tenderness to him, or a willingness to pander to the evil desires of sinful men that prompts him to such action as that. But the Christ who weeps over Jerusalem does not hesitate to predict its dreadful doom! And He who loved men so much as to lay down His life for them was the one who spoke again and

again of the place “where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.” Many such words fell from those loving lips that never would have invented an unnecessary terror, so we may be sure that the penalty of sin is a very terrible one.

Every one of us who is out of Christ is under the death penalty—“He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” “The soul that sins, it shall die.” And what that death involves, what that existence must be which is but life in the midst of death—the life of an immortal being that is stripped of all possibility of well-being forever—I will not attempt to describe. But that is the penalty of sin and that is due to God, to whom we are debtors, indeed.

And, my dear Friends, it gives me great joy to add that *if we are pardoned sinners*, we owe to God a deep debt of gratitude! If, through the blessed processes of Grace, through the atoning Sacrifice and mediation of our Divine Redeemer, we are delivered from the debt of sin and the handwriting that was against us is taken away and nailed to His Cross. If, through the death of Christ, we are delivered from the death penalty of sin—as we certainly are, for Christ has forever cleared all Believers by bearing their punishment in His body on the tree, then are we debtors to the Infinite Love and boundless compassion of our Covenant-keeping God, His well-beloved Son and the ever-blessed Spirit! In this debt let us be continually willing to sink deeper and deeper. I would that, in this respect, my own soul were like a boat that had foundered at sea—and the sea should be the Love of God—and I would go down into it over the masthead till I was completely submerged in the abyss of Infinite Love. And, in truth, that is just where we are if we are in Christ Jesus! And each one of us, slightly altering the poet’s words, can say—

**“O love! You bottomless abyss!
My soul is swallowed up in you.”**

Which of us can ever fully tell what we owe to God for our election, our redemption, our effectual calling, our justification, our sanctification and our promised glorification? Who can tell how much we owe for being preserved from sin, for being restored after we have fallen into sin and for being enabled by Grace to rise above sin? Who can tell how great is our debt for all the blessings laid up in store for us which we shall enjoy, by-and-by, but which are just as surely ours before we receive them—that Grace we have not tasted yet, and that Glory which we have scarcely dreamt of yet—that infinite happiness which is hidden in the closed hand of God until the day shall come when He shall manifest it to our wondering eyes? “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh”—but debtors to the Covenant Love of God and, therefore, debtors to our fellow men, realizing our obligation to show to them, according to our ability, the great Love of God and to testify to them concerning the way of eternal life.

So, you see, in some form or other, we are all debtors. I am not about to speak of that last kind of debt, now, for it is not included in our Savior's parable. But I want to speak of the debt of obedience which has not been rendered and the debt of penalty which has been incurred in consequence of our disobedience. I intend, as God shall help me, to say something about debtors. And if, in the use of the illustration, I should seem to utter hard words about people who are in debt, I am not meaning to do that and I hope they will not take it so. I am simply intending to use the illustration. If it happens to hit anybody, I cannot help that. If the cap fits anyone, let him wear it.

Now, first, a sinner is very much like a debtor in this respect—*he is very apt to get more deeply into debt*. If you owe a pound today, there is a great tendency to owe two pounds tomorrow. Getting into debt is a slippery process and when your feet begin to slide, you are very apt to go deeper and deeper into the mire. And I am sure that this is the case with the Lord's two debtors—with the Lord's unnumbered millions of debtors—with all the Lord's debtors! People say, "Money makes money," and I suppose it does, but, certainly, sin makes sin. There is a cumulative force in evil so that a sinner finds that it gets easier to sin, instead of becoming more difficult. While the man grows old, his sin does not—rather, it seems to grow younger and to become more vigorous! Often times a sinner will become more adept in guilt and more inclined to evil, the further he advances in years. Certain sins may decline through the weakening of the flesh, but the sins of the heart do not. The power to sin may grow less, but the will to sin continues to increase as the sinner grows older. This is one of the terrible things about iniquity—that it breeds so fast. A man can never say to sin, "You may only come this far, but no further—and here shall your proud waves be stayed." When the great flood tide of evil comes rolling in, there is no telling where it will stop! As debt leads to more debt, so sin leads to more sin and, therefore, it is that there is a parallel between the sinner and the debtor.

Further, *sin, like debt, causes uneasiness in a man if there is a spark of honesty about him*. Some men, who have no sense of honor, are quite happy while in debt. You may have read of a sale that was to be held in Rome, on one occasion, when there were to be sold the goods of a man who had been for many years greatly embarrassed by debt. The emperor said to one of his chamberlains, "Go to the sale and buy that man's bed, for I cannot sleep at night and, surely, I should be able to sleep on his bed if he, being in debt, has been able to sleep so comfortably as I hear he has." Debtors ought not to have good sleep if they have wantonly plunged themselves into debt. Honest men are troubled, vexed, perturbed if they feel that they cannot meet their obligations. Now, when a sinner is thoroughly awakened to his true position, this is just his case. He says, "I am in debt to God and I cannot pay even a farthing in the pound. If He comes to call me to account and asks me, 'How much do you owe unto your Lord?' what can I answer Him? I am full of confusion

and full of fear.” Thus, you see, a sinner is like a debtor because he has no rest.

And further, *debtors and sinners shun their creditors*—they do not want to meet them—they try to get out of their way. Some of us know what it is to have cleared ourselves of rather troublesome friends by lending them money. We have never seen them since, so we reckon that perhaps it was a good investment. A man who is in debt does not want to see the person to whom he owes money. He would rather go down another street than meet him. If there is a knock at the door and the person who wants to come in is one who has called for a debt which the debtor cannot discharge, he would sooner jump out of the back window and make his escape, than he would meet him. And this is precisely the case with the sinner. He is in debt to God and he does not like to meet his great Creditor. He will not regard the call of the church bell and he will not keep holy the Sabbath. He would rather forget about all such things. To read his Bible, to attend a service where he shall be reminded of his obligations is most objectionable to him. He does not want to be reminded of them. If there should come one, in the dead of night, and cry in his chamber, “Prepare to meet your God!” it would be more terrifying to him than an earthquake or the most terrific thunderstorm. He does not want to meet his God! He says in his heart, if not in so many words, “No God! No God for me! I do not want a God!” And if it could be satisfactorily proved to him that God was dead, it would be one of the most joyful pieces of news that he had ever heard. He is so deeply in debt to God that he cries, “Where shall I flee from His Presence?” He would take the wings of the morning, if he could, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth if he thought that he could find some lonely spot where he would not be troubled by the fear of the Presence of God. That is every sinner’s condition. That is the condition of every unconverted person here! That was once my condition and the condition of everyone who is now a child of God.

The sinner, too, like the debtor, is in great danger. I do not know what the laws of England are, just now, concerning debt. Putting them into very simple English, I think they mean that nobody needs pay anybody unless he likes—and we have plenty of people who are getting rich by paying nobody at all. When they fail altogether, they break, and so make themselves. But I shall talk of the laws of England as they used to be. When a man was in debt in the olden times, he was always in fear of arrest. He could not tell when the sheriff’s officer would lay his hand upon him. That is just your case if you are an unforgiven, unpardoned sinner. You cannot tell when God will arrest you, but it is certain that, sooner or later—and even the later will not be long—you will have to stand before His Judgment Seat and answer at the bar of inflexible Justice for all your sins against Him. I would not like to have been a debtor who, wherever he went, was likely to be arrested. I have heard of one who was so often in debt and so frequently in prison in consequence, but who so regularly

ran into debt after he was let out of jail that, on one occasion, when his coat-sleeve caught on an area railing, he supposed it was the touch of the sheriff's officer and, thinking that he was again arrested, he exclaimed, "At whose suit?" It was only an iron bar that held him, but he imagined that one of his many creditors had claimed him. That must be a wretched kind of life for anyone to live—to be always afraid of arrest!

You smile at the idea, but if you were really in that condition, I do not suppose that you would smile then. And if you realized that at any moment you might be arrested by the cold hand of death, smiles would be far enough from your countenance! A man may be sitting in one of these pews and, before the clock ticks again, he may be in the world of spirits before his God! I am often hearing of persons, whom I have lately met apparently in robust health, who have been suddenly called away. They are gone, but we are still spared. In thought, I saw a procession passing before me. At first I imagined that it was flesh and blood marching down the street, but, as the procession passed me, I discovered that all who composed it were but shadows. I, who was looking on, am also a shadow and I, too, shall pass away. O debtor to a righteous God, this thought should cause disquietude within your careless spirit—that, at any moment, you may be arrested at the suit of your great Creditor!

And then, mark you, according to the Law of God, when arrested by death, you are cast into prison. You remember how our Savior put it—"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, You shall by no means come out from there till you have paid the uttermost farthing." Oh, what a dreadful prison that is into which souls will be cast who die in debt to God! And since they can never pay even a farthing of their debt, there can be no release for them! How long shall they lie there? Till they have paid the uttermost farthing? Why, that can never be! So, mind what you doing, you who are indebted to God, lest you be cast into that dreadful dungeon! Trifle not away your time, I pray you, but fly to Jesus who alone can deliver you from this weight of debt, for your danger is imminent at this very moment!

There is this about our debt to God—that it will never be forgotten by Him. I once knew a man who was much troubled by a debt, but his creditor was not, for many years had passed and he had never mentioned it. In fact, it had entirely slipped from his memory! I do not think such a case as that often happens, but I remember that one—but it will never happen with God. Nothing will ever slip from His memory! Sin is irrevocable and eternal. There is one process that can blot it out, or cast it into the depths of the sea and make it cease to be—there is but one such process—and the Christ of God can tell you what that is. But, apart from His atoning Sacrifice, there is no hope that the debt will ever be forgotten or forgiven.

And there is no protection for those who are in debt to the great Creditor. Protection is sometimes given to an insolvent debtor and, in the olden times, there used to be places of sanctuary to which men fled and so were free from liability to be arrested. Even now, men flee across the seas to avoid arrest. They cross the narrow channel that parts us from the Continent and there they are secure. But there is no such way of escape for those who are in debt to God! If you are one of His debtors through sin, there is no protection for you unless you flee to Christ! There is no distance of space or lapse of time, no repentance or tears that can blot out your transgressions. There they stand, indelible! Neither can you escape from the righteous hand of God in the day when He shall visit you for them.

This makes our indebtedness to God assume a very terrible shape—and if we have not been delivered from it by Christ, what can we do? No composition can be taken in part payment of our enormous debt. Even if it could be, we could not offer it—and there is no friend who can give to God a ransom for us, or stand in our place. No, let me correct myself. There is one Friend—and never let us forget Him—One who became Surety for His people and who was made to smart for it in that day when He paid their debts, to the uttermost farthing, by laying down His life for them. But, dear Friends, if there is anyone among us here who is still in debt to God on the matter of obedience, and who cannot present to Him the righteousness of Christ on His own behalf and who, in the matter of penalty, cannot bring to God the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ, and plead that it was offered for him, his case is a very sad and wretched one, indeed. The Lord deliver all such in His great mercy! I have been speaking figuratively, but there is truth at the back of it all. It is no figure, no emblem, no fancy, but a dread and terrible reality, that all sinners are in debt to God.

II. Now comes the second thought which will have much soul-searching power about it if God the Holy Spirit blesses it, and that is, that **SOME SINNERS ARE GREATER DEBTORS TO GOD THAN OTHERS ARE**—“The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.”

We have all sinned, so we are all debtors to God. But we have not all sinned to the same degree, therefore we are not all debtors to the same extent. There are some sins that are greater than other sins and, both in this world and in the next, punishments are to be measured out proportionately. There are some to whom it will be more tolerable in the Day of Judgment than it will be to others. Our Lord said even to Pontius Pilate, “He that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin.” So, clearly, one sin is greater than another. Every sin is great enough to ruin a soul forever, but there are some sins that have a peculiar crimson about them, a special venom and heinousness of offense against the Majesty of God. What constitutes, then, the five hundred pence debtor? Who are the people that are greater sinners than others?

I answer, first, that there are *some who have greater capacity than others*. There are some men and women who have but very little intellectual power. Their minds are narrow, their power of thought is limited—they cannot, under any circumstances, commit the transgressions which are easy enough to men of great, though imperious, masterly minds, with much inventive power and strong passions. Judge you as to your own condition in this respect. Some of you may know that you are very differently constituted from some of your neighbors. You may even have been tempted, in a moment of pride, to look upon them as very commonplace sort of folk—and you are quite aware, without any pride, that you are a person of far greater ability than they are. Very well, then it is possible for you to be a far greater sinner than they can be! You can throw more force and energy, more devilry into your life than they can. I have no doubt that there are many people who slip through life with little mind, little mental force and with comparatively little sin. They know but little, and think but little, and their condemnation will be little compared with that of greater sinners.

Some are great sinners *because they are placed in positions of great trust*. He who has but one talent can only sin with regard to that one talent. But he who has 10 talents, is 10 times as unrighteous in the sight of his Master. A man who is but a house servant, or a day laborer, may be unfaithful to his worldly master and, so far he will be wrong. But think of the position of a minister of the Gospel, the man to whom the souls of men are committed. If he is unfaithful to his Master, what terrible consequences are involved! And, as his reward is higher than the wages of the man that tills the soil, so shall his punishment be greater. Mark the difference of the sacrifice for a priest compared with the offering for a woman's purification. She might come with a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, but not so the sons of Aaron! Their office was higher and, if they sinned, their iniquity was, in consequence, all the greater—and there must be presented, in the type, a costlier sacrifice in recognition of the greater guilt in their case. You fathers and mothers can sin more than your children can. Masters, you can sin more than your servants can. Men of wealth, you can sin against every pound you have if you use it wrongfully. Men who occupy high places, your sin may be like that of David, who greatly disgraced the name of God before men. Because of your exalted position, you can do so much more mischief and your sin, therefore, is reckoned at a proportionately higher rate.

Sin, too, becomes greater *in proportion to a man's light and knowledge*. A young man, blessed with godly parents, brought up from his childhood in the midst of prayer and holiness, can sin much more than poor children taken out of the back slums and who, from their very babyhood, have heard words of blasphemy and seen deeds of filthiness. Oh, when some of us, whose privilege it was to hear the name of Jesus mingled with the first hush of our lullaby—when we sinned against God, there was an intensity of blackness about our sin that could not be found in

the poor heathen, or in such sinners in this land as are left in ignorance! The more you know—the more you understand of the mind and will of God—the greater is your transgression when you sin against Him!

Sin, too, is very largely increased *by tenderness of conscience*. There are some persons who must know that this assertion is true if they have looked into their own hearts and lives, for they were very tender-spirited in their youth and, as they grew up, they retained much of that tenderness. There are some coarse, rough, brutal men who could almost commit murder and not feel it—but some of us can remember the horror which came upon us when, for the first time, we used or heard an ill word. You remember how the breach of the Sabbath cut you to the quick when it was only a small matter about which others thought nothing. You also remember how, when you found yourself out in having told a lie, perhaps, unintentionally, you could not sleep, you felt so mean and miserable! Well, now, if you have forced yourself to sin in spite of such a check as this—if you have, as it were, gone over hedge and ditch in order to get to Hell—if you have throttled and strangled your better self with stern resolve that you would do evil—then you have sinned, indeed!

There are some such sinners, and there may be some such here, *who have suffered through sin and yet have gone back to it*. In the summer and autumn evenings it is one of the miseries of a man who sits writing to find how the poor gnats and the “daddy long legs” will fly to the lamp and get burned to death. You try to drive them away. You take the trouble to pick them up after they have burnt themselves—but back they come—and their folly is a true and melancholy picture of the way in which some men return to their vices, again and again, even after they have suffered greatly through indulgence in them! Even delirium tremens will not suffice to save some men from continuing to be drunks—and the rottenness of their bones has not been sufficient to keep others back from the house of the strange woman. Oh, how horrible is this! And how it adds to the guilt of sin and puts upon it a certain degree of presumptuousness which provokes God beyond the ordinary transgressions of common sinners.

Does this truth come home to the conscience of anyone whom I am now addressing? Then I go back to my preface, and ask such an one to say, with Simon the Pharisee, “Master, say on.” There is always a great intensity about sin when it is practiced for a long time. The sinner who is 60 years old is a greater sinner than a mere youth can well be. And the man who has spent three-score years and ten without remembering his God—the man whose life lease has run out and yet who, all the while, has spent his vigor in the service of Satan—has become one of the greatest of sinners—one of the five-hundred pence debtors!

Yes, there are degrees of sin! Sometimes a man recognizes that he has *distinctly sinned against God in an especially personal way*. David seemed to feel his sin thus when he said to the Lord, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.” Usually, unenligh-

tened men think most of an offense against their fellow men. It is very curious that it should be so, but so it is. If I were to charge any man here with the commission of a crime against his fellows, he would probably knock me down if he could. But if I charged him with a sin against God, he would say, "Oh, yes, yes! We are all sinners," and think that it was nothing to be a sinner because it was only against God! Thus men turn things upside down and an offense against our fellow man is reckoned to be a greater evil than an offense against the Judge of all the earth! But it is not so. It is that sinning distinctly against God that has the most evil about it and, therefore, it is that there is but one sin that is unpardonable—and that is a willful sin against the Holy Spirit, one Person of the blessed Trinity. It is because it is so especially and so designedly against Him that no repentance ever comes to the man who has committed it, for he has sinned the sin which is unto death and he remains in his death-state, so that he never repents of the iniquity and finds no forgiveness for it. Beware, I pray you, of sins distinctly against God, especially such sins as that of blasphemy, of murmuring against God, of infidelity, of a denial of His existence, of Socinianism, which is a robbing of Christ of His Deity and so of His highest Glory! For those sins which are most distinctly against God stand first in the dread catalog of iniquity. Remember how the Prophet Samuel said to Saul, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." Witchcraft was thought to be one of the worst of sins—and rebellion against God is put side by side with it.

And, last, I do believe that the greatest sin of all—that which, like a giant, rises head and shoulders above the rest—is *the sin of unbelief, or rejection of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus*. If any man here shall say, "I am no drunkard. I am no whoremonger." Well, Sir, suppose you are not—but are you an unbeliever in Christ? Then you shall have the same portion as they have, for, when God says, "I will give My only-begotten Son to die to save sinners," and yet men say, "We will not have Your Son as our Savior, but we will reject Him. 'This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours'"—when God takes out of His own bosom the darling of His heart, the very Glory of Heaven, and sends Him here in human flesh and blood to bear shame, suffering and death for guilty men—and they say that they will not believe on Him, then this is the sin that turns the key of Heaven against them and dooms them to eternal destruction!

Remember the solemn words of our Lord Jesus, Himself—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." Listen again to these familiar words—"He that believes not is condemned already." Why is he condemned already? He is living, he is laughing, he is sporting, he is merry-making—yet he is condemned already, "because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." That is the sin which, above all others, drops the black wax

upon his death warrant and sets the seal of Divine Wrath there so that he must die!

O my dear Hearers, our text says that one of the debtors owed 500 pence and, surely, that is the man who has heard the Gospel and yet has refused it! It is you who have been coming to this place, or to other houses of prayer, and who have been warned, invited and entreated for months and years—I know not how long—to believe in Jesus. If such is the case with any of you, put yourself down, not as a 50-pence debtor, but as a 500-pence debtor! No, I think I must liken you to him who owed his master ten thousand talents. How can you ever repay it? There is no hope of your ever repaying it. You can have it all frankly and freely forgiven! If you go to Christ and plead perfect poverty, you shall then be set free at once through faith in His dear name! But if not, you must be delivered over to the keeper of the terrible prison of which I spoke to you, and you can never come out of it! God grant that it may not be so with any of you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 15:13-33.**

Verses 13-27. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the Grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. I have therefore reason to glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not worked by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ. Yes, I have strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whenever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way there by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it has pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It has pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For these Achaeans and Macedo-*

nians had received the Gospel from the saints in Jerusalem. The Gentiles had been made partakers of their spiritual things, so it was their duty to minister to the poor Christian Jews in carnal things.

27, 28. *For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit. That is, “when I have delivered the money, and obtained a receipt in full for it; when I have discharged my duty in this matter.”*

28, 29. *I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.* He was sure of that, but he did not know how he would go in other respects. He did not know that he would go to Rome as a prisoner. He could not foresee that he would be sent there as an ambassador in bonds; and little, I think, did he care in what manner he would go, so long as he had the absolute certainty that he should go “in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.”

30, 31. *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them in Judea that do not believe; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints.* For there were some saints in Jerusalem who were very narrow-minded and who hardly thought it right to accept anything from Gentiles. They had not got clear of their Jewish bonds and Paul was a little afraid lest what he was taking to them might not be acceptable, so he asked the Romans to pray about that matter. Is there anything about which Believers may not pray? If there are, then we have no right to have anything to do with it! Bring everything before God in prayer, for all right things may lawfully be prayed about. So Paul asked the Christians in Rome to pray about that matter of his journey to Jerusalem and also to pray for his return.

32, 33. *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

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

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

THE TWO DEBTORS

NO. 3015

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 14, 1867.

“There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed one hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him more?”
Luke 7:41, 42.

[Other Sermons on various parts of this Parable, are as follows: No. 2,768, Volume 48—DEBTORS AND DEBTORS; No. 1,739, Volume 29—BANKRUPT DEBTORS DISCHARGED and No. 2,127, Volume 36—LOVE'S COMPETITION—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeons.org>.]

IT is not wise to compare ourselves with our fellow men. It is comparing one incorrect standard with another and is very apt to mislead. Still, as men will do this, as they will sail upon this tack, we will, for the moment, do the same with the view of correcting some of their mistakes.

I. The very brief Parable before us suggests four thoughts upon which we will dwell for a few minutes. The first is that THERE ARE DIFFERENT DEGREES IN OUR SINNERSHIP—some owe five hundred pence and others only fifty.

It would be very incorrect to say of all men, that they are alike sinful. That they are all guilty is true, but that they are all *equally* guilty is not true. There are persons who would contend very earnestly for this distinction because they claim to be among the better sort of sinners. They claim that they are not one tithe as guilty as many whom they know and that, in comparison with more grossly vicious persons, they are all but innocent! We will admit that, my excellent Friend. We will admit—not all, perhaps, that you would like us to admit—but we will at once allow that you are not so guilty as others. We will also admit that all sins are not alike degrading. There are vices, especially those which pollute the body, which manifestly lower men to the level of beasts, or worse than that, and we would not, for a moment, insinuate that our young friends who have been educated in the midst of godliness and have been preserved from any taint of vice, are so degraded by sin as drunks and revelers, the profane and the debauched.

Moreover, we are persuaded that the penalties of sin will differ and that, albeit all the wicked shall be cast into Hell, yet there will be degrees in the anguish of that lost state. Our Master has Himself told us, “That servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with

few stripes. For unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required.” There are great criminals whose punishment shall be more intolerable than that of others—and there are others, who have not sinned to the same extent, who, though justly punished with God’s wrath—shall not endure it to the same extent as those who have plunged more deeply into iniquity.

Thus we are prepared to admit that there *are* differences in sin, differences in the consequent degradation of sinners, and differences in the punishment due to sin. Our own conscience, common sense and right judgment teach us this, yet notwithstanding the admissions, I want to put a few plain questions to you, dear Friends, who think that you are among the fifty-pence debtors and who look down with some sort of disdain upon those who owe five hundred pence! And, first, let me ask you this question—*Are you quite sure that you are the lesser sinners?* Are you certain that you are to be reckoned among the fifty-pence debtors? Remember that we must always judge sin not merely by its outward appearance, but by the motives and character of the person committing it—and also by the circumstances under which the offense was perpetrated.

Will you not all admit that *a sin committed against light and knowledge is far worse than a sin of ignorance?* If a man should offend against the law of the land, not knowing it to be the law, his offense would not be as gross as that of another man who, understanding what the law is, deliberately sets himself in opposition to it. It may be that some of those upon whom you have looked down as owing God five hundred pence may have been without the light that you have had. Probably the most of them never had the privileges that you have enjoyed. Did not your godly mother pray over you from your very birth? Did not your anxious father diligently instruct you in the way of salvation? You have read the Bible, you have a tolerably clear notion what is right and what is wrong, so you have sinned in the light—you have sinned knowing it to be sin. May not, therefore, your little sins, as you think them to be, really be more heinous in the sight of God than those apparently greater sins which others have committed without the same degree of light and knowledge that you have had?

Further, *must not sin also be measured by the violence which a man has to do to his conscience in order to commit it?* To some persons, no doubt, from their early habits and even from their very constitution, I will not say that sin becomes inevitable, but certainly they glide into it almost by nature and without being conscious of any restraint—or the restraint is so little that they scarcely feel it. I know that there are some of you who, happily, had to pull and tug against the bit and bridle before you could live as sinners. Conscience has so sharply pricked you and made you so uneasy in your course of life, that you have had to wrestle with your own conscience as a man struggles with his adversary. You have had to clutch conscience by the throat and try to throttle it and if you could have done so, you would have stifled, once and for all, that warning cry which became a constant nuisance to you. You could not sin with such pleasure as others could because your conscience would not

keep silent, so, may not those minor offenses of yours which have been committed, notwithstanding the alarms of your outraged conscience, have had in them a heinousness which does not apply to the sins of others who have not had to contend against this inward monitor when plunging into sin?

Yet again, dear Friends, *may not example sometimes have a great deal to do with sin?* When I see some of our young people inclining to be drunks, I am very sorry and I blame them. But can I wonder at their conduct when I see how many parents train up their children as if they really intended to make drunks of them—tempting them to drink and giving them their first taste of that which becomes a cause of stumbling to them? I do not see how, if it were the objective of some parents to make their boys drunks, they could act otherwise than as they now do! I have heard a workingman say to his son, when he has passed him a jug of ale, “Take a drink, my lad,” and he has looked quite pleased when the boy has taken a deep draught. And then he has taken him to the gin palace and let him mingle freely with the evil company usually found in such a place! So, is there any wonder that the boy becomes a drunk? Can a father blame his son for swearing when he is, himself, a blasphemer? No. And I say that people who have thus been in the midst of sin from their very childhood, may not, after all, be such great sinners as others who have had the very opposite example set before them—and yet have committed these sins contrary to all the training of their early childhood. Some of us cannot recollect a fault on the part of our parents. Honestly looking back upon the private life of my father and mother, I cannot recall anything in their example which it would have been unsafe for me to imitate. Well then, if I have sinned, I have sinned against a parental example which I ought to have followed and, therefore, there must be more guilt in my fifty-pence sin than in the five-hundred-pence sin of others who have not had such an example as I had!

Do you not think, too, that circumstances greatly affect the comparative enormity of sin? If a thief steals a loaf because he has starving children crying at home, would you give him the same punishment as you would award to another man who steals what he really does not need and who seriously injures the man he robs merely for the greed of gain? You all make distinctions as to the motives which prompt to various actions—if you find that the motive, in one case, although not right, was more excusable than in the case of another—you judge the first one the more leniently. How do you know, my dear Hearers who resisted the calls of Divine Grace last Lord’s-Day, that you were not more guilty than that man who was not here but who reeled home that same night, intoxicated? You came into direct contact with God’s mercy and you resisted it—and that is more than the poor drunk did! And as to some of you seat-holders who are constantly here, yet still remain unconverted though we have entreated you to lay hold on Christ—I will not say it, but I almost think that your resistance of those continued invitations of Grace may have in it more of moral guilt, in the sight of God, than some of those offenses for which men are shut up in prison and are execrated

by their fellows! Many people do not regard sins against God as being so heinous as crimes against men, yet they are even more so! And it is one of the marks of our common moral conduct that while a man may not be greatly offended if you call him a sinner, he would be very angry if you called him a criminal! That is to say such a man thinks there is not much amiss in having offended God, but he thinks it would be a dreadful thing to have broken the laws of his fellow men!

If you think these things over seriously, I should not wonder if anyone of you who at first said, "I am a fifty-pence debtor. I thank God that there are differences between sinners and that I am not so degraded as other men are"—should have to say, "It makes very little difference to me after all. It is true that I have never been a thief, I have never committed an act of unchastity, I have been an honest, upright, respectable member of society, yet, as I have not believed in Jesus Christ and turned from sin, I may be among those who were apparently first, who shall be last, while some who seemed to be last, shall stand far before me." I shall *not* be sorry, dear Hearer, if that is the point to which you come. Indeed, I shall rather be glad, for it will be a more hopeful position for you to occupy than that which you once felt was your right place!

II. Having thus shown you that there are degrees in sin, I shall now pass on to show you that **THERE IS AN EQUALITY IN THE BANKRUPTCY OF BOTH THE GREAT AND THE LITTLE SINNERS.**

Neither of the debtors in the Parable had anything with which to pay his debt. And when God means to save a soul, He makes it realize that it has nothing with which it can discharge its debt to God. If any of you think that you can do *anything* towards saving yourselves, go and do it! But Christ will have nothing to do with you on those terms! You must be brought to feel that you are helpless, hopeless, lost, ruined and undone—and that you cannot lift even a finger to save yourself—but that the Grace of God must do everything for you, from the first to the last! And unless you are thus emptied, and humbled, and laid low in the dust before God, I see no sign that His Spirit is effectually working in you—

***"While we can call one mite our own,
We get no full discharge."***

Both these debtors knew that "they had nothing to pay." *There are some men who are conscious of a great deal of guilt who offer to discharge their liability by their repentance.* "Oh," says such a man, "I am very sorry for my sin and that sorrow will surely make up for it. My tears shall flow freely and I will deprive myself of this pleasure and that! Surely that is all that is needed." But the man whom God means to save knows that his repentance cannot atone for his past guilt. If I get into debt, it is no use for me to be sorry—that sorrow will not pay my debt! And as I am immeasurably indebted to God, my tears of repentance will not discharge that debt—

"Could my tears forever flow,"

they would not atone for sin! I hope you all realize the Truth of what I am saying, for if you do, it is a token for good in your case.

Some others, though they cannot pay the full amount of their debt, hope to make a compromise. They will do their best and leave the Lord Jesus

Christ to make up the rest. They cannot offer to God perfect obedience, so they offer such obedience as they can—and they trust that will satisfy Him. But a soul that has been truly awakened by the Holy Spirit knows that “compromise” is quite out of the question. The Divine declaration is, “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them.” There is not a word about some things which are required and other things which may be excused. My dear Hearer, I trust you are convinced that no half-obedience can ever be accepted by God! If you are to be saved by your own works, you must be absolutely perfect in thought, word and deed from the moment of your birth to the hour of your death! One crack in the crystal vase of perfection spoils it—and you all know that the vase was not only cracked, but smashed to atoms long ago. Do not trust in your own righteousness, but confess before God that you have “nothing to pay” off that terrible debt which you have incurred through sin.

Some men give their note of hand and promise to pay their debt. They hope they will be better in the future than they have been in the past. But suppose they are? They will then be no better than they are always bound to be—and how can that improvement discharge their *past* debts? Try that plan on one of your tradesmen. You owe him, shall I say fifty pounds? Well, then, go to him and say, “I cannot pay what I owe you, but I will never get into your debt again.” Will that promise take your name off his ledger? You know that it will not! And so, even if you could serve God perfectly in the future, that would not put away your sins in the past! The fact is, these promises of yours are just like the paper money which represents no real security and so leads to bankruptcy. You may build up a nice-looking structure with promises of good works which you will do in the future, but it will all come tumbling down one of these days—and great will be the fall thereof.

This is the only safe declaration for a man to make—“O God, I am deeply in Your debt and have nothing to pay! If You would save me through my repenting, even then, if You did not enable me to repent, I could not repent, for my heart is hard as a stone! Lord, will You not take away my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh? And, Lord, if I am to be holy in the future, it must be Your Grace which will make me so. I know that if I am ever to enter Heaven, I must be holy. And I also know that holiness must be worked in me by Your Holy Spirit. Consequently, it cannot be any credit to me—You must have the credit of it all. As for me, I am like the two debtors, I have ‘nothing to pay’—nothing whatever! If You send the sheriff’s officer to take me and put me in prison, and tell me that I shall never come out until I have paid the uttermost farthing, I must lie there forever and ever, for I know that it is not in my power to meet even one in ten thousand of Your just demands. If you should lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, my building for eternity must be found wanting. Pull it down, Lord, and then build me up as You would have me!”

We are all equal here—“there is no difference.” You respectable ladies and gentlemen are on a level with the worst villains in the land! My Lord,

you are no better off, in this respect, than a chimney-sweeper! Your Majesty, even *you* have no preference, in this matter, over the poorest woman in your dominions! If you are to be saved—high and low, rich and poor, you great and mighty ones, and you despised and abandoned ones—so must all bow together here as you will have to lie in earth's common grave! So must you bow down in one common lowliness of mind before your God, whose debtors you all are, confessing that you have "nothing to pay"—not a single rusty farthing of goodness in the whole human race! Jew and Gentile must bow together before God, crying, "Guilty, guilty, GUILTY! We are guilty, everyone of us and we have nothing to plead in answer to the demands of Your righteous Law. And even this confession, itself, is forced from our lips because we cannot help feeling that it is, alas, but too true." We are all equal here.

III. Passing on to the next point, we observe that when Sovereign Mercy dealt with these two debtors—the fifty-pence man and the five-hundred-pence man—IT PUT THEM ON A LEVEL, AGAIN, for their creditor "frankly forgave them both."

The man who owed the five hundred pence could turn to the other debtor and say, "I am out of debt, my Brother!" And the other one could say to him, "Give me your hand! I cannot say any more than you can, but, glory be to God, I cannot say any less, for I, also, am out of debt! I could not pay my fifty pence, so I could have been shut up in the debtors prison—and you could not pay your five hundred pence, so you, also, could have been kept in prison. And though I did not owe as much as you did, yet I owed more than I could ever have paid, so let us together bless the name of the Lord who has frankly forgiven us both because His only-begotten and well-beloved Son has redeemed us from going down to the Pit by paying all our debt on Calvary's Cross."

There is one word that I want you to especially notice—"He *frankly* forgave them both." By that I understand that he forgave them altogether because he willed to do so and not because of any reason in them why he should do so. Once and for all, he fully cancelled all their debts. And now, just as if they had never been in debt at all, he could not arrest them for debt and they had no cause to be afraid that he would do so, for he had no legal claim against them for he had, himself, by an act of Grace, forgiven them all that they owed—and they were, therefore, clear. Ah, my dear Hearers, your hearts must leap for joy if you know that God has forgiven all your past sin! Sometimes, when we get to talking about the perfect pardon which we have received from God, some people say, "How egotistical, how presumptuous you are!" Well, we will be egotistical and presumptuous in that sense—and the more we are so, the better will it be! Anyone who has believed in Jesus is wholly forgiven! Against me, if I believe in Jesus and against you, if you believe in Jesus, there is no sin recorded in God's Book of Remembrance! It is all blotted out! If you could turn the pages over, you would not find a single entry of the sin of a Believer. In God's sight, if I have trusted in Christ, I am as pure as though I had never sinned, for I have been so washed in Christ's precious blood that not a spot or wrinkle remains upon me! And you, too, Believer, are not half-pardoned. Christ is not half a Savior to us, but a

whole Savior! And the pardon which God gives to us is a full and final pardon. He does not forgive us upon condition that we do not go back to the world. He makes no such condition and He will not let us go back. He forgives us outright, and puts the whole of our sin away forever. He receives the prodigal back into His bosom and bids him sit at the table and feast while the music and the dancing make glad his heart!

Do you *know*, dear Hearer, that *you* are forgiven? “Oh,” says one, “I would give all I have to know that.” You may know it. If you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, that is a sure proof that you are pardoned. And you may live and you *ought* to live in a constant realization of perfect pardon through the precious blood of Jesus. There may have come into this place one who would not like his name to be known, or his character to be described. He has gone very, very far into everything that is evil. But he is now standing at the foot of the Cross and he is looking up to the Crucified Christ and he can say, “My trust is in Jesus only.” There is probably also here a young man whose life, from his youth up, has been most excellent—nobody could ever detect a flaw in his moral character. He, too, is looking upon the wounds of Jesus, and he also can say, “My trust is in Him alone.” Now, these two persons are equally pardoned! That great sinner has no more against him in God’s Book than that excellent youth who is also forgiven—“He frankly forgave them both”—nor forgave one of them fully and the other only partially, but, “He frankly forgave them both.”

My eyes glance here and there upon some of my Brothers and Sisters in Christ whose life stories remind me of the differences there are between them—and also of the likeness which Divine Grace has worked in them. There are some here whose tongues were used in blasphemy not long ago. The drunkard’s cup was often at their lips and the drunkard’s language was their usual speech. But they are washed, cleansed and sanctified! And now there is no difference between them and those who were preserved from wandering out of the path of morality. “No difference,” did I say? Sometimes I think that there is *this* difference—that those who have sinned much and have had much forgiven, are the warmest-hearted among us, the most faithful and the most earnest. So that if we, in our earlier days, seemed to excel them, they now excel us and we almost envy them their holy joy and earnest love to the Lord who has washed them from their many sins! Still, there is an equality between these two classes. They are both alike pardoned, both washed in the same precious blood, both clothed in the same spotless righteousness, both equally adopted into the family of God, both equally secured by the Everlasting Covenant and both equally have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! And they shall both equally stand at the right hand of Christ, wearing the white robes, waving the palm branches, and they shall equally share His victory as they sing, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

IV. Now, lastly, THERE IS ANOTHER POINT OF DIFFERENCE—“Which of them will love him more?”

It is quite certain that there are some Christians who love the Lord Jesus Christ more than others do. Some who love Him much while others only love Him a little. Shall I describe those who love Christ only a little? If I do, some of you will be able to recognize your own portraits. They come to the place of worship pretty regularly. They sing, but not too loudly, for they are afraid of being too enthusiastic. They seldom come to a Prayer Meeting and only occasionally to the week-night service. They take just sufficient spiritual nourishment to keep them alive! I suppose they are afraid of taking too much, lest their spiritual nature should become too vigorous. They do have family prayer—sometimes. They do pray regularly, but it is very short. It may be sweet, but it is certainly very short. They do some good in the world—at least, we hope they do. They could count on one hand all the souls they have ever brought to Christ and all the good works they have ever done for the Lord Jesus Christ might be recorded on a very small scrap of paper. Some of them are wealthy and they heard a man ask them to give a tithe of their income to Christ. They thought he was a fanatic—they never *dreamed* of doing such a thing as he urged, though they do, sometimes, give a sixpence to the collection! They like other people to be earnest. They do not object to that unless those people ask them, also, to be earnest. These little-loved people have believed in Jesus, so they will go to Heaven—but such a change will have taken place in them that we shall scarcely know them.

I have seen whole congregations of this sort of people! I have preached to them—that was terrible work, I can assure you. I have gone home with the deacon and he has been a person of the same sort. He didn't care to know how the cause was getting on in London. Indeed, he didn't care much whether it was getting on or not. As for revivals, if you only mention the word in the presence of such Brethren, they say, “No good ever comes of them.” These people have had little forgiven, so they only love a little. They were never very great sinners and never had any deep repentance so, in their own estimation, they never owed Jesus Christ very much—they are a sort of superficial Christians who will be “saved, yet so as by fire.”

You hardly need that I should describe those who love Christ much—those who delight to praise Him, to pray in His name and to do all in their power to make Him known to others—those who give to God's cause at no ordinary rate, and help us to fight Satan in no ordinary way and to spread the Gospel of Christ in no common fashion! Last week some of us were at a meeting at which there was present a dear Brother in the ministry, the very flame of whose eyes seemed to set us all on fire—and when we have heard him speak from this platform, the very place has seemed to shake under the power of his fervent proclamation of the Truth of God and his impassioned prayers! A man who is thus all soul and all heart cannot preach lifeless, heavy, drugging sermons—and cannot bear to be with people who are dull, cold and heavy of heart. He feels that he has had much forgiven and, therefore, he loves much. I

could also tell you of some godly Sisters who have given almost all their living to the cause of God and of others who give all their time to God's service, having sacrificed everything else that they may devote themselves to the cause of Christ. These are they who love much.

We have differences even in the ministry. We have some Brothers who preach twice in the week, and they get so weary that they have to go away for a long holiday. But there are others who can preach 10 times in the week, or who, if they are not preaching, are visiting their people from door to door—and yet they do not die, but bless God that they have the strength thus to serve Him! As it is in the pulpit, so is it in the Sunday school, and so is it with all classes of Christians—there is a difference. Some seem to be all heart and others seem to have no heart at all. There are some who serve the Lord with their whole soul and others who give Him just the odds and ends of their time and strength. I pray God to raise up among us many Brothers and Sisters who shall be eminent for their Grace and consecration to Christ!

What is the best way to reach this point? Not to be great sinners, but to *feel* that you are great sinners! To have a deep sense of your own sinfulness. If you have never plunged into open vice, be thankful that you have not done so, but regard your sin in the light in which I tried to put it in the earlier part of this sermon. Set a clear view of it till you are humbled, broken down and crushed under its ponderous weight. Then go to Jesus Christ with this load of sin and, trusting in Him, know that you are forgiven through His atoning Sacrifice. And then there will be a potent motive within you which will give strength to your entire life and put muscle, nerve, sinew and bone into your Christianity! Then will you sing—

***“Love I much? I’ve more forgiven!
I’m a miracle of Grace!”***

God bless this message to those poor trembling souls who are deeply in debt through sin—that they may see God's way of forgiving them through the merits and death of His dear Son, Jesus Christ. And may those who are forgiven much love Jesus much, and may God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 7:36-50.**

Verse 36. *And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.* It was usually a suspicious circumstance when a Pharisee desired to be familiar with Christ. It might generally be suspected that he wished to entrap Him. Yet, on this occasion, if there was no real friendliness to Christ, there was at least the appearance of it. We see what our Savior did when the Pharisee gave Him an invitation—“He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.” The Lord saw there an opportunity for usefulness. He knew that He would have a good reason for speaking personally to this Pharisee, who, perhaps, was one of the better sort. At all events, our Lord felt that it was right for Him to go into that house,

even if they did watch Him and try to catch Him in His talk. If there was hypocrisy there, there was the more need for His Presence, as Jesus Himself said concerning His eating with publicans and sinners, “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.”

37, 38. *And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.* She was not a sinner in the ordinary sense of the word, but she was “a sinner” by trade, “a sinner” by profession. It always seems to me that in this description of her, every word is emphatic. There is much meaning in every separate action of the woman and, even in her little mannerisms, there is something that is instructive to us. Our Lord was reclining at His meal and His feet were turned towards the door, so that she had not to come far into the house before she reached His feet. And there she stood “at His feet.” Those are blessed words, “*at His feet.*” That is where we, also, should stand and weep. That is where we should sit and learn. That is where we should wait and serve. That is where we hope to live and reign forever—“at His feet.”

This woman “stood at His feet *behind Him*”—as if she were unworthy to be looked upon by Him, but found it honor enough to be behind Him, so long as she was but near Him—“at His feet behind Him, weeping”—with sorrow for her sin, with joy for her pardon, with delight in her Lord’s Presence, perhaps with grief at the prospect of what yet awaited Him. And she “began to wash His feet with tears.” O sweet repentance which fills the basin better than the purest streams of earth could ever do! Then she unbound her tresses—those nets in which she had, perhaps, caught many a man when she had hunted for the precious life after her former sinful manner. But now she uses those tresses for something better, she makes a towel of her hair. That which was her pride shall now fill that humble office and even be honored thereby. “And kissed His feet.” Oh, the tenderness of her love and the strength of her passion—a sacred one, not born of earth at all—for that dear Lord of hers! She kissed His feet and then she poured upon them the precious perfumed ointment which had cost so much.

39. *Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying.* Well, what did he say? I think that if some of us, taught of God, and let into the secret of eternal love, had been there, we would have whispered to one another, “What a change has been worked in that woman! There she is, weeping and washing the Savior’s feet, when, but the other day, she was standing at the corners of the streets, in the attire of a harlot, plying her accursed trade.” How greatly we would have rejoiced to see her! But it is only Divine Grace that teaches us to rejoice over even one sinner that repents and Simon the Pharisee appeared to know little or nothing of Divine Grace! He had, however, the good manners not to say aloud what he thought, but, “he spoke within himself, saying.”

39. *This Man, if He were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches Him: for she is a sinner. Yet “this Man” was a Prophet and He did know “who and what manner of woman” that was who touched Him! More than that, He knew what manner of woman His Divine Grace had made her and how true, how pure was the love which she was then manifesting to Him! And He knew how deep was her repentance, how changed her heart, how renewed her entire life was. He knew all about her, but poor Simon could not know “this woman” as Christ knew her.*

40. *And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have something to say unto you. And he said, Master, say on. Christ often answers people who do not speak audibly. He answers those who only speak in their hearts. So you who are silently praying may take comfort. If Jesus answers a Pharisee who speaks in his heart against Him, much more readily will He answer His own people when they are speaking in their hearts to Him! It was a hopeful sign that Simon used a respectful title in speaking to Christ and that he was willing to listen.*

41-43. *There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave more. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged. Now, dear Friends, I hope that those of us who have had much forgiven are proving, by the warmth of our love, how right was this judgment on the part of Simon. If you have had much forgiven, be well to the front in every struggle on behalf of the cause of Christ! Be well to the front, also, with your gifts for Him—bring your alabaster box and break it for Him. Wait not for anyone to ask you, much less to press you, to give to Him who gave His all for you, but, spontaneously, out of the love you bear to Him who has loved you so much as to die for you, prove that you love Him most of all.*

44. *And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, See you this woman? Christ knew that Simon did see her, and that he had just been sneering at her in his heart. “See you this woman?”*

44. *I entered into your house, you gave Me no water for My feet: but she has washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. “I became your guest and, therefore, as My host, the first thing you should have done was to give the ordinary Oriental hospitality of washing My feet. You gave Me no water for My feet; but she has washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.” What a changing of places there is now! The Lord has made the first to be last and the last to be first! Simon thought himself far in advance of this woman, but now that Christ had explained their true positions, I should think he began to see that the woman was far ahead of him.*

45. *You gave Me no kiss. Yet that was the Eastern custom in welcoming an honored guest.*

45. *But this woman since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss My feet. “At best, you would only have kissed Me once, but this woman,*

since I came in, has never left off kissing My feet. With a sacred audacity of love, she has lifted My feet to her lips and kissed them again and again.” So, see here again how the first is last, and the last first.

46. *My head with oil you did not anoint: but this woman has anointed My feet with ointment.* “That is a common custom in the case of a guest of honorable estate, but you did not observe it. Yet this woman has poured upon My feet the most precious form of perfume that could be procured anywhere.”

47, 48. *Therefore I say unto you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said unto her, Your sins are forgiven.* There I see the clear run of the argument—that she is a woman who has had much forgiven by Christ and that is the reason why she loves Him so much. But often, when an inference is very natural and plain, the Savior leaves men to draw that one for themselves, while He draws another. He puts the same Truth in another shape—“Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.” I am afraid that there are many professed Christians who must have had very little forgiven them, for they love Christ very little. This seems to be the age of little love to Christ. There are some few who love the Master intensely, but oh, how few they are! Some persons think they are only very little sinners and we are told, nowadays, what a little thing sin is, and what a little place Hell is, and what a very short time the punishment of sin will last! Everything is according to scale and it must be so in religion! As you diminish the guilt of sin and the punishment of sin, you also diminish the sense of obligation in being saved from sin. Consequently, you diminish our love to Christ and we shall gradually get less and less, I fear, unto the old scale, the old balance! The old shekel of the sanctuary shall once again be used by us.

49. *And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that also forgive sins?* “Who is this who can thus absolve from guilt?”

50. *And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.* “Go home, good Woman, do not stay here and be bothered by these people.” And oftentimes that is the best advice that we can give to new converts. There is a theological controversy raging and the jargon of the different schools of thought is being used by one and another, but, do go home, good Soul. You need not trouble about controversial matters. Your sins are forgiven you. Your faith has saved you. If you know that, you know as much as you need to know just now. Go home and be quiet and happy. “Go in peace.”

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

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

WHO LOVES CHRIST MORE? NO. 2873

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 3, 1876.

“There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave more. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged.”
Luke 7:41-43.

When we commence the Christian life, it is very natural that we should say to ourselves, “We do not wish to be second-rate Christians, or ordinary Christians—much less to prove like the Laodicean professors, neither cold nor hot, or, like those of whom the Apostle John wrote, “They went out from us, but they were not of us.” I like to see the holy ambition of the young convert who desires to bring forth much fruit to the Glory of God—to love Christ much and manifest that love by every possible act of devotion to Him. Truly, my dear Friends, you need not be as your fathers have been, for we have often provoked the Lord and have many times done what we ought not to have done. There is plenty of room for improvement upon the past generation and we would earnestly urge those of you who are commencing the heavenly race to run faster than we have run—to keep your eyes more steadfastly fixed upon the goal—and to continue more resolutely in the right way than we have done. We do not desire that you should imitate our mistakes, or that you should fall into our backslidings. We wish that yours might be the highest conceivable form of Christian life and we know that if it is to be so, there must be in you intense love to Christ.

My objective, at this time, is to give some directions which, perhaps, the Spirit of God will bless, especially to beginners, that they may be taught to love Christ much and manifest that love as this woman did. It may be that some of us who have been for years on the right road, may also get stirred up to greater zeal and devotion to our Lord. Possibly, we may hear our Master saying to us, as He said to the angel of the church of Ephesus, “I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love.” If His Spirit shall make our love to burn more vehemently, we may be able to start anew and after a better fashion in the work and service of our Lord. This were “a consummation devoutly to be wished.”

With this end in view, I shall begin by speaking upon the fact that *we must all be saved in the same manner*. Whatever our desires may be to outrun others in the Christian race, we must begin by being saved in exactly the same manner as others are. Then, secondly, I shall try to show that *it will help to increase our love if we have a deep sense of our own sinfulness*. And then, thirdly, provided we have this deep sense of sin and, in consequence, possess a burning love to Christ, *this will lead us to show our love very much as this woman did*.

I. First, then, whatever our desires may be to serve our Master to the utmost—to be in the front rank of His servitors—yet we **MUST BEGIN WHERE OTHERS BEGIN**.

There is the same door of entrance for us as that which was opened to the very chief of sinners, for there is no difference between one sinner and another in the sight of God, as far as the plan of salvation is concerned. There may be many differences in other matters but, in the matter of salvation, there is nothing which places one man in a different position from another, or which allows him to be saved in any other way than the one way which God has laid down for a sinner's salvation.

You notice, in the parable before us, that both the parties were in debt—"the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty"—but they were both in debt. So, if some men have plunged into the grossest vice and defiled themselves, and polluted their lives, they are certainly in debt five hundred pence. But if others have been kept from overt acts of transgression, yet, since their hearts have gone astray from God and since, with their desires, and with their lips, and in many respects even in their actions, they have broken His holy Law, they also are in debt. Fifty pence, it may be, but still, they are in debt. There is not one among us who can stand before the Most High and say to Him, "I owe nothing to Your justice for I have never infringed Your righteous Laws." Any man who would say that would be a liar, and the truth would not be in him. If we say that we have no sin, or that we have not sinned, we lie in the face of the living God and in the teeth of our own conscience, too! So, we are all in debt, even if the amount differs in each case.

We also learn from the parable that, although *both the parties were in debt, neither of them had anything with which to meet the liability*—"they had nothing to pay." One only owed fifty pence, but, then, he had not the fifty pence. No, he had not even one penny out of the fifty required to meet the amount. The other debtor owed five hundred pence and his plight was just the same, for he had nothing to pay. It sometimes happens that the man who owes the most, has the most to pay, but it is not so here. He has *nothing* to pay. And sometimes the man who owes but very little, may be the one who has something with which to meet his obligations. He has pulled up just at the right time and though he is insolvent, yet he can almost meet the debt.

But it is not so here. He has nothing to pay. Neither of them could produce so much as a single penny and that is your case and mine, dear Brothers and Sisters—we have nothing to pay. All that we have, or ever shall have, is already due to God. If there were any assets, they would

not belong to us and there is nothing in reserve—nothing that we can look for, that will drop in, towards the close of life, with which all our old scores can be wiped out. Under the Law of God, there is nothing for us but debt, debt, debt! And even if we had the power to pay our old debts, new ones would soon swallow up all our capital. But we have nothing with which to meet our old debts. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself,” is still God’s daily demand upon us. And if we were able to meet it, it would not in any way make up for the deficiencies of the years that have gone by. Here we all stand upon an equality—we are all in debt and we have, none of us, anything with which to pay that debt.

And here is the glory of God’s mercy in dealing with sinners who believe in Jesus. In the parable of the two debtors, we are told that *the creditor freely forgave them both*. He did not say to either of them, “I will set you a certain time and you shall pay me so much a week until you clear it off.” Oh, no, he forgave them both—wiped the score out altogether! He did not ask anything of them, for he knew that they had nothing. He forgave them, says the text, *frankly*, that is, freely. He did not forgive one of them because his debt was a misfortune which he could not avoid, but he frankly forgave them both. He did not look for any worthiness in either of them, or expect anything from either of them, but, as an act of pure gratuitous favor, because he delighted to show kindness to his poor debtors, he said, “There, go home, both of you. I shall never ask you for the amount of your debts again. I have crossed it off my book though I have received nothing whatever from you.”

Now, this is just what the Lord, in His infinite mercy, does for all poor sinners who come and trust His Son. He gives them a receipt in full, for there is One who has paid the debt for them! All glory be to His name—it has been paid in full! But, as far as we are concerned, the Lord does not give us pardon because of our tears, or prayers, or repentances, or even because of any merit in our believing, for our very believing is marred by unbelief—but He forgives us freely. And He does not forgive us because He thinks that in the future we shall improve upon the past. Oh no, we are His workmanship when we do improve and it is He who must have the credit of our improvement. But He forgives us freely, “according to the riches of His Grace,” passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin, and remembering not the wickedness of His people, “because He delights in mercy.”

Here, then, we are all on the same level and if any young Christian thinks that he starts with an advantage over others, he makes a great mistake—and he had better go back and start where all pilgrims to Zion must start—at that wicket gate which John Bunyan describes, or, better still, at that Cross where Christian lost his load and from where he went on his way rejoicing! You must come down from that high horse, young man—your birthright is not worth a farthing to you, your church attendance and your chapel attendance are not worth a single penny to you—you must trust in Christ just as a harlot or as a thief must! It is true that

you have been moral and I thank God for it. It is true that you have been preserved from contamination with an ungodly world and I thank God for it. But, still, in the matter of the soul's salvation, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Faith in the atoning Sacrifice of Christ is the way of salvation for the most immoral and for the most moral, too! You and I, dear Friend, must go together to the Lord Jesus and see in Him the full Atonement made and the utmost ransom paid—and then we must accept, as poor bankrupt sinners, the free gift of a full discharge through the Sovereign Mercy of God whom we have offended.

It is absolutely essential for us to begin here, for, if we do not start our Christian life rightly, we shall never make progress in it. If there is a mistake in the first course of bricks laid, or if the foundation is not well dug out, or if things are done improperly at the beginning, there are sure to be all sorts of mischief in the rest of the building. Therefore, I charge you, begin by coming to Christ as naked sinners needing to be clothed. Do not come to Him in the filthy rags of your self-righteousness, seeking to have a piece of His spotless robe of righteousness tacked on, for that can never be! If you think of passing your counterfeit coin with Christ's pure gold, you are making a fatal mistake. I charge you to begin as lost, ruined and condemned sinners—for that is what you really are. Coming to Christ like that and trusting in Him, you shall be saved, you shall be adopted into the Divine family, you shall be sanctified in Christ Jesus and, in due time, you shall be glorified through Him, and through Him alone!

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you how our lives may become more intense than the lives of many other professing Christians are through our love being more fervent than theirs. In order to attain that end, WE MUST HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF OUR OWN SIN. "Which of them will love him more?" "I suppose he to whom he forgave most."

I can imagine someone saying, "I was never, in very deed, as great a sinner as some have been. Must I, therefore, love Christ less than those who have been greater sinners than I have? Will this morality of mine—in which I do not trust for a moment and concerning which I do not speak boastingly—will this put me at a disadvantage in comparison with others? Shall I never attain to such love as that woman had who was a sinner?" Listen, my Friend. Suppose that the man who owed 500 pence only thought that he owed fifty. He would not love the creditor, who forgave him, any better than the one who really did owe the 50 pence, would he? It was not the amount forgiven, as you will readily see, which was the cause of the greater or lesser love—it was the *consciousness* of the amount—the realization of its greatness, which would be the cause of the greater love! I do not doubt that there are some very great sinners who have been forgiven, who yet do not love Christ much and, on the other hand, there are some who, in the judgment of men and, perhaps, in the judgment of God, are nothing like such great sinners, who, nevertheless, love Christ more—the reason being that these greater sinners never had such a deep sense of the enormity of sin as these, comparatively speak-

ing, lesser sinners have had. The question turns, you see, not so much upon the actual amount of debt, as upon the consciousness of the magnitude of that debt—not so much, in the matter of love, upon the indebtedness, as upon the *sense* of that indebtedness, so that you who have been kept in the ways of morality before you were converted, may rightly place yourselves among the greatest debtors and, perhaps, may love Christ even more than some others do who have actually been grosser offenders, but who have never been awakened to such a full sense of their sinfulness as you have had, and, consequently, do not think themselves to be the greatest debtors to God. It is, dear Friends, a deep sense of our sinfulness, coupled with the perfect consciousness of our forgiveness, that will work in us intense love to Christ.

Let me further say that *anyone who has been forgiven very great open sin ought, certainly, to have the greatest and strongest motive for love to Christ*. You cannot always tell how love comes into the heart. I do not deny the duty of love, but love does not come merely as a duty. You love your mother, or you love your wife and it is your duty to do so, but you could not be made to love either of them simply by being told that it was a duty! You do it because of the natural impulse within your heart which moves you to love. In like manner, love to our Heavenly Father and love to Christ is, no doubt, a duty, but it is much more than a mere matter of duty. That is a cold sphere for love to live in and she soon gets away from the polar regions of duty to the more tropical climate of the Garden of Gethsemane and the place called Calvary. She loves because she cannot help loving—because she must love! The gratitude within her heart is so great that she cannot help loving the Lord who has done so much for her!

I hope that is the case with any of you who were once drunkards, or who had lost your character, or who had sinned against God in an open way and even dared, perhaps, to blaspheme His holy name. As you think that over, oh, how your heart ought to burn with love to your Lord! You remember how Paul writes concerning adulterers, drunks and all sorts of grossly sinful people—and then says, “Such were some of you, but you are washed.” This should bring tears to the eyes of all whom it concerns—“But you are washed”—you are singing your Savior’s praises, though once a profane or licentious song would have suited you better! You are now bowing your knees in prayer, though once those knees never knew what it was to make an obeisance before the Most High! You are loving Him, now, with all your heart, though once you saw no beauty in Him that you should desire Him. Brothers and Sisters, I will not say that you ought to love Christ much—rather will I say that I feel sure that you do! If you realize what He has done for you, you cannot help loving Him much! And I trust that in the outpouring and manifestation of love, yours will be a life as vigorously good as once it was shamefully bad—a life as full of the fire of Heaven as once it was full of the fire of Hell—a life as much above the common life of men as once it was below what the life of men really ought to be. God grant that it may be so with you!

Now I will address myself to those who thank God—without any of the Pharisaic spirit—but very humbly thank God that they were not allowed

to run into the same excess of riot as others, but were early brought to a knowledge of the Savior. I say to you, dear Friends, that *you, also, may be among those who love Christ much if you have a very deep sense of sin.* A venerable servant of God whom most of you know and respect, has made a remark which I fully endorse. He says that he has noticed that the deepest convictions of sin do not come, as a rule, to men of coarse life, but to those who have been of upright moral character. My own observation has taught me that, very often, drunks and other persons who have lived openly evil lives, when they are converted, are brought all of a sudden to Christ and made to rejoice in Him—while some of us who were kept from such sins as they have committed, have had a far greater sense of horror and terror indicted upon us than they have ever experienced! I have many times found that the deepest sense of sin has been felt where the actual sin has been the least. There are, no doubt, exceptions to this rule, but I believe it is the rule—and the explanation is that the ungodly man, by a long life of sin, has so seared his conscience that even when the Spirit of God comes to him, he has not that delicate, acute sense of sin which another man has, who, by God's Grace, has never been permitted to blunt the edge of his conscience.

I will tell you another thing. I believe that in many Christians, the sense of sin is much stronger 10 years after they have been saved than it is at the time of their conversion. There is not any despair mixed with it and the fear of punishment has gone—but a sense of horror at the terrible guilt of sin will sometimes come over a Christian who is far advanced in the Divine life. No, the further he is advanced in the Divine life, the more will horror take hold of him whenever he sees sin, even in others, but still more in himself! Some glib professors talk of having got out of the 7th of Romans—I hope they will grow in Grace until they get *into* the 7th of Romans! It seems to me as if they were in the 1st of Romans, so they have a long way to travel before they will get into the 7th of Romans. The nearer you get to perfection, the more horrified you feel because of the sin that still remains in you! And the more horror you feel at your sin, the more intense will be your gratitude to the bleeding Savior who has put that sin away. And, in consequence, the more intense will be your love to Him.

I charge you, Christian people, if you want your piety to be increased, never to blunt your sensibility of sin. Do not begin to look at sin in any light which takes away any of its blackness. The devil himself is not as bad as sin is, for it is sin that made the devil. Satan was a holy angel until sin came into him, but sin itself was never anything else but sin—a horrible thing, and it never will be anything else but sin, look at it in whatever way you may! Some have spoken of sin as being merely a failure, or a slight slip. God keep you, Beloved, from ever using such language as that! Sin, in a child of God, is a damnable thing—as damnable as it is most atrociously wicked—and if it were not for the Grace of God, which takes it away, the brightest saint would soon be banished from God's Presence. Sin is always an evil thing, but in a child of God it is a

worse thing than in worldlings, for he sins against greater light and knowledge than they possess.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you desire to cultivate, as I trust you do, the feeling that you owe your Lord 500 pence which He has freely forgiven you, *you must often think of the spirituality of the Law of God*. We think, at first, that the Ten Commandments only mean what we see on the surface. And if we have not broken them, we feel happy. Or if we *have* broken them, then we feel some conviction of sin. But the longer we live and the more the Spirit of God deals with us, the more we discover that the Law contains the condemnation of every evil thought, temper and imagination. Think, for instance, when we come to discover, in connection with the command, "You shall not kill," that he who is angry with his brother without a cause is a murderer! Who among us has completely escaped that sin? Do angry thoughts ever arise in our heart? Ah, then we begin to discover that we have broken that Commandment and that, in this sense, we are murderers! And we find that there are more men who have broken that Law than have been put to death by their fellow men. It is just the same with each of the Commandments. I need not go into the details of them, but may the Spirit of God make *you* often go into the details till you look into your own life and are horrified and say, "Why, where we fancied we saw righteousness, we see ourselves altogether condemned before the all-seeing eyes of God."

If you would have a sense of sin, in the next place, *endeavor more and more to appreciate the excellency of God*. O You holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, when I think of some of Your creatures and compare myself with them, self-conceit may set my mind at ease—but when I look up to You and remember that the heavens are not clean in Your sight, and that You charge Your angels with folly, I feel afraid to come into Your Presence! In the visions of the night, when we have thought upon the purity and spirituality of God, our hair has been ready to stand on end as we have realized how far we are from such perfection as His—and we have been ready to cry with Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." If the Holy Spirit will teach you to feel like that, then you will love Jesus Christ for having had pity upon you and provided a way by which all your sinfulness could be taken away!

Another blessed sharpener of our sense of sin is *a consciousness of sin's tendency*—knowing what sin really is and what it would do if it could have its way without those blessed checks which Omnipotence put upon it. What would sin do if it could? What *did* it do when God gave it liberty? It took God Himself and accused Him, brought Him before its bar and there the sinner dared to sit and judge his God—yes, and to condemn his God and even to slay his God! This is what sin always does whenever it can. "The fool"—that is, the ungodly man—has said in his heart, "There is no God." He means, "No God for me. I do not need any God. If I could have my own way, there would not be any God." And every offense against God's Law is a wish, on our part, to be greater than God—to have our way instead of God having His way—in a word, to push

God off His Throne that we might sit there in His place! O Sin, I cannot but hate you, now that I see you red with the blood of the Son of God! I cannot but abhor you, now that I see that you would let Hell loose into this world if you could do so! A Christian cannot help hating sin in proportion as He loves God who has forgiven Him all His trespasses.

One thing which has often made me feel great tenderness of soul is *a sense of the Divine Love*. If you ever offend a person and that person, instead of being in the slightest degree angry, lets fall a tear, but says nothing. And if you hear afterwards that he has been laying himself out for your good and that the very thing about which you were angry was really intended to be a blessing to you, oh, you feel as if you could never forgive yourself! To do a wrong thing is bad at any time, but to do a wrong to the One who is so good and so kind as God is—oh, have you not often said to yourself, “How could I have done this? I am one of God’s chosen people. He loved me before the foundation of the world, though I did not know it. Christ wrote my name on His hands and on His heart—and shed His blood to redeem me—yet I did not know it. I even ridiculed His name and yet, all the while, He had prepared a place in Heaven for me and He had made up His mind that He would save me, that His Grace would seek me! I did not know anything about it and I went on in the frivolity and foolishness of my heart against Him.” This thought makes sin appear exceedingly sinful, as being committed against a God who is all goodness and altogether love and mercy—and so we feel ourselves to be indebted 500 pence—not merely fifty.

Above all, dear Friends, I know of nothing that can make us more sensitive about our guilt, and conscious of it, than *the realization of what Jesus Christ is to us*. I think this poor woman was helped to weep by the sight of His feet. They had not been pierced, then, but I know that it helps us to weep in penitence when we can see His dear, His blessed feet that were pierced for our sins, and look upon His hands and remember His words, “These are the wounds that I received in the house of My friends.” And then look into His side and see that the gash goes right to His heart and, all the while, realize that each of our sins became a nail and unbelief the spear to pierce His hands, and feet, and side. That wonderful love of Jesus Christ to us has never changed. It has never been repressed by our ingratitude, or made to cease even by our forgetfulness of Him. He loved us even to the death and, after death, He has continued to love us still! He loves us so that He cannot be content even in Heaven until He gets us there with Him. Being Himself there as our Head, He is determined to bring all His members there.

Just look at Jesus Christ a minute, and then look at sin. Oh, what a loathsome thing, what a monster it then appears! I am sure, dear Friends, if you are beginning to think little of sin, it must be because you have been thinking little of Jesus Christ. You cannot have met your best Friend lately, or else you would never parley with His enemy. O Beloved, lie in Christ’s bosom where all the sweetest perfumes are! Rest your head upon His breast where the myrrh, and aloes, and cassia are to be found and you will never crave the leeks and garlic of Egypt! After having been

with Him and eaten of the heavenly manna, you would not be able to eat the dust and ashes of this foul world! So, in proportion as you get near to Jesus, you will hate sin and you will love Him who bore your sin, and carried it all away that you might be free from it forever!

There are many other topics I might mention so as to sharpen your sense of sin, but I pray the ever-blessed Spirit to keep your mind and heart sensitive towards sin, for you can be sure of this—that you can never exaggerate your own guiltiness in God's sight. When you have the lowest notion of yourself, you are getting the nearest to the truth. When you feel your sin to be exceedingly sinful, you do not even yet know how sinful it is, for—

“God only knows the love of God”—

and God only knows the sinfulness of man! Perhaps, if any man among us could see his sin as it really is, he would go mad. I am persuaded that, sometimes, God spares men who have been great sinners, the horrible revelations which He gives to others because they could not bear them! If they did ever see themselves as they are, they might be driven to despair. So He sometimes leads them by easier ways than He does some others and He thus gives to others the opportunity of putting themselves down among the 500 pence debtors and to love Him more because, after all, they are conscious of having had the most forgiven.

III. My time has fled, so I must only say very briefly, in the third place, that IF WE GET A BURNING LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST, IT WILL BE WELL FOR US TO SHOW IT AS THIS WOMAN DID. How shall we do it?

First, *by desiring to be near Him*. This woman, in her desire to be near Christ, came right up to His feet. Augustine admires the gracious audacity of this woman. She had been very bold when she was a sinner—her shamefacedness was gone when she was a sinner and it was also gone when she was a saint. May we, too, love Christ so much that we cannot be content to live at a distance from Him, but may we be among those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes and abide close beside Him!

The next point in her for us to imitate is *the boldness of her confession*. Some of Christ's disciples came to Him by night, but this woman came to Him by day. They dared not approach Him when anybody saw them, but she cared not who saw her. I would that you who love Jesus much were as bold as she was in the acknowledgment of your faith. Come out and confess Christ, saying, “I have had much forgiven—therefore I will tell the whole world of what the Lord has done for me.”

Then, next, *this woman had deep humility*, for, bold as she was, she rendered the lowliest service that she could to Christ. May you be such willing slaves to Him that washing His feet will be the work in which you delight! If I may but wash His feet—help His poor people—look after a few infants in the Sunday school—do any little thing for Him—if I can only have some smiles from Him, though they are only such as come to menials, I will be glad to get them.

Then, *imitate this woman's penitence*. She bathed His feet with her tears—so you show Him how deep and true is your repentance. It is well not to make a show of repentance to men except by your actions. But let

your whole life and your inmost soul make a show of it before Christ. Wash His feet with your tears. Refresh Him with your contrition.

After washing His feet with her tears, this woman wiped them with the hairs of her head. *Imitate her self-denying service.* Show your love to Jesus in some special way. I do not know what particular form your service may take, but let it be some loving, tender, self-denying work for your dear Lord and Savior. Make a perfect consecration of yourself to Him, as this woman did. May the Holy Spirit help you to do so! But you will never do it unless you have a deep sense of sin, so, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I come back to that point because that is the chief thought I want to leave in your mind. Do you feel sin to be a bitter and hideous thing? And do you feel yourself to be a great sinner? You will never pray so well as when you have a tear in your eye. You will never serve God so well as when you have been standing in the publican's place and saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

I am persuaded that we, ministers, do not preach with effect if we preach as if we were wonderful saints looking down on you, poor sinners. Oh, no! When we are, ourselves, tender in spirit, God helps us to be tender to the humble and contrite among our hearers! Out of our hearts, by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, comes power that helps others to be humble and contrite before God. We are nothing to boast of, so let us never boast. Though we are accepted in the Beloved, and perfect in Christ Jesus, forgiven, saved forever, (blessed be His name!), yet this is no reason for us to lift ourselves up, but to lift Christ up! It is a cause for gratitude, but not for conceit. So we will feel that we have had much forgiven, and will love Him much who has freely forgiven us all our trespasses. May He help us to do so, and His shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 116.

In this Psalm, David tells us his experience with regard to God and with regard to men.

Verse 1. *I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my supplications.* Answered prayer is a good reason for loving God. David was in his right senses and he was, by no means, a fool, yet he declared that God had answered his prayers and, therefore, he loved Him. And this is not only David's experience, but there are thousands of us who can say that God has heard our prayers and, therefore, we love Him. How can we help doing so?

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* If a beggar in the street were to say to us, "Because you have relieved me once, I will beg of you as long as I live," we would not be pleased to hear him say that—but God loves to hear us say that to Him! He wishes us to resolve that because we have been successful in prayer once, we will call upon Him as long as we live! Now David explains the circumstances which led him to pray.

3. *The sorrows of death compassed me.* “I seemed to be shut in—surrounded by a circle of difficulties and terrors! The sorrows of death compassed me.”

3. *And the pains of Hell got hold upon me.* They seemed to seize him as a lion seizes his prey.

3, 4. *I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech You, deliver my soul.* His prayer was a very short one, but very much to the point. Words make not prayer—they often burden it, and prevent it from flying—

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire”

and David, in a few earnest words, expressed that desire—“O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.”

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.* All who have ever tried Him have proved Him to be so—merciful to forgive our sin—merciful to help us in the time of trouble—merciful to strengthen us in the performance of our duty. “Our God is merciful.”

6. *The LORD preserves the simple.* Those who are of a single mind—who have no double meanings and concealed motives—those who know their own ignorance and weakness and who, therefore, dare not trust in themselves.

6. *I was brought low, and He helped me.* David could speak for himself and he did so without the slightest hesitation. Can you, dear Friends, after making trial of God’s love and Grace, say of Him, “I was brought low, and He helped me”? If you can, then bear this testimony to His praise and glory!

7. *Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* Man’s soul is like the dove that Noah sent out from the ark. It flew over the wide waste of waters, seeking rest, but finding none, so, at last, with weary wings, it made its way back to the ark. And, Soul, you will never rest till you come back to your Creator and Redeemer! You may fly to the pleasures and follies of this world but they can furnish no real rest for you. If you would rest, you must come back to your God.

8, 9. *For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.* “Let my fellow creatures think what they will of me, I will not care about their judgments, I will only think of God.” This is the highest, noblest, happiest style of living—to “walk before the Lord.” Why, there are some men who dare not even call their souls their own! They are afraid of their next-door neighbors, or of some great kinsman who sets the fashion for them. But the man who walks before the Lord will think only of the verdict of the Most High and will care nothing about what men will say.

10, 11. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, all men are liars.* He felt that he could not trust them. He had come into such trouble that men would be deceivers even against their own will, for, even when they would have helped him, he found that they could not. He had looked to them as worthy of his confidence and had found them fail him. Therefore he said that as far as reliance upon them was concerned, “All men are liars.” Well, what then?

12. *What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?* “Though men have failed me, the Lord has not. If friends all prove to be false, He is still true. ‘What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?’”

13-15. *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.* It matters not where they die—in the dungeons of the Inquisition, or on the sickbed of poverty and obscurity—God is always with them. The deathbed of a saint is one of the places where God often makes His Glory to be best seen. From the lips of dying men and women some of us have heard strange sayings—sweeter than any that ever fell from poet’s tongue or pen! We have heard words which it was almost unlawful for a man to utter, save only for those who were in the very suburbs of Heaven—almost in Glory—even while they spoke with us on earth. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” Will yours be a saintly death, dear Friend, or will it, on the other hand, be a death of gloom and sorrow? God grant that you may die the death of His people because you have lived the life of His people!

16. *O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds.* How pleased David was to be God’s servant! Yet he says, “You have loosed my bonds.” To serve God is to be free! We are never truly free until we bow our willing necks to the yoke of the Most High. Then we break every chain and snap every fetter. He is the free man whom our God makes free—all the rest are slaves.

17-19. *I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the LORD’S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—411, 606, 538.

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

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

BANKRUPT DEBTORS DISCHARGED

NO. 1739

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And when they had nothing to pay,
he frankly forgave them both.”
Luke 7:42.***

THE two debtors differed very considerably in the amounts which they owed—the one was in arrears 500 pence and the other fifty. There are differences in the guilt of sins and in the degrees of men's criminality. It would be a very unfair and unrighteous thing to say that all men are exactly alike in the extent of their transgression. Some are honest and upright, kind and generous, even though they are but natural men—while others appear to be of a malicious, envious, selfish disposition—and rush into evil, sinning, as it were, with both hands greedily. The man who is moral, sober and industrious is only a fifty-pence debtor as compared with the vicious, drunken blasphemer whose debt is written at 500 pence.

Our Savior recognizes the distinction because it exists and cannot justly be overlooked. There are distinctions among unconverted men, very great distinctions. One of them, a young man, came to Jesus, and he had so many fine traits in his character that the Lord, looking upon him, loved him. But when the Pharisees gathered about Him, our Lord looked round upon them with indignation! The soil, which was none of it yet sown with the good Seed, yet varied greatly, and some of it was honest and good ground before the power of the Holy Spirit came to it. Sinners differ from each other.

But I call your particular notice to the fact that though there was one point of difference in the two debtors, there were *three* points of similarity, for they were both debtors—and so all men have sinned, be it little or be it much! And, secondly, they were both alike, bankrupt, neither of them could meet his debt. The man who owed 50 pence could no more pay than he who owed 500 pence, so that they were both insolvent debtors. But what a mercy it is that they were alike in a *third* point, for, “when they had nothing to pay,” their creditor, “frankly forgave them both”! Oh, my dear Hearers, we are all alike in the first *two* things! Oh that we might be, all of us, alike in this last point, that the Lord our God may grant to every one of us the free remission of sins according to the riches of His Grace through Christ Jesus!

Why should it not be so, since Jesus is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins? There is forgiveness with God! He delights in mercy! He can cast all our sins into the depths of the sea that they may not be mentioned against us any more forever! While we are compelled to go together two-thirds of the road, what a pity it would be that we should be divided in the third portion of it! That first two-thirds of the road is a

very muddy, baggy piece of way and we sorrowfully wade along it in company—all in debt and all of us unable to pay!

But that next part of the road is well-made, smooth and good for travelers—and it leads into the gardens of happiness! Oh that we may traverse it and find the free pardon of God! Oh for free remission for all of us without exception! Why not? May God send it of His great mercy at this good hour! To that end I wish to speak with you, dear Friends, for I believe that the Lord Jesus has something to say to you, and I pray that your hearts may be open to Him, crying gladly, “Master, say on!”

Our first point for consideration is their bankruptcy—“they had nothing to pay.” The second is their free discharge—“He frankly forgave them both.” And the third is the connection between these two things, for that little word, “when,” marks the connection—“*when* they had nothing to pay, He frankly forgave them both.”

I. First, let us think of THEIR BANKRUPTCY. This was their condition. They were unquestionably in debt. If they could have disputed the creditor’s claim, no doubt they would have done so. If they could have pleaded that they were never indebted, or that they had already paid, no doubt they would have been glad to have done so. But they could not raise a question—their debt could not be denied. Another fact was also clear to them, namely, that they had nothing to pay with. No doubt they had made a diligent search. They had turned out their pockets, their cash boxes, their lockers—and they had found nothing—they had looked for their household goods, but these had vanished, piece by piece.

They had nothing at home or abroad that they could dispose of. Things had come to such a pass with them that they had neither stock nor money, nor anything in prospect which they could draw upon—they were brought to the last extremity—reduced to absolute beggary. Meanwhile, their great creditor was pressing them for settlement. That idea lies in the heart of the text. The creditor had evidently brought his overdue accounts and had said to them, “These claims must be met. There must be an end to this state of affairs; your accounts must be discharged.” They were brought to this condition—they must confess the debt and they must also humbly acknowledge that they had nothing to pay it with—the time for payment had come and it found them without a penny. No condition could be more wretched.

So far I have stated the parable and it most truly sets forth the condition of every man who has not come to Jesus Christ and so received the frank forgiveness of his sins. Upon this we will enlarge. We are all, by nature and by practice, plunged in debt—and this is the way in which we came to be so—hear it and mark it well! As God’s creatures we, from the very first, owed to Him the debt of *obedience*. We were bound to obey our Maker! It is He that made us, not we, ourselves, and we were, therefore, bound reverently to *recognize* our Creator, affectionately to *worship* Him and dutifully to *serve* Him. This is an obligation so natural and reasonable that nobody can dispute it!

If you are the creatures of God, there is nothing more right than that you should honor Him. If you daily receive the breath in your nostrils and

the food that you eat from Him, then you are bound to Him by the ties of gratitude and should do His will. But, dear Friends, we have not done His will! We have left undone the things we ought to have done and we have done the things we ought not to have done—and so we have come, in a second sense, into His debt! We now stand liable to penalty, yes, we are already condemned! There is due from us to God, in vindication of His broken Law, both suffering and death—and in the Word of God we find that the righteous penalty for sin is something utterly overwhelming! “Fear Him,” says Christ, “who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.”

Yes, I say unto you, fear Him! Very terrible are the metaphors and symbols by which the Holy Spirit sets forth the misery of a soul upon which the Lord pours forth His fiery indignation! The pain of loss and pain of woe which sin, at last, brings upon guilty men are inconceivable—they are called “the terrors of the Lord.” There is not one among us, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, but owes to God’s Law a debt which eternity cannot fully meet, even though it is crowded with agonizing regrets! A life of forgetfulness of God and breaking of His Law must be recompensed by a future life of punishment! That is where we stand—can any man be at rest while this is his condition before God? We are debtors—the debt is overwhelming—it brings with it consequences tremendous to the last degree! And we are utterly unable to make any amends for this.

If He should meet with us and call us to account, we cannot repay Him one pence of a thousand. We cannot excuse ourselves and we cannot, by any possibility, render to Him His righteous due. If any think they can, let me remind them of this, that to cancel the debt which we owe to *God* we must pay it all! God demands, *righteously* demands from us the keeping of His *entire* Law. He tells us that he that is guilty in one point is guilty in all points—for God’s Law is like a fair vase of alabaster, lovely in its entirety—but if it is chipped in any part, it may not be presented in His court. The least flaw in it mars its perfection and destroys its value. A *perfect* obedience to a perfect Law is that which is required by the justice of the Most High—and is there any one of us who can render it, or who can attempt to pay the penalty due for *not* rendering it?

Our inability to obey comes of our own fault and is part of our crime. Ah me! May none of us ever have to bear the penalty! To be banished from His Presence and from the glory of His power! To be cast away from all hope and light and joy forever! Why, there are those at this moment in the abyss of woe who have for *thousands* of years endured the heavy hand of justice and yet their debt remains unpaid, even now, for they have yet to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ at the Last Day and answer for their transgressions! It is certain that to meet the whole payment is impossible! Neither in the form of obedience, nor in the form of penalty may we ever hope to pay it—it would be all in vain to make the attempt.

Remember, too, that if there is anything that we can do for God in the way of obedience, it is already due to Him. All that I can do, if I love God with all my heart and soul and strength, and my neighbor as myself, throughout the rest of my life, is already due to God—I shall but be dis-

charging new duties as they occur—how will this affect *old* disobediences? In what way can I cleanse myself from my former stains by the resolve that I will not be defiled with fresh ones? If your hands are blood red, can you make them clean by the mere resolution that you will not plunge them, again, into the dye? You know it is not so—past sin cannot be removed by future carefulness—

***“Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal, no respite know.
All for sin could not atone,
Christ must save, and Christ alone.”***

We have nothing with which to meet our liabilities because everything that we can possibly earn or obtain in the future is already due—so we have nothing left unmortgaged, nothing of our own.

Moreover, the debt is immense and incalculable! Fifty pence is but a poor representation of what the most righteous person owes. Five hundred pence is but an insignificant sum compared with the transgressions of the greater offenders. Oh, Friends, when I think of my life, it seems to be like the sea, made up of innumerable waves of sin; or like the seashore, constituted of sands that cannot be weighed nor counted! My faults are utterly innumerable and each one deserving eternal death! Our sins, our heavy sins, sins against light and knowledge; our foul sins, our repeated sins, our aggravated sins, our sins against our parents, our sins against all our relationships, our sins against our God, our sins with the body, our sins with the mind, our sins of forgetfulness, our sins of thought, our sins of imagination—who can make them right? Who knows the *number* of his trespasses?

Now, to think that we can ever meet such a debt is, indeed, to bolster up ourselves with a notion that is utterly absurd—we have nothing with which to pay! Moreover, I go a little further. Even if these sins were somewhat within reach to pay back—if we were not indebted for the future as to all we can do, yet what is there that we can do? Does not Paul say of himself that he was not sufficient to think *anything* of himself? Did not the Lord tell His Israel of old, “From Me is your fruit found”? Did not Jesus say to His disciples and even to His Apostles, “Without Me you can do nothing”? Then, O bankrupt Sinner, what is there *good* that you can do? You must, first of all, get the good work from God before you can perform it!

It is true you are to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” but what must come *first*? Read the passage, “For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” If the Lord does not work salvation in us, we cannot work it out! Every good thing in man is the work of God, the produce of the Spirit of God operating upon the heart and mind. Men are dead in trespasses and sins; dead to all that is holy and acceptable with God and life, itself, is a *gift*. What, then, can sinners do? Their bankruptcy is utter and entire—and this is true of every man that is still out of Christ—he is a debtor and he has nothing to pay. This being the case, I want to spend a minute in noticing certain temptations to which all bankrupt sinners are subject.

One of these is to try and forget their spiritual estate altogether. Some of you here, today, have never given serious thought to your souls and to your condition before God. It is an unpleasant subject. You suspect that it would be still more unpleasant if you looked into it. You want *amusement*, something to while away the time because you do not care to examine the state of your heart before God. Solomon exhorts the diligent man to know the state of his flocks and look well to his herds. But he that is careless and idle would rather leave such enquiries and let things go as they please. The man who is going backward in business has no pleasure in taking stock. "Oh," he says, "don't bring me my books; I shall not sleep at night if I look into them." He knows that he is sinking lower and lower and will soon be a ruined man—and the only way in which he can endure his life is to drive dull care away by drink, or company, or idle amusement.

He labors to beguile the hours that he may conceal from himself his true condition. But what a fool he is! Would it not be infinitely wiser if he would look things in the face and have it out and know his actual state? Such ignorance as he chooses is not bliss to a right-hearted man, but suspense and misery. I have often prayed this prayer—"Lord, let me know the very worst of my case," for I do not wish to entertain a hope that will, at last, deceive me. Disappointment will be bitter in proportion as false hope was sweet. This is the temptation of the bankrupt soul—to shut its eyes to the unwelcome Truths of God. The ostrich is fabled, when hunted, to bury its head in the sand, and conceive that the hunter is gone when he is no longer seen. But he is *not* gone—the unseen danger is quite as real as if it stared us in the face. However forgetful *you* may be, God does not forget your sins!

Another temptation to a man in this condition is to make as good a show as he can. A man who is very near bankruptcy is often noticed for the dash he cuts. What a horse he drives as he comes up to business! What fashionable parties he gives! Just so. He desires to keep up his credit as long as he can. He is going to make a smash of it, by-and-by, but for a season he assumes the airs of my lord and everybody near him imagines that he has money enough and to spare! The governor of a besieged city threw loaves of bread over the wall to the besiegers, to make them believe that the citizens had such large supplies that they could afford to throw them away—yet they were starving all the while! There are some men of like manners—they have nothing that they can offer to God, but they exhibit a glittering self-righteousness! Oh, they have been so *good*, such superior people, so praiseworthy from their youth up!

They never did anything much amiss—there may be a little speck here and there upon their garments—but that will brush off when it is dry. They make a fair show in the flesh with morality and formality and a smattering of generosity. Besides, they profess to be *religious*—they attend worship services and pay their quota of the expenses. Who could find any fault with such good people? Just so, this profession is the fine horse and trap with which they, too, are cutting a dash just before going through the courts! There is nothing at all in you and there never was, if you are as nature has made you—why, then, do you try to brazen it out and make

yourself to seem something when you are nothing? You may, by this means, deceive *yourself*, but certainly you will not deceive *God*!

Another temptation which lurks in the way of a bankrupt sinner is that of making promises of what he will do. Men in debt are generally very promising men—they will pay next week for certain, but when next week comes, they meant the next week further on—and then payment shall be doubly certain! Yet they put in no appearance, even then, or, if they do, they give an IOU. Is not that a precious document? Is it not as good as the money itself? They evidently think so, for they feel quite as easy as if they had really paid the debt! But when the IOU falls due, what then? It falls, never to rise again! Ah me, an IOU is often just a lie with a stamp on it! So will debtors go on as long as they can. This is what every sinner does before he becomes cleared by the Sovereign Grace of God.

He cries, “I mean to do better.” Never mind. Tell us no more what you *mean* to do, but do it! To promise and vow so falsely is only adding to your sins! “Oh! But you know I do not intend to go on in this way always! It is a long lane that has no turning. I shall pull up short, one of these days, and then you will see.” What shall we see? What we shall see will not be much! We shall see the dew of promise disappear and the morning cloud of resolution pass away. Dear Sir, you cannot raise our hopes. Neither God nor man will trust you—you have promised these 20 years and in no one year have you made a real move in the right direction! You have not lied unto men, only, but unto God—and how will you answer for it? Know you not that every promise that you make to God which you do not keep is a great addition to your transgressions and helps to fill up the measure of your iniquities? Give up the way of lying, I pray you!

Another temptation is always to ask for more time—as if this was all that was needed. When the debtor, in another parable, was arrested, he said to his creditor, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.” We cannot pay any of our debt, today, and dote upon tomorrow. Yes, it does seem such a relief to get a little longer time—somehow a vague shadowy hope seems to pervade the months to come. The sinner cries, “Go your way this time! When I have a convenient season, I will call for you.” It is not convenient just now, but wait a little bit—a suitable hour will come. With this temptation, Satan has destroyed multitudes of men, tempting them to ask for more time, instead of coming up to the mark at once and asking for immediate pardon.

What are the fabled virtues of tomorrow? Why do men dote upon the unknown future? To an immediate decision I would press you at this moment and may God, by His Divine Spirit, deliver you as a bird from the hand of the fowler, that you may no longer procrastinate and waste your life in disobedient delay! This being the temptation, let me hint to those of you who are bankrupt, what your wisdom is. It is your wisdom to face the business of your soul. Your soul-matters are the most important things you will ever have on hand, for when your wealth must be left and your estate shall see you no more—and when your body is dead—your soul will still be living in eternal happiness or endless woe! Therefore, do not neg-

lect your state in reference to God. It is the most important matter! Give it the first place.

Settle this business before you attend to anything else. Take care that you face it like an honest man and not as one who makes the best of a bad story! It may be bad, yet the best thing you can do is to go right through with it in truth and soberness before the Lord. Hope lies that way. Do not let your danger be concealed like a thief who hides in the good man's pantry till the hour to rob his house. Suffer not the sparks to smolder where they may consume you all! Quench the fire before you sleep! When you face the matter, be very true and sincere with yourself and with God because you are not dealing with creditors who may be cheated, but you are dealing with GOD who knows the secret thoughts and intents of your heart.

Before God nothing but truth can stand! The painted hypocrite is spied out immediately. The Lord takes off all masks and men stand before Him as they really are—not as they would seem to be—so be true with yourself! Do not take your pen and write down 50 if you owe 100, but put the fair number down. Tricks and falsehoods had better be put away, once and for all, when you deal with God. One thing more—it will be your wisdom to give up all attempts to pay—you have nothing to pay with! Do not delude yourself into the idea that you will pay, one day, for you never will. Do not make the slightest attempt at paying, for you cannot do it! But take quite another course—plead absolute poverty and appeal to mercy! Say, “Lord, I *have* nothing, I *am* nothing, I can *do* nothing. I must throw myself upon Your Grace.”

Of this Grace I am now going to speak. May I so speak as to encourage you who are bankrupts to come to the Lord, that He may frankly forgive you all.

II. Our second head is THEIR FREE DISCHARGE. “He frankly forgave them both.” What a blessing they obtained by facing the matter! These two poor debtors, when they went into the office, were trembling from head to foot, for they had nothing with which to pay and were deeply involved. But look! They come out with light hearts, for the debt is all disposed of; the bills are receipted; the records are destroyed! Even thus the Lord has blotted out the handwriting that was against us and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross. In this free discharge I admire, first of all, the goodness of the great Creditor. What a gracious heart He had! What kindness He showed! He said, “Poor souls, you can never repay Me, but you need not be cast down because of it, for I freely cancel your debts.” Oh, the goodness of it! Oh, the largeness of the heart of God!

I was reading of Caesar the other day. He had been at fierce war with Pompey and, at last, he conquered him. And when he conquered him, he found among the spoil Pompey's private cabinet in which were contained letters from the various noblemen and senators of Rome who had sided with him. In many a letter there was fatal evidence against the most eminent Romans. But what did Caesar do? He destroyed every document! He would have no knowledge of his enemies, for he freely forgave them and wished to know no more. In this, Caesar proved that he was fit to govern

the nation. But look at the splendor of God when He puts all our sins into one cabinet and then destroys the whole! If the sins of His people are sought for, they cannot, now, be found! He will never mention them against us any more. Oh, the goodness of the infinite God, whose mercy endures forever! Bow before that goodness with joy!

But, then, observe the freeness of it—"He frankly forgave them both." They did not stand there and say, "Oh, good Sir, we cannot pay," and plead and beg, as for their lives. But he freely said to them, "You cannot pay, but I can forgive. You ought never to have got into my debt and you ought not to have broken your promises to me; but behold, I make an end of all this weary business—I freely blot out all your obligations!" Did not this open a fountain in their eyes? Did they not hasten home to their wives and children and tell them that they were out of debt, for the beloved creditor had forgiven it all most freely?

This is a fair picture of the Grace of God! When a poor bankrupt sinner comes to Him, He says, "I forgive you freely—your offense is all gone. I do not want you to earn a pardon by your tears, prayers and anguish of soul. You have not to make Me merciful, for I am already merciful and My dear Son, Jesus Christ, has made such a propitiation that I can be just and yet can forgive you all this debt. Therefore, go in peace." Furthermore, this debt was fully discharged. The creditor did not say, "Come, my good fellow, I will take 50 percent off the account if you find the remainder." As they had nothing with which to pay, they would not have been a bit the better if he had reduced them 90 percent! If he had reduced the debts by half, the one would have owed 250 and the other 25, but their cases would have been hopeless, since they had not a farthing of their own.

Now the Lord, when He blots out His people's sin, leaves no trace of it remaining. My own persuasion is that when our Lord Jesus died upon the Cross, He made an end of all the sins of all His people and made full and effectual atonement for the whole of those who shall believe in Him. I can sing with all my heart—

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

All the sin of Believers has been, once and for all, carried into the wilderness of oblivion by our great Scapegoat and none shall ever find a sin with which to condemn one soul of the chosen band. There is no debt left against a Believer—no, not one single pennyworth of debt remains upon the score! Does not the Spirit of God Himself ask the question, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "The Lord has frankly forgiven their debt and He has not done so in *part*, but as a whole.

As for our sins, "the depths have covered them." "There is not one of them left." Hallelujah! Observe that it was a very effectual forgiveness, too. The only person that can forgive a debt is he to whom the debt is due. Only God can forgive sin, seeing it is a debt to Him. What think you of those who are said to be able to forgive you for a shilling? Why, I say that to pay them their fee would be eleven-penny, three farthings and another farthing thrown away! When you have got *their* forgiveness what is the good of

it? Suppose I were to forgive you for injuries done by you to the Queen—of what value would *my* forgiveness be? He against whom I have transgressed is the only one that can pronounce my pardon! And if he absolves me, how effectual is the sentence!

When the creditor said, “I freely forgive you both,” why, the deed was done! His lips had power! He had finished the debt by his word. And so when the Lord Jesus Christ is looked unto by the eye of faith, there comes a voice from His dear wounds which cries to the poor trembling bankrupt sinner, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven. I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities.” What an effectual pardon it is! How it charms the heart and lulls every fear to rest! He frankly, He fully, He freely, He effectually forgives! And I believe that when this is done, I may add another adjective—it is an *eternal* discharge!

That creditor could never summon those debtors again for debts which he had remitted. He could never think of such a thing with any show of justice. He had frankly forgiven them and they were forgiven. God does not play fast and loose with His creatures—forgive them and then punish them. I never shall believe in God’s loving a man, today, and casting Him away tomorrow! The gifts and calling of God are without repentance on His part. Justification is not an act which can be reversed and followed with damnation. No! No! “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.”—

***“If sin is pardoned I’m secure,
Death has no sting beside
The Law gave sin its damning power,
But Christ, my Ransom, died.”***

By His death, our Redeemer effectually swept away sin once and for all, and He removed all the curse of the Law. In the offering of bullocks and lambs there was a continual remembrance made of sin, for the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin. But the Apostle writes, “This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down by the right hand of God,” because His work was effectually and eternally done.

Only one more remark on this point—this frank forgiveness applied to *both* the debtors—“He frankly forgave them both.” The man that owed only 50 pence needed a free discharge as truly as the debtor who owed 500, for though he was not so deep in the mire, yet he was as truly in the slough. If a man was lying in prison for debt, as men used to do under our old laws, if he only owed 50 pounds, he was shut within walls just as closely as the greater debtor who owed 50,000—and he could no more get out without the payment or forgiveness of his smaller liability than the bigger debtor could. A bird held by a string is as much a prisoner as a bull that is tied by a rope!

Now, you good people who have always tried to do your duty and are numbered with the 50-pence debtors, you must confess that you have become somewhat indebted to God by committing a measure of sins. Take note that you cannot be saved except by the free forgiveness of God through the precious blood of Christ. The 50-pence debtor must obtain his discharge by Grace alone. It is also a most blessed thing to perceive that he forgave the 500-pence debtor with equal freeness. Perhaps I have some here, men and women, who have never made any pretense of being

good—who from their childhood have gone from bad to worse. There is a possibility of free and instantaneous forgiveness for you at this moment. You that are over head and ears in debt to God can be freely forgiven by the same Lord who forgives the smaller debtors!

When a man has his pen in his hand and is writing receipts, it takes him no more trouble to write a receipt for 500 pounds than it does for a bill of 50—the same signature will suffice! And when the Lord has the pen of His Spirit in His hand and He is about to write upon a conscience the peace which comes of reconciliation, He can write upon one as well as upon another. You with a little bill, bring it here, that infinite Grace may write upon it, “CANCELLED!” You with a more weighty account, come and place it near that gracious right hand, for though your bill is long and heavy, the hand of Infinite Love can write, “CANCELLED,” in a moment! My joy overflows at having such a Gospel to preach to you—whatever your guilt, my gracious God is ready to forgive you for Jesus’ sake, because He delights in mercy!

III. I now beg your very special attention to the last point which is—THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS BANKRUPTCY AND THIS FREE DISCHARGE. It is said, “When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.” There is a time when pardon comes and that time is when self-sufficiency goes! If any person in this place has, in his own conscience, come to this point—that he feels he has nothing to pay—he has come to the point at which God is ready to forgive him! He that will acknowledge his debt and confess his own incapacity to meet it, shall find that God frankly blots it out! The Lord will never forgive us until we are brought to the starvation of pride and the death of boasting. A sense of spiritual bankruptcy shows that a man has become *thoughtful*—and this is essential to salvation.

How can we believe a thoughtless person to be a saved man? If we so think about our state as to mourn our sin and feel its wickedness—and if we have made a close search into our hearts and lives and find that we have no merit and no might—then we are prepared in all thoughtfulness to say, “In the Lord I have righteousness and strength.” Must there not be serious thought before we can hope for mercy? Would you have God save us while we are asleep, while we are giddy, frivolous, trifling and without concern about our sin? Surely that would be giving a premium to folly! God acts not so. He will have us *know* the seriousness of our danger, otherwise we would treat the whole matter with lightness and miss the moral effect of pardon—and He would be robbed of His Glory.

Next, when we come to feel our bankruptcy, we *then* make an honest confession. And to that confession a promise is given—“He that confesses his sin shall find mercy.” The two debtors had *acknowledged* their debts and they had also openly confessed, though it must have gone against the grain a bit, that they could not pay. They humbled themselves before their creditor and then he said, “I frankly forgive you.” If one of these debtors had bounced and bragged, “Oh, we can pay,” in all probability he would have been sent to prison. As for you, poor Trembler, I do not know where you are this morning, but here is comfort for you—when you go to God in

your chamber and cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, for I am guilty, and I cannot justify myself before You, nor offer any excuse to You"—then it is that He will say, "Be of good cheer! I have put away your sin; you shall not die."

When you have nothing to pay and confess your insolvency, the debt shall be wiped out. When you are brought to your worst, you shall see the Lord at His best! It is in their utter destitution that men value a discharge. If God were to give His mercy to every man at once, without his ever having had any sense of sin at all, why, men would count it cheap and think nothing of it! "God is merciful," is a common saying everywhere. And it is such a bit of valueless talk with them that they let it roll glibly out as if it were no matter. They do not worship Him for His mercy or serve Him for His Grace. They say, "Oh, God is merciful," and then they go on to sin worse than ever! The idea has no effect upon their hearts or lives. They have no esteem for that mercy of which they speak so freely. So the Lord takes care that the sinner shall *know* his need of mercy by feeling the pinch of conscience and the terror of the Law.

If I may so speak, He dispatches the sheriff and makes the soul suffer stress by convincing the man of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. The Lord puts the thought of execution into the heart and *then* it is, when the poor creature cries, "I have nothing to pay with," that free discharge is given by the Lord and heartily prized by him to whom it comes! When our account is long and heavy, it is a blessed thing to see the Lord write, "Cancelled," and to behold the whole mountain of debt swallowed up in the sea of love! Christ is precious when sin is bitter. Is it not wise on God's part that the canceling of the debt shall come just when we have nothing to pay and, therefore, are prepared to prize a free forgiveness? Under conviction, a poor soul sees the reality of sin and of pardon!

My dear Hearer, you will never believe in the reality of forgiveness till you have felt the reality of sin! I remember when I felt the burden of sin and thought, but a child, my heart failed me for anguish and I was brought very low. Sin was no bugbear to scare me—it was a grim reality—as a lion, it tore me in pieces. And now, today, I know the reality of pardon—it is no fancy, no dream—for my inmost soul feels its power! I know that my sins are forgiven and I rejoice because of that belief, but I should never have known the real truth of this happy condition if I had not felt the oppressive load of sin upon the conscience. I could not afford to *play* at conversion, for sin was an awful fact in my soul. Our heavenly Father does not wish us to use lightness in a matter concerning which Jesus shed His blood—and so He brings us into trouble of soul—and afterwards into a vivid realization of Free Grace.

He lets the whip fall on our shoulders until we bleed—and this makes us weary of the slavery of sin. He sets Conscience and the Law upon us—and these two thrust us into the inner dungeon and make our feet fast in the stocks. All this prepares us for the delivering power which shakes the prison walls and loosens our bonds—and for the tender love which washes our stripes and sets meat before us! I believe that the Lord will give us our freedom when we have got to our last farthing and not till then, be-

cause only then do we look to the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, my dear Friends, as long as we have anything else to look to, we will never look to Christ! That blessed port into which no ship did ever run in a storm without finding a sure haven is shunned by all your gallant vessels—they would rather put into any port along the coast of self-deceit than make for the harbor which is marked out by the two lighthouses of Free Grace and dying love!

As long as a man can scrape the meal barrel and find a little in it; as long as he can hold up the oil cruse and it drips, if it only yields a drop in a week, he will never come to Christ for heavenly provision! As long as he has one rusty counterfeit farthing hidden away in the corner of his till, the sinner will never accept the riches of redeeming love! But when it is all up over him—when he has nothing in the parlor, nothing in the kitchen, nothing in the cellar—when there is neither stick nor stock left, *then* he prizes Jesus and His salvation! We break to make! We are emptied to be filled! When we cannot give, God can forgive! If any of you have any goodness of your own, you will perish forever! If you have *anything* you can trust to of your own, you will be lost as sure as you are living men and women!

But if you are reduced to sore extremity and God's fierce wrath seems to burn against you—then, not only may you have mercy, but mercy is yours already!—

***“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own
We get no full discharge.
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have naught to pay
Our Lord forgives us all.”***

Blessed are you poor, for you shall be rich! Blessed are you hungry, for you shall be fed! Blessed are you that are empty, for you shall be filled! But woe unto you that are rich and are increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and boast of your own goodness! Christ has nothing to do with *you* and we have nothing to preach to you except this—“They that are whole need not a physician.” The heavenly Surgeon did not come to save those who have no need of saving. Let those who are sick prick up their ears and hear with delight, for the Physician is come with a special eye to them. Are you a sinner? Then Christ is the Savior of sinners! Join hands with Him by faith and the work is done—you are saved forever! God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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

LOVE'S COMPETITION

NO. 2127

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING,
FEBRUARY 2, 1890.**

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

***“Tell Me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged.”
Luke 7:42, 43.***

I REMEMBER seeing, somewhere or other, as a sign upon an inn, the words, “The First and Last.” I do not know what that may happen to be among men, but I know that love is God’s first and last. It is there that He begins with us in mercy—“We love Him, because He first loved us.” His love at the first springs up like a fountain in the midst of a desert and freely flows along the wilderness to the unworthy sons of men. In the end, the result of that love is that men love Him—they cannot help it any more than the rock can prevent the echo when the voice falls upon it. Love is not a creature of law—it comes not on demand—it must be free or not at all.

It has its reasons why it springs up in our hearts, but it is not a mercenary thing which can be procured at such-and-such a price. It is not a matter of argument—it is not of itself an act performed as a matter of duty. Love is a duty, certainly, but it does not come to us that way—it comes to us like a roe or a young hart, over every mountain and hill, leaping and bounding. It comes not as a heavy burden dragged along an iron way. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be despised. Men do not make themselves love by a course of calculation—they are overtaken with it and carried away by its power.

When godly men consider and enjoy the great love of God to them, they begin to love God in return, just as the bud, when it feels the sunshine, opens to it of its own accord. Love to God is a sort of natural consequence which follows from a sight and sense of the love of God to us. I think it is Aristotle who said that it is impossible for a person to know that he is loved without feeling some degree of love in return. I do not know how that may be for I am no philosopher, but I am sure that it is so with those who taste the love of God. As love is the first blessing coming from God to us, so it is the last return from us to God—He comes to us loving—we go home to Him loving.

I. I intend to keep to my text and handle it red hot, by first noticing that IT IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT PARDONED SINNERS WILL LOVE. “Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?” It is *implied* that the two debtors who had been frankly forgiven would both *love* their

benefactor. The question was not, "Which of them will love him?" but, "Which of them will love him *most*?" So, then, I say, it is taken for granted in the text that those who are pardoned will love him who has so freely pardoned them. And this, first, because *it seems most natural that where kindness is received gratitude should be felt.*

This is so generally admitted that gratitude is found among the lowest and worst of mankind. "If you love them who love you, what thanks have you? For sinners also love those that love them." It is man-like to return good for good and ingratitude is looked upon most rightly as one of the basest of the vices. Why we find gratitude not only in men and women—intelligent creatures—but we find it in the very beasts of the field! "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib."

A dog that has received benefits from you will be attached to you and by every possible means will endeavor to show his affection! The ancients had many rare stories of the gratitude of wild beasts. You remember that of Androcles and the lion. The man was condemned to be torn to pieces by beasts, but a lion, to which he was cast, instead of devouring him, licked his feet because at some former time Androcles had extracted a thorn from the grateful creature's foot. We have heard of an eagle that so loved a boy with whom he had played that, when the child was sick, the eagle sickened, too. And when the child slept, this wild, strange bird of the air would sleep, but only then. And when the child awoke, the eagle awoke. When the child died, the bird died, too.

You remember that there is a picture in which Napoleon is represented as riding over the battlefield and he stops his horse, as he sees a slain man with his favorite dog lying upon his bosom doing what he can to defend his poor dead master. Even the great man-slayer paused at such a sight! There is gratitude among the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. And surely, if we receive favors from God and do not feel love to Him in return, we are worse than brute beasts! And so the Lord, in that pathetic verse in Isaiah, pleads against us, "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." If we receive favors from God, it is but natural that we should love Him in return. Alas, that many should be so unnatural, so false to every noble instinct, so dead to the gratitude which goodness deserves!

Gratitude should surely arise when the benefit is surpassingly great. Surely love must spring up with the greatest force and freedom when favors are far above the common run of blessings—when these favors are not such as are confined to time and to the body, but when they reach to eternity and bless the soul. When favors are of such weight as the forgiveness of sin and the salvation of the soul from wrath to come I would stand and sing to the fountain of the heart as Israel did in the wilderness, "Spring up, O well; sing you unto it: The princes dug the well."

And has not our great Prince who has been struck upon the cheek dug this well by giving us, through His free Grace and dying love, to taste of full remission and of complete pardon of our guilt? Shall we not, *must* we not love the Redeemer in return? I call common ingratitude worse than

brutish—but to have sin forgiven and not to love God—in this case where shall I go for a word? I must call it devilish. It were worse than infernal to receive a deliverance from guilt so great, from punishment so justly terrible and not to love the Lord, through whom it is given to us! Oh, love the Lord, whose mercy endures forever! If, indeed, you have tasted of that mercy, you *must* love Him. It cannot be otherwise—you are bound to God by bonds of love and these draw you, by a secret but irresistible force, to love the Lord in return!

And moreover, not only is this natural and necessary, because of the greatness of the mercy, but *the Grace of God always takes care that wherever pardon is given love shall be ensured*—for the Holy Spirit co-operates with the work of Christ. And if we are cleansed from the stain of our former evil through the blood of Christ, we are renewed and changed in the spirit of our minds by the Holy Spirit. He does not take away our sin and then leave us that old heart of stone, insensible, ungrateful—but as He gives us a garment of righteousness He gives us a heart of flesh. The Spirit works in us a degree of love at the same time that He creates the first look of faith.

And soon our faith increases and then He works in us more and more of that love to Christ by which we cling to Him. This love works in us a hatred of sin and a spirit of obedience whereby we yield ourselves up to the service of Him who has bought us with His precious blood. You know that it is so, Brothers and Sisters. Where pardon comes, delight in God comes with it. You know that God does not divide His gifts and give justification to one and sanctification to another—the Covenant is *one*—and the blessings of the Covenant are threaded on the one string of infinite wisdom, so that when there comes the washing in the blood, there comes also a cleansing with water by the Word.

The Holy Spirit washes us from the power of sin as the blood of Christ cleanses us from the guilt of sin. Where sin is forgiven, there must be love to the God who forgave it because the Spirit of God makes sure work upon the heart of the Believer—and one of his first works is love. I need not argue this further because all Christians know this as a matter of fact—*where there is no love there is no pardon*. You cannot be pardoned and not love God as a result of His loving forgiveness! What was the very first emotion that you and I felt when we had a sense of guilt removed? We felt joy for our own sake, but immediately after, or at the same instant, we felt such intense gratitude to God that we loved Him beyond all expression!

We have sometimes been half afraid that we do not love God as much, now, as we did at that moment, though I trust that the fear is groundless. But at that moment there was nothing too hot or too heavy for us to have attempted on behalf of Him who had taken the burden from off our shoulders. We would have said at that moment, “Here am I, send me,” if it had been to prison, or to death! Oh, the joy of those first days! They are rightly called the days of our espousals. And what love we had then! We were willing to leave all for Christ’s sake. We snapped fond connections at His

command. Truly, like Israel of old, we would have gone after our God into the wilderness—yes, after our Savior into the grave!

Nothing could have kept us back or have caused us to wander from Him, then. Do you not remember how you used to long for Sundays to hear of Jesus and praise His name with His people? If there was a week-night service, you were always there, though no one persuaded you to go. Then, any corner in the Meeting House was good enough for you. Now, perhaps, you need a very soft cushion to sit upon. You sat, then, in a straight-backed pew and did not know it!

Now, you need very tender dealing and the preacher must mind that he interests you by illustrations and poetical allusions. But then the Gospel, itself, interested you! And however dull the preacher might have been, you were so willing to hear about Jesus and to know of His love, that there you were—eager to hear the most humble evangelist! Wisdom did not need to press you into her house, for you were earnestly waiting at the posts of her doors, glad to hear even the footsteps of those who came in and out. Oh, those were brave days! I hope that we have braver days now. But, for certain, as sure as we knew our pardon, we felt that we loved the Lord with all our hearts.

Now I want to make a little practical use of this inference from the text. That pardoned souls love their pardoning God is a great Truth and a very solemn one in its bearings upon us at this time, for there are persons in this house of prayer who were never forgiven—and we are sure of that unhappy fact since they do not love God. Their sins must be still upon them because they have not the token of pardon, inasmuch as they have no love to Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, listen to me, you that do not love God and yet, perhaps, dream that you are saved! Are there not some here that seldom think of God—who do not care if a day, a week, a month, a year should pass over their heads—and yet they have no thought of the Almighty Judge of all the earth?

They receive His mercies but they do not thank Him! They feel His power but they do not fear Him! “God is not in all their thoughts.” O my Hearer, if this is your case, you do not love Him—for if we love any person we are sure to think of him! Thoughts fly that way in which the heart moves. I do not say that we are *always* thinking of those we love—but I do say that our thoughts will fly that way when they can. You know at sunset where the crows live. Perhaps all day long you are unable to tell for they may fly from one plowed field to another to find their meat. But watch when night comes on and when they are free from other obligations and wish to find rest—they fly straight to those tall trees where they have built their nests.

A man may, in the busy time of the day, think about 50 things—but let him be free from pressing labor and care—and he returns to his love as birds fly to their nests at night! His thought flies to Jesus because Jesus is the home of his heart. If your hearts love God your thoughts will run to Him as the rivers run to the sea. Yes, and often in the very middle of business the man who loves his God will be speaking with Him! He may

not interrupt the conversation and those in the shop may not know what is on his mind, but his heart will be up above the mountains where the angels dwell, communing with the great Father of lights! But where there is no thought of God, there is no love to Him.

Are there not many who never do anything for God? He has made them and He preserves them, and yet they never make Him any return by way of willing action designed to give Him pleasure. I may put it to some of you—did you ever do *anything* distinctly for God in all your lives? What? Not so much as once? Ah, me, a man so curiously made by the Divine finger—displaying infinite skill in every blood vessel, nerve and muscle that is necessary for his life and motion—and yet he has never thought of the Great One who has set all this machinery in motion and keeps it in action! To live only by God and yet to live without Him! Strange!

Can there exist a man who never does anything for his God who is constantly doing so much for him? If so, I would say to such a one—“You have never been pardoned for you do not love God since you never think of Him and do nothing for Him.” Some men evidently do not love God for they have no care about anything that concerns Him. They do not refrain from sin because sin would grieve God. The idea of grieving God, perhaps, has not crossed their minds—so they vex the Holy Spirit most thoughtlessly. But, ah, if you love anyone, you will not likely cause him grief—you will not do the evil thing which he hates.

He that loves God will often have a check put upon him and feel that he cannot do this great wickedness and sin against God. To sin against *God* is the greatest of sin and the *essence* of sin. The venom of sin lies there. This makes sin so exceedingly sinful that it is against the God of Love. But if you never felt that, then you do not love Him and, for certain, you are not forgiven. Look at others—they do not love God, for they do *not care for His house* where His people meet. They seldom come to the meeting for worship, and if they come it is from some other motive than to meet with God. They do not care for *His day*. Sundays are very dreary in London, so they say. There is nothing to interest them for they have no interest in the great Father, or His Incarnate Son—they have no desire to hear of Him or to praise Him, or to pray to Him.

They do not care for *His Bible* though it is a world of delights and comforts. The Bible is perfumed with the love of God but they perceive not its fragrance. The Savior's face is to be seen reflected in almost every page and yet some think that the Bible is more dull than an old almanac and though they must keep it in their house—for it is respectable to have a copy of it—yet to read it and to read it with *pleasure*—why, that has never happened to them! Nor is there any likelihood that it ever will unless they get made anew. Nor do they care for *God's people*. In fact, they like a quiet joke against Christian people and sometimes, if they can see faults in them—and, oh, how readily they may!—they report those faults with considerable exaggerations and feel pleased to eat up the faults of God's people as they eat bread!

Lack of love to the children argues lack of love to their Father. "He that loves Him that begat, loves him also that is begotten of Him." We know that we love God when we love His children. But if in your heart there is no such love to His children, to His Book, to His day, to His house, or to His service, you may rest quite certain, my Friend, that your guilt still clings to you. You are not pardoned and God will require that which is past and call you to account. For every secret thing He will bring you into judgment and for every idle word that you have spoken He will take reckoning of you.

Ah, how sad it is that when I am longing to speak joyously about the love that arises out of pardoned sin, I am compelled, for pity's sake, to turn aside to give a warning to many who, having no love to God, prove by that fact that they have never been forgiven! So I leave the first point. It is supposed in the text and taken for granted that all pardoned sinners will love Him who has pardoned them.

II. But now, secondly, IT IS SUGGESTED IN THE TEXT THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN THE DEGREES OF LOVE TO GOD. "Tell me therefore, which of them will love him *most*." These words evidently show that some persons love God more than others and that, albeit there must be a sincere love to God in all pardoned sinners, yet there is not the same degree of love. Love is evidently a Divine Grace which is not stereotyped and cast in a mold so as to be the same in every case and at every time.

Love is a thing of life—it is, therefore, a thing of growth. It is certainly so in our own selves. There was a time when we did not love God so much as we do now. And I grieve to say that there are even now times when we do not love God so much as we once did, for we grow cold and backsliding. Love is not like a piece of cast iron, fixed and set. It grows and has its times of budding, flowering and leaf-shedding. It is like a fire—at one time it may burn low and at another time it may be blown up to a very vehement heat. Love rises and falls—I speak not of God's love to *us*—but of *our* love to God. It has its ups and downs, its summers and its winters, its flood tides and its ebbs. And if we find a change in love in the *same* heart, we are not at all astonished that it should differ in different hearts!

Besides, we know that there are differences in love because *there are differences in all the other Divine Graces*. Faith—some men have much faith. God be thanked that there are men of strong faith still on the face of the earth! But there are others who have a faith which, though a true faith, is a very weak one. It is a trembling faith. It cannot walk the waves with Peter, but it can sink with him and it can cry out for deliverance. Faith, in some Christians, seems to be a very feeble affair. As I said the other day, they hardly know whether it is faith or unbelief. Their cry is, "Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief," as if they had made a mistake in calling it faith at all for it was so mixed with unbelief.

It is not always such an infant Grace, for there are strong Believers who have turned to fight the armies of the aliens—men who have borne their cross without impatience and their testimony without cowardice—men who have conquered sin and lived in holiness and brought glory to God.

Faith, like a ladder, has its lower and its higher rounds. Faith has its dawning, its noon, its shade. We are sure that it is so, for we have observed it in ourselves and seen it in others. We have seen it great and we have seen it little. The practical point I would reach is just this. *Let us look, first of all, to our love in its sincerity.* What if my love may not be compared with yours as to degree? Yet the Lord grant that I may truly love Him.

Peter could not say that he loved Christ more than others, but he did say, "You know all things; You know that I love You." A little pearl is a pearl as much as a great one, though every one of us would sooner have the greater pearl. There is the Queen's image on a four-penny piece as certainly as there is upon the sovereign—though we would all prefer the golden coin! There is the image of God on all His people's faith and love, whether great or little. The main thing with the coin is to be sure that it is genuine metal. So, if love is *real* love, that is the main point. Do you love the Lord with all your heart? If so, strive to have more love but do not fling away what you have, for you would thus despise what the Spirit of God has worked in you.

Endeavor also, dear Friends, to have growing love. Do not be satisfied to be today what you were 12 months ago. I am afraid that some Christians do not grow much. I am very glad when I see them grow downward when they are rooted in humility, when they have truer views of themselves than they ever had and a deeper sense of their indebtedness to God. That is good growth. Try to have, however, a love that grows so that you may more forcibly love Jesus Christ than you did in days that are past. Say to yourself, "Well, if I have ever so little love, it shall be practical love, I will *show* it. I will be doing *something* for my Lord."

The woman, by whose means this parable was called forth, loved Christ so that she brought her alabaster box of ointment and anointed His feet and washed them with tears—and wiped them with the hair of her head. And one of the best ways to make love grow is to use all the love you have. Is it not so with merchants and their money? If they want to increase their capital, they trade with it. If you want to increase your love to Jesus, use it! Do not merely *talk* about it but actually serve Him under its sweet constraint. It is a very poor Christianity that consists in sitting still and dreaming and never attempting any practical service for Jesus, our Lord.

He that thinks that he will quietly enjoy religion all alone will soon find that he has very little of it to enjoy—for doubts and fears will breed in swarms in a stagnant atmosphere. Where there is none of the blessed wind of *activity*, there will soon be mists and damp—perhaps foul gas and fevers. And if you have but little love at present, *cry to God to give you a more intense love* and, though I have said that to use your love is a good way to increase it, yet there is something still better, and that is to know more and feel more of the love of Christ to you. If you exercise, you will increase your sense of warmth—but it will be a far surer thing if you get where the sun shines with equatorial heat—so other means are good but

to get near to Jesus is best of all. In proportion as you live close to the glorious central sun of the love of Christ, you will, yourself, be warm.

I was about to compare the heart of my Lord to a volcanic mountain constantly streaming with the burning lava of love. Oh, that my soul could but get that fire-stream poured into it to set the whole of my nature on fire and consume me in the flame-torrent of love! You see that it is suggested in the text that there are differences in the degrees of love and there let us leave it, for we must come to the third point.

III. Thirdly, THE TEXT PUTS TO US A QUESTION, "WHO WILL LOVE HIM MOST?" I want to introduce the question to you by saying that it is *a very interesting one*. After what the Lord has done for us, one takes pleasure in thinking what will come of it. One likes to think of the farmer's harvest. After all that plowing and sowing, what will come of it? It is interesting to begin to calculate the crop and to anticipate the shouts of harvest home.

Now, what will come of infinite love—the supreme act of God's heart to men? What will come out of the gift of His Only-Begotten Son and the putting away of sin through the death of Jesus? What will men do for God after this? How much will they love Him? It is an interesting question. What have you to say upon it? And it is *a personal question* which the Lord puts to each one of us. You know He put it to Simon. "Tell Me," He said, "which of them will love him most?" And He puts it to us to consider it, to turn it over and to give our own verdict because there may be some blunder in our heart which this question is meant to set right—and the thoughts which the enquiry will cause in the spirit are meant to correct our judgments.

Therefore do not put it aside, but try now to answer it as the Lord puts it. It is *a practical question*—"Which of them will love him most?"—for everything in conduct depends upon love. Where there is *much* love, there is sure to be *much* service in proportion to the strength. Give us a Church that loves Christ Jesus much—you will have mighty Prayer Meetings! You will have a holy membership! You will have liberal giving to the cause of Christ! You will have hearty praising of His name! You will have careful walking before the world! You will have earnest endeavors for the conversion of sinners! Missions at home and abroad will be set on foot when love is fervent.

When the heart is right, everything is likely to be right. But when the heart goes wrong, oh, what a fatal thing it is! A disease of the heart is looked upon as the worst of mischiefs that can happen to a man. One old doctor of my acquaintance used to say, "We can do nothing with the heart." God keep us from a diseased heart—a fatty degeneration of the heart, or an ossification of the heart towards the Lord Jesus Christ! The question asked in the text is, however, *a somewhat limited one*. It is this. The question is not, "Who in all the world will love Christ most?"—but who out of *two* persons, in whom there is no particular difference of character, but only this one difference—that the one owes 500 pence and the other 50—which out of these two will love Christ more?

We will suppose that they are equally tender of heart and equally regenerate and that they do know, each of them, certainly, that his debt has been discharged. The only difference between them is that one has been a grosser sinner than the other. And the question asked is, "Which of those two will love the Savior most?" *It is a very simple question*, too, not at all hard to answer—for even this Simon, the Pharisee, who, like the rest of the Pharisees, was very badly instructed, yet, nevertheless, could see his way to answer the question correctly. So he answered, "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most." And the Lord replied, "You have rightly judged." Thus I have set before you the question.

IV. And so, lastly, IT IS EXPECTED THAT WE GIVE A REPLY. And I wish for myself—and therefore wish the same for you—that each one of us may say, "I am the man that ought to love the Lord Jesus most and, by His Grace, I will surely do so." *The most indebted should love most.* Have we not here many 500-pence debtors? Some of my dear Brethren, here present, were, among outward sinners, the very chief—men who could drink and swear and lie—ringleaders in everything that was evil.

Blessed be God that such have been here led to Jesus! We heard the other night a dear Brother tell us of what he used to be. With modesty and shamefacedness he mentioned how great his sin had been—but his sin was put away—he was pardoned and he knew it! And he rejoiced in it. Such a man must say, "I will love Him most." Where there has been overt sin, palpable, undeniable—where the outward character has been defiled and stained with it—forgiveness involves us in deep obligation to grateful love. You may stand in the front rank and love Jesus most.

But I am not going to let you rise to that eminence of obligation, or rather sink to that depth of indebtedness without having a struggle for it myself. Some of us take that place of eminent obligation on *another* ground and yet it is the *same* ground—for while some of us were never *openly* profane, or drunken, or immoral—we have to confess the equal greatness of our sin on account of our offending against light and knowledge.

We sinned greatly against early convictions, against a holy training, against a tender conscience, against singular favors received from God—and therefore with shame we begin to take the lowest place—acknowledging that to us belongs the greatest debt of grateful praise to God. When I was preaching once, I said—and I meant it—that I should be the deepest debtor to Divine Grace that ever entered the gates of Glory—and I ventured to say—

***"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While Heaven's resounding mansions ring,
With shouts of Sovereign Grace."***

It was in a country place and as I came down the pulpit stairs many clustered about me to shake hands. And one old lady said to me, "You made one great blunder in your sermon." I said, "My dear Soul, I dare say I made a dozen. I am a great blunderer." "No," she said, "but you said that you would sing the loudest when you get to Heaven—but you shall not, for

I owe more to Divine Grace than you possibly can. I was once a great sinner and I have had much forgiven. And therefore I shall praise God more than you." I did not yield the point, but I held my tongue. I could let her be first and yet take the same place myself! As I went down the aisle many friends declared that they would not give way to me in that point and that they ought to praise God more than I, for they owed Him more.

It was a happy controversy! It reminded me of Ralph Erskine's, Contention among the Birds of Paradise, where he represents the saints in Glory, each saying that he shall lie the lowest and shall praise the most sweetly the infinite love of God. I think that there are grounds upon which some here, who have been kept from everything which is outwardly evil, may, nevertheless, feel that inwardly they are 500-pence debtors—and so, when the question is asked, "Which will love Him most?" they will say, "Why, I! I was not so honest as some of those wicked fellows. I did not dare to say all they said, nor to be openly vile as they were—but I was quite as bad at *heart* and if I dare have had my full swing—I should have been as base as they were."

But I do not think that the spirit of the parable is exhausted by either of these cases. I think it includes more. There are some who evidently have *not* had more forgiven than others as to outward sin. On the contrary, they have been prudently brought up from their childhood and yet for many a year they have been foremost in service and have been special lovers of the Lord. Though by no means great offenders in their unconverted state, they are certainly great saints now—they are intense in their service, consistent in their character, fervent in their love. How is it that some who shout that they have been snatched from the burning and according to their own statement were the very chief of sinners—and make a great trumpet-blowing over their own conversion—yet do not love the Lord Jesus one half so much as these dear, quiet souls who never went into open sin?

I take it the reason is this. Our estimate of sin is, after all, the thing which will create and inflame our love. If a man thinks sin to be exceedingly sinful and feels it to be so, he *has a deeper sense of his indebtedness* than the man who may have committed grosser vices but has never seen them in their real blackness—as they appear in the light of God's Countenance. Too many Believers know little of what it is to be amazed and astounded at the heinousness of their transgressions. Why, time was with me—and is now—when, if I had inadvertently spoken a word that was not exactly true, it cost me more pain to think of what was only a hasty error than it has cost many men to repent of their cursing and swearing!

I am sorry to say it, but I believe that some make a *glory* of their shame and dare to *brag* of what they used to be. They stand up and make confession without a tear in their eye, or a blush on their cheek. Such testimony ought *never* to be heard for it is a positive creator of evil in the minds of those that hear it! I am sorry to have to say it but I know that it is so. Testimonies are published which are inducements to vice and tend to make men immoral, rather than to make them turn to God! In certain

circles he is treated as a hero who can prove that he has been a great rascal. It was not thus that the prodigal was received by his father—he never hung up his old rags as a trophy!

O Brothers and Sisters, when we talk about what we were, we had better veil our faces! Our former follies are things to be confessed to God in secret—and if they must be spoken in public, to the praise of Divine Grace—there must be a careful avoidance of anything like boasting, for it is a shame even to speak of the things that were done of them in secret. When there is really a deep sense of sin, there is a holy, delicate way of speaking of it. Old sins are not to be talked of as an old soldier shoulders his crutch and shows how fields were won. A crimson blush is the best color to wear when we speak of our lost estate. To talk smilingly of injuries done to the delicacy of our own conscience—of awful injuries done to others by foul example—is *not* to glorify God but to enthrone vice!

And, dear Friends, I believe that some whom God has preserved by preventing Grace from going into great sin, will, nevertheless, love Him most because *they have a clearer view than others of what it cost in order that they might be pardoned*. Happy are they who remember well the griefs of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane—

***“There’s never a gift His hand bestows
But cost His heart a groan.”***

Oh, if your heart dwells on Calvary, where falls the crimson shower of Christ’s most precious blood—if you gaze intently upon the wounds of Jesus till you die into the death of the Crucified—then do you love Him much! It is well to have the soul torn with anguish because—

***“It cost HIM cries and tears
To bring us near to God:
Great was our debt,
And He appears
To make the payment good.”***

Remember, in proportion as you estimate the Sacrifice, you will love Him who *was* the Sacrifice for sin. Brothers and Sisters, I hope you all love Christ Jesus more than I do, for I would have Him possess the highest love of every human heart—and yet I will not be willingly excelled by any one of you in a competition of love to Jesus. I will run my very best that no man take my crown

But supposing, dear Friends, any of you *do* love Him most—then show it just as that woman did who brought the alabaster box of precious ointment. If you love Him most, *do* most. Do everything that is humanly possible, quickened by the Spirit of God. If you have done much, do 10 times more! Never talk of what you *have* done, but go on to something else. An officer rode up to his general, and said, “Sir, we have taken two guns from the enemy.” “It is well,” said the general, “Take two more.” If you have most love to Christ, do most spiritual good to men. Yet *do something distinctly for Jesus*.

It is a blessed token for good when our work among men is not so much for the sake of sinners as for love of Jesus. When we love the Brethren it should be because they belong to Christ. It is sweet to serve the

Lord Christ Himself. See how the holy woman offered homage distinctly to her Lord—tears for His travel stains—hair to wipe His feet, ointment to anoint His flesh. Do your choicest and best for Jesus, for Jesus personally. *Try to do it most humbly.* Stand behind Him. Do not ask anybody to look at you. Do it very quietly. Do it feeling that it is a great honor to be permitted to do the least service for Jesus. Do not dream of saying, “I am somebody. I am doing great things. I do more, even, than Simon the Pharisee. Come see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts.”

Jehu talked in that fashion—but he was good for nothing. Do your personal part without seeking to be seen of men. *Do it self-sacrificingly.* Bring your best ointment. Pinch yourself for Christ. Make sacrifices—go without this and that to have something which you can do Him honor. *Do it very penitently.* When you serve Him best, still let the tears fall on His feet, mingling with the costly ointment. The tears and the ointment go well together. Mourn your guilt while you rejoice in His Grace. *Do it continuously.* “This woman,” said Christ, “since I came in has not ceased to kiss My feet.” Do not leave off loving Him and serving Him. Do it on and on and on—however much the flesh may ask for respite from service. *Do it enthusiastically.* See how she kissed His feet—nothing less than this would express her love!

Stoop down and kiss and kiss again those blessed feet which traveled so far in love for you! Throw your whole soul into your deed of love. “Why,” they will say, “Mrs. So-and-So is enthusiastic! She is quite carried away by her zeal.” Let it be true more and more! Never mind what the cold-hearted think, for they cannot understand you. They will say, “Ah, that young person is too fast by half.” Never mind. Be faster still! Wise people cry out, “He has too many irons in the fire.” But I say to you, heat up the fire! Get all the irons red hot and hammer away with all your might! With all your strength and energy plunge into the service of your Master! If you love your Master, you can best show your love by ardent *service*. The Lord bless you with the utmost degree of love, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 18.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—810, 814, 797.**

MR. SPURGEON’S return was deferred for one week by a severe attack of sciatica and gout, but he prays that he may preach at home February 2nd. Oh, for a great blessing!

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

A GRACIOUS DISMISSAL NO. 2183

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 11, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”
Luke 7:50.*

THE main part of my subject will be—that gracious dismissal, “Go in peace.” To her who had been so lately blessed, the word, “Go,” sounded mournfully, for she would gladly have remained through life with her pardoning Lord, but the added words, “*in peace*,” turned the wormwood into honey—there was now peace for her who had been so long hunted and harried by her sins! Rising from the feet she had washed with tears, she went forth to keep her future footsteps such as those of a believing and, therefore, *saved* woman ought to be.

We like a motto to begin the year with and it has been useful to some spirits to choose a motto with which to enter on a new course of life. We climb the hill of enterprise, or dare the wave of trial with an inspiring word upon our lips. To certain young men, a word has come in life's early morning, wet with the dew of Heaven—and that word of their dawn of day has stayed with them. The echoes of that life-evoking word have followed them long after it was spoken. Amid strange scenes it has come to them like a voice from the unseen. It has whispered to them within the curtains of their dying bed—it has murmured consolation amid Jordan's swelling waves. That first word of joy and peace from Jesus with which they began the new life came to them, again, just as they were melting away into the invisible land. And so they began the service of the Redeemer—and so He declared that their work was finished. Perhaps that love-note will be their welcome at the very gates of Heaven!

Our Lord, in the instance before us, sent a penitent away from the chill atmosphere of self-righteous quibbling and thus relieved her of a controversy for which she was not fitted. But I see more than that in this benediction. It looks to me as if our Divine Master, when He found this poor sinner so full of love to Him that she washed His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, having by a parable explained to the Pharisee the reason for the greatness of her love, then said to her, “Go in peace,”—meaning that word not only to be cheering for the necessary purpose of the moment, but to go with her and to attend her all the rest of her life, until, when she came into the dark valley, she should fear no evil, for she would still hear that sweet voice saying, “Go in peace.” What music to have heard! What music still to hear!

Now, I would to God that the word which I shall speak at this time might be honored of the Lord to serve that sacred purpose to some here present. May it be a life-word to certain of you! May it be to others of us who have long known the Savior a revival of our rest—and may we get such a draught of peace from Jesus that we may never thirst again! The lips of our Divine Lord are a wellspring of delight! Each word is a chalice brimmed with sweetness. Imbibing this, we shall go our way, even to our journey's end, after the manner of the hymn which we sang just now—

***“Calm in the hour of buoyant health,
Calm in my hour of pain;
Calm in my poverty or wealth,
Calm in my loss or gain.
Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
Softly resting on Your breast,
Soothe me with holy hymn and Psalm,
And bid my spirit rest.”***

Oh, that our life may be as a sea of glass! May the sacred circle of our fellowship be within the golden line of the peace of God! You who did bid us come to You and rest, now bid us, “go in peace.”

I am going to say a little in my opening upon a *delightful assurance* which constituted the reason why the woman went in peace—“Your faith has saved you;” or, as in the 48th verse, “Your sins are forgiven you.” Upon the strength of the assurance that she was saved, she might safely go in peace! When we have talked a little upon that subject, we will then come to a *considerate precept*—the Savior directed her, in the moment of trial, to, “go in peace.” There was an assurance for her comfort and a precept for her guidance.

I. First, then, consider A DELIGHTFUL ASSURANCE. The ground upon which the penitent woman might go in peace was that she had been saved. The Savior assured her—“Your faith has saved you.”

She was not saved by any other way than *we* are saved, but she received the common salvation by like precious *faith*. The way of salvation to her was faith in Christ—that is the same way for us, but she had what some of you, no doubt, would greatly *like* to have—she had *an assurance that she was saved from the Lord's own mouth!* I think I hear some saying, “I should go in peace, I am sure, if the Lord Jesus would but appear to me and speak, and say with His own lips, “Your faith has saved you.” It is natural that you should think so. It must have been rapture to receive a benediction from the mouth of our King, our Savior! Yet, dear Friends, we must not hang our confidence upon a mere circumstance. For a mere circumstance it is, whether Christ shall literally stand before you in the flesh and say, “Your faith has saved you,” or whether He shall say it to you by the Infallible record of His own Word.

It does not make much difference as to my faith in what my father says to me, whether I meet the venerable man in the morning in my garden and there hear his voice, or whether I get a letter by post in his handwriting, and he says to me upon that paper just what he would have said if I had met him face to face. I do not require him to always come up the hill to my house to tell me everything that he has to say—I should think my-

self an idiot if I did! If I were to say, "My dear Father, you have assured me of your love by letter, but somehow, I cannot credit it unless you come and look me in the face and take my hand and assure me of your good will." Surely, he would say to me, "My dear Son, what ails you? You must be out of your mind. I never knew you to be so childish before! My handwriting has always been enough. I can hardly think you mean it when you say that you cannot credit me unless I stand manifest before your eyes—and with your ears you hear me speak."

Now, what I would not do to my *earthly* father, I certainly would not do to my heavenly Savior! I am perfectly satisfied to believe what He writes to me and if it is so written in His Book, it seems to me to be quite as true and sure as if He had actually come from Heaven and had talked with me, or had appeared to me in the visions of the night. Is not this the reasoning of commonsense? Do you not at once agree with me?

"Well," you say, "we go with you *there*, dear Sir, but, then, He spoke that word to her *personally*. We would never have any more doubts, but would go in peace if He said that word of assurance to us. You see, it is not merely that Jesus, Himself, spoke and said, 'Your faith has made *you* whole,' but He looked that way! He turned towards her and she knew that He referred to her. There was no mistaking to whom the assurance was given! There were other people in the room, but He did not say it to Simon. He did not say it to Peter. He did not say it to James and John. She knew by the look of Him that He meant it for *her* and for her, alone, for she was the only person to go and, consequently, the only one to 'go in peace.' Our Lord put it in the singular number and said, '*Your* faith has saved *you*.' I want it to come home just so to me."

Yes, but I think that this is a little unreasonable, is it not? Because if my father (to carry on my figure) were to speak to me, and to my brothers, and to my sisters, and were to say, "Dear children, I have loving thoughts concerning you, and I have laid up in store for your needs," I do not think that I should say to him, by-and-by, "Now, Father, do you know that I did not believe you, or derive any pleasure from what you said because you spoke to others beside myself? I did not think your statement of love could be true because you included my brothers and my sisters. You did not use the singular, but you put it in the plural—and you spoke to all my brothers and sisters, as well as to myself—and, therefore, I felt that I could not take any comfort out of your tender assurances." I should be a most unreasonable kind of person if I were to talk in that way—and my father would begin to think that his son was qualifying for a lunatic asylum! If he did not attribute it to unkindness of heart, he certainly would ascribe it to stupidity of head! Why, surely, surely, if my father says the same to each one of his children as he says to me, his words are all the more likely to be true, instead of being less worthy of belief and, therefore, I derive comfort from his promises of love being put in the plural rather than in the singular. Surely it should not be less easy to believe that God would deal graciously with me in company with thousands of others than that He should pursue a solitary plan with *me* as the lone object of His love. Is it not so?

“Ah, yes!” says one, “but you have not hit on it yet. I want to know that I am one that is in that plural! And I want to know that I really am one of those to whom Jesus speaks in His Word.” My anxious Friend, you may know it—and you may know it most certainly. It is written, “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.” It need never be a question whether you believe in Him or not. If you trust Him, that is the gist of the matter. You can readily ascertain whether you do really trust Him, or do not trust Him. If you do trust Him, you are His, and every promise of His Covenant is made to you! You have faith, and when the Lord lays it down as a general statement that faith saves—the statement is applicable to all the world, in every place and in all time—until the present age shall end—and men shall have passed into the fixed state of retribution where no Gospel of faith is preached. “Your faith has saved you.” If you have faith at all—if you believe that Jesus is the Christ—you are born of God! If you can say to the Lord Jesus—

***“All my trust on You is stayed
All my help from You I bring,”***

that is faith and Jesus testifies, “Your faith has saved you.”

Now, because the Infallible Witness says this of all who have faith, I do not think you ought to doubt it. It is true you do not hear His voice because He says it rather by the written Word than by word of mouth, but surely this does not affect your faith. We believe a true man whether he writes or speaks—indeed, if there is any choice, we prefer that which he has deliberately put on paper, for this remains when the sound of the voice is clean gone. It is most profitable for us that we should read our Lord’s declaration over and over again—and put it in all sorts of shapes—and see how it always remains faithful and true. It is more assuring to you to find it in the volume of the Book than it would be if the Savior met you tonight, and said to you, “Your sins are forgiven you. Your faith has saved you.” The record excels the voice.

“No,” you say, “I cannot see that.” Well now, Peter was with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration and nothing could shake Peter’s conviction that he had been there in the midst of that heavenly Glory—and yet, for all that, Peter says, concerning the Inspired Word, “We have a more sure Word of testimony!” He felt that even the memory of that vision, which he had assuredly seen, did not always yield to him so much assurance as did the abidingly Inspired Word of God! You ought to feel the same. If I were conscious tonight that, at some period of my life, I had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken to me, the very spot of ground on which it occurred would be exceedingly dear and sacred to my spirit. But I am certain that when I grew depressed—when darkness rushed over my soul, as it sometimes does, I would be sure to say to myself—“You never saw anything of the kind! It was a delusion, a figment of your imagination, a delirium and nothing more.”

But, Beloved, when I get to this Book and see before me the sacred lines, I know that I am not deluded! There it stands, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” I am sure about that and I

am sure that I believe and, therefore, I am *sure* that I am saved! I like to put my finger right down on the passage and then say, "Lord, I know You cannot lie. I have never had a question about this being Your Book. Whatever other doubts have plagued me, this has not. You have so spoken it home to my soul that I am as assured that this is Your Book as I am assured of my own existence. And, therefore, You have done better for the removal of my doubts and for the assurance of my soul's eternal salvation, by putting Your promise in your Book than if You had, Yourself, personally appeared to me and spoken with Your own voice."

O my Hearer, the written Word is most sure! If you believe, you are saved, as surely as you are alive. If you believe, Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of the Lord shall stand fast for you. "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." He has eternal life in present possession! Our Lord has put it thus—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him shall be saved." There are no, "ifs," or, "buts," about these Words of promise. Salvation is put as a present thing and as an abiding thing, but in every case as a *certain* thing! And why should we be worried and worn about the matter? It is so and let us take the comfort of the fact. We must either throw away this Book by beginning to talk about "degrees of inspiration" and all that foul rubbish, or else we are logically bound to be sure of our hope and to rejoice in it!

I guarantee you, O my Hearer, that as long as you stand fast by the belief that this is a sure Word of testimony, you will know that you are saved! If this Book is true, every Believer in Jesus is as safe as Jesus, Himself. To say, "I believe, but I am afraid I am not saved," is to say, but in a roundabout way, that you do not believe at all! For, if you believe, then you believe that God speaks the Truth—and this is the testimony—"God has given us eternal life, and that life is in His Son." This is the testimony of the great Father and the testimony of the eternal Spirit! And we must not dare to doubt it. You may doubt whether you believe or not, but given that you do really and unfeignedly put your trust in the Lord Jesus, then, as effect follows cause, it is certain that the cause of faith will be followed by its sure effect—salvation! "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Do not worry any longer—go in peace! Have done with questioning! End all debate—go in peace. Go about your business, for the work of salvation is done! You are a saved soul—go and rejoice in finished salvation and ask no more questions. "Why do you cry you unto Me?" said God to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Why do *you* question and doubt any longer? Go forward to enjoy what God has prepared for you! And as you are saved and justified in Christ, now seek sanctification and all the other blessings of the Covenant of Grace which lie before you in Christ Jesus your Lord! The promise is sure—be sure that it is so—and in perfect rest of soul enjoy the good which God provides you!

I think I have thus brought out as clearly as I can that delightful assurance which is the ground of the command, "Go in peace."

II. We come, secondly, to listen to A CONSIDERATE PRECEPT. Our Lord, with wise tenderness, dismissed the beloved object of His pardoning love and bade her, “Go in peace.” May the Holy Spirit bless this to us!

This precept divides itself into two parts. There is, first, “Go.” And then there is, “Go in peace.”

There is “go.” Now, in, “go,” there are two things—to go *from* and to go *to*. *Where was she to go from?* First, she was *to go from these quibblers*. Simon and the Pharisees are as full of objections as a swarm of bees is full of stings. They say in their hearts, one to another, “Who is this that also forgives sins?” They have even dared to question the Character of the Perfect One and have hinted a suspicion of His purity for allowing such a woman to come so near Him and to wash His feet with her tears. Therefore the Savior says to her, “Go.” This was not a happy place for a child-like love to linger in. Her soul would have been among lions. Jesus seems to say, “Do not stay to be tormented by these quibblers. Your faith has saved you—go. You have gained a great blessing—go home with it. Let these people argue with each other. You have a rich prize—take it out of the reach of these pirates.”

Oftentimes I believe that the child of God would find it to be his greatest wisdom, whenever he is in company that begins to assail his Lord, or to denounce his faith, just to go about his business and let the scoffers have their scoffing to themselves. Some of us have thought it our miserable duty to read certain books that have been brought out against the Truth of God, that we might be able to answer them—but it is a perilous calling. The Lord have mercy upon us when we have to go down into these sewers—for the process is not healthy!

“Oh,” says a man, “but you must prove all things!” Yes, so I will. But if one should set a joint of meat on his table and it smelt rather high, I would cut a slice, but if I put one bit of it in my mouth and found it far gone, I would not feel it necessary to eat the whole round of beef to test its sweetness! Some people seem to think that they must read a bad book through—and they must go and hear a bad preacher often before they can be sure of his quality. Why, you can judge many teachings in five minutes! You say to yourself, “No, Sir, no, no, no! This is good meat—for dogs! Let them have it, but it is not good meat for me and I do not intend to poison myself with it.” The Savior does not tell the woman, “Stop, now, and hear what Simon has got to say. Dear good woman, you have been washing My feet with tears and here is a highly intelligent gentleman, a Pharisee, who has a very learned speech to deliver—give him a fair hearing. You have to prove all things—therefore stay and hear him. And here are more gentlemen who object to My pardoning your sins. And their objections are fetched from deep veins of thought. Listen to them and then I will answer their questions and quiet your mind.”

No, the Savior says, “Go in peace. You have peace—do not stay till you lose it. You have your comfort and joy—refuse to be robbed of them.” Why, if you were in a room and you saw a certain number of gentlemen of a suspicious character—and you had your watch with you—you would not feel it necessary to stay and see whether they were able to extract your

watch from you, but you would say to yourself, "No, I am best out of this company." We are safest out of the society of those whose great objective it is to rob us of our faith. "Your faith has saved you. Go home. Leave them. Go in peace."

I think that He meant, besides going away from the men, "*Go away from the publicity into which you have unwillingly stepped.*" If our Savior had been like some excellent people of the present day, He would have said, "Stand before all these men and tell your experience. I shall require you to be at half-a-dozen meetings this week and you must speak at every one of them." A splendid woman, was she not, who washed the Savior's feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head? She might have exhibited her eyes and her hair—and told their gracious story. Who can tell but several would have been impressed by the narrative? The Savior said to the woman—so excitable, for she was all that, as well as grateful—"Your faith has saved you; go in peace." As much as to say, "There are certain of your own sex that you can speak to. You will find some poor fallen woman to whom you can quietly tell of My pardoning Grace. But yours is a case in which the very beauty of your character will lie in the quietude of your future life. 'Your faith has saved you.' That is enough for you. You have come upon the stage of action by that splendid act of your love, but do not acquire the habit of winning publicity. Do not aspire to display yourself in a bold and heroic attitude, but go in peace." He almost seems to say, "Subside now into your family. Take your place with the rest of your sisters. Adorn, by your future purity, My doctrine, and let all men see what a change has been worked in you, for, perhaps that very weakness of yours which made you what you were as a sinner, may put you in danger, even as a saint. Therefore I do not ask you to tarry here and join My disciples, or follow Me publicly through the streets. But your faith has saved you; go in peace."

I think that the Master taught a great deal of wisdom here, which some of those who are leaders in the Church of God would do well to copy. Yes, I think that I shall go a little further and say that *I think the Savior, then and there, dismissed her from that high ministry which, for once in her life, she had carried out.* She washed His feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. It was the action of a love which had risen to a passion. It was an action such as shall be told for a memory of her everywhere—and we may well imitate her penitence and her heroic courage, as well as her love to Christ. But, at the same time, we cannot always be doing heroic actions. Life is mainly made up of common deeds. It would not be possible to be always washing feet with tears, nor to be always unbraiding tresses to use them as a towel.

The difficulty with some people is that they are always wanting to practice the sublime. Alas, they often fail by just one step and become ridiculous! They are always straining after effect and, hearing of what has been done once, by one choice person, they must do it themselves and they must keep on doing it! O my Sister, there may come a time when you will have to speak for Christ and speak openly before many, but tomorrow you had better go home and see to the children and make home happy for

your husband. You will glorify Christ by darning stockings and mending the socks of the little ones, quite as surely as by washing His feet with tears. You make a great mistake if you have not a piety which will take you into domestic life—which will help you to make the common drudgery of life a Divine service. We need men who can serve God with the axe and plane, or behind a counter, or by driving a quill. These are the men we need—but there are many that crave to vault at once into a conspicuous place and perform an astounding deed! Having done it once, they become unsettled all the rest of their lives and do not seem as if they ever could take to plainly keeping the Ten Commandments and walking in the steps of Jesus. I wish that those who must flash and blaze would hear the Lord Jesus say to them, “Go in peace.” I mean any of you who really did distinguish yourselves on one occasion and deserved much praise from your Christian friends. I fear lest you should pine for unusual and even undesirable forms of service and become useless in the ordinary course of life. Now, do not be spoiled for life by having been allowed in one unusual deed, but hear the Master say, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace. Serve Me in the daily avocations of life and bring glory to My name at home. Go from the strain of publicity to the gentler pressures of family duty.”

Do you not think that He even meant that she was now to cease *from that singular fellowship with Him that she had enjoyed?* She had been very close to Him, but she was, perhaps, never to be quite so near to Him again. In spirit she should be, but certainly not physically. It happens that those who take to the contemplative life—and there is no life higher than that—are apt to think that they must forget the *practical* life. But it must not be so. We must do that which the Master bids us do as well as sit at His feet! I am tempted to tell a story which most of you must know concerning the famous man of God, who, in his cell, thought he saw the Lord Jesus and, under that persuasion, he worshipped with rapt delight. But just then the bell at the convent gate rang and it was his turn to stand at the door and deal out bread to the hungry. There was a little battle in his mind as to which he should do—tarry with his Lord, or go to hand out bread to the poor mendicants. At last, he felt that he must do his duty even at the cost of the highest spiritual bliss. He went and distributed the bread and when he came back, to his great delight, the vision was still there and a voice said to him, “If you had stayed, I would have gone; but as you have gone, I have therefore stayed to commune with you.” The path of duty must be followed and no spiritual enjoyment can excuse us from it! Never offer one duty to God stained with the blood of another! Balance your duties and let not one press out another. “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Do not think that you need to be all day long at your Bible, or all the evening at your prayers. There is a time for everything. Let every holy work have its place, that your life may be a fair mosaic of brilliant colors, all set according to the Divine pattern, to make up a perfect character. “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace and do the next thing, and the next, without weariness.”

That leads me to speak of *what she was to go to*. It seems to me that the Savior said, “Now go home. You have been a fallen woman—home is the place for you. Go home to your mother and father, or other relatives. Seek a home. Be domesticated. *Attend to your own work*. Whatever your place is, go to it. Leaving daily duty was the source of your temptation—return to walks of usefulness and habits of order—and this will be your safety. You will be less likely to be led away if you have work to occupy head, heart and hands.”

Did He not mean, “*Go now to your ordinary life-trial*”? Do you think yourself a very peculiar person—a sort of saint that has to float in the air, or live upon roses? Do not fancy such a thing! I have heard of the Chinese, that they sell shoes with which you can walk on the clouds. And I believe that some people must have bought a pair of those remarkable articles, for their lives are spent in cloudland, walking as in a dream, upon high stilts of fond imaginations! Do not think great things of yourself. You are but a common man or woman. Do such duty as your fellow Christians do and do not think yourself a superior person. The worst people in the world to work with are superior people. Those are of no importance who think they are of great importance. Poor creature! It is not the Grace of God which turns your brain, but your own silly conceit.

Go forth to your further service—“Go in peace. There are some to whom you can tell of My love. Oh, how you will tell it! You that have washed My feet with your tears, go and shower those tears over fallen ones like yourself. Go, use those eyes, that you may look My love right into their hearts as you are speaking to them. Go all your life in peace and do for Me all that I shall put in your way to do for Me.” That is what I think our Lord meant. Brothers and Sisters, do not think of sitting here to enjoy yourselves, but go off and glorify your Redeemer’s name. Go!

But then here is the point of it—He said, “*Go in peace*.” O my Brothers and Sisters, I desire that all of us who love the Lord may go all the rest of our life journey in peace. May pardoning love put us at peace concerning all our sins! O pardoned one, you love much, for you have had much forgiven—let your thoughts all run to love—and none to fear. Fret not about the past—the dark, dishonorable past. The hand that was pierced has blotted it all out! The great Lord has frankly forgiven you all your debt. Let not that disturb you any longer. Go in peace! What a rest it is to be rid of the burden of sin and to know of a certainty, from the teaching of God’s Word, that your sins are forgiven you! This is peace which passes all understanding.

Our Lord meant, next, “*Go in peace*” *in reference to all the criticisms of all these people who have looked at you*. Do not mind them. Do not trouble about them. What have they to do with you? It is enough for a servant if his master accepts him—he need not mind what others have to say about his service. Your faith has saved you. Forget all the unkind things they have said and do not trouble your heart about the cruel speeches they may yet make. Go in peace and be under no alarm as to upbraiding tongues.

And then I think He meant, “*Go in peace about what you have done.*” I know the mood of a word like that. I have preached the Gospel. I have thrown my whole soul into it and after it is all over I have felt bound to chide myself that I did not do much better as to style, or spirit, or length, or some other matter. Oh, but if the Master accepts it, one may go in peace about it! This woman had done a very extraordinary thing in washing Christ’s feet with tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. And when she got away, she might have said to herself, “I wonder why I was so bold? Was I not immodestly conspicuous? How could I have done it? How must I have looked when I was bathing His feet? For me, too—such a sinner as I am—for me to have done it to the Blessed and Holy One! I fear He must have felt vexed at my rudeness!”

Have you not sometimes done a brave thing for Christ and then, afterwards, felt just like that. “I was a bold minx,” you say, “after all, to push myself so forward.” The good young man, who has just preached for the first time, says, “Well, I got through it this time, but I will never attempt it again, for I am sure that I am not fit for such holy work.” So the Master says to this woman, “Go in peace. I have accepted you and your loving service. Do not be troubled about what you have done. It is all sweet to Me and has a rich perfume of your great love. Never fret about what you have done. You have done the right thing. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” I want us to have just that kind of peace—peace about what we have done for our Lord, even as we have peace about forgiven sin and peace about human criticisms.

“Go in peace.” Oh, to possess, from this time forth, a holy quiet! We are so apt to grow fretful. I know some good Brothers and Sisters who have a swollen vein of suspicion about them that bleeds every now and then, and pains them greatly, and alarms other people. I know some Sisters—they are very good, but unreasonably fearful. They say that they are “nervous.” Perhaps that is the fact and so I will say no more. But, oh, that we could get them cured of this disease of the nerves! I would they could be quieted! I admire the members of the Society of Friends for this virtue beyond almost any other which they exhibit—they seem to be so steady, self-contained and equable. They are a little slow, perhaps, but then they are very sure, firm, steadfast and calm. We are, some of us, too much in a hurry to go fast. If we were a little slower, we would be quicker. If we left our affairs more entirely with God, our peace might be like a river.

Yes, I would to God, dear Friends, that we might feel a constant joy. Why not? Nothing ought to trouble us, for we know that all things work together for good. If we live by faith, nothing can trouble us, for between here and Heaven we shall keep company with You, You Blessed One! And if the way You take is rough, the fact of Your being with us shall make it smooth for us. We will travel merrily with this as our march music—“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Still, to come back to where I began, I dare say that the good woman thought that she would like to speak a word for the Lord. When they said that He could not forgive sin, would not she have liked to say, “But He did forgive my sin and He changed my nature! How dare you speak thus?”

But the Savior said, "Go." She was not called to contend. Thank God every child of God is not called to fight with the adversary—those of us who are men of war from our youth up take no pleasure in strife! We wish that, like this holy woman, we could be exempt from this warfare. She might well rejoice in her escape from the sacred conscription. Many a cuff and blow she thus avoided and, as her Captain sent her off the field, she might go home right happily.

She might have lost the blessed frame of mind in which she then was— and this would have been a real injury to her. She was sweetly wrapped up in love and there her Lord would have her abide. He seems to say, "You are too precious to be battered and bruised in battle. Go—go in peace. Dear Soul, you are so full of love to Me that I do not want you to be worried with fighting, contending and arguing. Go in peace." She would have done no good, I dare say, if she *had* ventured into a fray for which she was so unfitted. If she had spoken, she would have said something which the cruel Pharisees would have turned into a jest. So He said to her, "Go in peace." Why should her feebleness give them an occasion for unholy triumph? All true hearts are not fit for fight. Besides, she had her Lord to be her Advocate, and there was no need for her to speak. Therefore He said, "I can manage them without your presence. Go in peace." When we may believingly leave a difficulty with our Lord, it is faith's duty to go home quietly. No doubt, by going in peace, she would be doing greater service than she would by using her tongue upon these ungodly men. A quiet, happy life is often the noblest witness that we can bear for Christ. Therefore I say to everyone who loves the Lord, there are times when He will say to us, "Do not enter into any of this conflict, turmoil and muddle. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

The last word I have to say is this. There are many poor souls who talk about coming to Christ who are not yet saved. They are always hearing about faith and thinking of it—and yet they never do, in very truth, believe. Now, do not hear nor debate any more about faith, but *believe*. Trust Jesus Christ and think no more about your own trusting. Think about it as a *thing done*—not as a thing to be done! God help you now to believe in Jesus—and so pass over the bridge of belief to the golden shore of Jesus, Himself!

Well, but I notice some say that they believe, but it is not believing, because if it were believing, they would "go in peace." A person comes to the bank with a check. He believes it to be honestly his and the signature to be correct. He puts it down on the counter and the clerk puts out the money. But look! The man does not take it. He stands and loafs about. The clerk looks at him, and wonders what he is doing. At last, when the person has been there long enough to wear the good man's patience out, the clerk says, "Did you bring that check to have the money?" "Yes, I handed it in." "Well, then, why do you not take the money and go about your business?" If he is a sensible man, he delays no longer—no, he would not have delayed so long. He takes the money and departs in peace.

Now, dear Soul, if you have a promise from God—"He that believes is not condemned," or, "He that believes has everlasting life"—do you be-

lieve? Then take the blessing and go about your business! Do not keep on saying, "Perhaps it is so," and, "Perhaps it is not so." Do you believe that God speaks the Truth? If so, then take the promised blessing and enjoy it, for you are a saved man! "But I have been going to a place of worship for years and I have been believing in a sort of a way, but I have never dared to say that I was saved." Then you are acting the part of an unbeliever! If you do not know that you are saved, how dare you go to sleep tonight? How can a man dare to eat his meals and go about his business, and yet say, "I do not know whether I am saved or not"? You *may* know it and you *ought* to know it. If you believe, you are saved! If you doubt that fact, you are rather an unbeliever than a Believer. Take up your money and go home. "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Trust Jesus! Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

The Lord help you truly to believe, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 8:15-39.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—719, 726, 702.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

Although far away from my usual congregation, I am not without some little comforting and guiding work to do among those whom my Master leads to this place. This sermon is quite in harmony with what I have had to say to seekers and feeble ones here. "He fashions their hearts alike." There is a family likeness in the Lord's people wherever we meet them! The same Truth of God also suits Believers of every nation—all nations can live upon bread. It is a great delight to minister consolation. Had we nothing else to do, a pastor's life would be spent in green pastures by the still waters. We never carry the lambs in our bosom without feeling our heart grow warmer. All the spiritual help we render comes back to us in the most effectual manner—to water others is to be watered yourself. The river which refreshes the fields is not dry, itself.

Therefore, our word from our retreat to all who are one with us in the Lord's service is on this wise, *Comfort the feeble-minded. Support the weak.*" In doing this, you shall, yourselves, be comforted and supported. Hands that now hang down will, by God's Grace, be lifted up if they are used to raise others from the ground. Try this prescription, you that are yourselves cast down! It is recommended by the preacher.

Mentone, January 3, 1891,

C. H. S.

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

“GO IN PEACE”

NO. 2770

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 16, 1902.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1883.**

***“And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”
Luke 7:50.***

THERE appears to have been four stages in Christ’s dealing with this woman. I know not what had preceded the narrative as we have it recorded in this Chapter—I need not enter into that question now. There had, doubtless, been a work of the Spirit of God upon that woman’s heart, turning her from her sin to her Savior, but when she stood at our Master’s feet, raining tears of penitence upon them, wiping them with the hairs of her head, giving to them kisses of love and anointing them with the ointment from the alabaster box, there were four stages in His gracious dealings with her.

The first was when He silently accepted her manifestations of love. When the copious tears from her eyes fell upon His feet, He did not withdraw them. When those feet were wiped with the luxuriant tresses of her hair, still He did not withdraw them. And when she ventured upon a yet closer familiarity and not only kissed His feet, but did not cease to kiss them, He still did not withdraw them, but quietly accepted all that she did. And when the precious ointment was poured in lavish abundance upon those precious feet of His, He did not upbraid her, He did not refuse her gifts, but tacitly accepted them, though without a word of acknowledgment just then. And I think it is a very blessed thing for any of you to be accepted before God, even though no word has come from His lips assuring you that it is so. When your tears, cries, secret love, and earnest seeking—when your confession of sin, your struggle after faith and the dawning of your faith are just accepted by the Lord, though as yet He has not said to you, “Your sins are forgiven you,” it is a very blessed stage for you to have reached, for the Lord does not begin to accept anyone, even by a silence which means consent, and then draw back!

He accepted this woman’s love and gifts, though, for a time, He gave her no assurance of that acceptance and that fact must have greatly cheered her. Manoah’s wife said to him, “If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands.” And I feel sure that if the Lord had not meant to bestow His mercy upon this woman, He would not have submitted to her washing of

His feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head—and the subsequent continual kissing of them and anointing of them with the precious ointment.

Our Lord’s favorable inclination towards this woman was still more marked in the second stage of His dealings with her, when He began to defend her against her accuser. When Simon’s evil thoughts had condemned her and also her Lord, Jesus spoke that wonderful parable which set forth the greatness of this woman’s love and justified the extraordinary way in which she manifested it. Christ did not speak to her, but He spoke up for her—and such action as that should be quite sufficient to satisfy the soul of a Believer in Him. So what if my Lord has not revealed Himself to me? He has revealed Himself to the Father for me! What if He has not spoken to me? Yet, if He has spoken to God on my behalf—if He has spoken in the Scriptures in defense of poor sinners and advocated their cause in the High Court of Heaven, then how thankful I may be—and how thankful they may be!

In the third stage, our Lord did still more for this woman, for He spoke to her these gracious words, “Your sins are forgiven.” Oh, how they must have dropped like dew into her poor soul! How she must have been refreshed by them! She, who was a sinner—a great sinner, a public sinner—yes, a professional sinner—hears her Savior say to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” The absolution pronounced by the man who calls himself a priest is utterly worthless! But it would be worthwhile to give a thousand worlds, if we had them, for absolution from our Great High Priest! Yes, He who knew all about the woman’s sin, He who had power on earth to forgive sins, had said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Was not that enough for her? Would not that short sentence set all the bells of her heart ringing as long as ever she lived?

Yes, but there was still more to follow, for the Lord spoke to her a second time and said, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” So she was not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but she was also delivered from the power of sin! Her faith had saved her! She was a saved woman, so she might go in peace! Now she is enjoying the sunlight of full assurance, the bright clear noontide of acknowledged acceptance—“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Some of us have this great blessing and we rejoice in it, but if others of you have not come quite so far on the heavenly road, do not begin murmuring or doubting! Bless the Lord Jesus Christ for any favor that He has shown to you, a poor unworthy sinner, and if you have even the faintest ray of the Light of God, pray Him to make your path like that of the just which “shines more and more unto the perfect day.” If you have received any token for good from your Lord, be thankful for it and expect, before long to hear in your soul the sweet music of this gracious word—

“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

So we have come to our text, in which two things are very clearly revealed. The first is, an assurance—“Your faith has saved you.” And the second is, a *dismissal*—“Go in peace.”

I. First, then, here is AN ASSURANCE: “Your faith has saved you.”

That assurance teaches us, first, that *salvation is a present thing*—"Your faith *has* saved you." This is something that is already accomplished. You are saved—not, you *shall* be saved—but you are even now in possession of the priceless gift of salvation. "Your faith has saved you." All through the Scriptures and especially in the New Testament, it is plainly asserted that believers in Christ are already in possession of salvation. I will not stay to prove that it is so, but will rather explain it. If anyone says to me, "In what respect are Believers saved?" I answer that they are saved in the price, in the promise, in the principles and in the pledge of salvation. The alliteration will help you to remember these four points.

First, they are saved *in the price of salvation*. All that was necessary to save them from the result of sin has been endured by the Lord Jesus Christ. He has ransomed them by His death upon the Cross. He has stood in their place and borne their sin in His own body on the tree—and suffered the full penalty for it. He has finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in for them everlasting righteousness so that they are saved! The great work of their salvation was completed by Christ upon the Cross when He laid down His life for them and now they are, "bought with a price," even "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Next, they are saved *in the promise of salvation*. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who cannot lie, has declared that "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God's promise is certain of fulfillment, so that every believer in Jesus may be absolutely sure of salvation. We often take the check of a man who is known to be in a good financial position, and we consider his check to be as good as if it were hard cash. And, in like manner, we accept God's promise of salvation as being just as sure as the salvation itself. Paul tells us that God's promise has been confirmed by an oath, "that by two Immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Then, thirdly, we have salvation *in the principles of it*. That is to say, all those Graces which constitute the essentials of a perfect character, are in every true child of God. There is given to us, when we are regenerated, the very same life which we are to live forever in Heaven. We have now the root, the bulb, the seed out of which immortality and perfection will most surely grow—we may not yet be perfect, but we have that which will come to perfection! We have within us a new nature which cannot sin because it is born of God and this will gradually overcome the old nature, as the Israelites drove out the Canaanites, and we shall be perfect before the Throne of the Most High. A man may have, in a very small room, a whole field of wheat lying in embryo in the seed which is to be sown in the springtime, and reaped in the autumn! And we have, in the gift of God's Grace, all Heaven in embryo in the seeds of faith and love, and the work of the Holy Spirit within our souls. Thus, we have salvation in the principles of it.

And, once more, we have salvation *in the pledge of it*, for, when the Holy Spirit enters our heart, His coming there is the pledge and the earnest of Heaven! There is a difference between a pledge and an earnest and what I really mean is rather an earnest than a pledge. A pledge is taken back, but an earnest is retained. A man who has his wage to take at the end of the week, may get some earnest money in the middle of the week and, if his master is what he should be, that will be a pledge that he will get the rest. So the Holy Spirit is the Divine Person who virtually puts Heaven into us and makes us fit to be in the Heaven, which Christ has gone to prepare for us. What a mercy it is to have the witness of the Holy Spirit, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Heavenly Father—to have aspirations after holiness which we never had in our unregenerate state! All this is the pledge of Heaven and in having the pledge, we have practically the salvation itself. The Holy Spirit would not have come into our hearts and given us all these blessings if He had not meant to “perfect that which concerns us,” and to save us in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Salvation, then, is a present thing, in price, in promise, in principles and in pledge. But the important question for each of you to answer is—Have you obtained that salvation? If you have not, you are in a truly terrible condition, for you are “condemned already” because you have “not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” But if you have obtained this salvation, then you are indeed rich to all eternity! Perhaps you live in one poor room and have to work very hard for a livelihood, yet you are much richer than those emperors and kings who have much earthly pomp and state, but who are not the subjects of God’s Grace—for *you* are saved! The Lord has given you that salvation which can never be taken away from you. So rejoice in this salvation and, if you have little else to cover you, let this salvation be your royal apparel! Let this salvation load your table with heavenly dainties! Let this salvation smooth your path, however rough it may be, and cheer your heart, however great your trials may be!

So, this assurance means that salvation is a present thing.

Next, it teaches us that *salvation is obtained by faith*. “Your faith has saved you.” “But,” says someone, “Was it not the Lord Jesus Christ who saved her?” Yes, certainly it was, but do you see what Christ does? He is so fond of Faith that He takes the crown from His own head and puts it on the head of Faith, as He says to the woman, “Your faith has saved you.” Is that a safe thing for Christ to do? Oh, yes! Because Faith at once removes the crown from her own head and puts it back upon Christ’s, saying, “Not unto me, not unto me, but unto Your name be all the Glory.” Christ loves to crown Faith because Faith loves to crown Christ! As for boasting—Faith cannot tolerate that for a moment! She hurls it out of the window and will have nothing further to do with it. Our Savior speaks thus, “Your faith has saved you,” because He knows that it will be understood that Faith is only the connecting link with Himself—that He really works the salvation, but that the faith of the Believer is the means of obtaining it.

There are four things, concerning this faith which I want you to notice, and I will put them under the same letter that I used before, so that it may be the easier for you to remember them. First, this woman's faith was a *personal* faith—“Your faith has saved you.” O dear Friends, I implore you to give up all idea of being saved by anybody else's faith! You must believe in Jesus for yourself or you will be lost forever! What a dreadful lie it is when men stand up as sponsors for a child and promise and vow various things, none of which are within their power to perform! As to anything that anybody ever promised with regard to your soul, what can another person do for you in such a matter as that? The most earnest faith in your parents can never bring you to Heaven unless you, also, have faith in Jesus! There is a great blessing which may come to us through the faith of others, if they exercise it in prayer on our behalf, but, still, *salvation* can never come to us apart from our own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you”—not Peter's faith, nor James's faith, nor John's faith, but her own! And you, also, must have faith for yourself, or you will assuredly be lost! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” But if you do not personally believe on Him, you cannot be saved!

Notice, next, that this woman's faith was a *practical* faith. She was saved by faith, and not by works, but she was not saved by a faith which did not produce works. Think of her works—she washes the Master's feet with her tears and wipes them with the hairs of her head. She kisses them repeatedly and anoints them with her precious ointment. I may truly say of her, “She has done what she could.” All that her affection prompted, her devotion performed—for she had the faith which works by love—and if you, dear Friends, have a faith that never works for Christ, I beg you to get rid of it at once, for it will turn out to be a bastard faith! The faith that never kisses His feet is a faith that He will tread under His feet! The faith that never anoints Him is a faith that will have no fragrance in His esteem and He will not accept it. We are not saved by works and faith combined, much less by works alone, but, nevertheless, the faith which saves is not a barren faith—it *produces* the good fruit of love and service for Christ.

So this woman's faith was personal and practical. It was also a *penitent* faith. While she stood at Christ's feet, behind Him, her eyes showered tears upon them as she wept over her sin. I am always doubtful of the genuineness of a dry-eyed faith. The longer I live, the more I am afraid of those people who profess to leap into faith without any repentance! And there seem to be some, in these days, who do not believe in the old-fashioned sorrow for sin. I would rather see some men less confident than they are if they were more humbled on account of their past transgressions. This woman manifested a truly penitent faith.

And, once more, it was a *pure* faith—I use that word, *pure*, to help your memory. I mean that her faith was perfectly simple. She wept, but she did not trust in her weeping. She anointed Christ's feet with the ointment, but she did not rely upon her self-sacrifice. She kissed His feet, but she did not depend upon her kisses. Where was her trust all

placed? Why, upon Christ—and upon Him alone! I do not know that she had ever read the Old Testament. Certainly, she could not have read the New Testament, for it was not written then! She may not have known much about the Bible, but she knew Him who is the very sum and substance of the Bible! I have heard people talk about a Body of Divinity, but there never was but one in the highest sense of the term, and Jesus Christ is that Body of Divinity! He is, in the true sense, “the Word of God.” This woman had seen Him, she had learned to know Him—He had forgiven her sin and she had come into that house full of love to Him, full of trust in Him and now, from His own lips, she receives this gracious assurance, “Your faith has saved you.” It was faith in Him and in nothing else! There was not and there could not have been, in her case, anything to trust to but Christ. She was, in a very emphatic sense, a sinner. She had not set herself up as being a person of good character. There were, no doubt, scores of people in the city who could have borne lamentable evidence of her sinfulness. But she trusted herself absolutely to Jesus Christ, the sinners’ Savior, and she trusted Him alone—and so her faith was proved to be of that pure kind that saves all who exercise it. Let yours be like that, dear Friend—personal, practical, penitential and pure!

Further, upon this first point, note that *salvation may be a matter of assurance*. This woman had the assurance from Christ’s own lips, “Your faith has saved you.” Those of you who were at the Prayer Meeting here last Monday night, will remember that one of our Brothers, when he was giving an address, made you smile when he said, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life,” and then added, “h-a-s—that spells, ‘got it.’” “That is a strange mode of spelling which is not taught at the Board School, yet it is a heavenly way of spelling and it is perfectly correct. “H-a-s—that spells, ‘got it.’” If you have the blessing of salvation, there is a possibility of knowing that you have it. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” He has got it! He has got it now!

“I would believe it,” one says, “if Jesus Christ spoke to me and said so.” My dear Friend, He *has* said it in His Word! Is that Word a lie, or is it true? If it is true, then what more do you need? Christ has written it in His Word and I like a thing that is written even better than that which is spoken. You know how a man says, when he wants a guarantee about a bargain, “Give it to me in writing, for some people will swear that they never said what we heard them say, so give it to me in black and white.” Well, here it is in black and white—“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” And again, “There is therefore now”—“*now*,” mark you—“no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” And yet again, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now, cannot you also say, “got it”?

“Oh, but!” says someone, “I need *evidence* that it is so.” Very well, you shall have evidence! You shall have the Witness of the Spirit who has renewed you. You shall have the witness of your changed life. You shall have the witness of your new character, but, first of all, is not Christ’s Word sufficient for you? Is not Christ’s written Word enough? Is not this Book, which you believe to have been Inspired by the Holy Spirit and

which reveals the Word of the Lord, enough for you? It is enough for me! If all the men in the world were to come, one after another, after I had read something in the Bible—and they were all to say, in their different languages, “That is a lie,” I would not believe it an atom the less! And suppose they were all to stand up and say, “It is true”? I would reply, “Of course it is! But I do not need *your* word to confirm what Christ has said.” I am perfectly satisfied if He has said it. And there it stands—and all the powers of Hell cannot prevail to overthrow it! Here is the solid rock for a soul to rest upon! Christ says, at this moment, to everyone who believes in Him and trusts in His blood and righteousness, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

II. So we come to the latter part of our text, which is A DISMISSION—“Go in peace.” What did our Lord mean by saying this?

I think He meant, first, “Leave this place of controversy and go in peace.” Did you notice that it was when those who sat at the meal with Him began to say within themselves, “Who is this that also forgives sins?” that He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace”? I see the black looks of those Jews, those Pharisees, round about Simon’s table. Why, they are as sour as vinegar and full of all kinds of skepticism! So the Savior says to the woman, “Go home, good Soul, away from all of them.” So, dear Friends, whenever you meet with a book that is full of skepticism and unbelief—especially you who have lately found the Savior—you had better throw it away! “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Unbelief will be no help to you—your faith has already saved you—what more do you need? You have the assurance within your own soul that you are saved—do not go anywhere, or do anything to damage that assurance! I do not think it is worthwhile to go through a horse pond and get covered with filth, just for the pleasure of being washed afterwards!

It may be that some strong man, like another Samson, may have to go in among the Philistines and pull their temple down about their ears, but poor Hannah could not do that, and those who are like her—the women of a sorrowful spirit—had better go home and get out of the way of that set of wranglers! They may even be wrangling professors, squabbling about this doctrine and that—and perhaps not understanding any of them properly—so the Savior says to you, “You have the assurance of salvation; do not let anybody worry you out of that. Go in peace.” This is what the Apostle means when he says, “Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations.”

Then, next, I think our Savior meant His words to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace,” to be *a kind of dismissing of her case from the Court*. Here is Simon, in thought, accusing her and thinking that she ought not to be permitted to come and touch the Master’s feet. And here is the Lord Jesus Christ not only becoming a pleader for her, but deciding the case in her favor as He says to her, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” This was in effect saying, “Your case is dismissed; there is nothing against you. The Court clears you; go home, good Soul.” What a mercy it is when the Lord speaks thus to anyone! “Who shall lay

anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Christ has dismissed us from the Court of Justice, so let us “go in peace.”

May not our Lord also have meant something more than we see upon the surface of these words? May He not have meant, “*Go home in peace to your daily avocations*”? Ah, she had done a deal of mischief in that home of hers by her sin, for there never was a fallen woman who brought a blessing to her family while she lived in sin. And now that the Savior has given to her the assurance of salvation, He says to her, “Go home, and attend to your ordinary household duties. Go and act as a woman should. Fulfill your part as a mother, or a daughter, or a servant, or whatever your calling may be. Go in peace.”

Do you not also think that this *dismissing word would last her as long as she lived*—and that all her life, she would seem to hear the Savior saying to her, “Go in peace”? Perhaps she was to go upstairs and lie there ill—but she was to “go in peace.” Possibly she was to come down and to confront opposition and persecution—if so, she was still to hear this message, “Go in peace.” I think that word would come to her every morning as soon as she awoke. And when she was about to close her eyes and go to sleep, she would still hear it. With such a gracious message as that, she could even go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and “fear no evil.” It may be that is just what the Lord meant it for—that when she came to die—and she may have died a martyr’s death, we cannot tell—at any rate, whenever she came to die, this message was ringing in her ears, “Go in peace.”

The practical point that I want to bring home to you Christian people, to you who are saved, is this. Beloved Friends, as you go to your families, as you go through life, as you go into eternity, I pray you to “go in peace.” It is Heaven begun below to possess “the peace of God, which passes all understanding.” Peace should be the continual portion of all Believers. This is what the angels sang when our Lord Jesus appeared on earth, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men.” And as it was at the beginning of our Savior’s life, so it was at the end, for this was our Lord’s legacy to all His disciples, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.” That which gives one of His titles even to God Himself—for He is called “the God of Peace”—should be very precious to your soul.

Peace is the fit result of what the Savior has done for you. Has He forgiven you? Then you have peace. Has He saved you? Oh, then, feel an inward peace which none can take from you! Did He die for you? Then you can never die, in the full meaning of the word, so be at rest about that matter! Has He risen for you? Then, because He lives, you shall live also! Therefore, let not your heart be troubled, but be at peace. Will He come again to receive you unto Himself? Oh, then, let your peace be like a river flowing from the very Throne of God!

This peace within your heart is the blessed fruit of the Spirit of Peace. Where the Spirit of God is, there must be peace, for He is the Sacred Dove. The fruit of the Spirit within us should be “quietness and assurance forever.” Do not despise this priceless gift of peace, but, as saved souls, covet more and more of it. Do you know what I mean by talking thus to you? Suppose you are thinking to yourself, “Alas, I am going home to an ungodly husband”? Never mind, dear wife, “go in peace.” “Oh, but, tomorrow I have to go out among ungodly men.” Never mind—“go in peace.” Do not go among them disturbed and fluttered, but sing to yourself softly—

“My heart is resting, O my God!”

“Go in peace.” Perhaps you are going to the sickbed of one of your dearest friends. Possibly there is one at home who is so depressed in spirit as to depress you, too. Never mind! “Go in peace.” It will strengthen you to have your own heart at peace.

I remember once seeing an accident on a hill. I feared that a man had broken his leg and I know that someone ran to fetch a doctor. And when he came, to my surprise, he walked coolly up to where the man was. If I had been sent for, I would have run myself out of breath to get to the poor man! And when I reached him, I would have been all of a tremble, and would not have been able to do anything properly. But when the doctor heard that there was a man with his leg broken, he walked quietly to the spot and the result was that he was able to do his work properly. Our Lord Jesus Christ was never in a hurry. It is marvelous to contemplate the leisure of the greatest Worker who ever lived! He always moved along with a holy calm and quiet dignity and He, therefore, did everything well. Do you likewise—“go in peace”—for it shall be your strength. Sometimes, your strength is to sit still and, always, the joy of the Lord shall be your strength.

This is the way in which you are to glorify God in your life—by going in peace. When this woman went back to her home—that same woman who had been such a poor, trembling, broken, bruised reed, because of her sin—those who knew her enquired, “What has happened to Mary?”—if that was her name. I do not know. “What has happened to her? Why, she looks so placid, so calm, she is not like the same woman that she used to be.” I have no doubt that she was rather quick-tempered, for most very loving spirits are like that. “But now,” say her friends, “she takes things so differently. She is so still, quiet and restful.” Just so—and then they took knowledge of her, that she had been with Jesus, and had learned of Him, for that was His style and His manner, also!

Ah, dear Hearts, if Christ has saved you, you have the best reason in all the world for being the quietest, happiest people who ever lived! One said, one day, to a person who had spoken of his salvation in tones of assurance, “You ought to be the happiest man that lives.” And he answered, “So I am.” It was well known that he was very poor, that he did not know where he would get a second coat for his back, but, then, he thought that he did not *need* a second coat till he had worn out the first one! They said that he did not know where he would get his next break-

fast, but he had had his supper, so he was quite content to wait till God should give him his breakfast. He had such simple faith in God that though he was so very poor, yet he said he was the happiest man in all the world!

Go in for that, Beloved, for surely you have a right to it if you are a believer in Jesus! Your greatest sorrows are over, your heaviest burdens Christ has carried, the most terrible disaster that could ever happen to you has been averted by Him, the most fearful calamity that you once had cause to dread can never come to you! You are an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ! You shall have all you really need in this life and you shall have the Heaven of God in the life to come! The supreme act of God, by which He eternally blesses, has already been performed upon you! The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have all united to bless you—and the Covenant of Peace is signed, sealed, ratified and you must and shall conquer at the last! So, “Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid,” but say to yourself—

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

God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: EPHESIANS 2.

Verse 1. *And you has He quickened.* You, who were dead by nature, are now made alive unto God by the Holy Spirit. If you had nothing else to think of, all day long, but just these five words, they might suffice to lift you up to the very heights of grateful adoration of your quickening Lord—“And you has He quickened.”

1. *Who were dead in trespasses and sins.* These were your grave clothes, or the charnel-house in which you would have continued to lie if the quickening power of God the Holy Spirit had not brought you out into newness of life!

2. *Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.* This is what happened to us all in our unregenerate state—we were carried along by the world, loving what it loved, judging from its views and acting according to its maxims. No, worse than that, the devil himself had dominion over us, as he had over the rest of the world. “The prince of the power of the air” was the spirit that worked in us as well as in the rest of “the children of disobedience.” What a glorious deliverance it was to be saved from the power of death and the dominion of Satan—and to be made partakers of everlasting life!

3. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* That is the highest point to which human nature can attain—left to itself, it makes us “children of wrath.” Even those who are now most assuredly the children

of God were once the children of wrath! There was no difference, in that respect, between them and the rest of mankind. It is only the marvelous mercy and Grace of God which have made us to differ from our fellow creatures who are still "dead in trespasses and sins."

4, 5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ.* Again let us praise the Lord with all our hearts for what He has done for us. It is truly wonderful that He should have loved us when we were "dead in trespasses and sins"—with no feeling, no holy desire, no repentance—while indifference, heartlessness, powerlessness covered everything! We were dead in sin, yet He loved us, and therefore it was that He "quickened us together with Christ."

5. *(By Grace you are saved).* Not by human merit, not by the energy of our own will, but, "by Grace you are saved."

6. *And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* We are not only alive, you see, but we are elevated into the highest position of the new life—made to live *with* Christ and *in* Christ—made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

7, 8. *That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by Grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.* Both the salvation and the faith that makes it ours are the gift of God! Twice over the Apostle tells us that we are saved by Grace, yet men will not believe it. They will, somehow or other, get away from this humbling, but true and precious Doctrine. They will contrive, by some method or other, to squeeze in their own works and their own will—and so rob Christ, if not of His crown, yet of some of its brightest jewels.

9, 10. *Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship.* If we have good works, as I trust we have, yet even *they* are the production of God's Grace! Praise and glory for them belong to Him, and not to us—"For we are His workmanship."

10. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.* This is the great objective of our election—we are elected that we may be holy and that we may walk in *ordained* good works—who can rightly quarrel with such a Divine Purpose as this?

11, 12. *Therefore remember that you, being in time past, Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* That is the condition of every unbeliever at this time—"having no hope, and without God in the world." Mr. Hume once made the remark that he knew many Christians who were afraid to die, but he was not. The Christian man, to whom he said this, pointed to an ox grazing in the meadow and said, "You have reached about as high as that bullock has, for he, also, is not afraid to die. But pray tell, Mr. Hume," enquired the good man, "have you any hope after death?" At that question, the philosopher

shook his head, for he knew nothing of such a hope as that! The utmost point he could reach was, by indifference, to raise himself above fear. “Having no hope,” is a true description of every man who has no faith in our crucified and risen Savior.

13. *But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.* That is the great attracting power which draws us from our natural distance and brings us into nearness to God! How we ought to prize that precious blood which does so much for us! It cleanses us from sin. It pleads for us before the Throne of God and here, you see, having made a way of access for us, it also conducts us along that way and brings us near to God.

14. *For He is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us.* There are now no privileges for the Jew from which the Christian is shut out, for Christ “has made both one.” There is now neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, for all Believers are one in Christ Jesus.

15-22. *Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two, one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy Temple in the Lord: in whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* May we realize that the Holy Spirit is inhabiting His own Church at this moment and, especially, may all of us who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, realize our own position in that spiritual Temple which is the “habitation of God through the Spirit,” for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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NO. 1162

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 15, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Your faith has saved you.”
Luke 7:50; Luke 18:42.***

I do not remember that this expression is found anywhere else in the Word of God. It is found in these two places in the Gospel by Luke, but not in any other Gospel. Luke also gives us, in two other places, a kindred and almost identical expression, “Your faith has made you whole.” This you will find used in reference to the woman whose issue of blood had been staunched, (Luke 8:48), and in connection with that one of the 10 lepers who returned to praise the Savior for the cure he had received (Luke 17:19). You will find the expression, “Your faith has made you whole” once in Matthew and twice in Mark, but you find it twice in Luke and, together with the twice repeated words of our text, “Your faith has saved you.”

Are we wrong in supposing that the long discussions of Luke with the Apostle Paul led him not only to receive the great doctrine of Justification by Faith which Paul so plainly taught and to attach to faith that high importance which Paul always did, but also to have a peculiar memory for those expressions which were used by the Savior in which faith was manifestly honored to a very high degree? Albeit Luke would not have written anything which was not true for the sake of maintaining the grand doctrine so clearly taught by the Apostle, yet I think his full conviction of it would help to recall to his memory more vividly those words of the Lord Jesus from which it could be more clearly learned or illustrated.

Be that as it may, we know that Luke was Inspired and that he has written neither more nor less than what the Savior actually said. Therefore we may be quite sure that the expression, “Your faith has saved you,” fell from the Redeemer’s lips and we are bound to accept it as the pure, unquestionable Truth of God. And we may repeat it, ourselves, without fear of misleading others, or trenching upon any other Truth. I mention this because the other day I heard an earnest friend say that faith did *not* save us, at which announcement I was rather surprised. The Brother, it is true, qualified the expression, and showed that he meant to make it clear that Jesus saved us—and not our own *act* of faith.

I agreed with what he meant, but not with what he said, for he had no right to use an expression which was in flat contradiction to the distinct declaration of the Savior, “Your faith has saved you.” We are not to strain any expression to make it mean more than the Speaker intended—and it is well to guard words from being misunderstood. But on the other hand, we may not go quite so far as absolutely to make negative a declaration of the Lord Himself, however we may mean to qualify it. It is to be qualified if

you like, but it is *not* to be contradicted, for there it stands, “Your faith has saved you.”

Now we shall, this morning, by God’s help, inquire *what was it that saved* the two persons whose history will come before us? It was their faith. Our second inquiry will be *what kind of faith was it* which saved them? And then thirdly, *what does this teach us in reference to faith?*

I. WHAT WAS IT THAT SAVED the two persons whose history we are about to consider? In the penitent woman’s case, her great sins were forgiven her and she became a woman of extraordinary love—she loved much, for she had much forgiven. I feel, in thinking of her, something like an eminent father of the Church who said, “This narrative is not one which I can well preach upon. I had far rather weep over it in secret.” That woman’s tears. That woman’s unbraided tresses wiping the Savior’s feet. Her coming so near to her Lord in such company. Facing such proud cavaliers with such fond and resolute intent of doing honor to Jesus. Verily, among those that have loved the Savior, there has not lived a greater than this woman who was a sinner!

Yet, for all that, Jesus did not say to her, “Your *love* has saved you.” Love is a golden apple of the tree of which faith is the root, and the Savior took care not to ascribe to the *fruit* that which belongs only to the root. This loving woman was also right notable for her repentance. Mark you well those tears. Those were no tears of sentimental emotion, but a rain of holy heart-sorrow for sin. She had been a sinner and she knew it. She remembered, well, her multitude of iniquities and she felt each sin deserved a tear—and there she stood weeping herself away because she had offended her dear Lord. Yet it is not said, “Your *repentance* has saved you.” Her being saved caused her repentance, but repentance did not save her. Sorrow for sin is an early token of Divine Grace within the heart, yet it is nowhere said, “Your sorrow for sin has saved you.”

She was a woman of great humility. She came behind the Lord and washed His feet, as though she felt herself only able to be a menial servant to perform works of drudgery, and to find a pleasure in so serving her Lord. Her reverence for Him had reached a very high point. She regarded Him as a king and she did what has sometimes been done for monarchs by zealous subjects—she kissed the feet of her heart’s Lord—who well deserved the homage. Her loyal reverence led her to kiss the feet of her Lord, the Sovereign of her soul, but I do not find that Jesus said, “Your humility has saved you.” Or that He said, “Your reverence has saved you.” He put the crown upon the head of her *faith* and said expressly, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

In the case of the blind man to whom my second text refers—this man was notable for his earnestness. He cried, and cried aloud, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” He was notable for his importunity, for they who would have silenced him rebuked him in vain. He cried so much the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” But I do not discover that Christ attributed his salvation to his prayers, earnest and importunate though they were. It is *not* written, “Your prayers have saved you.” It *is* written, “Your faith has saved you.” He was a man of considerable and clear

knowledge, and he had a distinct apprehension of the true Character of Christ—he scorned to call Him Jesus of Nazareth, as the crowd did, but he proclaimed Him, “Son of David.”

And in the presence of that throng he dared avow his full conviction that the humble Man, dressed in a peasant’s garb, who was threading His way through the throng, was none other than the royal heir of the royal line of Judah, and was, indeed, the fulfiller of the type of David, the expected Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Son of David! Yet I do not find that Jesus attributed his salvation to his knowledge, to his clear apprehension, or to his distinct avowal of His Messiahship. No, He said to him, “Your *faith* has saved you,” laying the entire stress of his salvation upon his faith.

This being so in both cases, we are led to ask, what is the reason for it? What is the reason why, in every case, in every man that is saved, *faith* is the great instrument of salvation? Is it not, first, because God has a right to choose what way of salvation He pleases, and He has chosen that men should be saved, not by their *works*, but by their *faith* in His dear Son? God has a right to give His mercy to *whom* He pleases. He has a right to give it *when* He pleases. He has a right to give it *in what mode* He pleases. And know this, O sons of men, that the decree of Heaven is immutable and stands fast forever—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned.”

To this there shall be no exception! Jehovah has made the rule and it shall stand. If you would have salvation, “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” But if not, salvation is utterly impossible to you. This is the appointed way. Follow it because it leads to Heaven. Refuse it and you must perish! This is God’s sovereign determination, “He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.” Jehovah’s will be done! If this is His method of Grace, let us not kick against it! If He determines that faith shall save, so let it be. Only, Good Master, create and increase our faith!

But while I attribute this to the sovereign choice of God, I do see, for Scripture plainly indicates it, a reason in the nature of things why faith should thus have been selected. The Apostle tells us it is of faith that it might be of Grace. If the condition of salvation had been either feeling or works, then such is the depravity of our nature that we should inevitably have attributed the merit of salvation to our works or our feelings! We would have claimed some *credit* for our salvation! It matters not how low the condition may have been, man would have still considered that there was something *required* of him, that something *came* from him, and that, therefore, he might take some credit to himself.

But no man, unless he is demented, ever claims credit for believing the Truth of God! If he hears that which convinces him, he is convinced. And if he is persuaded, he is persuaded—and he feels that it could not well be otherwise. He attributes the effect to the Truth and the influence used. He does not go about and boast because he believes what is so clear to him that he cannot doubt it. If he did so boast of *spiritual* faith, all thinking

men would say at once, "Why do you boast in the fact of having believed, and especially when this believing would never have been yours if it had not been for the force of the Truth of God which convinced you, and the working of the Spirit of God which constrained you to believe?"

"Faith is chosen by Christ to wear the crown of salvation because—let me contradict myself—it *refuses* to wear the crown. It was Christ that saved the penitent woman! It was Christ that saved that blind beggar! But *He* takes the crown from His own head, so dear is Faith to Him, and *He* puts the diadem upon the head of *Faith* and says, "Your faith has saved you," because He is absolutely certain that Faith will never take the glory to herself, but will again lay the crown at His pierced feet, and say, "Not unto myself be glory, for You have done it! You are the Savior, and You alone."

In order, then, to illustrate and to protect the interests of Sovereign Grace, and to shut out all vain glorying, God has been pleased to make the way of salvation to be by *faith*, and by no other means! Nor is this all. It is clear to everyone who chooses to think that in order to the renewal of the heart, which is the chief part of salvation, it is well to begin with faith, because faith, once rightly exercised, becomes the mainspring of the entire nature. The man *believes* that he is forgiven. What then? He feels *gratitude* to Him who has pardoned him. Feeling gratitude, it is but natural that he should hate that which displeases his Savior—and should *love* intensely that which is pleasing to Him who saved him—so that faith operates upon the entire nature and becomes the instrument in the hand of the regenerating Spirit by which *all* the faculties of the soul are put into the right condition!

As a man thinks in his heart so is he, but his thinking comes out of his believing! If he is put right in his believing, then his understanding will operate upon his affections and all the other powers of his manhood—and old things will pass away and all things will become new through the wonderful effect of the faith—which is of the operation of God. Faith works by love and through love it purifies the soul—and the man becomes a new creature. Do you see, then, the wisdom of God? He may choose what way He will, but He chooses a way which at once guards His Grace from our felonious boasts, and, on the other hand, produces in us a holiness which otherwise never would have been there! Faith in salvation, however, is not the meritorious *cause*. Nor is it in any sense the *salvation* itself.

Faith saves us just as the mouth saves from hunger. If we are hungry, bread is the real cure for hunger, but still it would be right to say that *eating* removes hunger, seeing that the bread, itself, could not benefit us unless the mouth should eat it. Faith is the soul's mouth whereby the hunger of the heart is removed. Christ is also the bronze serpent lifted up—all the healing virtue is in Him—yet no healing virtue comes out of the bronze serpent to any who will not look. So the *looking* is rightly considered to be the act which saves.

True, in the deepest sense, it is Christ lifted up who saves—to Him be all the glory—but without looking to Him you cannot be saved, so that—

"There is life in a look,"

as well as life in the Savior to whom you look! Nothing is yours until you appropriate it. If you are enriched, the thing appropriated enriches you. Yet it is not incorrect but strictly right to say it is the *appropriation* of the blessing which makes you rich. Faith is the hand of the soul. Stretched out, it lays hold of the salvation of Christ—and so by faith we are saved. “Your faith has saved you.” I need not dwell longer on this point. It is self-evident from the text that faith is the great means of salvation.

II. WHAT KIND OF FAITH WAS IT that saved these people? I will mention, first, the essential *agreements*, and then, secondly, the *differentia*, or the points in which this faith differed in its *external* manifestations in the two cases. In the instances of the penitent woman and the blind beggar, their faith was fixed, alone, in Jesus. You cannot discover anything floating in their faith in Jesus which adulterated it—it was unmixed faith in Him. The woman pressed forward to *Him*—her tears fell on *Him*—her ointment was for *Him*. Her unloosed tresses were a towel for *His* feet—she cared for no one else, not even for the disciples whom she respected for His sake. Her whole spirit and soul were absorbed in Him. He could save her. He could blot out her sins. She believed Him and she did it unto Him.

The same was the case with that blind man. He had no thought of any ceremonies to be performed by priests. He had no idea of any medicine which might be given him by physicians. His cry was, “Son of David, Son of David.” The only notice he took of others was to disregard them and still to cry, “Son of David, Son of David.” “What will you that I shall do unto you?” was the Lord’s question. And it answered to the desire of the blind man’s soul, for he knew that if anything were done it must be done by the Son of David.

It is essential that our faith must rest alone on Jesus. Mix anything with Christ and you are undone. If your faith shall stand with one foot upon the rock of His merits and the other foot upon the sand of your own duties, it will fall and great will be the fall, too! Build wholly on the Rock, for if so much as a corner of the edifice shall rest on anything beside, it will ensure the ruin of the whole—

**“None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”**

All true faith is alike in this respect.

The faith of these two was alike in its confession of unworthiness. What did she mean by standing behind Him? What did her tears mean, her ever flowing tears, but that she felt unworthy to draw near to Jesus? And what did the beggar’s cry mean, “Have mercy on me”? Note the stress he lays upon it. “Have *mercy* on me.” He does not claim the cure by merit, nor ask it as a reward. He appealed to *mercy*. Now I care not whose faith it is, whether it is that of David in his bitter cries of the 51st Psalm, or whether it is that of Paul in his highest exaltation upon being without condemnation through Christ—there is *always* in connection with true faith a thorough and deep sense that it is *mercy*, mercy alone, which saves us from the wrath to come.

Dear Hearer, do not deceive yourself! Faith and boasting are as opposite to one another as the two poles. If you come before Christ with your

righteousness in your hands, you come without faith! And if you come with faith you must also come with confession of sin—for true faith always walks hand in hand with a deep sense of guilt before the Most High. This is so in every case. Their faith was alike, moreover, in defying and conquering opposition. Little do we know the inward struggles of the penitent as she crossed the threshold of Simon's house. "He will repel you," the stern, cold Pharisee will say, "Get out of here, you whore! How dare you defile the doors of honest men." But whatever may happen she passes through the door. She comes to where the feet of the Savior are stretched out towards the entrance as He is reclining at the table—and there she stands.

Simon glanced at her—he thought his glance would scare her off—but her love to Christ was too well rooted to be withered by him. No doubt he made many signs of his displeasure and showed that he was horrified at such a creature being anywhere near him! But she took no notice of him. Her Lord was there and she felt safe. Timid as a dove, she trembled not while He was near. But she returned no defiant glances for Simon's haughty looks! Her eyes were occupied with weeping. She did not turn aside to demand an explanation of his unkind motions, for her lips were all engrossed with kissing those dear feet. Her Lord, her Lord, was all to her! She overcame through faith in Him and held her ground. She did not leave the house till He dismissed her with, "Go in peace."

It was the same with the blind man. He said, "Son of David, have mercy on me." They cried, "Hush! Why these clamors, blind beggar? His eloquence is music, do not interrupt Him. Never Man spoke as He is speaking. Every tone rings like the harps of the angels. Hush! How dare you spoil His discourse?" But over and above them all went up the importunate prayer, "Son of David, have mercy upon me," and he prevailed. All true faith is opposed. If your faith is never tried, it is not born of the race of the Church militant. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith," but it is indicated in that very declaration that there must be *something to overcome* and that faith must wage war for its existence!

Once more, the faith of these two persons was alike in being openly avowed. I will not say that the avowal took the same form in both, for it did not—but still it was equally open. There is the Savior and there comes the weeping penitent. She loves Him. Is she ashamed to say so? It may bring her reproach. It will certainly rake up the old reproaches against her, for she has been a sinner. Never mind what she has *been*, nor who may be present to see her. She loves her Lord and she will show it. She will bring the ointment and she will anoint His feet, even in the presence of Pharisees, Pharisees who would say, "Is this one of the disciples of Christ? A pretty convert to boast of! A fine conquest this, for His kingdom! A harlot becomes a disciple! What next and what next?"

She must have known and felt all that, but still there was no concealment. She loved her Lord and she would avow it. And so in the very house of the Pharisee, there being no other opportunity so convenient, she comes forward and without words, but with actions far more eloquent than words, she says, "I love Him. These tears shall show it. This oint-

ment shall diffuse the knowledge of it, as its sweet perfume fills the room. And every lock of my hair shall be a witness that I am my Lord's and He is mine." She avowed her faith.

And so did the blind man. He did *not* sit there and say, "I know He is the Son of David, but I must not say it." They said, some of them contemptuously, and others indifferently, "It is Jesus of Nazareth." But he will not have it so. "You Son of David," says he! And loud above their noise I hear him cry like a herald proclaiming the King, "Son of David." Why, Sirs, it seems to me he was exalted to a high office! He became the herald of *the* King and proclaimed Him, and this belongs to a high officer of State in our country! The blind beggar showed great decision and courage. He cried, in effect, "Son of David You are Son of David! I proclaim You Son of David! You shall be proclaimed, whoever may deny it! Only turn Your eyes and have mercy upon me."

Are there any of you here who have a faith in Christ which you are ashamed of? I also am ashamed of *you*—and so, also, will Christ be ashamed of you when He comes in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him! Ashamed to claim that you are honest? Then I think you must live in bad company, where to be a rogue is to be famous. And if you are ashamed to say, "I love my Lord," I think you are courting the friendship of Christ's *enemies*, and what can you be but an enemy yourself? If you love Him, say it! Put on your Master's regimentals! Enlist in His army and come forward and declare, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Their faith was alike, then, in these four particulars—it was fixed alone on Him. It was accompanied with a sense of unworthiness. It struggled and conquered opposition. And it openly declared itself before all comers.

By your patience I shall now try to show the *differences* between the same faith as to its manifestations. First, the woman's faith acted like a woman's faith. She showed tender love and the affections are the glory and the strength of women. They were certainly such in her. Her love was intense, womanly love—and she poured it out upon the Savior. The man's faith acted like a man's in its determination and strength. He persisted in crying, "You Son of David." There was as much that was masculine about his faith as there was of the feminine in the penitent's faith—and everything should be in its order and after its season.

It would not have been meet for the woman's voice to be heard so boldly above the crowd. It would have seemed out of place for a man's tears to have been falling upon the Savior's feet. Either one or the other might have been justifiable, but they would not have been equally suitable. But now they are as suitable as they are excellent. The woman acts as a godly woman should. The man like a godly man. Never let us measure ourselves by other people. Do not, my Brother, say, "I could not shed tears." Who asked you to do so? A man's tears are mostly within and so let them be—it is ours to use other modes of showing our love. And, my Sister, do not say, "I could not act as a herald and publicly proclaim the King." I doubt not you could do so if there were need, but your tears in secret, and those wordless tokens of love to Jesus which you are rendering are not less ac-

ceptable because they are not the same as a man would give. No, they are the *better* because they are more suitable to you. Do not think that all the flowers of God's garden must bloom in the same color or shed the same perfume.

Notice, next, that the woman acted like a woman who had been a sinner. What more meet than tears? What fitter place for her than at the Savior's feet? She had been a sinner—she acts like a sinner. But the man who had been a beggar acted like a beggar. What does a beggar do but clamor for alms? Did he not beg gloriously? Never one plied the trade more earnestly than he! "Son of David," he said, "have mercy on me." I should not have liked to have seen the beggar sitting there weeping. Nor to have heard the penitent woman shouting! Neither would have been natural or seemly. Faith works according to the condition, circumstances, sex, or ability of the person in whom it lives—it best shows itself in its own form—not in an artificial manner—but in the natural outflow of the *heart*.

Observe, also, that the woman did not speak. There is something very beautiful in the golden silence of the woman which was richer than her silver speech would have been. But the man was not silent. He spoke. He spoke out and his words were excellent. I venture to say that the woman's silence spoke as powerfully as the man's voice. Of the two I think I find more eloquence in the falling tears and unbraided hair wiping the Savior's feet than in the cry, "Son of David, have mercy on me." Yet both forms of expression were equally good. The silence best in the woman with her tears and the speech best in the man with his confident trust in Christ.

Do not think it necessary, dear Friend, in order to serve, to do other people's work. What your own hand finds to do, do it with all your might. If you think you can never honor Christ till you enter a pulpit, it may be just possible that you will afterwards honor Him best by getting *out* of it as quickly as you can! There have been persons well qualified to adorn the religion of Christ with a lap stone on their lap who have thought it necessary to mount a pulpit—and in that position have been a hindrance to Christ and His Gospel. Sister, there is a sphere for you. Keep to it. Let none push you out of it. But do not think there is nothing else to do except the work which some other woman does. God has called her, let her follow God's voice—He calls you in another direction, follow His voice there. You will be most like that other excellent woman when you are most different from her. I mean, you will be most truly *obedient* to Christ, as she is, if you pursue quite another path.

There was a difference, again, in this. The woman gave—she brought her ointment. The man did the opposite—he begged. There are various ways of showing love to Christ which are equally excellent tokens of faith. To give Him her ointment and give Him her tears, and give Him the accommodation of her hair was well. It showed her faith, which worked by love. To give nothing, for the beggar had nothing to give, but simply to *honor* Christ by appealing to His bounty and His royal power, was best in the beggar. I can commend neither above the other, for I doubt not that both the penitent and the beggar gave Christ their whole *heart*—and what more does Jesus ask from anyone? The thoughts of the woman and the

thoughts of the beggar were different, too. Her thoughts were mainly about the past and her sins—therefore her tears. To be forgiven, that was her point.

His thoughts were mainly about the present and did not so much concern his sin as his deficiency, infirmity and inability—and so he came with different thoughts. I do not doubt that he thought of sin, as I dare say she, also, thought of infirmity. But in her case the thought of sin was uppermost and therefore the tears. In his the infirmity was uppermost and therefore the prayer, “Lord, that I might receive my sight.” Do not, then, compare *your* experience with that of another. God is a God of wonderful variety! The painter who repeats himself in many pictures has a scarcity of conception, but the master artist scarcely ever sketches the same thing a second time. There is a boundless variety in genius and God, who transcends all the genius of men, creates an infinite variety in the works of His Divine Grace. Look not, therefore, for likeness everywhere.

The woman, it is said, loved much, and she proved her love by her acts. But the man loved much, too, and showed *his* love by actions which were most admirable, for he followed Jesus in the way, glorifying God. Yet they were different actions. I do not find that he brought any box of ointment, or anointed Christ’s feet. Neither do I find that she literally followed Christ in the way, though no doubt she followed Him in spirit. Neither did she, with a loud voice, glorify God as the restored blind beggar did. There are differences of operation, but the same Lord. There are differences of capacity and differences of calling, but the same Lord. By this reflection I hope you will be enabled to deliver yourselves from the fault of judging one, by another, and that you will look for the same faith—but not for the same development of it.

So interesting is this subject that I want you to follow me while I very rapidly sketch the woman’s case and then the man’s, not mentioning the differences, one by one, but allowing the two pictures to impress themselves separately upon your minds. Observe this woman. What a strange compound she was. She was consciously unworthy and therefore she wept, yet she drew very near to Jesus. Her acts were those of nearness and communion—she washed His feet with her tears, she wiped them with the hairs of her head—and meanwhile she kissed them again and again. “She has not ceased,” said Christ, “to kiss My feet.”

A sense of unworthiness and the enjoyment of communion were mixed together! Oh, Divine faith which blends the two! She was shamefaced, yet was she very bold. She dared not look the Master in the face as yet—she approached Him from behind. Yet she dared face Simon and remain in his room, whether he frowned or not. I have known some who have blushed in the face of Christ who would not have blushed before a judge, nor at the stake, if they had been dragged there for Christ’s sake. Such a woman was Anne Askew, humble before her Master, but like a lioness before the foes of God! The penitent woman wept, she was a mourner, yet she had a deep joy. I know she had, for every kiss meant joy. Every time she lifted that blessed foot and kissed it, her heart leaped with the transport of love. Her heart knew bitterness for sin, but it also knew the sweetness of par-

don. What a mixture! Faith made the compound. She was humble—never one more so—yet see how she takes upon herself to deal with the King, Himself!

Brothers and Sisters, you and I are satisfied, and well we may be, if we may wash the *saints'* feet, but she was not. Oh, the courage of this woman! She will pass through the outer court and get right to the King's own Throne—and there pay her homage, in her own person—to His Person, and wash the feet of the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God! I know not that an angel ever performed such a service, and therefore this woman takes preeminence as having done for Jesus what no other being ever did! I have said that she was silent, and yet she spoke. I will add she was despised, but Christ set her high in honor and made Simon, who despised her, to feel little in her presence! I will also add she was a great sinner, but she was a great saint. Her great sinnership, when pardoned, became the raw stuff out of which great saints are made by the mighty power of God.

Finally she was saved by faith, so says the text, but if ever there was a case in which James could not have said, "Shall faith save you?" and in which He must have said, "Here is one that shows her faith by her works," it was the case of this woman! There she is before you! Imitate her faith, itself, though you cannot actually copy her deeds! Now look at the man. He was blind, but he could see a great deal more than the Pharisees who said they could see. Blind, but his inward optics saw the King in His beauty—saw the splendor of His Throne—and he confessed it. He was a beggar, but he had a royal soul and a strong sovereign determination which was not to be put down. He had the kind of mind which dwells in men who are princes among their fellows!

He is not to be stopped by disciples, no, nor by Apostles! He has begun to pray and pray he will till he obtains the blessing he seeks! Note well that what he knew, he avowed. What he desired, he pleaded for. And what he needed he understood. "Lord, that I might receive my sight." He was clear about his needs and clear about the only Person who could supply them. What he asked for he *expected*, for when he was bid to come he evidently expected that his sight would be restored, for we are told by another Evangelist that he cast away his beggar's cloak! He felt he should never need to beg again! He was sure his eyes were about to be opened!

Lastly, what he received he was grateful for, for as soon as he could walk without a guide he took Christ to be His guide and followed Him in the way, glorifying Him. Look on both pictures. May you have the shadows and the lights of both, as far as they would tend to make you, also, another and distinct picture by the same Artist, whose hand, alone, can produce such wonders.

III. WHAT DOES THIS TEACH US IN REFERENCE TO FAITH? It teaches us, first, that faith is all important. Do, I pray you, my Hearers, see whether you have the precious faith, the faith of God's elect! Remember there are not many things in Scripture called *precious*. There is the precious blood and there goes with it the precious faith. If you have not that, you are lost! If you have not that, you are neither fit to live nor fit to

die! If you have not that, your eternal destiny will be infinite despair! But if you have faith, though it is as a grain of mustard seed, you are saved. "Your faith has saved you."

Learn, next, that the main matter in faith is the person whom you believe. I do not say *in* whom you believe. That would be true, but not quite so scriptural an expression. Paul does *not* say, as I hear most people quote it, "I know *in* whom I have believed." Faith believes *Christ*. Your faith must recognize Him as a Person and come to Him as a Person, not resting merely in His teaching, or only His work, but in Him. "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." A personal Savior for sinners! Are you resting on Him alone? Do you believe Him? You know the safety of the building depends mainly upon the foundation, and if the foundation is not right, you may build as you will, it will not last. Do you build, then, on Christ, alone? Inquire about that as a special point.

Observe, next, that we must not expect exactly the same manifestation in each convert. Let not the elders of the Church expect it. Let not parents require it from their children. Let not anxious friends look for it. Do not expect it in yourself. Biographies are very useful, but they may become a snare. I must not judge that I am not a child of God because I am not precisely like that good man whose life I have just been reading. Am I resting on Christ? Do I believe Him? Then it may be the Lord's Grace is striking out in quite a different path for me than that which has been trod by my brother. It may illustrate other phases of its power and show to principalities and powers the exceeding riches of Divine love.

IV. And, lastly, the matter which sums up all is this—if we have faith in Jesus we are saved and ought not to talk or act as if there were any question about it! "YOUR FAITH HAS SAVED YOU." Jesus says it. Granted, you have faith in Christ and it is certain that faith has saved you. Do not, therefore, go on talking and acting and feeling as if you were *not* saved. I know a company of saved people who say every Sunday, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners." But they are *not* miserable sinners if they are saved! For them to use such words is to throw a slight upon the salvation which Christ has given them. If they are saved sinners, they ought to be rejoicing saints!

What some say others do not say, but they act as if it were so. They go about asking God to give them the mercy they have already obtained, hoping one day to receive what Christ assures them is already in their possession, talking to others as if it were a matter of question whether they were saved or not, when it cannot be a matter of question. "Your faith has saved you." Fancy the poor penitent woman turning round and saying to the Savior, "Lord, I humbly hope that it is true." There would have been neither humility nor faith in such an expression! Imagine that blind man, when Christ said, "Your faith has saved you," saying, "I trust that in future years it will be found to be so." It would be a belying at once of his own earnest character and of Christ's honesty of speech! If you have believed, you are saved! Do not talk as if you were not, but now, take your harp down from the willows and sing unto the Lord a new song!

I have noticed in many prayers a tendency to avoid speaking as if facts were facts. I have heard this kind of expression, "The Lord has done great things for us, therefore we desire to be glad." The text is, "The Lord has done great things for us, therefore we *are* glad." And if the Lord has done these great things for us, our right is to be glad about them, not to go with an infamous, "if," upon our lips before the Lord who cannot lie! If you are dealing with your fellow creatures, suspect *them*, for they mostly deserve it. If you are listening to *their* promises, doubt them, for their promises go to be broken. But if you are dealing with your Lord and Master, never suspect *Him*, for He is beyond suspicion! Never doubt His promises, for Heaven and earth and Hell shall pass away, but not one jot or little of His Word shall fail!

I claim for Christ that you cast away forever all the talk which is made up of, "buts," and, "ifs," and "perhaps," and, "I hope," and, "I trust." You are in the Presence of One who said, "Verily, verily," and meant what He said! He is "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." You would not spit in His face if He were here, yet your, "ifs," and, "buts," are so much insult cast upon His Truth! You would not scourge Him, but what do your doubts do but vex Him and put Him to shame? If He lies, never believe Him! If He speaks the truth, never doubt Him! Then shall you know, when you have cast aside your wicked unbelief, that your faith has saved you, and you will go in peace!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Luke 7:36-50; 18:35-43.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" 18 (VER. I), 536, 586.

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THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

NO. 308

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 15, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

*“And when much people were gathered together and
were come to Him out of every city, He
spoke by a parable. A sower went out to sow his seed:
and as he sowed, some fell by the
wayside; and it was trod down and the fowls of
the air devoured it. And some fell upon
a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it
withered away, because it lacked
moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the
thorns sprang up with it
and choked it. And other fell on good ground
and sprang up and bare fruit an hundredfold.
And when He had said these things,
He cried, He that has ears to hear, let him hear.”
Luke 8:4-8.*

IN OUR country, when a sower goes forth to his work, he generally enters into an enclosed field and scatters the seed from his basket along every ridge and furrow. But in the East, the corn-growing country, hard by a small town, is usually an open area. It is divided into different properties, but there are no visible divisions, except the ancient landmarks, or perhaps ridges of stones. Through these open lands there are footpaths, the most frequented being called the highways. You must not imagine these highways to be like our paved roads. They are merely paths, trod tolerably hard. Here and there you notice byways, along which travelers who wish to avoid the public road may journey with a little more safety when the main road is infested with robbers—hasty travelers also strike out short cuts for themselves and so open fresh tracks for others.

When the sower goes forth to sow he finds a plot of ground scratched over with the primitive Eastern plow. He aims at scattering his seed there most plentifully. But a path runs through the center of his field and unless he is willing to leave a broad headland, he must throw a handful upon it. Yonder, a rock crops out in the midst of the plowed land and the seed falls on its shallow soil. Here is a corner full of the roots of nettles and thistles and he flings a little here. The corn and the nettles come up together and the thorns, being the stronger, soon choke the seed, so that

it brings forth no fruit unto perfection. Remember that the Bible was written in the East and when its metaphors and allusions have been explained according to Eastern customs, it often helps us to understand a passage far better than if we think of English customs.

The preacher of the Gospel is like the sower. He does not make his seed—it is given him by his Divine Master. No man could create the smallest grain that ever grew upon the earth, much less the celestial seed of eternal life. The minister goes to his Master in secret and asks Him to teach him His Gospel and thus he fills his basket with the good seed of the kingdom. He then goes forth in his Master's name and scatters precious Truths of God. If he knew where the best soil was to be found, perhaps he might limit himself to that which had been prepared by the plow of conviction. But not knowing men's hearts, it is his business to preach the Gospel to every creature—to throw a handful on the hardened heart and another on the mind which is overgrown with the cares and pleasures of the world. He has to leave the seed in the care of the Lord who gave it to him, for he is not responsible for the harvest, he is only accountable for the care and industry with which he does his work.

If no single ear should ever make glad the reaper, the sower will be rewarded by His Master if he has planted the right seed with careful hand. If it were not for this fact with what despairing agony should we utter the cry of Isaiah, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Our duty is not measured by the character of our hearers, but by the command of our God. We are bound to preach the Gospel, whether men will hear, or whether they will not. It is ours to sow beside all waters. Let men's hearts be what they may, the minister must preach the Gospel to them. He must sow the seed on the rock as well as in the furrow, on the highway as well as in the plowed field.

I shall now address myself to the four classes of hearers mentioned in our Lord's parable. We have, first of all, those who are represented by the wayside, those who are "hearers only." Then those represented by the stony ground—these are transiently impressed, but the Word produces no lasting fruit. Then, those among thorns, on whom a good impression is produced, but the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of the world choke the seed. And lastly, that small class—God be pleased to multiply it exceedingly—that small class of good-ground hearers, in whom the Word brings forth abundant fruit.

I. First of all, I address myself to those hearts which are like the **WAYSIDE**—"Some fell by the wayside. And it was trod down and the fowls of the air devoured it." Many of you do not go to the place of worship desiring a blessing. You do not intend to worship God, or to be affected by anything that you hear. You are like the highway which was never intended to

be a cornfield. If a single grain of the Truth of God should fall into your heart and grow, it would be as great a wonder as for corn to grow up in the street. If the seed shall be dexterously scattered, some of it will fall upon you and rest for a while upon your thoughts. 'Tis true you will not understand it. But, nevertheless, if it be placed before you in an interesting style, you will talk about it till some more congenial entertainment shall attract you.

Even this slender benefit is brief, for in a little season you will forget all that you have heard. Would to God we could hope that our words would tarry with you, but we cannot hope it, for the soil of your heart is so beaten by continual traffic that there is no hope of the seed finding a living root-hold. Satan is constantly passing over your heart with his company of blasphemies, lusts, lies and vanities. The chariots of pride roll along it and the feet of greedy mammon tread it till it is hard as adamant. Alas, for the good seed—it finds not a moment's respite—crowds pass and pass again.

In fact, your soul is an exchange, across which continually hurry the busy feet of those who make merchandise of the souls of men. You are buying and selling, but you little think that you are selling the Truth of God and that you are buying your soul's destruction. You have no time, you say, to think of religion. No, the road of your heart is such a crowded thoroughfare that there is no room for the wheat to spring up. If it did begin to germinate, some rough foot would crush the green blade before it could come to perfection. The seed has occasionally lain long enough to begin to sprout, but just then a new place of amusement has been opened and you have entered there and as with an iron heel, the germ of life that was in the seed was crushed out. Corn could not grow in Cornhill or Cheapside, however excellent the seed might be—your heart is just like those crowded thoroughfares—so many cares and sins throng it and so many proud, vain, evil, rebellious thoughts against God pass through it, that the seed of the Truth of God cannot grow.

We have looked at this hard roadside, let us now describe what becomes of the good Word, when it falls upon such a heart. It would have grown if it had fallen on right soil, but it has dropped into the wrong place and it remains as dry as when it fell from the sower's hand. The Word of the Gospel lies upon the surface of such a heart, but never enters it. Like the snow, which sometimes falls upon our streets—upon the wet pavement, melts and is gone at once—so is it with this man. The Word has not time to quicken in his soul—it lies there an instant, but it never strikes root, or takes the slightest effect.

Why do men come to hear if the Word never enters their hearts? That has often puzzled us. Some hearers would not be absent on the Sunday

on any account. They are delighted to come up with us to worship, but yet the tear never trickles down their cheek, their soul never mounts up to Heaven on the wings of praise, nor do they truly join in our confessions of sin. They do not think of the wrath to come, nor of the future state of their souls. Their heart is as iron. The minister might as well speak to a heap of stones as preach to them. What brings these senseless sinners here? Surely we are as hopeful of converting lions and leopards as these untamed, insensible hearts.

Oh feeling! You are fled to brutish beasts and men have lost their reason! Do these people come to our assemblies because it is respectable to attend a place of worship? Or is it that their coming helps to make them comfortable in their sins? If they stopped coming, conscience would prick them. But they come here that they may flatter themselves with the notion that they are religious. Oh, my Hearers, your case is one that might make an angel weep! How sad to have the sun of the Gospel shining on your faces and yet to have blind eyes that never see the light. The music of Heaven is lost upon you, for you have no ears to hear. You can catch the turn of a phrase, you can appreciate the poetry of an illustration, but the hidden meaning—the Divine life—you do not perceive.

You sit at the marriage feast, but you eat not of the dainties. The bells of Heaven ring with joy over ransomed spirits, but you live unransomed, without God and without Christ. Though we plead with you and pray for you and weep over you, you still remain as hardened, as careless and as thoughtless as ever you were. May God have mercy on you and break up your hard hearts, that His Word may abide in you. We have not, however, completed the picture. The passage tells us that the fowls of the air devoured the seed. Is there here a wayside hearer? Perhaps he did not mean to hear this sermon and when he has heard it he will be asked by one of the wicked to come into company. He will go with the tempter and the good seed will be devoured by the fowls of the air. Plenty of evil ones are ready to take away the Gospel from the heart. The devil himself, that prince of the air, is eager at any time to snatch away a good thought.

And then the devil is not alone—he has legions of helpers. He can set a man's wife, children, friends, enemies, customers, or creditors, to eat up the good seed and they will do it effectually. Oh, sorrow upon sorrow, that heavenly seed should become devil's meat! That God's corn should feed foul birds! O my Hearers, if you have heard the Gospel from your youth, what wagonloads of sermons have been wasted on you! In your younger days, you heard old Dr. So-and-So and the dear old man was accustomed to pray for his hearers till his eyes were red with tears! Do you remember those many Sundays when you said to yourself, "Let me go to my chamber

and fall on my knees and pray”? But you did not—the fowls of the air ate up the seed and you went on to sin as you had sinned before.

Since then, by some strange impulse, you are very rarely absent from God’s House. But now the seed of the Gospel falls into your soul as if it dropped upon an iron floor and nothing comes of it. The Law may be thundered at you. You do not sneer at it, but it never affects you. Jesus Christ may be lifted up. His dear wounds may be exhibited. His streaming blood may flow before your very eyes and you may be bid with all earnestness to look to Him and live. But it is as if one should sow the seashore. What shall I do for you? Shall I stand here and rain tears upon this hard highway? Alas, my tears will not break it up. It is trod too hard for that. Shall I bring the Gospel plow? Alas, the plowshare will not enter ground so solid. What shall we do? O God, You know how to melt the hardest heart with the precious blood of Jesus. Do it now, we beseech You, and thus magnify Your Grace, by causing the good seed to live and to produce a heavenly harvest.

II. I shall now turn to the second class of hearers—“And some fell upon a ROCK. And as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.” You can easily picture to yourselves that piece of rock in the midst of the field thinly veiled with soil. And of course the seed falls there as it does everywhere else. It springs up, it hastens to grow, it withers, it dies. None but those who love the souls of men can tell what hopes, what joys and what bitter disappointments these stony places have caused us. We have a class of hearers whose hearts are hard and yet they are apparently the softest and most impressible of men.

While other men see nothing in the sermon, these men weep. Whether you preach the terrors of the Law or the love of Calvary, they are alike stirred in their souls and the liveliest impressions are apparently produced. Such may be listening now. They have resolved, but they have procrastinated. They are not the sturdy enemies of God who clothe themselves in steel, but they seem to bare their breasts and lay them open to the minister. Rejoiced in heart, we shoot our arrows there and they appear to penetrate. But, alas, a secret armor blunts every dart and no wound is felt.

The parable speaks of this character thus—“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.” Or as another passage explains it—“And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness. And have no root in themselves and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the Word’s sake, immediately they are offended.” Have we not thousands of hearers who receive the word with

joy? They have no deep convictions, but they leap into Christ on a sudden and profess an instantaneous faith in Him and that faith has all the appearance of being genuine.

When we look at it, the seed has really sprouted. There is a kind of life in it, there is apparently a green blade. We thank God that a sinner is brought back, a soul is born to God. But our joy is premature—they sprang up on a sudden and received the Word with joy, because they had no depth of earth and the same cause which hastened their reception of the seed also causes them, when the sun is risen with his fervent heat, to wither away. These men we see every day in the week. They come to join the Church. They tell us a story of how they heard us preach on such-and-such an occasion and, oh, the Word was so blessed to them, they never felt so happy in their lives! “Oh Sir, I thought I must leap from my seat when I heard about a precious Christ and I believed on Him there and then. I am sure I did.”

We question them as to whether they were ever convicted of sin. They think they were. But one thing they know, they feel a great pleasure in religion. We put it to them, “Do you think you will hold on?” They are confident that they shall. They hate the things they once loved, they are sure they do. Everything has become new to them. And all this is on a sudden. We enquire when the good work began. We find it began when it ended, that is to say, there was no previous work, no plowing of the soil, but on a sudden they sprang from death to life, as if a field should be covered with wheat by magic.

Perhaps we receive them into the Church. In a week or two they are not so regular as they used to be. We gently reprove them and they explain that they meet with such opposition in religion, that they are obliged to yield a little. Another month and we lose them altogether. The reason is that they have been laughed at or exposed to a little opposition and they have gone back. And what do you think are the feelings of the minister? He is like the husbandman, who sees his field all green and flourishing, but at night a frost nips every shoot and his hoped-for gains are gone. The minister goes to his chamber and casts himself on his face before God and cries, “I have been deceived. My converts are fickle, their religion has withered as the green herb.”

In the ancient story Orpheus is said to have had such skill upon the lyre that he made the oaks and stones to dance around him. It is a poetical fiction and yet has it sometimes happened to the minister, that not only have the godly rejoiced, but men, like oaks and stones, have danced from their places. Alas, they have been oaks and stones still. Hushed is the lyre. The oak returns to its rooting-place and the stone casts itself heavily to the earth. The sinner, who, like Saul, was among the Prophets,

goes back to plan mischief against the Most High. If it is bad to be a way-side hearer, I cannot think it is much better to be like the rock.

This second class of hearers certainly gives us more joy than the first. A certain company always comes round a new minister. And I have often thought it is an act of God's kindness that He allows these people to gather at the first, while the minister is young and has but few to stand by him—these persons are easily moved and if the minister preaches earnestly they feel it and they love him and rally round him, much to his comfort. But time, that proves all things, proves them, too. They seemed to be made of true metal. But when they are put into the fire to be tested, they are consumed in the furnace. Some of the shallow kind are here now. I have looked at you when I have been preaching and I have often thought, "That man one of these days will come out from the world, I am sure he will." I have thanked God for him.

Alas, he is the same as ever. Years and years have we sowed him in vain and it is to be feared it will be so to the end, for he is without depth and without the moisture of the Spirit. Shall it be so? Must I stand over the mouth of your open sepulcher and think, "Here lies a shoot which never became an ear, a man in whom grace struggled but never reigned, who gave some hopeful spasms of life and then subsided into eternal death"? God save you! Oh, May the Spirit deal with you effectually and may you, even you, yet bring forth fruit unto God, that Jesus may have a reward for His sufferings.

III. I shall briefly treat of the third class and may the Spirit of God assist me to deal faithfully with you. "And some fell among THORNS. And the thorns sprang up with it and choked it."

Now, this was good soil. The two first characters were bad—the *way-side* was not the proper place, the rock was not a congenial situation for the growth of any plant. But this is good soil, for it grows thorns. Wherever a thistle will spring up and flourish, there would wheat flourish too. This was fat, fertile soil. It was no marvel, therefore, that the husbandman dealt largely there and threw handful after handful upon that corner of the field. See how happy he is when in a month or two he visits the spot. The seed has sprung up. True, there's a suspicious little plant down there of about the same size as the wheat. "Oh," he thinks, "that's not much, the corn will outgrow that. When it is stronger it will choke these few thistles that have unfortunately mixed with it."

Mr. Husbandman, you do not understand the force of evil, or you would not thus dream! He comes again and the seed has grown, there is even the corn in the ear. But the thistles, the thorns and the briars have become twisted with one another and the poor wheat can hardly get a ray of sunshine. It is so choked with thorns every way, that it looks quite yel-

low—the plant is starved. Still it perseveres in growing and it does seem as if it would bring forth a little fruit. Alas, it never comes to anything. With it the reaper never fills his arm. We have this class very largely among us. These hear the word and understand what they hear. They take the Truth of God home. They think it over. They even go the length of making a profession of religion. The wheat seems to spring and ear. It will soon come to perfection.

Be in no hurry, these men and women have a great deal to see after. They have the cares of a large concern—their establishment employs so many hundred hands. Do not be deceived as to their godliness—they have no time for it. They will tell you that they must live. That they cannot neglect this world. That they must anyhow look out for the present and as for the future, they will render it all due attention by-and-by. They continue to attend Gospel-preaching and the poor little stunted blade of religion keeps on growing after a fashion. Meanwhile they have grown rich, they come to the place of worship in a carriage, they have all that heart can wish. Ah, now the seed will grow, will it not? No, no. They have no cares now. The shop is given up, they live in the country. They have not to ask, “Where shall the money come from to meet the next bill?” or “how shall they be able to provide for an increasing family.”

Now they have too much, instead of too little, for they have riches and they are too wealthy to be gracious. “But,” says one, “they might spend their riches for God.” Certainly they might, but they do not, for riches are deceitful. They have to entertain much company and chime in with the world and so Christ and His Church are left in the lurch. Yes, but they begin to spend their riches and they have surely got over that difficulty, for they give largely to the cause of Christ and they are munificent in charity. The little blade will grow, will it not? No, for now behold the thorns of pleasure. Their liberality to others involves liberality to themselves. Their pleasures, amusements and vanities choke the wheat of true religion—the good grains of Gospel Truth cannot grow because they have to attend that musical party, that ball, and that evening party and so they cannot think of the things of God.

I know several specimens of this class. I knew one, high in court circles, who has confessed to me that he wished he were poor, for then he might enter the kingdom of Heaven. He has said to me, “Ah, Sir, these politics, these politics, I wish I were rid of them, they are eating the life out of my heart. I cannot serve God as I would.” I know of another, overloaded with riches, who has said to me, “Ah, Sir, it is an awful thing to be rich. One cannot keep close to the Savior with all this earth about him.” Ah, my dear Hearers, I will not ask for you that God may lay you on a bed of sickness, that He may strip you of all your wealth and bring you to beg-

gary. But, oh, if He were to do it and you were to save your souls, it would be the best bargain you could ever make! If those mighty ones, who now complain that the thorns choke the seed, could give up all their riches and pleasures—if they that fare sumptuously every day could take the place of Lazarus at the gate—it were a happy change for them if their souls might be saved.

A man may be honorable and rich and yet go to Heaven. But it will be hard work, for, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” God does make some rich men enter the kingdom of Heaven, but hard is their struggle. Steady, young man, steady! Hurry not to climb to wealth! It is a place where many heads are turned. Do not ask God to make you popular. They that have popularity are wearied by it. Cry with Agur—“Give me neither poverty nor riches.” God give me to tread the golden mean and may I ever have in my heart that good seed, which shall bring forth fruit a hundred-fold to His own glory.

IV. I now close with the last character, namely, the GOOD GROUND. Of the good soil, as you will mark, we have but one in four. Will one in four of our hearers, with well-prepared hearts, receive the Word? The ground is described as “good”—not that it was good by *nature*, but it had been made good by *Grace*. God had plowed it. He had stirred it up with the plow of conviction and there it lay in ridge and furrow as it should lie. When the Gospel was preached, the heart received it, for the man said, “That is just the blessing I want. Mercy is what a needy sinner requires.” So that the preaching of the Gospel was THE thing to give comfort to this disturbed and plowed soil. Down fell the seed to take good root.

In some cases it produced fervency of love, largeness of heart, devotedness of purpose of a noble kind, like seed which produces a hundredfold. The man became a mighty servant for God, he spent himself and was spent. He took his place in the vanguard of Christ’s army, stood in the hottest of the battle and did deeds of daring which few could accomplish—the seed produced a hundredfold. It fell into another heart of like character—the man could not do as much, but still he did much. He gave himself to God and in his business he had a word to say for his Lord. In his daily walk he quietly adorned the doctrine of God his Savior—he brought forth sixty-fold.

Then it fell on another, whose abilities and talents were but small. He could not be a star, but he would be a glowworm. He could not do as the greatest, but he was content to do *something*, however humble. The seed had brought forth in him tenfold, perhaps twenty-fold. How many are there of this sort here? Is there one who prays within himself, “God be merciful to me a sinner”? The seed has fallen in the right spot. Soul, your

prayer shall be heard. God never sets a man longing for mercy without intending to give it.

Does another whisper, “Oh that I might be saved”? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you, even you, shall be saved. Have you been the chief of sinners? Trust Christ and your enormous sins shall vanish as the millstone sinks beneath the flood. Is there not *one* here that will trust the Savior? Can it be possible that the Spirit is entirely absent—that He is not moving in *one* soul—not begetting life in *one* spirit? We will pray that He may now descend, that the Word may not be in vain.

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THE SEED BY THE WAYSIDE

NO. 2843

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 9, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1888.

“As he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.”
Luke 8:5.

THIS parable is recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is a very important one and, therefore, it is very carefully preserved for us. Matthew puts it, “When he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came, and devoured them up.”

Notice that the sower is always spoken of as a solitary man. In the harvest field, there is a great company and they sing and shout together in harmony, but the sower goes forth alone. Our Savior was the great Sower—“THE SOWER went forth to sow,” unaccompanied. He pursued His solitary way and all day long He continued His personal task. For that reason, I feel that when we come together in large numbers, the majority of us, I hope, being earnest sowers of the Good Seed of the Kingdom, we help to cheer each other up, for, to a large extent, we have to work alone. I have, thank God, many helpers, but there are certain parts of this work in which I feel an almost unbearable solitude. I suppose that you who are engaged in your own spheres of service often derive much comfort from Christian communion, but there must be some parts of your work in which you have to act by yourselves—to labor alone and to wait upon God alone. I think that this experience is good for us. I do not believe that it is good for us to be continually leaning upon one another, like those houses of which so many are being run up nowadays. If you took the end one away, they would all fall down! We want to be self-contained—not merely semi-detached, but altogether detached—so as to be able to stand by ourselves upon our own foundation. God sometimes takes away a helper from us in order that we may learn to lean upon Him, only, and to go about our service in entire dependence upon the Master who is to derive Glory not only from the result of the service, but from the service itself.

It may do us good to talk a little while about our failures. I suppose that we have all had a good many. When some of you began your work for God, you thought that you were going to push the world before you and to drag the Church behind you—but you have not done it yet. You fancied that you were going to convert everybody by your preaching, but, like Melancthon, you have had to say, “Old Adam is too strong for young

Melancthon.” And you have been driven closer to God by the very failures which you have experienced. If the Holy Spirit shall graciously help us, we may both glorify God and comfort one another while we meditate upon one set of failures with which we are constantly meeting, that is, those that are set forth in these words, “As he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.”

So, first, we learn that *we shall have some unprofitable labors*. Secondly, *we shall find that some soils will remain unsuitable for the Good Seed*. And, thirdly, *we shall have to watch that seed, that we may learn something from what happens to it*.

I. First, then, **WE SHALL MOST CERTAINLY HAVE SOME UNPROFITABLE LABORS**, something to sigh over, something that will drive us to cry, with Isaiah, “Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

We may expect this, first, *because it is so in everything else*. There is not a tradesman here who makes a profit on everything. There never was a merchant who was successful in every transaction. There are losses in the most gainful trade. Look at the fisherman—does he catch fish every time he casts his net? I have stood, many times, on the sea shore at Mentone and seen from a dozen to 20 men pull in a net which had encompassed many acres of sea—and when they had pulled it in, I could hold in my hand all that they had caught! And I have seen them go out again almost directly after, and come in again with as little as before! But they still kept on their task even though, often and often, the tiniest plate would hold all that they took. Fishermen do not give up their work because they have some failures in their fishing—and if we take the figure which our Lord used, that of the farmer, we find that all crops do not succeed. The farmer, after some years of experience, at any rate, does not expect that every seed will come up and that every crop will be, alike, bountiful. If he did, he would be sorely disappointed! He learns at last to set the gain over against the loss, to set the success over against the failure and so he perseveres and has patience, expecting and believing that, in the long run, he will be a gainer. So, dear Christian Friend, whatever is your sphere of service, I would lead you to expect that there will be some unprofitable parts of the field because it is so in everything else—and the analogies of Nature generally hold good in the sphere of Grace.

Do you not think, in the next place, that *our disappointments and our unprofitable labors teach us our dependence upon God*? Perhaps we are not yet able to bear a very large measure of success. If the Lord blesses some Brothers a little, and they see a few souls brought to Christ, they are not only very grateful and very happy, which is quite right, but they are very great in their own esteem, which is quite wrong! You should hear them at night after a successful meeting—you would hardly know them! God has given them a puff of wind in their sail and they are almost blown over, for they have so little ballast. There are some of us workers for God whom He cannot trust with success—that is one reason for our failures, for our Master means to make more use of us, by-and-by. It does not yet appear what we shall be and He is humbling us that we may be fitted to bear the exceeding weight of happiness which He means to

lay upon us when, in later years, He makes us bring forth abundantly to His praise and Glory.

O workers, mind that you are fit to be blessed by God! Do pray that you may be in such a state of spiritual health that it may be safe for your Heavenly Father to indulge you with very much success! I think that whenever we have been trying hard for the conversion of any person and we have not succeeded in it, it drives us to our knees. You must have met with some who have greatly disappointed you. You thought that you had that fish, but it has slipped away from you and gone back into the river or sea again. You supposed that that woman was really converted. What a sincere penitent she seemed to be! But she has gone back to her old sins and is as evil as ever. You thought that that man was really a most striking instance of Divine Grace, but you are ashamed of him now, for he is doing harm to others who think that there is nothing in religion when they see what a false profession he has made. Ah, some of you do not know the heartbreak which we who have to deal with many souls, have to endure, but, in your smaller sphere, you must often have had to go to God with tears wetting your cheeks because, after all, you have not won that boy for Christ, or you cannot induce that giddy girl to seek the Savior.

You have wept and you have prayed, and yet, for all that, there is some of the wayside still in front of you, and it seems as if it never can and never will yield any harvest to your sowing! We do not like wasting our breath. We do not like, above all, seeming to waste our breath in prayer—and I do not believe that we really do so. I believe that it all turns in some way to God's Glory, but yet it does so happen that, by our failures, we are driven to feel our entire dependence upon our God. We are emptied of our self-sufficiency and made to know that we can no more convert a soul than we can make a world! Any man who thinks that he can create a new heart in any other person, had better begin by creating a fly. When he has done that, then let him think that he can make a sinful man to be a new creature in Christ Jesus! Go and raise the dead, if you can. Speak to those who lie in our cemeteries and cause them to live again—and then imagine that you have within you the power to call a dead soul to spiritual life! This is the work of God alone! God's arm must be made bare before this miracle can be worked—and our failures teach us our absolute dependence upon Him.

This process is necessary, also, in order *to get at the good soil*. We must sometimes have to deal with persons who derive no benefit from us for the sake of others connected with them. The sower does not want to cast his seed upon the path that runs through the middle of the field. It is so hard that he knows that whatever falls upon it will be lost. But, then, he does want to sow right up to the edge of it. He does not want to leave a long strip on each side of the path without any wheat. His endeavor is, while he does not waste more than he can help upon the path, yet to sow right along by the edge of it that he may have a harvest close up to the barren pathway. It cannot be helped, in the nature of things, that some grains of wheat must fall upon the trodden path. So, if you want to be the means of blessing to a man's wife, it may be that you will have to

try to win her husband, also, although he will never be won to Christ. If it is your anxious desire that all the children in a certain house should be converted to God and all the family should come to hear the Word, it may be that one member of the family will never receive the blessing. Do not begin asking any questions about that matter—your business is to preach to them all, to “preach the Gospel to every creature”—and if there should be some who prove to be like the trodden pathway to the Good Seed, effectually resisting the Gospel, it is necessary that they should be in the audience, for, if they did not come, it is probable that somebody else, whom God means to bless, would not be there.

Further, consider that *this scattering of the Seed on the trodden road is necessary to the testing of the soil*. I believe that we would do a deal of mischief by keeping on sorting out certain characters in preaching the Gospel, for it would drive people to think of themselves rather than of the Gospel. If I were to come here and say, “Now if you are so-and-so, and so-and-so, then you may come to Christ and be saved”—the first thought in each of my hearer’s minds would be, “Am I this, or am I that?” I do not want you to think in any such fashion as that—the main thing is to take you off from all thought of self, that you may think only of Christ and His all-sufficiency. Are you a creature? We are bid to preach the Gospel to every creature. Are you a sinner? Then, “it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” So, if we are to preach in this wholesale style, we must throw some handfuls of Seed where they will never spring up! But our great Lord has so much Good Seed, He is so rich a Farmer that He will not miss those handfuls that seem to be lost—and we have a far easier task to bear our failures and mourn over them, than if we had to be weighted with the responsibility of picking out our hearers and saying, “This one may have the Gospel, and that other one may not.” That would be, indeed, a heavier burden than we could bear!

I remember Rowland Hill’s reply, when somebody said that he ought to preach only to the elect. “Very well,” he said, “next Sunday morning, chalk them all on the back and when you have done that, I will preach to them.” But the chalking of them on the back is the difficulty—we cannot do that and, as we cannot do that, the best way is for us to leave our God to carry out the purposes of His distinguishing Grace in His own effectual way and not attempt to do what we certainly can never accomplish! There, scatter a handful of Seed “by the wayside.” Even if the birds of the air devour it, there is plenty more where that came from and it would be a pity for us to leave any portion unsown because we were miserly and stingy with our Master’s Seed!

Once more, I am sure that when we do meet with failures, as we all do, *this makes us the more grateful when we see the Seed spring up anywhere*. I could not help blessing God, in the Prayer Meeting before this service, for any soul that had ever found the Savior under my ministry. It always seems to stagger me how God can bless one who is so feeble and I think that it must often surprise you, my dear Friends, when you find that God has really brought a sinner to Jesus’ feet through your instrumentality. When we remember the feebleness of our testimony and our

frequent lack of faith in God. When we recollect how often we go home groaning because we cannot preach as we would like to preach and, I suppose I may say of you teachers, because you cannot teach as you would like to teach—then we can say, “Blessed be God, ten thousand times, if but one poor servant girl has found the way to Heaven through me.” If one poor Arab of the street should find Christ at the ragged-school, if there were only one as the result of a life of service, it would well repay you! Do not feel that because you seem to have no influence upon some people, the edge of the chisel is taken off—the material upon which you are working is so hard that you cannot make any impression upon it. When the Lord gives you another piece of wood that He has softened, you may work away at that and then you will be able to say, “Blessed be His name I do not have all the difficult side of the work, but I do have to sow in some honest and good soil, which brings forth its hundredfold as my reward.”

II. But, secondly, it is certainly true that we shall find SOME SOULS WHICH, for the present, at any rate, SEEM UNSUITED TO THE GOSPEL.

This trodden track, through the field, was not a fit place for the seed to fall with any hope of a harvest following. Roadways, which have been long used, become very bad for sowing. I remember paying a visit to the old city of Silchester which still remains in England. Few ever seem to see it, but it is well worth seeing, though nothing remains but the walls. I went down to examine it and, standing on the wall, I could distinctly trace the streets of that old city, yet the whole of it was covered with wheat, but it would not come to perfection, or grow to any great length of straw where the old Roman roads had been. Near Croydon I have frequently traced the old Roman road through a field of grass or of wheat, by the fact that it was so well made that after the English plowing of centuries, it still seems difficult to raise good crops upon the ground. And those Oriental paths, though not made with all the skill of the Roman road makers, became very hard through being traversed by multitudes of feet.

In a similar manner, there are many persons into whom we cannot get the Gospel because *they are too much occupied*. There is too much traffic over them. They are not occupied with deep thought but with multitudes of frivolous thoughts which are well imaged by travelers who just pass continually along a road. Have we not many in our congregations who are always occupied with worldly thoughts? From the moment they are up till they go to bed, it is just one continuous tramp of the world! They are trodden with the multitudinous feet of worldly business.

Then, along a public road, you not only have business men, but you have persons bent on pleasure. How many young people there are whose hearts are just a road along which thoughts of levity and desires for amusement are continually going! How many precious hours are wasted over the novels of the day! I think that one of the worst enemies of the Gospel of Christ, at the present time, is to be found in the fiction of the day. People get these worthless books and sit, and sit—forgetful of the duties of this world and of all that relates to the world to come—just losing themselves in the story of the hero or heroine. I have seen them

shedding tears over things that never happened, as if there were not enough real sorrows in the world for us to grieve over! So these feet of fictitious personages, these feet of foolish frivolities, these feet of mere nonsense, or worse, keep traversing the hearts of men and making them hard so that the Gospel cannot enter.

I believe, too, that some are made hard even by hearing the Gospel. You can hear too much if you do not hear aright. One nail can drive another out. If one sermon were put into practice, it would be better than 50 that went in one ear and out the other. Some are always greedy to hear the last new orator who has been discovered. They will go all over London to listen to him. That is only another kind of traffic constantly going over the road and making it as hard as if it were traversed for unholy purposes.

Again, this was bad and unsuitable soil because *it was hardened by the constant traffic*. Sin hardens the heart. Every sin makes room for another sin and it is always easier to sin again after you have sinned once. No, more—I might even say that it becomes almost inevitable that you will sin again after you have sinned once. Sin hardens the mind so that it does not receive the Gospel.

And the world has a hardening effect, too. Association with its society, yielding to its customs, being engrossed in its business, all this makes a man's heart exceedingly hard. I have already reminded you that, alas, even the Gospel, itself, may harden sinners in their sin. After long hearing it, neglecting it, rejecting it, it seems to operate upon them in a very terrible way so that it becomes a savor of death unto death to them. Sad to relate, they are not alarmed by the fatal lethargy which has crept over them even while hearing the Word! And if they hear error, it has the same effect in a more dreadful way. Much of the preaching of the present day tends to harden the hearts of men against the Gospel. They are excused in their sins, taught to question the Inspiration of the Scriptures, led to doubt whether, after all, sin will bring the eternal punishment which our Lord Jesus plainly revealed! Oh, it is a sad, sad thing when all this traffic of things good, bad and indifferent has gone over a man's soul till it becomes harder than the nether millstone!

One other reason why this soil was so uncongenial was that *it was totally unprepared for the seed*. There had been no plowing before the seed was sown, and no harrowing afterwards. He that sows without a plow may reap without a sickle. He who preaches the Gospel without preaching the Law of God may hold all the results of it in his hand and there will be little for him to hold. Robbie Flockhart, when he preached in the streets of Edinburgh, used to say—"You must preach the Law, for the Gospel is a silken thread and you cannot get it into the hearts of men unless you have made a way for it with a sharp needle—the sharp needle of the Law will pull the silken thread of the Gospel after it." There must be plowing before there is sowing if there is to be reaping after the sowing!

And in this case there was no harrowing after sowing and that is a very important part of the work—to go over the ground again to get the seed well into the soil. I like those Prayer Meetings that harrow in the

seed and that private prayer, that secret study of the Word, that private crying unto God, after the seed has been sown, that He would be pleased to cover it up and keep it in the soil, and make it grow ready for the harvest! But, with no plowing before the sowing, and no harrowing afterwards, what result can you expect?

We meet with hearers who are just like that trodden path. I wonder how many of that sort are here now? As a rule, we have a choice congregation on a Thursday evening because it is not every hypocrite who comes out to a week-night service. I do not say that every hypocrite comes out on Sunday, but we have a hope that persons have some love for the things of God when they come out on a week-night to hear the Gospel. Yet I should not wonder if some of you are no better than you ought to be—as hearers of the Word, I mean. Some people come to see what kind of a place the Tabernacle is, or what kind of a person the preacher is. I hope that all of you are perfectly satisfied, now, on both those points, and that you will forget all about the place and the preacher and will just think about yourselves and about that Divine Truth which will not be blessed to your salvation unless it is honestly and genuinely received into your heart. If you receive Christ, He will bring forth fruit in you, but if you remain like the trodden pathway and do not receive Him, what can be the result but your greater condemnation?

III. The third thing that I learn from this part of the parable is that **WE MUST WATCH THE SEED.** Ministers have to do this—all Christian workers have to do this! We will try to do it now for a few minutes.

First, it is clear that *when this Seed was sown, it touched the heart.* In the 12th verse, we read, “Those by the wayside are they that hear, then comes the devil, and takes away the Word out of their hearts.” Then it must have reached their hearts—and that is the sad part about it. These hearers were not, after all, merely hearers, for they were, to some extent, affected by the Word. They had some serious thoughts for the time being. The Seed did not get deep *into* their hearts, but it did touch them. It fell on the soil and remained on the soil for a while, though it could not get its rootlets down into it and could not really be absorbed into the ground. And oh, my dear Hearers, it may be that when you hear the Word of God, it does affect you! You have not yet reached that stage in which you can hear it without any feeling whatever. You do feel it and you sometimes weep when you hear it, yet how often we are disappointed, for you seem desperately resolved not to be saved!

In this case, *the Good Seed did not really reach the understanding.* Those who heard the Word did not understand it. We are told now that if you touch the heart, that is everything—but it is not. To touch the heart is something, but you must also touch the *understanding* if you are to effect any permanent good. I mean that you may gather people together and get up excitement, and work them up in any way you please, for some people are easily moved—but they must understand what it all means if they are to derive real benefit. It is not enough to say, “Believe! Believe! Believe!” Teach them *what* they have to believe, or else what good have you done? Shouting, stamping, trawling, crying does not amount to much. People need to be taught to understand the Truth of

God, to get a grip of it, to really know the meaning of what they hear. They must know that they are lost. They must know that Christ is the great Substitute for sinners. They must know what the new birth means. Otherwise, if the Truth is not received into the understanding, the mere receiving of it into the emotions will be of very little use whatever. These hearers understood not the Word, so Satan stole it away from them.

Notice that, all the while, this Good Seed, as it did not get into the understanding, *was really outside the man*. There it lay upon the surface. That which fell on the good ground had disappeared. You could not find it, for it had sunk into the earth. But here you can see every single grain that has been dropped—there it lies, outside the soil. O my dear Hearer, as long as the Gospel is outside you, it cannot do you any good! So, let it in. Oh, that your broken heart might receive it! Oh, that your plowed-up conscience might accept it and bury the Truth of God within your innermost self, that there it might grow!

The next thing that happened to it was that as it lay there, somebody came along and trod on it. *“It was trodden down.”* It was crushed and smashed. The hearer who does not receive the Truth into his heart, goes outside and meets an old companion who speedily treads on it. Or he gets home to his wife, who does not fear the Lord, and she treads on it. Or, tomorrow, he goes into the workshop and somebody there ridicules him and so treads on the Good Seed.

Yet, even then, *it retained so much of life as to arouse the opposition of Satan*. Notice how zealous the devil is. We may be careless about souls, but he never is. Although the Seed lay there on the surface and had never penetrated the soil. And although that Seed had been trodden on, Satan was not satisfied. He said, “There may be life in it and if there is, it is dangerous to have lying there, for it may grow.” So he comes and takes it away altogether. Some bird of the air devours it. I believe that Satan does not like you to come to a place where the Gospel is preached. He knows that if you stand where the shots are flying, you may get one of them into your heart, so he would rather that you would not come at all. But if you do hear the Gospel, even though it does not penetrate into your heart, yet he still does not like it to be there. So he comes and takes it away—he makes you forget it—he brings something fresh before you, so that you may fail to remember the good Word of God. Perhaps he suggests a new line of business to you, or there is a new play at the theater, or something fresh to attract your attention because he is afraid of losing you. He does not like losing his servants and, from long experience, he knows that every now and then one of them runs away at night and never comes back. So he is always on the watch for would-be runaways. He does not want you to be gone, so he calls his birds of the air and says to them, “Take away that Seed. The man has not received it into his heart, but I do not even like it to be near him.” I wish I could clap my hands and so drive those foul birds away, but I ask God’s people to lift their hands in prayer that these sermon thieves may be driven off and that what has been said may abide in your memory.

My dear Hearers, are any of you content to be like this trodden wayside? Will you continue hearing the Gospel and yet never receive it into

your souls? Are you going to be trod on, and trod on, and trod on till you are simply a way for other people to use? Some of you work hard for your living and get nothing out of it. Somebody else is getting the whole of your life. You are simply a rut in which other people go to get riches for themselves. Are you content to let it be so with you in a spiritual sense? Do you mean to be nothing else but just a place for other people to walk over and to use your life for their own ends and purposes?

Oh, that the Holy Spirit would drive the great steam-plow through you and break you in pieces! It would be the happiest thing that could happen to you, though your misery might be deep and your anguish terrible. And then may He sow you with His own Good Seed, that you may bring forth fruit to life eternal, having in this life joy, peace, restfulness, usefulness—and in the world to come life everlasting! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” There is a handful of Seed for you! Believe now, and you shall live. Look! Look! Look and live. Look even now, at this very moment, for you live the moment that you look! God save you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 8:1-21.**

Verse 1. *And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him.* Our Lord’s display of forgiving Grace to the woman who was a sinner seemed to whet His appetite for soul-saving, so that, “He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God.” Dear Friends, whenever we win a soul for God, let it spur us on to a greater diligence in His service! Let it make us insatiable for more of this best wine of the Kingdom of Heaven. It was so with our Divine Master. He went about preaching and, as He preached, He was training others to also preach—“the twelve were with Him.” I think that whenever there is a successful ministry, there should be those round about who are being trained to continue it. Among the Waldensians, the pastors were always accompanied by young men who learned to preach from their example, and who shared their toils when they went from valley to valley proclaiming the Gospel.

2, 3. *And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance.* If they could not be Apostles, they could, at any rate, being women of property, contribute both to the sustenance of Christ and of the Apostles who were with Him. There is a place for everyone who is willing to be used by the great Master-BUILDER who leaves no stone out of the wall if it is fit to be built into it. There is something for the 12 to do and there is something for the holy women to do—and we cannot do without either of them. And in that Last Great Day when the rewards are distributed, there will be as much for Joanna as for John, and as much for Mary Magdalene as for Simon Pe-

ter. Did they not each, according to their utility, serve the Lord Jesus Christ?

4, 6. *And when much people were gathered together, and were come to Him out of every city, He spoke by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.* Or, as Mark records it, “because it had no depth of earth.” There was just a little coating of earth, sufficient for the fructification and the early sprouting of the seed—it came up all the more quickly because it was so near the surface, and because the heat could get at it so easily—the hard pan of the rock speedily sending up the heat to it. But, for that very reason, “as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.”

7, 8. *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up and bore fruit an hundredfold. And when He had said these things, He cried, He that has ears to hears let him hear.* There are many, who have ears, who do not hear to any real purpose. There is the physical act of hearing, but they do not hear in the heart and the mind. It is a very different thing to have an impression on the drum of the ear and to have an impression on the tablet of the heart. “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.”

9, 10. *And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be? And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.* It was a time of judicial visitations. These people had for centuries refused to hear the Voice of God and now they were to pay the penalty for that refusal! The reward of virtue is capacity for higher virtue, just as the effect of vice is a tendency to yet greater vice. When men will not hear the Voice of God, it is a just judgment upon them that they cannot hear—their impotence being the result of their impudence. Since they would not hear, they shall not. Who shall say that this is not a very just and natural way of allowing sin to punish itself? So these people heard the words of our Savior’s parable. It was like a clock, a covering to the Truth, but, to them, it hid the Truth—they did not see it. To the disciples of Christ, it set forth Truth in all its beauty, but, to the unbelieving people, it hid the Truth, so that they did not discern it. Brothers and Sisters, if you and I understand heavenly mysteries, let us not be proud that it is so, but let us hear our Savior saying to us, “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.” This is the gift of the Free Grace of God. Be very thankful for it, but give God all the praise for it. For if you begin to say to yourself, “I am a man of great understanding,” and if you shall take to yourself a high place, God may leave you to your natural blindness and, then, where will you be?

11. *Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God.* Not the word of man. Have we a Word of God at all? Brothers, that is a question which we nowadays have to answer. Our fathers never questioned it—they believed in the Infallibility of the Bible, as we do. But, now, all our wise

men do not think so. They set to work to mend the Scriptures, to pick out of the Bible that which they imagine to be Inspired. Let us not do so, my Brothers and Sisters.

12. *Those by the wayside are they that hear, then comes the devil and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.* He does not mind their merely hearing. What he is afraid of is their *believing*, for he knows that in believing lies the secret of their salvation.

13. *They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy.* They are very hasty converts, like men who hurriedly take a bath. They are no sooner in than they are out—it is so speedy that there is more haste than real speed with some of them.

13. *And these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.* “These have no root,” and they never had any root. If you give your child a little garden for himself, perhaps he will go and pluck the heads off some of your flowers, and put them in the ground, and say, “There, Father, see what a nice garden of flowers I have?” But they have no root, and so they very soon wither away. These are like men’s converts, of whom we read that so many scores came forward the whole of the people in the parish were said to be converted—but in six weeks you cannot find one of them! How often is this the case! We begin to be afraid of those statistics because there is so little truth in them and yet, if there were but one saved out of a hundred, how grateful we would be!

14. *And that which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.* How many we have of that sort! They continue somewhat longer than the others, yet they get choked after all.

15. *But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.* Or, “with perseverance, with continuance.” “He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved.” He is not converted at all who is not converted eternally. The work of man is temporary—the work of God is everlasting.

16. *No man, when he has lighted a candle, covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed; but sets it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.* A candlestick, or lamp stand. True religion and true doctrine are not intended to be concealed, they are meant to be seen—and if any of you are hiding these blessed things away, I pray you to do so no longer. Bring out your candle and put it on the candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

17. *For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.* You cannot conceal anything from the eyes of God, so do not try to do so. You are like bees in a glass hive, watched while you are working and your every movement observed. God can read the secret emotions of our hidden nature. “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

18. *Take heed, therefore, how you hear.* You think, and think very properly, that we ought to take heed how we *preach*. Yes, that is true, but you must take heed how you hear. There are a great many criticisms upon preaching—will you kindly make a few criticisms upon your own hearing? I like what a woman said to me some time ago, about a certain preacher. She said, “I heard him well last Sunday.” Yes, that is the thing, she did not tell me how he preached, she told me *how she heard*, and that is the main point. Good hearers will make good preachers, in due time, I do not doubt. God grant that we may be all good hearers! “Take heed, therefore, how you hear.”

18. *For whoever has, to him shall be given, and whoever has not, from him shall be taken even that which he seems to have.* Preaching will enrich you or impoverish you according to how you hear. There are some hearers who have nothing and the preacher gives them nothing. Hens like to lay where there is a nest-egg, and preachers of the Gospel like to preach to hearers who have received some Truth and want more. Where there is some love to God, and love to souls, there more will come. May all of you be among those who have, to whom more shall be given! But the Gospel is also “a savor of death unto death” to some who hear it. It takes away from some men what they never had. You call that a paradox? So it is, but it is true. They think they have it, but the Gospel reveals to them their mistake—and so it takes from them that which they seem to have.

19. *Then His mother and His brothers came to Him but could not reach Him because of the crowd.* I think that His mother and His brothers were under the delusion that He was mad, and they came to seize Him, to restrain Him, so little did even *they* understand Him!

20, 21. *And it was told Him by certain which said, Your mother and your brothers stand outside, desiring to see You. And He answered and said unto them, My mother and My brothers are these which hear the Word of God and do it.* The spiritual relationship overtops the natural. But what a sweet and condescending word this is. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do you hear the Word of God and do it? If so, Christ is at home with you. Christ calls you, “Brother.” He knows that you will take care of His cause. He calls you, “Brother.” He has deep sympathy with you. O blessed One, You who calls us mother and brother, how we welcome those loving and familiar titles!

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

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NO. 2845

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1888.

*“And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up,
it withered away because it lacked moisture.”*
Luke 8:6.

IN this parable of the sower, there is great discrimination of character, not only between those who bring forth fruit and those who bring forth none, but also between those who bring forth fruit in different degrees—not only between the fruitful and the fruitless—but also between various forms of fruitlessness. The reasons are given, not in bulk, but in detail—why this failed, and that failed, and the other failed. All this points to discrimination in hearing. When there is discrimination in the preacher, as there should always be, there should be an equal discrimination in the hearer, and each one should try to take to himself that special part of the Word which is intended for him.

The true preacher, especially our great Lord and Master, resembles a portrait painted by a real artist which always looks at you, no matter where you are in the room—to the right, or to the left of it, its eyes seem to be fixed upon you. So does our Lord, whenever He preaches, look at us. May He look at us in that way just now and may we catch His eyes as He gazes upon us—and may the preacher also seem to be looking straight at you, because you are on the watch for that particular part of the Truth which especially concerns you! If there is anything hopeful and cheering in the sermon, may it come to you who are mourning and doubtful! If there is anything awakening, may it come to those of you who happen to be tinged with self-confidence!

Coming to our text, I think it suggests to us three observations. First, *let us note well that there is a reception of the Word of God which fails to be effectual.* Secondly, we shall *enquire why it fails in these cases.* And, thirdly, *we shall consider how this failure is to be avoided.*

I. First, THERE IS A SOWING THAT COMES TO NOTHING. There is even a reception of the Seed into the soil which disappoints the sower.

This failure was not because the Seed was bad. It was the same Seed which, in the good soil, produced thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold. You know that, sometimes, when we do not succeed in impressing our hearers, we condemn ourselves, perhaps very justly. If men are not saved, the preacher must not put the blame upon Divine Sovereignty—he must

blame himself. He must also ask himself, "Have I really preached the Truth? Have I preached it in a right spirit? Have I preached different Truths in due proportion? Have I given the most weight to that which is of primary importance and have I put that which is secondary in its proper position?" We poor sowers often chastise ourselves for our failures, or, if we do not, we ought to do so—otherwise we shall never improve. God help us to preach better, to love men's souls more and to be more earnest in seeking to bring them to Christ! I mean this wish for myself and for all of you who love the Lord.

But there was no fault to be found with the Seed that fell on the rock, although it did not result in a harvest. The Seed was good, thoroughly good. The sower got it from his Master and his Master's granary contains no Seed which will not grow. True preachers can say with the Apostle Peter, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables." We have preached to you the Word of God, so that whenever we put our head upon our pillow, we can truly say that we have not preached what we thought, or what we imagined, but we have declared what we believe to be revealed in this blessed Book of God. That is the Good Seed that we sow and if it does not grow in you, it is not the fault of the Seed, it is your own fault. There is something about you that hinders it. Will you think of that, dear Hearer, if you are unconverted?

But, in the next place, *the failure was not from lack of receptiveness*. Those hearers who are like the Seed sown on the rock, do receive the Seed. We are expressly told that by our Lord, Himself—"They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy." We have hearers who take in all we say, perhaps too readily. They hear indiscriminately. There are some hearers who are like a sponge—they suck up all—good, bad and indifferent. If they hear of a clever, oratorical preacher, they speedily run after him. What he preaches, or whether he preaches with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, is not a matter about which they enquire. They have not much depth of earth, but what little earth there is takes in the Seed. There is not enough depth of earth for the Seed to really bear fruit, yet they do, in some sort of fashion, receive it. I am not going to pile up indiscriminate censure upon this receptiveness. It is a briar upon which a rose may grow but, still, it is a briar until it is properly grafted. Receptiveness may easily be carried too far and men may even ruin themselves by being too ready to receive what they hear—not by being too ready to rightly receive the real Word of Truth, but by receiving it in the wrong fashion. Do they disbelieve what you say? No, they are not earnest enough to do that! Do they doubt what you preach? No, they have not gone so far aside as that. Do they argue against the Gospel? Oh, no—they have not fallen into that form of depravity! They take in what they hear. They do not do much with it. There is not Grace enough in their heart, after they have nominally received the Word, to cause it to grow. There is a lack somewhere—not a lack of receptiveness, but a lack in another direction.

The failure, also, *was not caused through lack of heat*. There was a hard rock with a little soil upon it, just enough to take in the Seed. That

rock needed to be broken up, ground to powder and made into good soil, but as it was not broken up—when the sun shone, the rock refracted and reflected all the heat and gave great warmth to the soil in which the seed was lying—so that it grew very fast, for it was in a kind of hothouse. We have many hearers who, if enthusiasm could save them, would have been saved long ago. On Sundays they are very soon warmed up, and there is so little of them that the heat of the sun soon penetrates to their rocky nature. The heat is refracted and straightway they are all in a blaze. I know them, they are very nice people to preach to. How excited they grow! They are ready enough to shout, “Hallelujah!” They speedily receive the Word, but there is no depth about them, so they do not retain it. They will do anything that we want them to do. They are not only enthusiastic, but they soon grow fanatical. I am not blaming them for this. If there were something else to go with it, it would be a good thing.

The gardener or florist likes a good bottom heat to make his plants grow rapidly, but if it is all heat—if it is a dry heat and nothing else, very soon they are scorched to death. The little moisture that was in them at first, makes them grow rapidly, but when that is exhausted, they are soon withered. I do not deny that it is quite a pleasure to meet with a warm-hearted man. We have plenty of people about who are either cold or only lukewarm. If they give you their hand, you feel as if you had laid hold of a fish, it is so cold. We like to meet with hearers who respond to our appeals with kindly friendliness and who, when the Word is brought before them, display a warmth of feeling towards it. These are very hopeful people. I cannot say more about them. Their name is Hopeful, but they do not always grow into Faithful. They give us great encouragement, but, alas, they often cause us great discouragement.

Then, again, this failure *was not caused through lack of joy*, for we are told by our Savior that they received the Word with joy. Oh, they are so happy! They feel that they are saved and they are full of joy! And the main reason why they believe that they are saved is that they are so happy. Well, there is something in being joyful. I do not like to see people who seem to have a religion that disagrees with them. True religion does, indeed, make us glad. But then, my dear Friends, if your only evidence of the possession of Grace is that you are so happy, you may be unhappy tomorrow—and what will be your state then? Our human nature is so constructed and our body has so much influence upon our mind and soul, that we can soon become very low in spirit and scarcely know why we are in such a condition! That joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit, I cheerfully acknowledge, but there are many joys that are *not* fruits of the Spirit at all, for they are earth-born and carnal. And there is often a so-called religious joy which is the fruit of carnal excitement and supposed conversion—not the result of a real saving knowledge of God.

Perhaps if these people had received the Word with sorrow—if they had received it with a broken heart and a contrite spirit—if they had received it tremblingly, in the very depth of their souls. If they had gone home to cry to God in secret prayer instead of rejoicing in open exultation, there might have been evidences in them of a deeper, surer, truer

and more abiding work. These people had joy and plenty of it. I am not saying anything against their joy—it was not the point in which they failed. They failed somewhere else, as I shall try to show you presently.

And, once more, they did not fail *from lack of eagerness and speed in receiving the Truth*. They received it at once and the Seed sprang up at once. Just because they had no depth of earth, it sprang up all the faster. The Seed that fell upon the shallow soil covering the rock grew quickly—it sprang up because of the very absence of the element that was necessary to bring it to perfection! I believe in instantaneous conversion. I believe that the new birth must be instantaneous, that there is a moment in which a man is dead and another moment in which he is alive and that, just as there is a certain instant in which a child is born, so there is an instant in which we become the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. But there is also a supposed conversion which is undone as quickly as it is done. There are to be found, in some churches, men who have grown wonderfully fast. They were drunks a fortnight ago and they are taking the lead among experienced Christians today! Well, it may rightly be so. God acts according to His own Sovereign will and He can work such wonders of Grace and miracles of mercy. But it may turn out that a thing that grows very fast does so because it will not stand fast and will not last long. We have to deal with so many who are always procrastinating and putting off and, therefore, it seems a good fault when men are hasty about these things—it is a blessed fault, if a fault at all! Yet it did so happen that while these people were excellent in that direction, they failed in another, and failed in a fatal way, of which I have now to speak.

II. That brings me to ENQUIRE WHY THESE PEOPLE MADE SUCH A SAD FAILURE?

The seed that fell on the trodden path, while they were lost to the farmer, did feed the birds, at any rate. But these on the rock did not. They quickly sprang up, and were soon withered and good for nothing. They promised much, but it came to nothing at all. And, in this way, some of those who appear to be the most hopeful, may cause us most grief by being our greatest disappointments.

Now why was this? Luke tells us, and no other Evangelist tells us, that it was because they “lacked moisture.”

Does not this mean, first of all, that *they lacked the influences of the Divine Spirit*? When we speak of spiritual dew, we refer to the operation of the Holy Spirit. When we talk of the river of the Water of Life, we mean those sacred things which come streaming down to us from the Throne of God through the working of the Spirit of God. These people lacked that moisture. They were converted, so far as they were converted at all, through the eloquence of the preacher—and a man who is converted by eloquence, can be unconverted by eloquence! Or they were converted by the zeal and earnestness of Christian people. But if you were converted by one man, another man can unconvert you. All that is of man is sure to be unraveled as all the spinning and the weaving of earthly machinery can be pulled to pieces. But the work of God’s Grace endures forever. Have you, my dear Hearer, felt the power of the Holy Spirit first withering

you up? “The grass withers, the flower fades because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it.” Has He ever dried up, in you, all that was of yourself and turned the verdant meadow into a barren wilderness? It must be so with you at first—there is no sure work which does not begin with emptying and pulling down. Was the Spirit of God ever so worked in you as a spirit of bondage, shutting you up in prison under the Law, fixing your hands in handcuffs and your feet in fetters, putting you in the stocks and leaving you there? If you have never known anything about that experience, I am afraid you have, up to now, “lacked moisture.”

Then, when the Spirit of God comes to a soul that is thus broken down, He reveals Christ as a Savior for that sinner, a full Savior for the empty sinner! And oh, how sweetly does the soul rejoice as it perceives the suitability, fullness and freeness of Christ—and looks to Jesus and trusts Him! Have you ever felt that sacred moisture which softens the heart so that it sweetly yields to Christ, that moisture which refreshes the heart and makes it bloom again with a holy hopefulness and delight in Christ? O my dear Hearers, what we say about the Holy Spirit is no mere talk—it is a matter of fact! “You must be born-again,” born from above! You must be partakers of the Spirit of God, or else all your religion, however beautiful it may appear to be, will wither when the sun has risen with burning heat.

Now, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you find that everything goes ill with you when you lack moisture. One of our Brothers sometimes says to me, after a service, “Oh, Sir, there will be good done today, for there was dew about!” I know what he means and hope you also do. You have a little flower at home which you keep in the window, a geranium, or perhaps a fuchsia. You set great store by it because of its associations. But perhaps you have been out for a week and when you come back it looks so drooping that it seems as if it must die—and you soon discovered the reason why. It was quite dry—“it lacked moisture.” You gave it some water and it soon began to revive. These plants are kept alive by moisture. But when they lack moisture, the more the sun shines upon them, or the warmer the room is, the worse it is for them. They need moisture and so do we, poor plants that we are. We need the Holy Spirit and if the Lord does not water us daily from the living springs on the hill-tops of Glory, we shall certainly die! So take heed, Brothers and Sisters, that you do not lack the moisture of the Holy Spirit’s gracious influence.

Why did these people lack it? *There was moisture in the air.* It is evident that the other Seed which brought forth thirty, sixty, or a hundred-fold, had moisture. Yet this, which was in the same air as the other, “lacked moisture.” There were morning dews and there were mists and rains, yet these Seeds on the rock “lacked moisture.” The reason was that there was a lack of power to retain the moisture in the soil. When it came down, it ran off again, or speedily evaporated because there was a rock and only a very little earth on the top of it to hold the moisture, and all that came there soon disappeared. There are many persons who seem to be like this rocky soil—they have no receptiveness for the Divine Spirit—they seem to manage to do without Him.

Now let me warn you of *certain things that indicate a lack of moisture*. The first is Doctrine without feeling. You believe the Bible Doctrine concerning Christ. I am glad that you do, but dry Doctrine, without the bedewing influence of the Spirit of God, is just a granite rock out of which you will get nothing whatever. You say that you believe the Doctrine of Human Depravity, but have you ever really felt it and mourned over it? You say that you believe the Doctrine of Redemption, but have you ever proved the power of the precious blood of Jesus? Have you ever been melted at the sight of the Cross? You say that you believe the Doctrine of Effectual Calling, but have you been effectually called by Grace? You say that you believe the Doctrine of Regeneration, but have you been born-again? If not, you lack moisture. I have known some Brothers and Sisters who have been so “sound” that they have been nothing but sound. “Sixteen ounces to the pound,” they said they were. I thought that they were 17 ounces to the pound and that the last bad ounce spoilt the other sixteen! You may be wonderfully orthodox and yet be lost! That hard pan of rock must be broken up and ground to powder, that the moisture may get to the Seed. Of what use is Doctrine without feeling?

It is equally worthless where there is experience without humiliation. I mean that some talk about having felt this, and having felt that—and they boast of it. Some of them have even thought that they have become perfect—and they glory in it. Well, they lack moisture! As soon as you get side by side with them, you feel a need of something, you do not quite know what it is. It is dry experience. Perhaps it is boiling hot, but it is very dry. There is no bowing before the Lord in a humble confession of unworthiness. There is no understanding of what it is to feel the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should loathe ourselves, as condemned criminals ought to do. I pray the Lord to save us from an experience, however perfect it seems, which is not moist, which has not a living tenderness worked into it by the power of the Spirit of God. Avoid, then, experience without humiliation.

Also shun practice without heart-love. I have known some Brothers and Sisters who have been most exact and precise in all their conduct. I have thought that they scarcely ever sinned and I have not wondered that they did not because there did not seem to be enough juice in them to sin. They did not appear to have any human nature in them. They were just like dry pieces of leather—never excited, never getting into a bad temper—they have not seemed to have any temper, either bad or good. They never say a word too hastily. They always measure things out very exactly, yet a lack of love is a fatal lack. I knew one whom I greatly esteemed as a minister of the Word for many years. I esteemed him for his regularity of conduct. I believe that he got up to the tick of the clock, that he had family prayer to the tick of the clock and that he did everything in the same methodical manner. I remarked to him once, “There are many people, round about your Chapel, who are living in the depths of sin. Do you ever get any of them into your place of worship?” “No,” he replied, “I do not want to get them in.” I asked, “Why?” “Well,” he ans-

wered, “they are mostly harlots and thieves. What could I do with such people?”

Then I saw that it was possible to be regular, precise and good up to a certain point, and yet to have no moisture. And as the moisture was not there, of course no thief or harlot would go to hear him—he was too dry for them. It is an awful thing to have a Pharisaic practice—perfect when looked at by the casual eye, yet without the life and light of love—and, therefore, lacking moisture.

Beware, dear Friends, of a belief that never had any repentance connected with it, for that is another way in which the lack of moisture is manifested. There are some people who are willing to believe a great deal, but you never hear of them groaning because of sin, or confessing it with a broken heart in true humility before God. To trust in repentance without faith would be ruinous to the soul—but to have a kind of faith without repentance, would also be ruinous. If faith never has tears in its eyes, it is a dead faith. He who has never wept because of his sin, has never really had his sin washed away. If your heart has never been broken on account of sin, I will not believe that it was ever broken *from* sin. And if your heart is not broken from your sin, you are still at a distance from your God and you will never see His face with acceptance.

Beware, also, of a confidence that is never associated with self-diffidence. Yes, my dear Sir, speak as boldly as you will, be as brave as you may for your Master, but, at the same time, be very lowly in spirit. Let your own weakness be seen, as well as your Master’s strength. While you glory in Christ’s merits, confess your own sinfulness and admit that in yourself, you are nothing. We can never have too much confidence in God, but, unless it is associated with deep self-distrust, it will lack moisture and it will never produce any real harvest unto God.

Beware, also, of action without spirituality. We have many people of that kind. They are very active in serving God in one way and another. Would that all were—if it were in a right spirit! They are busy from morning to night, but there is no prayer and no dependence upon God mingled with their efforts—that will not do. That is all wasted activity. However busy we may be, we shall effect nothing unless we receive from the Holy Spirit all the power with which we work and are dependent upon Him for the success of every word we say. Beware of having so much to do that you really do nothing at all because you do not wait upon God for the power to do it right.

Then there is another dry thing, namely, zeal without communion with God. Zeal for extending the Kingdom of Christ, zeal for spreading the denomination, zeal for the advance of a particular sect, zeal that is intolerant, probably, but, all the while, no careful walking according to God’s Word, no observing what God would have us to be zealous about, no humbling of ourselves in the Presence of the great Lord of all, and no bathing of ourselves in the river of the Water of Life by fellowship with God.

Thus I might keep on showing you various ways in which people may have a great deal that is very good, yet it will all come to nothing because

they lack moisture. But *the seed cannot assimilate the dry earth until it is mixed with water and held in solution*, and spiritual life can only be fed by Truth held in solution by the Holy Spirit. When He softens and prepares us, then our roots and rootlets take up the true nutriment and we grow.

In the case of the seed upon the rocky ground, there was, also, *a deficiency of sensitive vitality*. The seed grew for a time, and then became dry—and are there not multitudes of people, in our Churches now, who are just like that? They are as dry as old hay, they have withered away. We cannot turn them out, but, oh, that we could turn life into them! Oh, that the Water of Life might flow all about them, so that they might live and bring forth fruit unto God!

I have said enough, if God shall bless it, to set many people searching their hearts to see whether this sacred moisture is there.

III. Now, to close, we are to CONSIDER HOW THE EVIL IS TO BE AVOIDED.

Well, first, let us one and all *cry to God to break up the rock*. Rock, rock, rock, will you never break? We may scatter the Seed upon you, but nothing will come of it till that rock is broken. The great steam-plow needs to be driven right through men's hearts till they are torn in sunder and the old rock of nature is ground to powder, made soft and turned into good soil. Dear Friend, do pray to God to make sure work of you. As far as you are concerned, the one thing you have to do is to believe in Christ Jesus, that you may be saved. But a part of the process of your salvation is the taking out of you the heart of stone and the giving to you of a heart of flesh. There is no true growing unless this takes place.

The next thing is, *look well to spirituality*. This moisture was a very subtle thing. Men might easily overlook that dampness in the atmosphere and in the soil which was all-essential. Who can tell you what unction is? Yet a sermon without unction is a poor, worthless thing. There is a certain secret something which distinguishes a true Christian from a worldling or a mere professor—see that you have it. Do not be content with the Creed, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, or anything else that is visible, but say, "Lord, give me the moisture that I need. Give me that secret something without which I shall be lacking the very thing which I most need." You cannot see your soul. You cannot fully tell what it is. Yet you know that it is a something that keeps your body alive and when that something is gone, the body becomes dead—so is all religion dead until it receives the life which comes from the moisture that so many lack.

That leads me further to say, *look to the Holy Spirit*. Be very tender towards the Holy Spirit. We preach Christ to you, as we are commanded to do, but we do not want you ever to forget the blessed Spirit, without whom nothing saving can ever be worked in you! You cannot make yourself to be born-again. Even the faith that saves is the work of the Spirit of God, if it is the faith of God's elect. Be zealous and tender, therefore, and walk carefully in reference to the Spirit of God lest you grieve Him.

Then I would say, next, *try to avoid all dry heat*. Do not work yourself up into a frenzy and think that there is anything saving in it. The heat of

excitement may be necessary, just as dust flies from the wheels of a chariot when it moves swiftly, but, as the dust does not help the chariot, but is a nuisance to those who are riding in it, so is it with excitement. It does not help the true movement and it is a nuisance to those who are living near to God.

Lastly, *be constantly looking for that Divine mystery of secret vitality which is called in the text, "moisture."* I commend to you this prayer, "Lord, give me this blessed moisture. Saturate me through and through with the heavenly dew, the Divine rain, that I may grow and bring forth fruit to the Glory of Your holy name." God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 42.

We often read this Psalm because we are very often in the same state that the Psalmist was in when he wrote it—and the language seems to suit us at many periods of our life.

Verse 1. *As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.* It is the "hart" that pants and, in the Hebrew, the word is in the feminine. The old naturalists say that the female has greater thirst than the male and that it shows it more, having more feebleness of body and less power of endurance. The hart is said to be, naturally, a thirsty creature, and when it has been long hunted, its thirst seems to be insatiable. The Psalmist does not say, "*your* soul hungers," but, "My soul thirsts." As man can bear hunger much longer than he can bear thirst, he may continue without food for days, but not without drink. So the Psalmist mentions the most thirsty creature and the most ardent of the natural passions—"As the hart pants after the water brooks." He does not merely say, "after the brooks," but, "after the water brooks." Why is this? I think it is because there are many brooks that are dry at certain seasons and the hart longs for those that have water in them. So the Christian thirsts, not only for the means of Grace—they are the brooks—but he longs for God in the means. When Grace is in the means of Grace, then they are water brooks, indeed. "So pants my soul after You, O God." He does not say, "So I pant after my former grandeur," or, "so pant I for my friend," but, "so pants my heart after You." His soul had only one longing, one thirst—and every power and every passion had united itself to that one desire—"so pants my soul after You, O God."

2. *My soul thirsts for God.* It was a soul thirst, not a throat thirst—the thirst had got as far down as the soul, till the inner spirit was as dry as a man's throat after a long journey through the desert. "My soul thirsts for God,"

2. *For the living God.* David had thirsted, you remember, for water from the well of Bethlehem that is within the gate and he said, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!" But that was not living water—he had drunk of it before, yet he thirsted again. But now his soul thirsted for God, for the living God.

Nothing but the cool refreshing Living Water of the Living God can ever effectually quench human thirst!

2. *When shall I come and appear before God?* He valued the assembly of God's people because he believed that there, in a special manner, he was "before God." What a rebuke this is to those who despise public worship! We know some who say, "Well, we can read a good sermon at home, we can study the Scriptures there." David was a great lover of God's Word and read it both day and night, yet even he could not dispense with the outward means of Grace—the public assembly of the saints. "When shall I come and appear before God?" Brothers and Sisters, let us look upon our gatherings for worship as an appearance before God! You do not merely come to listen to the Lord's minister, or to join in the sacred song of the congregation, but you come to "appear before God," that you may show yourself to Him as His servants and that He may reveal Himself to you as your Lord. When you and I have been tossing upon the bed of languishing, or have been detained upon the sea, or have journeyed abroad, then we have learned to prize the means of Grace more than ever!

3. *My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?* The Psalmist had sorrow within and persecution without, and a Christian sometimes has to eat salty food. "My tears have been my food." He finds but very little sweetness or solace in such food as this, yet, after all, there is much in a Christian's tears. It is a comfort to be able to shed tears of repentance and tears of longing after God. There are some Believers who still have tears for their food, yet they can say, "Thank God we are not dead—if we can weep, we are not utterly left of God. If we can sigh after Him and so, though our tears are salt, they are nourishing to the spirit." "My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say unto me, "Where is your God?" This is what our enemies always say to us when we are in trouble. This is what Queen Mary said when the Covenanters were obliged to flee to the Highlands. "Where now is John Knox's God?" But when her French soldiers were afterwards put to the rout by the brave Scots, she found out where God was! This was the taunt at the St. Bartholomew massacre in France. As they murdered the Protestants, the Papists cried, "Where is your God?" What a mercy it is that they say this, for nothing brings God so soon to His people as the taunts of their enemies. If any man supposes that God has forgotten His people and, therefore, insults them thus, God will come to them post-haste to rectify the mistake. "Where is your God?" He is coming to you, O Christian! He is near you now!

4. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.* You see, Brothers and Sisters, the more a man enjoys the means of Grace at one time, the more he grieves when he loses them. "I had gone with the multitude." There is something very inspiring in worshipping God in a crowd. The joy is infectious, there is a holy contagion in it. As the sacred song floats upward from many joyous voices, we seem borne up upon its bil-

lows of praise. I like that word “holy day” even though it is rather like holiday, for our holy days should be our true holidays. There should be no rest to the Christian like the holiness of the Sabbath—the holiness should be the very joy of it. Keep it a holy day, and then it will be a holiday! Try to make it a holiday and then it will be neither a holiday nor a holy day. At the remembrance of these past joys, the Psalmist’s soul was poured out like water, his heart was as water spilt upon the ground. See, Brothers and Sisters, how low a good man may come, and yet be safe—how near the rocks God’s ships may go and yet not be wrecked.

5. *Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance.* As one well remarks, Christian men have a deal of indoor work to do. They have not only to question others, but they have to question themselves. “Why are you cast down, O my soul?” Be very jealous, dear Friends, of doubts, and fears, and despondency. Some of us are sometimes the subjects of these emotions and this is sad, but when we try to pamper them, this is inexcusable. Endeavour to live above this disquietude—you cannot praise God, you cannot serve your fellow men, you cannot do anything well when your soul is in a disquieted state. Hope in God is the best cure for this despondency. “Hope you in God.” When you have no hope in yourself, nor in your graces, nor in your experience, “hope you in God.” He is loving, faithful, powerful and true, so, “hope you in God.” “For I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance.” “My countenance is wrinkled and covered with sores through my sickness, but He is the help of my countenance, and I shall yet praise Him.”

6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.* Oh, what a mercy it is to be able to look back upon our past experiences of God’s mercy! How delightful it is to remember what the Lord was to us in days gone by, for He is the same God still. When you are like Paul in the great storm, when neither sun, nor moon, nor stars for many days appeared, it is very pleasant to remember that the sun, moon and stars did shine in the past, and that they will shine forth again.

7. *Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts: all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me.* When there is a great rain at sea, there is a peculiar kind of noise, as if the deep above were talking to the deep below. “Deep calls unto deep and, sometimes, the two deeps clasp hands and then there is what we call a waterspout. The Psalmist uses this as a picture of his sorrows and it is very remarkable that sorrows seldom come alone. When the rain comes down on land, it calls to the little brooks, and they say, “Here we are,” and they go leaping down the hillside and speak to the rivulets, and they say, “Here we are,” and the rivulets speak to the rivers, and they say, “Here we are,” and they speak to the gulfs, and the gulfs to the broad sea till, “deep calls unto deep.” So, little sorrows, great sorrows, overwhelming sorrows come to the Christian and they all seem to come at once! No, not only do they come to us, but they go over us till we cry, “All Your waves and Your billows are gone over me.” Surely, this language is an exaggeration, for it is

only Christ who could say that, but, sometimes, when you and I are in a low dark frame of mind, we are apt to think that we have felt all the twigs of the rod and that we could not be made to smart more. Little do we really know of it—God grant that we may never know more than we do! Now comes an exercise for faith to be able, when down at the bottom of the sea, like Jonah, and at the mercy of every wave, to say with the Psalmist in the next verse—

8. *Yet the LORD will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.* We shall not only have daytime Grace, but nighttime Grace, too! “In the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.” What a sweet title that is, “The God of my life,” the source of my life, the strength of my life, the comfort of my life, without whom my life is not life at all!

9. *I will say unto God my rock, Why have You forgotten me?* He had been talking too much to himself—now he talks with his God.

9-11. *Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is your God? Why are you cast down, O my soul and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* Notice how the Psalmist had been growing. In the 5th verse, where the refrain comes in, it is very nearly the same as it is here, yet there is some difference. There it was, “I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance,” but here it is, “I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance.” Then it was God helping the poor wrinkled brow to turn towards Heaven. Now it is God Himself giving the man joy and rest. Then there is the last utterance of the Psalmist on that occasion, “My God.” He could not reach that note before, and when the Christian can say, “My God,” his troubles are at an end.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—42 (VERSION 1), 40, 499.

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

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

SATAN'S PUNCTUALITY, POWER AND PURPOSE

NO. 1459A

**WRITTEN AT MENTONE,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.**

***“Then comes the devil, and takes away the Word out of their hearts,
lest they should believe and be saved.”
Luke 8:12.***

IT is a great comfort that such multitudes are willing to hear the Word of God. Even though many should turn out to be as the rock, the wayside, or the thorny ground, still it is a cheering circumstance that the Seed can be sown broadcast over so large an acreage. Yet the thoughts excited by the sight of a vast congregation are not all pleasurable—the question most naturally arises—What will come of all this preaching and hearing? Will the heavenly Seed produce a harvest or fall on barren soil? The thoughtful Christian, in considering this question, takes into consideration the condition of the persons addressed and remembers that many are unprepared for the Gospel. So far from being like a field furrowed to receive the Seed, they are like a heavily traveled road.

They hear the Gospel and so far we are hopeful of them, but they have no idea of allowing it to enter their inmost souls. The ground of their hearts is already too much occupied. Other feet will tread there and speedily obliterate the sower's footprints and as for the good Seed, it may lie where it falls—entrance into the inner man it can have none. Nor is this all, the anxious observer remembers that there is yet another difficulty—the arch-enemy of God and man is opposed to the salvation of souls and, therefore, he is present with destructive power wherever the Seed of the Word is being sown.

It is of this we shall now speak—the activity of Satan during the preaching of the Gospel. He is out of sight, but we may not allow him to be out of mind—he does all the more mischief if men sleep. Let us watchfully turn our eyes towards him and prove that we are not ignorant of his devices. Our Divine Lord, in the words before us, reminded His *hearers of the devil's punctuality*—“*then comes the devil,*” or *his power*—“*and takes away the Word out of their hearts.*” And *of his purpose*, which is the prevention of saving faith—“*lest they should believe and be saved.*” At this time, when special services are being held, it may be well to bring these points clearly forward that all may be warned against the Wicked One and so, by the Grace of God, his designs may be frustrated.

I. First observe the Evil One's PUNCTUALITY. No sooner does the Seed fall than the fowls devour it. Our text says “*then,*” that is, *then and there* “*comes the devil.*” Mark renders it, “Satan comes immediately.” Whoever else may loiter, Satan never does. No sooner does a camel fall dead in the wilderness than the vultures appear. Not a bird was visible, nor did it seem possible that there could be one within a radius of many miles, yet speedily there are specks in the sky and soon the devourers are gorging themselves with flesh! Even thus do the spirits of evil scent their prey from afar and hasten to their destroying work.

The lapse of time might give opportunity for thought and thought might lead to repentance and, therefore, the enemy hurries to prevent the hearer from considering the Truth he has heard. When the Gospel has somewhat affected the hearers, so that in some slight degree it is in their hearts, then swifter than the flight of the eagle is the haste of the devil to take the Word out of their hearts. A little delay might put the case beyond Satanic power, hence the promptness of diabolic activity. O that we were half as quick and active in the service of our Lord! One half as prompt to seize every opportunity for blessing the souls of men!

No doubt Satan acts at times directly upon the thoughts of men. He personally suggested to Judas the selling of his Master and many another black insinuation has he cast into men's minds. Like the foul vulture which constantly feasted itself upon the vitals of Prometheus, so does the devil tear away the good thoughts which would be the life of a man's soul. Insatiably malicious, he cannot endure that a single Divine Truth should bless the heart. Fearful blasphemies, lewd imaginations, gross unbeliefs, or vain frivolities the devil casts into the mind like infernal bombshells to destroy any new-born thought which looks toward Christ and salvation!

At one time he fascinates the mind and another he terrifies it. His one aim is to distract the man's thoughts from the Gospel and prevent its lodging in the conscience and heart. As Satan cannot be everywhere present at one time, he frequently does his evil work by his servants, sending the inferior spirits to act as fowls in devouring the Seed and these, again, employ various agents. With great cunning are the common incidents of life used in the evil business, so that even by things indifferent in themselves, the purposes of the adversary are brought about. The preacher has some specialty in his manner, utterance, or appearance—and this becomes the bird which devours the Seed—the hearer is so taken up with a trifling oddity in the minister that he forgets the Truth of God which was spoken!

An anecdote was related, an illustration employed, or a word used which awakened a memory in the hearer's breast and away went the Word out of his heart to make room for mere vanity. Or if the sermon was preserved to its close, it then encountered a fresh peril—a lost umbrella, an extra pressure in the aisle, a foolish jest overheard in the crowd, or the absurd dress of an unknown person—any one of them may answer the devil's purpose and snatch away the Word. Little does it matter whether the Seed is devoured by black crows or white doves, by great fowls or little sparrows—if it does not abide in the *heart*, it cannot bring forth fruit and hence the devil arranges that somehow he will take away the Seed at once.

If he never visits a place of worship at any other time, he will be sure to be there when a revival has begun—“*then* comes the devil.” He lets many a pulpit alone, but when an earnest man begins preaching, “Satan comes *immediately*.”

II. Secondly, we will now, for a moment, notice his POWER. “And takes away the Word out of their hearts.” It is not said that he *tries* to do it, but that he actually *does* so. He sees, he comes and he conquers! The Word is there and the devil takes it away as easily as a bird removes a seed from the wayside. Alas, what a sway has the Evil One over the human mind

and how ineffectual is the preacher's work unless a Divine power is put forth with it!

Perhaps from the striking manner in which it was stated, a little of the Truth of God abides in the memory, but the enemy takes it quite out of the *heart*—and so the main part, the all-important part of our work is undone! We may be foolish enough to aim at the head only, but he who is crafty beyond all craft deals with the *heart*. Anyone may win the intellect—if Satan can keep the affections he is quite content. To the man's heart the good Seed is lost, the fowls have devoured it. It has become to him nothing, having no power over him, no life in him. Not a trace is left—no more than there would be a mark remaining of seed cast on the wayside after the birds had taken it away—so effectual is the work of the Prince of the Power of the Air.

When Satan thinks it worth his while to come, and come immediately, he means business and he takes care that his errand shall not fail. His power is partly derived from his natural wisdom. Fallen as he now is, he was once an angel of light and his superlative faculties, though perverted, defiled and dimmed by the blighting influence of sin, are still vastly superior to those of the human beings upon whom he tries his arts. He is more than a match for preacher and hearer united if the Holy Spirit is not there to baffle him. He has also acquired fresh cunning by long practice in his accursed business! He knows the human heart better than anyone, except its Maker. For thousands of years he has studied the anatomy of our nature and is conversant with our weaker points. We are all young and inexperienced compared with this ancient tempter—all narrow in our views and limited in our experience compared with this serpent who is more subtle than all the beasts of the field—what wonder that he takes away the Word which is sown in hard hearts!

Moreover, he derives his chief power from the man's condition of soul. It is easy for birds to pick up Seed which lies exposed on a hard path. If the soil had been good and the Seed had entered *it*, he would have had far greater difficulty, he might even have been foiled. But a hard heart does the devil's work for him in great measure. He need not use violence or craft—there lies the unreceived Word upon the surface of the soul and he takes it away. The power of the Evil One largely springs from *our own evil*. Let us pray the Lord to renew the heart that the testimony of Jesus may be accepted heartily and may never be taken away. Great is the need for such prayer!

Our adversary is no imaginary being, his existence is real, his presence constant, his power immense, his activity indefatigable. Lord, match him and overmatch him! Drive away this foulest of fowls! Break up the soil of the soul and let Your Truth truly live and graciously grow within us!

III. Our short sermon closes with the third point, which is the devil's PURPOSE. He is a sound theologian and knows that salvation is by believing in the Lord Jesus and, therefore, he fears above all things lest men should "believe and be saved." The substance of the Gospel lies in those few words, "believe and be saved," and in proportion as Satan hates that Gospel, we ought to prize it. He is not so much afraid of works as of faith. If he can lead men to *work*, or *feel*, or *do* anything in the place of *believing*, he is content. But it is believing that he dreads, because God has coupled it with being saved.

Every hearer should know this and be instructed to turn all his attention to the point which the devil considers to be worthy of his whole activity. If the Destroyer labors to prevent the heart's believing, the wise will have their wits about them and regard faith as the one thing necessary. "Lest they should believe and be saved" Satan takes away the Word out of their hearts. Here also is *wisdom*—wisdom hidden within the enemy's cunning. If the Gospel remains in contact with the heart, its tendency is to produce faith. The Seed abiding in the soil springs up and brings forth fruit and so will the Gospel display its living power if it dwells within the man and, therefore, the devil hastens to take it away.

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit and the devil does not like to see it lie near the sinner for fear it should wound him. He dreads the influence of Truth upon the conscience and if he cannot prevent a man's *hearing* it, he labors to prevent his meditating upon it. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"—to obliterate that which has been heard is the Satanic method of preventing faith. Here, again, is a practical word for the ear of prudence—let us keep the Gospel as much as possible near the mind of the unconverted—let us sow and sow again, in the hope that some grain may take root.

Countrymen were known in planting certain seeds to put in "one for the worm, and one for the crow, and then a third which would surely grow," and we must do the same. In the book of Jeremiah the Lord describes His own action thus—"I spoke unto you rising up early and speaking, but you heard not; and I called, but you answered not." Surely, if the Lord Himself has thus continued to speak to an unanswering race, we need not murmur if much of our preaching should appear to be in vain! There is life in the Seed of the Gospel and it will grow if it can be put into the soil of the heart! Let us, therefore, have faith in it and never dream of obtaining a crop except by the old-fashioned way of sowing good Seed. The devil evidently hates the Word—let us, then, keep to it and sow it everywhere!

Reader or Hearer, you have often heard the Gospel—have you heard it in vain? Then the devil has had more to do with you than you have dreamed! Is the thought a pleasant one? The presence of the devil is defiling and degrading and he has been hovering over you as the birds over the high-road and lighting upon you to steal away the Word. Think of this! You are missing, by your unbelief, fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ—and instead thereof you are having fellowship with Satan!

Is not this horrible? Instead of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you as He dwells in all Believers, the Prince of Darkness is making you his resort, coming and going at his pleasure into your mind! You remember Jacob's dream of a ladder and angels ascending and descending from himself to Heaven? Your life experience may be set forth by another ladder which descends into the dark abyss—and up and down its rungs, foul spirits come and go *to yourself!* Does this startle you? The Lord grant it may! Do you desire a change? May the Holy Spirit turn your heart into good ground and then shall the Seed of Divine Grace grow in you and produce faith in the Lord Jesus!

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

HEEDFUL HEARING

NO. 3357

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 1913.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 23, 1868.**

*“Take heed, therefore, how you hear.”
Luke 8:18.*

It is implied in this verse that you do hear. A man cannot take heed how he hears if he does not hear at all. Hence, how great is the sin of a vast proportion of the inhabitants of this city who utterly forsake the ministry of the Gospel, who never hear it, or hear it but only now and then! We have frequently met with people who, before they came to this house, never attended any place of worship. They were taken there, they say, to be christened, or they went there to be married and they expected to be carried there, or somewhere like it, to be buried, but that was all their church going and all their respect for the worship of God. Unhappy they—to have the Light of God and to refuse to see—to have God's diamond lying, as it were, at their very feet, and yet to refuse to pick it up! The day will come when wasted Sabbaths will be a burning accusation against the inhabitants of this privileged, but wicked city! With churches in almost every street, with preachers of the Gospel to be found here and there declaring fully the saving Truth of God, it shall go harder with the citizens of London than with the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day when the Lord comes to judge the quick and the dead! Do I address any who have merely dropped in here tonight, but who are not often hearers of God's Word? Ah, my dear Friends, you little know the sweetness of the Gospel, for if you did, “not tents of ease nor thrones of power” could tempt your feet away from the place where God specially reveals Himself on the Day of Rest!

Do you think how unjustly you are treating your God? There are seven days in the week and He gives you six, but you *rob* Him of the seventh. You are like a man on the highway who met a beggar and seeing him to be in great need—and having but seven pounds in his pocket, he gave the beggar six—and then the beggar knocked him down and stole the seventh from him! He was an ungrateful wretch—and what are you? You shall answer for yourselves.

It is implied, again, in the text that a man hears the Gospel, for it does not matter much how you hear if it is not God's message, if it is not the Truth of God. The best way to hear a lie is not to hear it at all. The best way to hear preaching that is not according to God's Gospel is to hear

enough of it to know what it is and then walk off and hear no more. But it is implied that you do hear the Gospel and here comes the enquiry—Do those who frequent places of worship invariably ask themselves the question—“Is the preacher a Gospel preacher? Does he preach according to the Holy Scriptures? Does he deliver to me the Truth of God, or is it a cunningly devised fable or invention of his own?” I fear that the most of our hearers only ask, “Is he a fluent speaker? Is he a high-soaring rhetorician? Can he pile his words, one upon another? Or is he amusing? Does he use many illustrations and metaphors? Will there be something to interest me?” Ah, but, my Hearers, if the bread is poisoned, it is of small concern that the baker makes it up into pretty loaves! If it is not a Gospel draught that is given you to drink, it is a small matter to you whether the cup is richly designed or not. Better that you have it in the poorest pot and drink from that, if it is from the river of the Water of Life, than that you receive untruth out of a golden cup! The chief matter with a hearer when he goes to a town to live and has to enquire, “Where shall I attend on the Lord’s-Day?” should be this—“Where can I hear most concerning the Lord Jesus Christ? Where shall I hear a man who can touch my conscience? Where shall I hear the Truth that will be quick, powerful and sharp as a two-edged sword to my soul? Where may I hope to be saved? Where may I trust, being saved, that I may be helped on the road to Heaven?” All the rest is mere matter of taste, but this is a matter of the utmost importance! Is it the Gospel or not? If it is not the Gospel, let not your feet tread the floor! But if it is the Gospel of Jesus, then “for-sake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.”

But now, these two things being granted—that we ought to hear and that it ought to be the Gospel—the text graciously counsels us, “Take heed how you hear.” We purpose to handle our theme after this fashion. First, there is *a caution implied in the text*. Secondly, there are *rules intended in it*. And then again, there are *strong reasons for it*. First, there is—

I. A CAUTION IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.

“Take heed how you hear.” The caution is that we should not think it a trifling thing to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “Take heed”—as though you had to stop on the threshold and remember where you are. Take heed, take heed and remember, then, that it is no trifling thing to hear a sermon if it is a Gospel sermon! Some think it is a simple work to preach and child’s play to sit and listen. When the great trumpet peals and the dead are awakened, they will think very differently! They will reckon that speech was never put to so noble a purpose as when it was used to bring men to reconciliation with their Maker—and that ears were never used to as good an end as when they were used attentively to hear what God the Lord would speak when He would bid the rebel come to Him and find mercy! The preacher, if he is what he should be, does not think it a light or easy thing to preach. It is said of Luther that he never feared any man

and yet he declares that he never preached a sermon without his knees knocking together because he trembled lest he should be guilty of the blood of any of his hearers. This is the great burden of my life, lest I should miss anything that should be profitable to you. Lest, in dealing with God's Word, I should be like some untaught chemist's lad who is mixing medicines which were meant for restoring health, but who introduces poisons into them. No! But I would tell you all I know, tell you all God's Word as I have learned it and speak it honestly, affectionately and plainly, trusting thus to be clear of the blood of all men!

But in proportion as it is solemn work to preach, it is also solemn work to hear. When men enter king's palaces, they become at once respectful, they regard their company, they pay marked attention to the head of the household—and should they not, when they come into the assembly of God's people to join in the worship of the Most High? Should they not, after the same sort, say, "How awe-inspiring is this place where the Gospel is preached! It is none other than the House of God, and the very gate of Heaven"?

Because, then, it is no light and trivial thing to hear a sermon, take heed how you hear!

Again, *it is no easy thing to hear a sermon well*, and hence the appeal of the text, "Take heed how you hear." The fool cannot hear it well. He lets it in one ear and out the other! The mere critic hears it, but without any profit to himself. Multitudes have heard hundreds, possibly thousands of sermons, but they have not been benefited thereby—they have let the golden stream run past them—and not one single drop of the precious treasure have they retained. The art of listening to the preaching of the Gospel is one of the highest arts in the world and conduces to the best results! Don't you suppose when you have come up those step, and taken your seats, that you are all ready for the sermon. No! No, it is not so! If you would have good fruit of it, there ought to be as much preparation on your part as on mine. Am I to pray that I may be a blessing to you, and are you not to pray that you may get a blessing out of the words? Are you to come flippantly, or even carelessly into these seats and sit down, and then hope to be edified? If so, indeed, you shall usually find your hopes disappointed! Take heed how you hear, because it is not a little thing, nor an easy thing, to listen to the Gospel of Jesus!

Take heed how you hear, implies this caution—that it is no light thing to hear the Gospel irreverently, for on the bad hearing may hang not only the loss of the blessing which might have come, but the infliction of *a punishment which shall be the greater for careless hearing*. Men never listen to a Gospel sermon and remain as they were. They are either bettered by it or—shall I say *worsened*?—if there is such a word. It is not possible that the Gospel should have shined on those eyes without either giving light or increasing the blindness. I do not believe that any man has regularly sat under the sound of a Gospel ministry for three months without

being either sensibly hardened or manifestly softened by it. You know how children's characters are formed, how day after day, and week after week, bring impressions for good or for evil upon their sensitive minds. And it is just the same with ourselves. Every Truth of God that passes before the camera of our soul leaves some degree of impression upon the sensitive plate of our character—and we are either blessed by it, or cursed by it, as the case may be. It must be either a savor of life unto life to us, or of death unto death. It is no light thing to have heard amiss!

But there is also a sweet caution that springs out of the text if you think it over. "Take heed how you hear," *for it may be a blessed thing to hear*, and no one can tell the weight of mercy that may come from the hearing! I have heard of a child who used to lean forward so earnestly to catch every word—he told his mother it was because he had heard the preacher say that if there was a sentence in the sermon that was likely to save one soul, the devil would, if it were possible, be sure to get you to be inattentive while that was being said! Now the boy was right, and there was a great truth in it. If men did but always catch the Word of God, speaking after the manner of men, what chances there would be that that Word would be blessed to them! And what a blessing it would be! Why, there may be some here tonight—for there have been such here many nights—who have come in here having had a miserable life of it up till now and their wife and children a more miserable life, still, if it is possible, for they have been frequenters of the ale-house, spending their money in riotousness. But what if they should be sobered tonight by Divine Grace and get new hearts and right spirits—that would be blessed hearing—blessed for the family, for the wife and children, as well as for the man himself!

There may have come in here some poor desponding men and women, ready to make away with themselves. Oh, perhaps in the hearing, tonight, the joy of the Lord may come to them and they may be saved! Many and many have found out that they were the children of God while they were hearing—found out that Christ was theirs, pardon of sin was theirs, Heaven was theirs! And they would never have found it if it had not been for *hearing* it! But while they were listening, God's Holy Spirit opened their hearts to perceive and receive what had all the while been written in the Scriptures!

Oh, may it be a blessed night to some of you while you are here! Pray for it, people of God! "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Let your prayer go up that souls here may so hear the Word of the Gospel of salvation as being a great message from God and, therefore, may hear it with all their hearts and so listen to it that it may be salvation unto them according to the Master's promise, "Incline your ears and come unto Me: hear and your souls shall live." Now, and at somewhat greater length—

II. THE TEXT IMPLIES SOME RULES AS TO HEARING.

The text is *multum in parvo*—much in little. “Take heed how you hear,” means many things. Do not be alarmed when I say that we shall have seven points under this head. That you may remember them, I have put them in the order of the alphabet.

“Take heed how you hear.” That is, first, take heed that you hear *attentively*. And it will not burden your memories if I hook on to that word another like it—*retentively*—that heed that you hear attentively and retentively. I have heard of a poor idiot who was an excellent hand, idiot though he was, at carrying messages. And the way in which he did it was to deliver the message exactly as he had it, word for word. But he had a great peculiarity. While the person told him the message, he always stood with one hand closing one of his ears—and as soon as ever he had got the message, he put the other hand up and closed the other ear so that both ears were shut—and away he ran! When asked why he did it, he said that when the message came he did not want it to get out at one ear—and then when he had received it, he shut the other ear in order that it might not get out that way! Observe, fool though he was, there was wisdom in the action. I wish there were as much wisdom in some who would not like to be called fools, for they hear the Truth of God with one ear and it goes out the other! It were well if they took care not to let it escape them. Have your ears open with keen, attentive listening—and then have both of them shut as being retentive to keep in the Truth you have received. But alas, many do not even hear at all. The Gospel is being preached, but they are thinking of a thousand other things. Distracting thoughts fill their minds.

We all know how hard it is for the marksman to shoot a running deer. And how difficult it must be for the preacher to strike the running judgment and the moving, restless mind that is preoccupied with other things! But if we can get the whole mind fixed on the subject before us, as it should be, then we may hope to make an impression. Do labor, dear Friends, to whomever you may be listening, to put those distractions away—the thoughts of house and home and all besides, while the Gospel is operating upon your minds! And when you have heard it, try to store it up and keep it there. If it is good for today, it is good for tomorrow! And if it does not bless you today in the hearing, perhaps God may bless it to you in years to come. We have read of a man who was converted through a sermon, but he heard the sermon 70 years before it was blessed to him! Mr. Flavel had preached it and the man was sitting, 70 years later, under a hedge in the United States. And he recollected that it was 70 years ago that day that he had heard the sermon—and God, then and there, blessed the sermon to him and he was saved! Hear, then, attentively and retentively!

The second point is—*hear believingly* and, as all true belief ends in practice, *hear obediently*. That which we do not accept as being true can be of no service to us, especially in the economy of Divine Grace—where

everything comes to us by faith—and where unbelief restrains the hand of God and keeps back the blessing. Faith, however, as I have said, must always be obedient if it is true. When you have heard the Word, put it in practice at once! What a grand close to a sermon that was after Paul had preached in the streets of Ephesus, when they brought out their books of witchcraft and made a pile of them in the street and burned them before the Apostle's face! Ah, it were well if men would bring out their sins, their hard thoughts of God, their fancied self-righteousness and everything contrary to the Divine will. It were blessed preaching, and blessed hearing, if such were the result—hear believingly and obediently!

Thirdly, hear *candidly and honestly*. Too many are prejudiced against the Word. Prejudiced because they do not like the preacher, though I see not why they should not accept the Truth wherever it may be found. A man would prize a jewel, though he found it on a dust heap—and the Gospel of Jesus is to be valued, let who will proclaim it! Some make up their mind before they hear, that they will not receive it. This is neither honest to the Truth of God, nor to themselves. They show not wisdom, but folly here. But many will tell you that they cannot be expected to change their religion, as if they half-felt that if they were to think a little they must do so. Surely that religion that will not bear deep consideration must be a poor, poor thing! No, Sir, but hear what is to be said! Judge it by the Word of God. Judge it honestly and when you have done so, if it is not the Truth of God, cart it away to the winds! But if it is the Truth of God, then accept it and may God bless it to you! It is a pity that men are not more candid in hearing the Gospel and in applying it to themselves. How many, if they hear a Truth of God, will say, "I wonder how that will suit So-and-So," and immediately cast their eyes around the place to see if Mrs. So-and-So is there and wonder how she will like it. The old Roman said, "Lend me your ears," but I may say—keep your ears at home! Hear for yourselves. Constantly this process ought to be going on in the hearer's mind, "What has that Truth to do with me? That promise—is it mine? That threat—ought it to make me tremble? That caution—does it apply to me? That command—am I the man who ought to carry it out? Oh, for such candid, personal applications of Gospel Truth by each hearer to himself! We should then have blessed results.

I have thus gone through three points. The fourth is—*hear devoutly and hear sincerely*. I reckon that but little good will come of the hearing which some people give when they hear of loaves and fishes being given away. If there are so many loaves to be given away on Sunday, a certain number of poor people will be sure to be there—a vile hypocrisy which cannot be too much condemned! Take heed, dear Hearers, that none of you ever hear with such low and sinister motives, but that you come to hear the Gospel as God's voice to us and, therefore, as in God's Presence with simple and lowly hearts, desire to know His Truth that you may sincerely live it! Never should there be mixed therewith anything so gross

and carnal as that which brings some men and women to the House of God.

Why, do not even some of you come merely because it is the custom to go somewhere, or because it looks respectable, as if the Lord's own worship were to follow and honor the fashion of the day? This is all mischievous and rotten as a motive! If I did not think it were some good to me to come to worship, or that it was my duty to God to do it, do you think I would do it to please my neighbors? No! Let my neighbors please themselves! The honest, upright man in these things remembers that religion is a *personal* thing and that to be the mere slave of fashion and custom of others is sinful degradation!

Oh, I beseech you, lay aside that slavery of men's fashion! And when you do listen to the Gospel, let it be with a direct and devout feeling in your soul that you have come to worship God and to hear what the Lord God shall speak to you!

I will not stay on any one point and, therefore, pass on to observe take heed that you hear *earnestly* and, therefore, *spiritually*. Some men get no blessing from the Gospel, but who wonders that they do not? They never put their hearts into it. Oh, I think if I were this night under conviction of sin and were seeking a Savior, I would listen with all my heart and soul to the preaching of Jesus Christ! Have you not known times, some of you, when you would have stood in the aisles by the hour to hear of Christ, if perchance you might have got rid of the burden of your sins? Ah, these are the men that get the blessing! But those who are half asleep and in their minds quite asleep, are not likely to receive the Word. How can it come to them with power? What probability is there that it will, when they themselves care not whether it will or not?

And then, dear Friends—coming to the letter “F”—take care that you hear *feelingly*, asking the Lord to make the Word cut into your souls! Those get the blessing in whom the Word plows a furrow—not those to whom it is like whipping the water, no impression being made but for an instant. Oh, pray God that you may not get Gospel-hardened! Ask Him to make you tender under all threats and to keep you like a well-plowed field that is ready to receive the good seed when it is scattered upon it! Try if you can, and may God's Holy Spirit help you to be warned under the threats, to be cheered by the promises, to be comforted by every good Word of the Lord so that, feeling the power of the Word, it may be life and salvation to you!

Again, “take heed how you hear,” and mind that you hear *gratefully and prayerfully*. It is a privilege beyond all price to live in a land of Bibles, to be brought where the Gospel is proclaimed. Thank God for it. Do not be indifferent, lest He take the candlestick out of its place and leave you in the dark. Hear prayerfully! I wish it were a habit with you, when you get home, to take a few minutes in a quiet room and pray for a blessing upon what has been heard. We might expect to see great results if this

were your constant practice, to pray after your hearing—and even before—to get the ground ready! And when the seed is sown, to rake it and water it, so that it may have congenial soil in which to take root. Ah, but how many come to hear the Gospel and then, all the way home, get into some idle company after the service and whatever Word of God might have been blessed, fails to produce any result, for the evil birds of the air have devoured the seed that fell upon such a hard highway!

May God give you Grace to put in practice these seven hints that I have given you. “Take heed how you hear.” And now, lastly, there are—

III. CERTAIN OBVIOUS REASONS FOR TAKING HEED HOW YOU HEAR.

And the first is *because it is God’s Word*. Not everything that I say, or that any minister says, is God’s Word. Hence you should take heed to separate between what is God’s and what is ours. But wherein we speak according to Holy Scripture, it is as much God’s Word as if God Himself spoke. And let me remind you that God’s Word, whoever speaks it, is a much more solemn matter than a king’s word! Where the word of a king is, there is power, but where the Word of God is, though a boy should speak it, there is Irresistible Power! It is better for you to hear God’s Word from your fellow men than it would be to hear it from an angel, for God would have employed angels on such messages if they had been better. But because men can enter with greater sympathy into your feelings, God has not given this ministry unto angels, but has “committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” It is better for you to hear it from us than it would be to hear it from one who should rise from the dead, for if not, God would bid them rise from the dead and preach to you. But remember, He would not send any from the dead to preach to Dive’s kinsmen.

He said, “They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hear them.” I will go further and say it is better for you to hear the Word of God from a poor preacher than it is to hear it from God, Himself, for men did hear it from God, Himself at Sinai, and they prayed that He would no more speak with them, for the voice was too terrible. “You cannot see God’s face and live,” but in tender mercy He speaks through the lips of one like yourselves, who has passed through your sinnership, has fled to Jesus and can speak from living experience. Therefore “take heed how you hear,” for though it is but a man that speaks, it is more than a king, or an angel, or one risen from the dead! It is, after all, the Voice of God, the King of kings, speaking through His ambassador—therefore despise it not!

“Take heed how you hear” *because it is most precious Truth which is proclaimed—Truth which may save your soul!* The only chance, my unconverted Hearer, that you have of Heaven lies in the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Do you know the story? God became Man that He might suffer what was due for human sin. And whoever trusts in Jesus Christ, the Substitute for sinners, shall be saved! If you rely simply and entirely upon Him, you shall live! Now, that is the Gospel. If ever you

shall enter Heaven, it shall be through that gate. If ever you have true peace, it will be through that precious balm of Gilead. I beseech you, then, despise it not! This treasure is better than gold! No mention shall be made of coral or jewel in comparison with it. Oh, come and buy it without money and without price! But trifle not in that sacred market of a preached Gospel in which alone you can buy the salvation of your soul!

Take heed how you hear, *because it is by this Gospel that you will be judged*. Paul says that Christ will judge the world and he adds, “according to my Gospel.” The Gospel! The Gospel! You have heard that word till you have grown sick of it, but you shall see that word pointing the sword of Justice if you despise it! When God stands and holds out mercy to sinners, if they reject it, surely their destruction shall be the more severe! Oh, my dear Hearers, if you understand the Gospel of Jesus, I beseech you to so act towards it that you may not be afraid when the big books are opened and the thundering voice of the Judge shall read out the history of your life and shall pronounce your final and eternal destiny!

Take heed how you hear, for *many who heard the Gospel once are now among the lost*. Terrible reflection! These pews have held some whose spirits are now forever banished from hope! Take heed how you hear, for you may be sitting in such a seat—the successor of such an one—and you, also, may tread in his footsteps, despise the Truth of God and so die without hope!

Take heed how you hear, for *there are many nearing the end who will hear no more*.

Among the regrets that too often make dying such stern *and* crushing work is this, “I knew the Gospel, but I did it not. I was told of Christ, but I never trusted Him. I was pressed and persuaded and prayed to give my heart up to Him, but I put off a decision until now! My last few hours have come and ‘tis enough for me to be thinking of the pain I suffer! I have no time to think upon eternal things and do such weighty business with a God who has now come so near to me, dressed in robes of wrath!” Oh, as you will prize your Sabbaths when they are over. As you will value the sermons when you cannot listen to any more of them, think well of them, now, and make this resolution—and God help you to make it in His strength—that you will never again read the Bible, or listen to Gospel preaching or Gospel talking, without the solemn desire of your whole soul that it may be made a saving blessing to you, that you may not perish while hearing the Word!

Oh, I pray you take heed how you hear, for *there are many in Heaven now who never could have been there if they had not heard the Word*. And they were such as you are! Then why should not you find the way there by the same road which they, though wayfaring men, were able to tread without mistake? Children, recollect that—

**“Many dear children are gathering there,
For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”**

There are children in Heaven who were saved by hearing the Word in the Sunday school, saved by listening to it from this platform when they were but boys and girls! Dear Children, may you trust Jesus and become lambs in His flock. Young men and maidens, there are multitudes of your age who are among the choristers of the skies, making eternal melody before the Great White Throne, and they came there by hearing of the name of Jesus and trusting in Him! Will you not follow them? They were taken from you—some of you remember them when they died—you sat side by side with them in the class one Sunday, and the next Sunday they were in Heaven! Or you watched them fading slowly, like lilies broken a little at the stalk, and at last they withered. No, they withered not, except to our poor eyes, for they bloomed anew in Heaven!

Will you not bloom there, too? If so, listen to the Word of Jesus and, above all, accept it, and accept it now! Trust Him whose hands were pierced! Rest in Him whose heart was smitten with a spear! He will save you! He rejects none who yield to Him—yield to Him now! And you, you men of business, 'tis hard work to get you away a little while from the desk and ledger, you are so absorbed and eaten up with many of the business cares of life! And you, working man, so apt to close your ears to anything about another world—yet hear me! There are merchants like yourselves and working men like yourselves who stand among the white-robed host and rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory! They are there, and if you ask them how, they will tell you that they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! They found that precious blood by listening to the Gospel with attentive ears, and will you not be found there? Oh, what will it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? Sirs, it will be bad business if you make ten thousand pounds and forever ruin your souls! It will be hard business, you working men, if you toil on, and on, and on, bricklaying and carpentering, and I know not what besides, and yet throw away your souls, your immortal natures! I beseech you, by every grain of sense you have, and all the wits that are within your brains, be wise and trifle not with your souls—your better part, your immortal part! As for your body, the worms will eat it, do what you may with it! But your soul—oh, I pray God that no undying worm may ever feed on that, but may you escape from that danger, safely be sheltered in Christ Jesus and be eternally blessed in Him!

I have given you good enough reasons, then, for taking heed how you hear, but what is needed, is not reasons, but reason, or better still—Grace, the Grace of God! What is needed is not more argument, but the willingness to yield to those already felt. Oh, yield now to the saving Grace of God in Christ Jesus! Look to Him and be saved, I pray you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 TIMOTHY 2.**

Verse 1. *You therefore, my son, be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus.* This is an exhortation to everyone of us, not only to have Grace, but to be strong in it. There are many professors who as long as they are just saved, are content. We are not content with being barely alive spiritually—we do not wish to spend our life shivering with cold, but we seek after comfort as well as existence—and we seek to be in health, as well as to be in life. So should it be with the Christian. He should pray, “Lord, make me strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus.” Oh, that these words might be not merely an exhortation, but a Divine fiat, that as God said, “Let there be light,” so He may say to His children, “Be you strong,” and then oh, how soon shall the weakest of us leap into immortal strength!

2. *And the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* So then, there is to be a succession of teachers in the Church, and these do ill who are always speaking against the ministry of God. Timothy receives his ministry from Paul—he is to commit it to faithful men and these are to hold it in custody to teach to others. But there are some who say that all Christians should be teachers. To which we answer, if the whole body were a mouth, where is the ear? The mouth is, after all, but a vacuum. If the whole body was a mouth, there would be no body at all! If all are to be shepherds, who are to be the sheep? If all are to sow, where are we to find the ground? No, Brothers and Sisters, we must be careful to pray God to continue the ministry in our midst, for without it we miss many blessings. “The same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

3. *You therefore endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* If you desire delicacy, join not the army. A soldier’s calling is not to be linked with softness—and if you desire ease and comfort, join not the army of Christ, for a Christian’s profession and these go not together!

4. *No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.* So Timothy, as a Christian minister, is to act as the Roman soldier did! It was a law in Rome that no soldier was to plead in court for another as a lawyer, or to act in business for another as a bailiff, or to have anything to do, while a soldier, with either husbandry or merchandise. And so should it be with the men of God who have to preach the Word—and every Christian, indeed! Though he meddles with common things, he is to take care that he is not entangled by them, not to be caught, as it were, as game is entangled in a net. There is a way, you know, of making the actions of common life subservient to the purposes of Divine Grace. This is the Christian’s business—let him take care that he is not entangled with the cares of this life.

5. *And also, if a man competes in athletics, he is not crowned except he strives lawfully.* There were rules in the Grecian games. When they struck each other, the blow was not to be given except upon a certain part of the body, and if a man fought unlawfully, he could not get the prize. So there are laws, too, for the Christian ministry and also holy regulations for the great wrestling of Christians.

6. *The farmer that labors must be first partaker of the fruits.* This is a law. No man has any right to be a partaker at all till he has first tasted of the fruits of the field. Until we have first tasted that the Lord is gracious, we cannot effectively or properly minister the things of God.

7, 8, 9. *Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel. Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil-doer, even unto bonds. But the Word of God is not bound.* See how the Apostle comforts himself! Here he is in prison, but the Truth of God is free! He sits with the chains about his wrists, but the Word of God travels from nation to nation, from continent to continent, like the free spirit that dwells in it!

10. *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.* Not that the sufferings of Paul had anything meritoriously to do with the salvation of the elect, but that by his earnest striving and suffering, the word of the Gospel was brought to their hearing—faith, then, came by hearing—and so they were saved.

11, 12, 13. *It is a faithful saying: For if we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.* Glory be to God, the unbelief of man cannot make God break His promises! Christian, all your unbelief has not made God unfaithful to you! And Sinner, though you cast out the promises of God as being good for nothing, yet He will not therefore raise the recompense of reward, for Jesus will save others if He saves not you. “He abides faithful.”

14. *Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.* There are some Christians who want to have this exhortation given to them in these days, for they are always striving about words to no profit. Beware of these men, if you would not have your faith staggered!

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

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

PLAIN WORDS WITH THE CARELESS

NO. 778

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 13, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.’”
Luke 8:28.

IF we understand these words to be the exclamation of the evil spirit which tormented this poor demonian, they are very natural words and one can very readily understand them, for the Presence of Christ is such a great torment to the Prince of Evil, that he might well cry out, “Are you come to torment us before our time?” If we would put Satan to rout we have only to preach the Lord Jesus in the power of the Spirit, for this is the Hell of devils. Hence it is that he roars so much against Gospel preachers—he roars because the Gospel makes him hurt.

But if these words are looked upon as the language of the *man* himself, they are most extraordinary. In fact, they are so singularly mad and foolish that we can only account for them by the fact that though it was a man who spoke, yet the devil was in him—for surely none but a man possessed with a devil would say to Jesus, who alone could bless him, “Depart from me!” or say, “Torment me not!” And yet there are tens of thousands of men in this world who are saying just the same thing! Thousands of persons appear to be far more anxious to *escape* from salvation than to escape from eternal wrath! They avoid Heaven’s love with scrupulous diligence and the prayer of their life seems to be, “Keep me, Lord, from Heaven! Prevent me ever being saved! Give me the full swing of my sins and let me live so as to ruin my soul!”

Conduct most strange! From where comes such folly? The desire and determination of some men to destroy themselves are fixed and resolute to the last degree. Their self-hate and their suicidal avoidance of mercy’s thousand exhortations and entreaties are so extraordinary that, I repeat, we can only account for men being so besotted and maddened by the fact that Satan has mastery over them and leads them captive at his will.

Before I proceed to discuss the words, themselves, there is, however something to be learned from them. We may learn that a man may know a great deal about true religion and yet be a total stranger to it. He may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God Most High, and yet he may be possessed of a devil—no, as in this case he may be a den for a whole legion of devils! Mere knowledge does nothing for us but puff us up. We may know, and know, and know and so increase our responsibility without bringing us at all into a state of hope. Beware of resting in head-knowledge! Beware of relying upon orthodoxy, for without love, with all your correctness of doctrine you will be as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal!

It is well to be sound in the faith, but the soundness must be in the *heart* as well as in the head. There is as ready a way to destruction by the

road of orthodoxy as by the paths of heterodoxy. Hell has thousands in it who were never heretics. Remember that the devils “believe and tremble.” There are no sounder theoretical believers than devils, and yet their conduct is not affected by what they believe and consequently they still remain at enmity to the Most High God. A mere head-believer is on a par, therefore, with fallen angels and he will have his portion with them forever unless Divine Grace shall change his heart.

We learn, also, from the words of the text, that there are a great many bad prayers prayed in the world. The man said, “I beseech You, torment me not.” He was earnest to get Christ to let him alone—very earnest. Many, many, many well-worded prayers which have been excellent in themselves, have not had half so much earnestness in them as this. Both men and swine run hard when Satan drives them, but the best of us are slow, indeed, in going to Heaven. A sinner’s prayer for his own misery is often a grim and awful thing to look upon from its horrible earnestness. Yes, how often have we heard men offer prayers which it would be a very dreadful thing if God were to hear? What are oaths and blasphemies but prayers? They are prayers of the worst kind! A thousand mercies, indeed, that God has never granted the swearer’s prayer but has been pleased to spare him though he has often invoked curses on his own head.

Swearer, down on your knees this moment and thank the Almighty that He has not taken you at your word! If you have ever made a league with death and a covenant with Hell and have asked that God would destroy you, be thankful that He has not done so. Take that as a sign of *mercy*, and pray that the long-suffering of God may lead you to repentance. I hope and pray that his having spared you is with the intent that He may save you eternally.

Now we shall come to the words themselves, though we shall not take them quite in the order in which they stand. The first thing to which I shall call your attention is a mischievous misapprehension—there are many foolish people in the world who imagine that Christ comes to torment them and that His religion would make them miserable. The second thing is a querulous question, “What have I to do with You?” Many, many think that they have nothing to do with religion, nothing to do with Christ, and they ask, more or less contemptuously or earnestly, as their state of mind may be, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God Most High?”

I. First, we have to do with A VERY MISCHIEVOUS MISAPPREHENSION. It is currently thought among mankind that to receive the Gospel of Christ would be to cease to be happy—to give up all joyfulness and cheerfulness—and to doom one’s self to a life of melancholy. I shall argue upon that point a little, and I shall begin by admitting some things which are, frankly, to be acknowledged. An honest man, when he has espoused a cause, must not go in for it blindly but must be willing to make admissions where truth requires them, even should they appear to be dead against him.

Now, I will admit that if men will turn from their sins, the Gospel will, if it gets at their consciences, make them miserable. It will act as salt to raw wounds or as a whip to rebellious backs. There are some of you of this sort whose pictures I could easily paint so that you would know yourselves at once. I have heard of and personally known persons who have

been in the habit of glaring vices, say, for instance, drunkenness, and yet they are here with remarkable regularity. They have been pleased, either with the greatness of the congregation, or else with the particular manner of the minister and they have come again and again! And there has been some kind of impression produced that they had a hankering after the best things.

They have, by-and-by, reasoned with themselves, "I cannot go on as I have done and yet continue here—the man makes his knife too sharp. I must give up my sins or leave him altogether." And so, after awhile, feeling themselves rendered perfectly wretched by the sermons to which they have listened, they have given up attending the means of Divine Grace. Many and many a man has gone down those steps under the columns in front, yonder, grinding his teeth and stamping his feet, and vowing that he would never come again! And yet he is the very man who is sure to come again before long! I am often very glad when that is the effect produced, for I have hope of men who have enough conscience left to be irritated by the Truth of God.

Better a wrathful hearer than a *forgetful* hearer! If the arrow irritates, let us hope that it has gone deep. I admit, then, I *must* admit it, that if men are resolved to keep their sins it will be a very uncomfortable thing for them to hear about Christ Jesus, and holiness, and happiness, and sin, and the wrath to come. Jesus Christ's coming near them in the preaching of the Gospel will torment impenitent sinners and make them feel alarm and terror which they will try to drown by opposing the Truth.

Why, in the old Methodist times when they took John Nelson and impressed him to make him a soldier, they said, "Take the fellow away! Why, a man cannot nowadays get comfortably drunk, nor swear a round oath but what there is some Methodist cant or other who is sure to reprove him!" Just so—wherever true religion is in the world it makes sinners sin uncomfortable. The Christian is a standing rebuke to the ungodly! A man who is honest, and sober, and decent, and chaste, and who lives as a Christian should live is such a rebuke to the wicked that if they cannot *burn* him—and perhaps they would like to do so in these times, yet, if they can but ignore him, or insinuate that he is a hypocrite and that he has some sinister motive—they can, then, be a little comfortable at the service of evil and warm their hands at Satan's fire.

I trust this Tabernacle will always be too hot a place for such of you as mean to indulge in secret sins and hold on to hidden wickedness. Never will I, so long as God spares this tongue, flinch from telling you of your sins, for if I did I should expect that your guilt would rest upon *me* and that the blood of your souls would lie at my door. O that we may have Grace to be far more faithful even though your approbation should turn to rancor! Yes, admit it if you mean to go to Hell! Then you need not come to hear the Gospel because your doing so will only make you uncomfortable in *this* world and be of no service to you in the *next*.

Again, I must make another admission, namely, that a great many people, when they become serious for the first time and give themselves to Christ, are rendered for a time very miserable. There are some whose repentance is so exceedingly bitter that they make the very worst of company. They shun company themselves, and those who love merriment

shun them. The terrors of the Lord are upon them and they are feeling the burden of sin—it is no wonder that a cloud hangs over their brows!

We read John Bunyan's life and we cannot but admit that for years he was rendered, by religion, as wretched a man as he well could—and many others have passed through just that same state of mind, some for days, some for months, and others even for years. But allow me to remind you that this is not at all the fault of our Lord Jesus Christ, for if these people had come at once to Him and obeyed the great Gospel command, "Believe and live," they would have had instantaneous peace! Did you note that verse in the hymn which was given out just now? It told us that no preparations were needed before coming to Jesus. I will quote it again—

***"This fountain, though rich, from charge is quite clear.
The poorer the wretch, the more welcome here!
Come needy, and guilty, come loathsome and bare;
You can't come too filthy, come just as you are."***

Now, if a soul will but cast itself at once upon the glorious work of the great Redeemer, it shall then and there be saved. If those who were so long in soul trouble had but come to Christ, and had trusted Him with all their sins about them, they would have had peace at once! And the reason why they were so long a time in misery was because they did not go to Jesus Christ but kept on looking to *themselves*—looking for this *feeling* and that good *action*, and that other *experience*—and dreaming that because they did not see these, they could not be saved. O that they had accepted at once the simple Truth of God that, "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin."

Now, if a man is under a physician's care and he has a medicine sent to him, if he should be months in getting well you cannot blame the *physician* if you find that the medicine stands untasted upon the mantel! Why the man has been trying 20 other things and he has only gotten worse and worse. It is a good thing that he wishes to be healed—but how much better would it be if he would but try the right medicine which alone can cure him? If he does not try the prescription it is not the fault of the *physician* if he is long a sufferer—it is his own fault!

Even so, if a man will not believe in Jesus, blame not the Master if he finds no salvation. O, poor troubled hearts, you need not go that round-about way of sorrow—tempted and tossed about, and tormented with a thousand doubts and fears—there is a far nearer and surer way to eternal life! If you come to Jesus Christ straightway and fall down before the Cross, and rest your soul simply there, you shall find joy and peace this very night—before you go to your rest you shall know that you are "accepted in the Beloved."

But even if this pain were necessary, notice this—is it not a very small cost to pay—to be rendered wretched for a little time if afterwards there shall come perfect peace, and if, especially, as the result of that there shall be eternal salvation in the world to come? Why, supposing a part of your foot has become diseased and a bone has to be taken out. You do not say, "Oh, but the surgeon cuts so deep, and he has to use so many dreadful tools!" Of course he has, but if he can save the limb, or preserve your life, nobody thinks of a little pinch so long as his life is preserved! Ah, if you had to stand waiting for Jesus at Mercy's gate in the cold with the hailstorm of wrath pelting you for ages upon ages, it would be a small

thing to endure if you might afterwards enter into the rest which remains for the people of God! Even on that computation the thing is a good bargain, and he that is wise will reckon the cost to be little enough.

But now that I have admitted this, I want to ask those who say that Jesus Christ would make them miserable a question or two. I have admitted a great deal—now be fair and open with me in return. You are afraid of being made miserable. Are you so mightily happy, then, at the present moment? You are afraid that if you became a Christian you would be melancholy. Now, tell me, are you so wonderfully full of joy at the present moment? Are you so marvelously happy that you are afraid of damaging your little paradise? Excuse me if I say that I rather question whether those Elysian fields of yours are so very delightful! I have my doubts about those charming pleasures of yours and suspect them to be more paint than reality.

Ah, my Friends, we little know the miseries of the wicked. Take the drunkard, for instance—what a jolly, genial fellow he is! Yes, but what does Solomon say? “Who has woe?” Hear that word again, “Who has woe?” Why, this man whom the world calls “such a jolly fellow” has woe because he tarries long at the wine and mingles his strong drink. If men were rational, none of them would take the drunkard’s woe for the drunkard’s mirth. There is no comparison—he has a dear price, a heavy penalty to pay for all his apparent joy. Rare old cordials turn out to be blue ruin and fine sparkling wines end in darkness and death!

It is so with *all* vices—they froth a little and then turn to wormwood—the dregs of which all the wicked of the earth shall drink. Who does not know that the penalty of fleshly vices is too horrible for us to describe? A man cannot sin without bringing upon himself some sorrow even in this life. Wretchedness follows at the tail of transgression. Do not tell me a working man who spends his money at the gin palace, or the beer shop can have a happy home. The woman who gads about here and there, visiting this and that place of pleasure and amusement and neglecting her family does not find it all happiness. I am sure she does not—her face is evidence to the contrary. Those who lie, and cheat, and swear and forget God—I am quite sure they do not find so much joy as they profess to have.

So, then, to make short work of the business, you who whine about religion as being melancholy are generally a set of hypocrites! So come here, Sir, and let me tell you a little plain truth. Why, you pitiful creature! You tell me that religion would make you melancholy when you are as melancholy, now, as you can pretty well live! You have looked after this excitement and that to try and forget yourself! And when you sit down when you are sober and calculate what you are, and where you are going, you know very well that nothing could make you much more miserable than you are, and you are about as dull now as you could be! Do not make this mighty fuss about religion making you miserable when you are miserable already! But, like a sensible man, find no fault with what you have not tried.

There is another question I would like to ask you, and that is, if you reply that you are happy now, I should be glad to know whether the present happiness which you enjoy, or say you enjoy, will last you very long? The leaves are now falling very rapidly from the trees and they remind us that

we, too, must die. Will your mirth and your jollity support you in your dying hour? Do you expect that these things will buoy you up amidst the chill waves of the black sea of Death? No, you admit that all your rare jollity must end then—well, is not this a poor prospect for a dying pillow? Is this a wise choice, to choose to die without a hope? And after death—what then?

Will your present worldly delights minister comfort to you in another state? Do you expect that the gaities and vanities of life, in which both rich and poor indulge, will be a comfort to you in looking back upon them when your soul is separated from your body, and you stand before the bar of God? And if you die unsaved, and God condemns you, driving you from His Presence, do you think that the merriment of the ballroom, the theater, and the drinking bar will, in their remembrance, yield drops of water to your burning tongue in eternity? Will these things be pillows for your aching head in Hell? Will the sinful joys of earth breathe the soft breath of consolation upon you when Christ has said, “Depart, you cursed”?

You know very well they will not! Listen to me, then. These joys of yours which you are so afraid of losing—they are but *bubbles* and they burst. They are mere child’s toys and you break them and have done with them. And you yourself will soon be where no more bubbles are blown and no more toys made to sport with! Do not, therefore, make so much noise about your *joy*—there is nothing in it. Sirs, you might throw your joys to the dogs and even *they* would refuse them! The joys that a man can know apart from Christ are unworthy of an immortal being—they are unsatisfactory, delusive, and destructive. And if the religion of Christ does take all such joys from you, it only removes from you mischiefs which you ought to be most glad to lose.

But now we will go farther in dealing with this mischievous misapprehension. You have a notion that if Jesus Christ should come into your heart you would have to give up your pleasures. Now, what pleasures? The pleasures of the hearth and family fireside? The pleasures of seeing your children growing up around you to call you blessed? The pleasures of doing good? The pleasures of discharging your duties as in the sight of God? The pleasures of a quiet conscience? The pleasures of knowing that you can look both your fellow men and your God in the face? None of these pleasures will Christ take away from you! The pleasure of having a good hope as to the hereafter? The pleasure of having a good friend to whom to tell all your troubles? The pleasure of going to your heavenly Father with all your griefs and sorrows? None of these will Jesus take away!

Nor can I conceive of any pleasure that is worth calling a pleasure, which a man will lose by becoming a Christian. Ah, yes, I know what you mean! You mean that you will not be able to go after your *sins*! Now I understand you! Why did you not say so before and call a spade a spade? Call your sins, sins, but do not call them pleasures! And learn that the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, are but Satan’s baits by which he takes souls upon his hook to their destruction. You shall lose no pleasure but that which is unhealthy, unfit for your soul, unsatisfactory in itself, and unworthy of your nature. If you come to the Cross you shall find of a truth that, “Religion never was designed to make our pleasures less.” It multiplies our truest and purest pleasures a thousand-fold.

“Oh,” you say, “but I shall have to give up my *liberty!*” Your liberty? In what respect? Your liberty to be honest and to be upright? Your liberty to love your neighbor? Your liberty to be kind to the unthankful and the ungenerous? Your liberty to go about doing good? Your liberty to search, and judge, and know for yourselves? You will have to give up none of this in becoming a Christian! In fact, I dare to tell you that you will have a liberty conferred upon you far more wonderful than any liberty which you as yet have known. “He is the free man whom the Truth of God makes free, and all are slaves besides.”

Jesus Christ gives a man such an independence of spirit that he fears no one, but does what is right actuated by the spirit of right within him. And then he goes through the world fearless of oppressors, dauntless and courageous under all circumstances, the Lord’s free man. You will not have, then, to give up your liberty. Yes, I know what you mean—you mean liberty to *sin*, that is to say, liberty to ruin yourselves! Thank God *that* liberty will be taken from you, for you never had any right to possess so terrible an engine of destruction! But it shall be so taken from you that you yourself will be glad to miss it.

Why, look at that swine, yonder, wallowing in the mire—a miracle transforms it into an *angel*—has not that angel liberty to go and wallow in the same filth as before? Certainly he has! But does he ever use it? No, it is contrary to his seraphic nature to be found reveling in mire. So will it be with you. You will not care for those things which are now your delight, but, being made free from sin you will count it foul scorn to serve it any longer. Oh, it will be no loss of liberty, but the unloosing of all your bonds! Still you say, “If I were a Christian it would make me melancholy!” What for? Why should it make you melancholy? Make you melancholy to think that, if you live, God will be your Shepherd, and you shall not want? Make you melancholy to think that when you die—

“Jesus can make your dying bed feel soft as downy pillows?”

Make you melancholy to believe that you are on the way to Heaven, and that when the trials of this poor life are over you shall be with Jesus forever? I cannot imagine it! Let not Satan’s lies deceive you. It will drive your melancholy most effectually away if Jesus Christ comes into your soul.

Now, I will put a few things to you, with the deepest earnestness, for I long to see you turned from your evil ways and saved by the Sovereign Grace of God. O that the Holy Spirit may press home upon you the arguments which I try to use! You have heard the story of the Savior who came from Heaven to earth to die for His enemies. Do you believe that He came to make us miserable? Can you look into the face of that Man who bled for sinners, that they might live, and believe that He came here with the malevolent design of making men wretched? You know better! In your heart you know better!

There must be joy in that which such a man works out—so gracious a Redeemer must intend our best happiness. Listen to His teachings and I will ask you, then, whether they tend to make anyone miserable? Point me to a precept where the Savior bids us cease to rejoice. I invite you to find in the Word of God a commandment against sober, solid, pure, holy joy! I will find you words like these, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” “Rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy.” What day? A bright

day? No. "When they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake."

He began His first sermon with the word, "blessed," and He repeated the word many times. And as He was at first, so He was at the last, for He was blessing His disciples when He ascended into Heaven! He came into the world that His teaching might make men blessed, both here and hereafter. I will ask you again whether you notice in His followers any particular misery. Some of them, through sickness, may be sad, and there may be some who profess to be Christians who have not enough religion yet to make them happy. But the most of us are a happy people. I will bear my witness, and speak for myself. I believe I have a spirit which delights in happiness and that I am not, naturally, one of the dullest of mankind. I am not conscious, now, of being anything but simply honest in what I am about to say, and I can assure you that nothing has ever given me such joy as the knowledge that Jesus Christ is mine.

I have had to suffer a great deal of pain lately. And nothing has assisted me to bear its sharpest twinges, and they have been sharp, indeed, like the thought that—

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine."

I tell you, young men, you who want to see life, you must see Christ! You who want to have true happiness, a happiness to rise up and to sleep with, a happiness to live with and to die with—not the happiness of those silly butterflies that fly from flower to flower and are never content except they are in the theater or the ballroom—but the happiness of a man that is worth calling a man—I tell you such solid happiness is to be found only in vital godliness! I am of the same mind as the poet Young, who said—

"A Deity believed is joy begun.

A Deity adored is joy advanced.

A Deity beloved is joy matured:

Each branch of piety delight affords."

God is my witness, I lie not, there is a joy to be found in knowing Christ which all this round world beside cannot be found—search it through and through! "O that you had hearkened to My commandments! Then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea."

One thing I will also say and then have done with this point. You really believe that religion is a happy thing, though you pretend you do not. You must confess, and you *do* confess, that you desire to die like a Christian. You like for the present, perhaps, to indulge in this folly and that iniquity, but you would like to die with Christ, would you not? Then if you would be like a Christian in *death*, you must be like a Christian in *life*. You have down deep in your heart, even though you may deny it, a consciousness that faith in Jesus is worth having and that it would be worlds better for you if you were converted and had the Holy Spirit dwelling in your hearts.

Now, do not check that thought. Do not, I pray you, quench that inward consciousness. Believe it, for it is true, and oh, may you tonight, by Divine Grace, be led to seek the Savior! And may you find Him before you give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids. My longing for you is that you may be saved! My heart bleeds over the prospect of your eternal ruin. O that you may be led to Jesus! May you trust your soul in the hands of Jesus who was crucified, and you shall find that He does *not* torment you, but is *comfort*, fullness of comfort to your spirit.

II. My time flies by me all too rapidly and I shall need all there is left for the second point, which is A QUERULOUS QUESTION—"What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God Most High?" "What have I to do with You?" This is a question which we have heard many times. Poor people often ask it. I heard a workman say, "Well, I have nothing to do with religion. I know it is all very well for my master, for parsons and fine ladies, and aristocrats and old women—but it is of no use to me. I have to work hard and I have a family to bring up—it has nothing to do with me."

Now give me your hand, my good fellow, and, believe me, you are quite mistaken. Why there is nobody in the world whom it has *more* to do with than it has with you, for "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." Jesus Christ sends His Gospel especially to those who labor and are heavy laden. Moreover, I do not know anyone who could need it more than you do, for you have not very much in this life to cheer or comfort you. It is a hard fight to get through this world at all in times like these. But if you have a good hope for the *next* world to help you in the battles of *this* life, then you will bear your trials and you will cheerfully endure the hardships which heavenly wisdom appoints for you.

There are a great many working men and their wives here tonight who are members of this Church, and I know if they were to stand up for the purpose—and hundreds of them could—each one of them would tell you that the best inheritance they have ever had has been an interest in Christ, and that they never found themselves so truly blessed as when they laid hold on eternal life and trusted in Jesus! It has *everything* to do with you working people! I love you and I long that you may believe this great Truth of God and put it to the test.

But very often the *wealthy* say, "What have we to do with You?" Lavender kid gloves and the Gospel are not always well agreed—the upper circles are none the nearer Heaven because of their imaginary elevation. There are also certain learned gentlemen who are instructed in metaphysics and philosophy who patronizingly inform us that the restraint of religion is a very proper thing to keep the working classes in some kind of order, but really, they, themselves, are several degrees above it. Thus they say, as plainly as they can, "What have I to do with You?" Ah, the greatest fools in the world are those who despise other people, and they certainly do this who say that a thing is good enough for others, but quite unworthy of such excellent people as themselves! Who are they that they should lift up their heads so high?

God "has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." And I reckon that that which is good for the poorest dustman, with his bell, is also good for the richest nobleman with his stars and garters. And that which may be a blessing to the most ignorant will also be a blessing to the most learned. O my Brethren, educated, refined, wealthy, as you may be—the Gospel of Jesus has *everything* to do with you! The giant minds of Milton and of Newton found ample room in the Gospel! They delighted to bathe, like leviathan, in the ocean of Divine Truth. Speak of philosophy? There is nothing so philosophic as the doctrine of the Cross of Christ! And as to metaphysics, if a man shall delight himself in these, he shall find arm room and elbowroom enough in the study of the Doctrines of Grace!

Here the stoutest champions of logic may meet each other in the arena of debate. Here is room for the most profound erudition. And if you should study till you know all things, yet shall you find that the knowledge of Christ Jesus surpasses all knowledge, and that His Cross is the most excellent of sciences. There is much to do with you, you great ones! May Grace bow your necks to the yoke of Jesus!

“What have I to do with You?” say this and that individual in this vast assembly. There may be many here who are saying, “Religion has nothing to do with *me*.” But, young woman in your beauty, religion will add a new charm to your attractions, an unfading luster such as nothing besides can yield! The knowledge of Christ Jesus shall give you a beauty of mind that shall last when the worm has furrowed that fair brow, and your well-fashioned form has dissolved into the old brown dust which is the residue of all living. Young man with all your manhood about you, full of life and spirit, Jesus Christ has much to do with you! He can make you more manly than you otherwise would have been. He can bring out the noble points of your character and educate you to be something more than school or university can make you.

And you who are in business, this will help you in your cares. You who have to toil, and slave, and bear the troubles of life—Jesus Christ will comfort and sustain you. And you gray-heads—who can need Jesus Christ more than you? Here is your staff, your dying pillow, your immortal rest. What has He to do with *you*? Why, I trust that you have much to do with *Him*, and if you have not, yet at least He has something to do with you which I will now show you. What have you to do with Christ? There are two or three matters in which all of you have to do with Christ, whether you will or not, and the first is this—it is because of His intercession that you are *alive* tonight.

Your tree brought forth no fruit, and the Master said, “Cut it down.” Why, then, does it stand? Why? Because the Husbandman said, “Spare it yet another year.” Shall that tree ungratefully say, “What have I to do with the Husbandman,” when it owes itself to Him? Ah, Friend, the Jesus whom you despised has interposed and lifted His pierced hand between you and the sword of Justice or your body would at this hour have been in the grave, and your soul would have been tormented in the pit! You *have* something to do with Him, then. Feel you no motions of penitence at the thought? Does not the Spirit of God lead you to honor the Author of your continued existence?

Again, you have this to do with Christ: that it is entirely owing to Him that you are now in a place where the Gospel can be proclaimed to you! O Sinner, there could have been no hope, no Gospel hope for you if Jesus had not died! What balm would there have been in Gilead, what physician there, if Jesus had not come from Heaven to save? The fact that you are able to hear me say, and that I am able to say it, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved”—that fact you owe to Christ! Otherwise, if we had met together it would only have been to remind each other that we were under God’s curse, and that when this life was over we should go to a world of misery. Now we hear the silver trumpet sounding with the love notes of the heavenly invitation, “Come to the banquet of mercy, you lame, and halt, and blind!” The chief of sinners may come, and, if they trust in Jesus, they shall be saved! But were it not for the

Crucified Son of the highest, no note of hope could reach the ears of the guilty!

I remind you, further, that if you ask, "What have I to do with Christ?" the time is hastening when that question will receive a most conclusive answer. At the Last Great Day, if you have nothing to do with Him as a Savior, you will have to appear before Him as *Judge*. The days of Divine Grace will then be over. The Great White Throne will be set in the heavens and a congregation infinitely greater than any we have ever seen will be gathered around that dreadful tribunal. All men must put in a personal appearance at the last assize, and each one will hear his final sentence. Ah, you cannot escape! You cannot hide yourselves from the eye and hand of the Judge! The mountains refuse to bow their heads to cover you, and the rocks will not open their flinty heart to receive you!

The eyes of fire find you out, and the voice of thunder says, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink." "Because I have called, and you refused, I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded." "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." We *must* have to do with Christ. You may get away tonight or any other night, and go into the haunts of sin and say, "I will not be followed by the arrows of the Gospel," but the arrows of *Justice* will surely overtake you! You may escape from the Savior, but you will rush into the arms of the Judge! You may fly from your Friend, but you will only make Him your enemy. You may waste your life in neglecting Him but the next life will never end, and your neglect shall bring upon you a remorse which can never know an alleviation.

"What have I to do with You?" The question is invested with great solemnity! Dear Hearer, trifle no longer. Weigh well the question we have been considering and never venture to ask it again! Shall I tell you, before I close, what Jesus Christ may have to do with you and what He has to do with many now present who have trusted Him? It would be a thousand mercies, and a thing to sing of in Heaven, if some who came in here utterly careless tonight should go away impressed. I am so thankful to be able to preach to you again in the evening. I thank God I am able to be here. I thirst and pant to be at my solemn but beloved work again. I am so glad to be again employed by my Lord as the means of warning and entreating poor sinners. I thought I could not better show my thankfulness than by seeking the conversion of some who are farthest away from seriousness.

I do hope many of the people of God have been praying that a blessing may come. My own soul keeps praying as I speak. O that the Lord may hear me! I may have some here who have never heard the Gospel before, and others who have only dropped in out of curiosity. May this be "a word in season" to such. Some of us were once as careless, as godless, as hopeless and as sinful as any of you can be, and Jesus Christ has had this to do with us—He showed us our lost estate! He broke our hearts and then He bade us look to Him! Oh, happy day when we did so! We saw Him, by faith, hanging on the tree and we believed that He had suffered there for us. We rested our souls upon what He had done and ever since that day, instead of saying, "What have I to do with You?" we have felt that we have *everything* to do with Him!

He washed us from our sins—our sins could never have been taken away from us by any other means. He clothed us with His righteousness—we have no other righteousness to wear than that which He has worked out and brought in. Since we have been brought into fellowship with Him we have found it to be our pleasure to be obedient to His commands, our privilege to believe His promises, our joy to plead His name at the Mercy Seat, our transport to have converse with Him, and our delight to expect the time when we shall be like He, and shall see Him as He is. You are no judges of what the Christian knows of enjoyment if you are not Christians yourselves! You can no more judge of spiritual delights than a horse in a field can judge of the pleasures of the mathematician or the astronomer. You have not the nature that qualifies you for it.

There is another world inside this world, another life within this life, and no one knows it but the man who has believed in Jesus. But, having believed in Jesus, thousands of us who are not enthusiasts nor fanatics bear our witness that Jesus Christ is so precious that if men did but know Him, they must *love* Him! If you did but know what delight it is to be a Christian, you would blame yourselves that you have lived so long without being one, too. If you could but know the sweetness of having Christ to be yours, you would not wish another hour to pass over your heads before you could say, “Christ is mine.”

The way to have Christ is to trust Him. There is life in a *look* at Jesus. There is nothing for you to do, nor even to feel, but simply to come just as you are and *trust* Jesus. This is the Gospel, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” Baptism is the outward *expression* of your faith. You are immersed in water to signify that you believe that you are buried with Christ, and that you rise again to life in Him. But the saving matter is the *believing*—the *trusting* is the great soul-saving Grace. Baptism follows as a test of *obedience*, and a means of refreshment to the soul. “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.” “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

This night, eternal Father, give your Son to see of His soul’s travail. This night, we beseech You, grant that some may no longer reject Your Son, but may the eternal Spirit, who can plead as we cannot, work effectually with the wills and consciences of men and compel those to come in who, up to now, have stood outside, that Your House of Mercy may be filled. The Lord answer the desire of our hearts, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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A WELCOME FOR JESUS NO. 2593

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 23, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 17, 1883.

*“And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him, for they were all waiting for Him.”
Luke 8:40.*

THE Revised Version is, in some places, though not in many, better than the Authorized Version. Our text is one of the few instances in which there is an improvement—“And as Jesus returned, *the multitude welcomed Him*, for they were all waiting for Him.”

We have already noted, in our reading, that our Lord had gone where He was not welcomed. He went across the Sea of Galilee to the country of the Gadarenes and there He met with an ill reception and was even entreated by the people to depart out of their coasts. Yet, although Jesus knew beforehand the treatment He would receive there, He went. He did not stay there long, but He remained long enough to effect a grand purpose of Grace. Upon His landing on that inhospitable shore, a poor creature, held in captivity by a legion of demons, was set free and, that done, the Master yielded to the unwise, ungracious, unkind request of the Gadarenes and went His way back across the sea.

The Lord Jesus Christ may still come to a family that does not want Him, does not wish to have Him. A man of God may pass that way and tarry for a night. The Gospel itself may be carried to people in a certain quarter and they may hear it, though they have no wish to do so. Well, if this is your feeling, my Hearers, do not be burdened with what you consider the great calamity of Christ coming near you! Do not be disturbed by the fear that you will be forced to be saved against your will! The Lord Jesus Christ will not stay where He is not wanted. As He bade His Apostles, when they were persecuted in one city, to flee to another, so He does Himself. If He is not received here, He will go elsewhere. Yet I trust that, at least, He will not leave your family, that He will not leave your ungodly neighborhood—until He has won from it some trophy of His Grace—until He has taken “one of a city, and two of a family,” to “bring you to Zion.”

He still delights to gather to Himself unruly ones whom He will tame, unclothed ones whom He will robe in the garments of righteousness, and demon-possessed ones whom He will cause to sit at His feet, as the Gadara demoniac did when he was restored to his right mind. I have seen this happen again and again, and it has been a blessed thing for those whom Christ has thus rescued and saved. He has gone away, at the request of those who did not wish for Him, yet He has not gone till He

has left behind Him a witness to His power who has continued, after His departure, to tell what the Lord has done for him! Thus a tree has been planted which Satan cannot pluck up and a light has been kindled which all the powers of darkness cannot blow out! Yet, alas, there are still some who do not want Christ and who treat Him so ill that He goes away from them, as He returned from the coasts of Gadara.

But now look at the other side of the narrative and learn from it that while some will not receive Christ, there are others who are anxious that He should come to them. When Jesus took ship and crossed over to the other side of the sea, “the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him.” Minister of Christ, servant of the Lord, if you are rejected in one place, you shall be received in another! If, today, you have to shake off the dust of your feet against impenitent hearers, it may be that, tomorrow, you shall find some whose hearts the Lord has opened, who will gladly receive your message, who will come to Christ and find salvation in Him. What a mercy it is that all ground is not stony ground! There is yet some “honest and good ground.” It is not everywhere that the door is shut, so that God’s servants cannot enter, but, in many places, an abundant entrance is made by the power of the Holy Spirit, and God’s servants are able to step in. Wherever Christ is welcomed, there we may expect to see His power displayed.

As we read the chapter, we saw that it was so in this instance. The people waited. The people welcomed and then Christ put forth His power until the people wondered. If we are, at this time, waiting for Christ, and if we now welcome Christ, we shall, by-and-by, become a wondering assembly, marveling at what the Grace of God has done among us!

I am going to divide my subject in this way. First, here is *a beautiful sight*. “They were all waiting for Him.” Secondly, here is a sure *arrival*. “Jesus returned.” The people were all waiting for Him, so He came to them. And, thirdly, here is *a hearty welcome*. “The multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him.”

I. First, then, here is A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT. “They were all waiting for Him.” I shall try to show you this beautiful sight in four pictures.

I think that it is a very beautiful sight, first, to see *a waiting assembly* when all the people have come together—not to hear fine music, or merely to listen to the voice of a man, but anxious to meet with God, desirous to feel the power of Jesus Christ! Happy preacher who has to address such an audience! Happy audience that has been brought into such a condition! “They were all waiting for Him.” Just for a minute or two look at our ordinary congregations and see if our text is true concerning them. Alas, the people are not all waiting for Jesus, for they have not all assembled at the hour of worship! A few come on time and take their seats, but it is not so with others. I am not speaking of you, my Hearers, for I exempt you from this description. You would not get in if you came late, so you do not generally attempt it, but you know how it is in many places.

Here they come—detachment of late-comers stamping up the aisle, interrupting the first prayer. Others come straggling in all through the reading of the Scriptures. God’s Word seems so contemptible in their esteem that they tramp up the aisle as if it were some unimportant book

that was being read. Then comes the singing and some join in it heartily. But others do not even know what hymn it is, for they have only just arrived. And I have known some friends, in certain places, come so late that the minister had almost finished his sermon—and they were just in time to go home with the congregation! This ought not to be the case anywhere and is not the case where all are waiting for Jesus. I like the thought of the good woman who said that she never went to a service late for it was part of her religion not to disturb the worship of other people. I wish many more agreed with her. Oh, how much loss of spirituality, how much loss of blessing has come by that straggling in, one by one, instead of all being assembled, waiting for the Savior with such due respect to His holy name that they would not think of being late!

He who goes to see an *earthly* king is surely punctual! He would sooner wait an hour in the anteroom than keep the monarch waiting a moment. But what shall I say of those who seem as if it were a painful operation to join in the worship of God and so postpone that operation to the last possible moment? That was a beautiful sight in the house of Cornelius the Centurion, when he had fetched in all his kinsmen and near friends before Peter arrived, so that he could say to the Apostle, “Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded you of God.” They were all there, all ready, all waiting, all prepared to hear and all glad to hear! The more of such congregations there are, the more will the Spirit of God work, the more numerous will be the converts and the more will Christ’s Kingdom spread among men!

I say all this because I know that there are many people from other places who are worshipping with us and I know, also, from observation, how many there are who look upon the House of God as a place into which they may stray at any time they please. Let it not be so with you, dear Friends, wherever you worship—but let it be said of you whenever Christ comes to the congregation—“They are all waiting for Him.”

A second picture, more beautiful, still, is to see a Church waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ—a *prayerful congregation met together to seek a revival of religion through the more manifest Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in their midst*. I wish that all the members of churches that are in a declining state would say to themselves, “This state of things will never do. We cannot endure this dullness and deadness.” Or, if the whole church will not say it, it would be a great mercy if some dozen or score of faithful men and women would meet together and say, “We cannot bear to have these Sabbath services and weeknight meetings without any converts. Month after month passing and no additions to the Church, no apparent power with the Word.” I would not wish them to meet together to censure, to criticize, or to pour out their common complaints, but I would have them gather distinctly to wait upon the Lord in prayer, pleading His promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

I think I see such an assembly as that, all earnestly pleading with the Lord, all surrounding the Mercy Seat, laying hold of strong arguments from the Word and pleading them before God. I watch them as they have separated and gone home—they are still praying and they will meet to-

gether, again, at the first opportunity. And with more tears and greater urgency, they will present the same earnest cry, "Return unto us, O Lord Jesus! Return, we beseech You, O God of Hosts! Look down from Heaven and behold, and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself! O Shepherd of Israel, the drought has been long, the pastures are dry, the very earth is parched—we entreat you to fill the clouds with rain and water us with Grace—and make our barrenness to depart and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose." In imagination, I see these people coming together week after week—frequently pleading alone, and then pleading in company, making the Mercy Seat at the family altar to echo the same cry—and then, after they have prayed, they are all waiting, men and women and children, saying, "When will Jesus come?" They are hoping that there will be better preaching and that their fellow church members and especially that they, themselves, may be more spiritual. They are looking about the congregation to see whether there are any tokens of converts or anxious souls. They are all on the alert, expecting an answer to their prayers and, therefore, waiting for that answer and ready, as soon as God sends the fruit, to gather it from the tree and store it up!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we shall see greater things than these if we once get into that blessed condition, so that it can be said of us, "They were all waiting for Him." If we have such Prayer Meetings as that tomorrow—which is our day of special prayer in connection with the College Conference—what a day of prayer it will be—all with one accord in one place crying for the blessing! We might expect to have another Pentecost to make our hearts leap within us with gratitude and praise to God. "They were all waiting for Him"—oh, what a lovely sight—lovely in the eyes of angels and of the angels' Master, to see His people all waiting for Him!

Now for the third beautiful picture which is, a seeking sinner *waiting for Christ in confession and prayer*. He is upstairs in the quiet of his own room. No one but God sees him, for he has taken care to shut the door. He is kneeling at his bedside. He says little, but he weeps much. He cannot utter many words, but his heart is breaking with his longing desire after Christ. He confesses his unworthiness. He knows that if Jesus of Nazareth passes by and lets him still remain in darkness, he deserves it. He bows his head low before the Lord and cries, "I have sinned." After a while, he begins to plead the promise, "You have said, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I come to You! I am waiting for You! Come to me!" Mark his struggling faith. He says, "Lord, teach me how to believe, and let me know what it is to trust You! Gladly would I do so. I hope I do. 'Lord, I believe; help You mine unbelief!'" Still more fervently he cries, "Lord, give me rest! Lord, come and take away the burden of my sin! Lord, I beseech You, shine upon me! Now, for weeks, I have cried to You. When will You come to me? Lord, these many months have I bowed at the foot of Your Cross and I have tried to look up, but, as yet, I see no light. Possibly, it is my ignorance that hides You from my eyes. Maybe it is my unbelief. Perhaps it is some sin I am still harboring. If so, Lord—

***'The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,***

***Help me to tear it from Your Throne,
And worship only Thee.***

I said it was a beautiful sight that I was going to describe to you—and so it is. Yet there are, in such a scene, sighs and groans, and tears, and sobs—and men who love the pleasures of the world flee from it. But angels stand gazing with their finger on their lips and when, at last, they break the silence, the holy ones whisper, one to another, “Behold, he prays.” And then their next word is, “Let us up and away to tell the bright spirits before the Throne of God, for this man that prays is not far from the Kingdom, and we must bid them rejoice with us over one sinner that repents.” Oh, that there may be many such among us! These will be precious gems in the crown of King Jesus! While many a boastful professor shall be passed by, the humble seeker who is waiting for Christ shall have his name recorded on the tablets of the Redeemer’s heart!

Now one more picture, that of a *departing saint, longing for Home*—such a picture as you will make, I hope, dear Friend, by-and-by—such a picture as I hope to make when my turn shall come. The battle is fought and the victory is won forever! The man is propped up in his bed with pillows, for life is fast ebbing and strength is failing him. You can hear him say, in short broken sentences, “I have waited. I have waited. I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord! I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait and on His Word do I hope. Why are His chariots so long in coming?” His friends step very softly across the room. It is so quiet and still that you can hear the clock tick. He is waiting—waiting for his Lord, while in his inmost soul he is singing—

***“My heart is with Him on His throne,
And ill can brook delay.
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up, and come away.’”***

He has closed his eyes. He is gone. It is all over in this world. He has entered into his rest. Thus Jesus comes to those that wait for Him.

I would begin to wait for Him now, dear Brothers and Sisters, while yet in health and strength. *Wait and watch for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, which is the joy and hope of His whole Church! Wait and watch for the opened Heaven, for the descent on Olivet on that day when He, who was seen to go up into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as He went up! And if you fall asleep before that wish of yours shall be fulfilled, yet this shall be your joy—that you were among those who watched and waited for your Lord, and you shall enter into His joy!

Thus have I set before you the picture in four panels which my mind’s eye sees in the last words of our text—“They were all waiting for Him.”

II. Now let us turn to the second point, A SURE ARRIVAL—“Jesus returned.” Men never wait in vain for Christ—if they are truly waiting for Him, He will come to them. How do we know this?

Well, we infer it, first, from the fact that *His Spirit is there already*. Brethren, are you waiting for Christ? Who but the blessed Spirit of God made you wait? There was a time when you would have been like the Gadarenes and would have asked Him to depart from you. But now the longing, the pining, the fainting, the swooning are all proofs of His Spirit’s work within you. Where His Spirit is, there Christ will surely be.

Indeed, He is there by His Spirit. He never set a soul hungering without intending to feed it with the Bread of Life. He never made a spirit thirst without meaning to fill it with the Water of Life. You can be sure that if you are waiting for Him, He will come to you, for His Spirit is already with you.

Next, we know that He will come because *His heart is there*. If ever there is a heart that wants Christ, Christ wants that heart! If you have only one grain of desire towards Christ, Christ has a mountain of desire towards you. There never was a sinner yet who had a head start on Christ—if there is one who is waiting for Christ, He is there already! I tell you, my waiting Brother or Sister, Christ looks upon you with the deepest sympathy. He knows all your desires. He even finds music in your groans! He bottles up your tears, for He sees beauty in every sorrowful drop that distils from your eyes. Be of good courage, for, if you desire Him, He also desires you—and where Christ's heart is, He Himself will be, before long! If His Spirit is working within you and His heart is already with you, He will surely come to you.

I also know that He will come because *His work is there*. I expect to find you, tomorrow morning, dear Brother, where your work is. My Sisters, I expect to find you in the house where your work is. Where, then, is Christ's work but in longing, anxious, breaking hearts? What does Christ do? According to the Psalmist, beside all His other work, He does two things—"He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names." And, wonder of wonders, at the same moment, "He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds." Our Lord Jesus is just as much at home in binding up wounds as He is in guiding stars—these two works are equally pleasing to Him—no, the latter is the choicer work of the two. So then, if you are waiting for Him, He will surely come to you, for His business lies your way. He has work to do in you.

This is not all. *He has given us His promise that He will come*. "They that seek Me early shall find Me." That is a promise which refers to the young, but it refers to the old, too. If they are seeking Him with such earnest longing that they seek Him early in the morning, or seek Him at once, they shall surely find Him. "for everyone that asks, receives, and He that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened." These are our Lord's own words, so He will not let you wait for Him in vain, you may depend upon that! His promise tells you so.

Besides that, there is an experience which many of us have had which we would like to tell you for your encouragement. *It is Christ's custom to come to waiting souls*. I can speak for many Brothers and Sisters here, as well as for myself, when I say that, "I sought the Lord and He heard me." "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." I was so foolish when I was seeking the Savior that, for a long time, I said to myself, "The Lord Jesus will hear my brother. He will hear my sister. He will be gracious to my father and my mother, but not to me." The devil said, "Your name is not on the roll of Christ's redeemed ones." How did he know? He had never read it. How could I tell? I had never seen it. When any man says to me, "Suppose I am not elect," I usually answer, "Suppose you are. And suppose both you and I leave off supposing and go to work upon certainty instead of supposition. Is not that a wise thing to do? Now, Christ

has said, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.' Will not the wisest thing for us to do be to go and see whether He will cast us out?" And, dear Friends, if He does cast any one of you out, I should like you to let me know of it, for I have gone up and down the land, these many years, telling everybody that Christ never did cast a sinner out and I do not wish to say what is not true. If He does cast out one who comes to Him, I shall have to amend my testimony—at least I shall have to stay at home and hold my tongue—if you can tell me, assuredly, that you went to Christ and He cast you out!

Sirs, I tell you that there is not, even among the damned in Hell, a single one who dares to say that he sought the Lord, and the Lord would not be found of him! There never shall be one among lost spirits who shall dare to say, "I trusted in Christ and He did not save me. I sought Him, but He would not look upon me." It cannot be so! Come along with you, then, I pray you, and end all questions and supposing by humbly casting yourself down at Jesus' feet and trusting in Him! You shall not die, but shall live forever and ever!

Thus have I spoken upon a sure arrival—Christ will come to those who wait for Him

III. Now, lastly, those who have waited for Christ are sure to give Him A HEARTY WELCOME when He does come. I know that for certain because many things will lead them to do so.

First, *their fears*. You know that at the time mentioned in our text, the people came down to the shore of the Sea of Galilee and waited, and watched, and looked everywhere for Christ. He was gone. He who had fed them was gone. He who had healed their sick was gone. They said, one to another, "Which way did He go?" And the answer was, "He sailed across the sea and there was a storm that night—and He has not come back." They may have said, "Perhaps He never will come back." And some of the Galileans may have sadly added, "Alas, we did not treat Him well when He was here. We did not honor and reverence Him as we ought to have done and now, possibly, we shall never see Him again." Among them was that poor woman with the issue of blood—and she would say, "Ah, if He does not come back, then I cannot be healed. I have not a penny left to spend on another doctor! And if I had, I would probably only get worse instead of better." There was Jarius also, the ruler of the synagogue, and he was asking, "Where is the great Prophet? Do you think He will come back? My dear little girl, my only daughter, is getting worse and worse. I fear she is dying. Would God He were back, for He might heal her! If He does not return soon, she will be dead before He comes. And then what shall I do?"

Then there was the poor paralyzed man who had four friends who promised that they would get him to Christ somehow or other, even if they had to pull the roof off the house. They meant to take Him to Jesus. As he lay there, he seemed to say, "Ah, me, I have my bearers willing to carry me into His Presence, but perhaps He will never come back! Perhaps He has gone away altogether." Now, whenever that fear comes into a man's mind, through long waiting for Jesus, till he says, "Perhaps He will not come! Perhaps He will never smile upon me. Perhaps He will never hear my prayer"—when Jesus does appear, how gladly He is wel-

comed! From many a heart and lips goes up the cry, "He comes! He comes! Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." Among the waiting ones who are sure to welcome Christ when He comes are those who have been troubled by fears concerning His absence.

Then, besides, *their hopes* made them welcome Him when He did come. The poor woman with the issue of blood said, "If He does come, perhaps I may be healed, so I hope He will return." And Jarius cried, "Oh, if He will but come in time, my dear child may yet be spared!" And the poor paralytic said, "If He will but come—if I may but hear the music of His footfall and listen to the charm of that dear voice, and look into those loving eyes, I may yet be restored!" So, when Jesus did return, the hopes of those who had been waiting for Him caused their hearts to dance within them and made them give Him a hearty welcome! Ten thousand million welcomes are due to the Savior who breeds such bright hopes within our spirits! Oh, if He comes to *you*, my Friend, how welcome He will be! How gladly will you receive Him! If any of you have no fears and no hopes concerning Christ, God have mercy on you! But such as have the fears and the hopes of which I have been speaking will be sure to welcome the coming Christ.

In addition to hopes and fears, there were many other things that made these people welcome Jesus. For instance, *their prayers*. When a man has long prayed for Christ, he will at last say, with the Psalmist, "My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." And this kind of prayer creates within the spirit such a thirst that when the fresh waters of Christ's Presence flow, then does the man welcome Him with unbounded joy!

And *their faith*, too, helped them to welcome Christ when He returned. When a man is truly trusting Christ and yet has no sensible realization of His Presence—when a man is really reposing upon Christ and yet does not, at the time, feel the comfort of full assurance—when at last Christ comes to Him and fully reveals Himself in all His preciousness and beauty, how heartily does such a man welcome his Lord and Savior!

And *their love*, also, helped these people to welcome Christ. And O, my Soul, what joy it is to you to get into Christ's company now that you have learned to love Him! My Brothers and Sisters, this is our Heaven below, is it not? In all the vehemence of our love which burns like coals of juniper, the Presence of Christ is most welcome to us. Oh, for but one glimpse of His eyes, for He has ravished our heart! Oh, but to hear the tinkling of the bells upon our High Priest's garments, though the sound is soft and low! Oh, to listen to but one Word of His! If He will but whisper, "You are Mine," it will lift our heart up almost to Heaven, itself, and fill it with a foretaste of the bliss of Glory! I know that it is so with you, Beloved. In proportion as you trust Him and love Him, will be the heartiness with which you will welcome Him when He comes to you!

In closing my discourse, let me say that if we are prepared to thus welcome Christ, He is sure to come to us. There never was a man yet who stood waiting to welcome Jesus, but Jesus was already on the way to Him. Shall I tell you how you may sooner bring Him to you than by any other means in all the world? Expose your wounds and sores before

Him! Unveil your poverty and wretchedness before Him and challenge His promise to heal and save just such sinners as you are! Never try, in order to attract Christ to you, to make yourself appear better than you are—that is poor policy and is sure to fail. If I were a wounded soldier on the battlefield, I think that I would try to appear quite as bad as I really was, so that the surgeon might attend to me at once. Certainly, it would be very foolish for a man who is sick, well-near unto death, to say to the doctor, “Leave me alone for a while; I can wait a little longer.” No, rather let him cry, “O Sir, I must be attended to at once, or I fear that it may be too late! I am so ill that unless I am speedily cared for, death will claim me for its own.”

Well, now, act in this fashion with regard to Christ. Go to Him, poor Sinner! Tell Him how bad you have been—you cannot aggravate or exaggerate your sin! Just lay it all open before Him and say, “My Lord, my sins are the mouths that shall plead with Your love. My misery is the eloquence that shall entreat Your mercy. I die if You do not, in pity, look upon me and forgive me. I have no other hope but in Yourself. I cast myself upon You. Lost or saved, I will trust in You. At the foot of the Cross I will perish, if I must perish anywhere.” Ring the bells of Heaven, for that soul is saved! Glory to God in the highest! On earth there is peace between that soul and its Maker, for it is trusting in the Redeemer, and none ever perish who trust in Him! The Lord thus bless you, dear Friends, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 8:26-56.**

Verses 26, 27. *And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He went forth to land, there met Him out of the city a certain man which had devils for a long time, and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.* To what a frightful state of wretchedness this poor creature was reduced by Satanic power! Yet he is only a picture of the state of mind into which many are brought through sin. They seem as if they could not live with their fellow men. They have grown so mad through sin, so utterly beyond restraint, that they can scarcely be endured in ordinary society. Yet, as Christ healed this man, so He is equal to the cure of the worst case of spiritual and moral disease that may be brought before Him!

28. *When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, you Son of God most high? I beseech you, torment me not.* See, the devil can make men pray against themselves, and this is what they do in common profane swearing when they imprecate all manner of curses upon their eyes and limbs. Ah, me! To what mischief and folly and misery can Satan drive his willing dupes!

29. *(For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he broke the bonds, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness).* Such cases have we often seen—young men who have been rescued from a course of vice and who have been, for a season, helped

towards virtue—but they have broken loose again. There was no holding them in. They had not learned self-restraint and no one else could restrain them

30, 31. *And Jesus asked him, saying, What is your name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep. So, you see, dear Friends, that devils can pray! “They besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep.” That is, to their place of torment in Hell. They would sooner go to the bottom of the sea than go to their own dreadful home and, if we are half as wise as devils are, we shall dread beyond all things to be driven there. May God grant that no soul among us may ever lift up his eyes in torment and find himself in that awful deep!*

32, 33. *And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought Him that He would allow them to enter into them. And He allowed them. Then went the devils out of the man and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were drowned. Our proverb says, “They run hard whom the devil drives.” And when once he begins to drive men or swine, there is no end to their running till they are drowned in the deep! Woe unto that man, then, who yields himself up to the tyrant master! Oh, seek the Grace that will enable you to fling him off, to never to come under his dread sway again! Better still, pray the blessed Prince of Peace to cast out the black prince of Hell and Himself to rule over your spirit, soul and body!*

34. *When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled and went and told it in the city and in the country.* Sometimes Christ worked cures which were scarcely mentioned. But here—and I only remember a second miracle at all like it—that of the withering of the barren fig tree—He worked a miracle of *judgment* and it caused a great stir and much talk. I have heard of bells at sea that only ring out in the roughest storms. Here is one that was heard when softer tones would not have been heeded—“They fled and went and told it in the city and in the country.”

35. *Then they went out to see what was done and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.* There was some clothing work done that day. I know not who provided the garments, but here was some real practical Christianity exhibited—not only by the Master in healing the demoniac—but by the friends who found clothing for this poor man. You do well, my Sisters, who set yourselves to help to clothe the poor. God grant that all of them may not only be clothed, but also be led to sit at the feet of Jesus!

36, 37. *They also which saw it, told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them.* Surely, this legion of demons must have had the same effect on them as on the poor man when Christ first came to him! These foolish people took up the same cry as the poor demoniac! “The whole multitude besought Him to depart from them.” Christ sometimes hears this kind of prayer. There is many a man who has entreated that his conscience might not be

troubled any more and it never has been troubled again. But what an awful prayer for any people to pray! "The whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them."

37-39. *For they were taken with great fear: and He went up into the ship, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that he might be with Him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to your own house, and show what great things God has done unto you. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done unto him.* Sometimes, it is better to be spreading the good news of the Gospel than to be sitting at Jesus' feet. It is best when we can do both, but, sometimes, the practical duty of serving our fellow men must take the first place. Happy are they who give themselves to this work, telling to others what God has done for them!

40-46. *And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him: for they were all waiting for Him. And, behold, there came a man named Jarius, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought Him that He would come into his house: for he had only one daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay dying. But as He went the people thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stopped. And Jesus said, Who touched Me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng You and press You, and You say, Who touched Me? And Jesus said, Somebody has touched Me; for I perceive that power is gone out of Me.* Here are we, tonight, dear Friends, a great crowd. And what multitudes of professed worshippers of God there are in many places! They seem to throng the Savior, but, ah, how few do really touch Him so as to derive healing power from Him! This humble, simple touch of faith is something above and beyond all the pressure of professed zeal and ardor! This touch Christ recognizes at once, but all the pressing and the squeezing of the crowd goes for nothing.

47. *And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately.* Here is a second confessor. First, there was a man healed. Now, here is a woman healed. Both sexes may now hear from them what Christ can do. If they will not believe, oh, then their unbelief is sad, indeed!

48, 49. *And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole; go in peace. While He yet spoke, there came one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Your daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.* As if such a suppliant really did trouble Him! Still, if you have been praying long and your case appears to be hopeless, Despair will whisper, "Trouble not the Master." But Christ is never troubled by our prayers! It is our *lack* of prayer that troubles Him. Even after the worst has come to the worst, we shall never trouble Him if

we continue our prayers. But if, on any account, we cease from them, then, indeed, is His heart grieved.

50. *But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, Fear not: only believe, and she shall be made whole. "If she is actually dead, she shall be raised to life again."*

51. *And when He came into the house, He suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. For Christ does not make a parade of His miracles! He loves to do His work quietly and they that make a great noise must mind that they do not get put out when Christ is about to work a cure.*

52-55. *And all wept, and bewailed her: but He said, Weep not, she is not dead, but sleeps. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and He commanded to give her meat. Young saints need feeding as soon as they are converted. The conversion may be by miracle, but they will need to be fed by ordinary means. Be ready, dear people of God, with your milk for those who are but newly born! "He commanded to give her meat."*

56. *And her parents were astonished. But He charged them that they should tell no man what was done. For Jesus did not wish, at least at that time, to have the story of His miracles blazed abroad. Of Him the Prophet had long before written, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 792, 766, 646.

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

***“And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him and touched the border of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd.”
Luke 8:43, 44.***

THOUGH I take Luke's statement as a text, I shall constantly refer to the version of the same story which we find in Mark 5:25 to 29. Here we have one of the Lord's hid ones—a case not to be publicly described because of its secret sorrow. We have here a woman of few words and much shamefacedness. Her malady subjected her to grievous penalties according to the ceremonial Law. There is a terrible chapter in the Book of Leviticus concerning such a case as hers. She was unclean—everything that she sat upon and all who touched it—shared in the defilement. So that, in addition to her continual weakness, she was made to feel herself an out-cast, under the ban of the Law.

This created, no doubt, great loneliness of spirit, and made her wish to hide herself out of sight. In the narrative before us she said not a word until the Savior drew it out of her, for her own lasting good. She acted very practically and promptly but she was a silent seeker—she would have preferred to have remained in obscurity, if so it could have been. Some here may belong to the great company of the timid and trembling ones. If courage before others is needed to secure salvation, matters will go hard with them. They shrink from notice and are ready to die of shame because of their secret grief.

Cowper's hymn describes their inward feelings, when it says of the woman—

***“Concealed amid the gathering throng
She would have shunned your view,
And if her faith was firm and strong,
Had strong misgivings too.”***

Such plants grow in the shade and shrink from the light of the sun. The nature of their sorrows forces them into solitary self-communion. Oh, that the Lord may heal such at this hour!

The immediate cure of this woman is the more remarkable because it was a wayside miracle. The Savior was on the road to restore the daughter of Jairus. This woman's healing was an extra portion of Divine Grace, a sort of over-splash of the great fountain of mercy. The cup of our Lord's power was full, full to the brim—and He was bearing it to the house of the ruler of the synagogue. This poor woman did but receive a drop which He spilt on the way. We do well if, when going upon some errand of love, we

concentrate all our energy upon it and do it well in the end—but the Savior could not only perform one great marvel but He could work another as a sort of by-play incidentally—I almost said “accidentally,” on the road.

The episodes of the Lord Jesus are as beautiful as the main run of His life’s poem. Oh, that this day, while my sermon may seem meant for one and distinctly directed to his salvation, it may also, by the power of Jesus, save another not so clearly pointed at! While the Word is aimed at one particular character, may the Lord cause the very wind of the Gospel shot to overcome another—or, to change the figure for a better one, while we spread the table for some bid guest, may another hungry soul have Divine Grace given him to take his place at the banquet of Grace! May those who hide away and whom, therefore, we are not likely to discover, come forth to Jesus and touch Him and live!

Let us at once speak of this much-afflicted woman, for she is a typical character. While we describe her conduct and her cure, I trust she may serve as a mirror in which many tremblers may see themselves. We shall carefully note what she had done and then what came of it. This will lead us on to see what she did, at last, and what we, also, should do. May the Holy Spirit make this a very practical discourse by causing you to follow her till you gain the blessing as she did! The preacher is very weak. And may the Lord, for this very reason, work by him to your salvation.

Consider, therefore, concerning this woman, WHAT SHE HAD DONE. She had been literally dying for twelve years. What had she been doing? Had she resigned herself to her fate, or treated her malady as a small matter? Far from it. Her conduct is highly instructive.

First, she had resolved not to die if a cure could be had. She was evidently a woman of great determination and hopefulness. She knew that this disease of hers would cause her life to ebb away and bring her to the grave. But she said within herself, “I will have a struggle for it. If there is a possibility of removing this plague it shall be removed, let it cost me what it may of pain or payment.” Oh, what a blessing it would be if unsaved ones here would say each one for himself, “I am a lost soul. But if a lost soul can be saved, I will be saved. I am guilty. But if guilt can be washed away, mine shall be washed away. I have a hard heart and I know it. But if a heart of stone can be turned into a heart of flesh, I long to have it so and I will never rest until this gracious work is worked in me!”

Alas, it is not so with many! Indifference is the rule. Indifference about their immortal souls! Many are sick with dire spiritual disease but they make no resolve to have it cured. They trifle with sin and death and Heaven and Hell. Insensibility has seized upon many and a proud conceit—they are full of sin, and yet they talk of self-righteousness, they are weak and can do nothing—yet they boast of their ability. They are not conscious of their true condition and hence they have no mind to seek a cure. How should they desire healing when they do not believe that they are diseased? How sad that beneath the ruddy cheek of morality there should lurk the fatal consumption of enmity to God!

How horrible to be fair without and leprous within! Are there not many who can talk freely about religion and seem as if they were right with God and yet in the secret of their hearts they are the victims of an insincerity and a want of the Truth of God which fatally undermines the life of their profession? They are not what they seem to be—a secret sin drains away the lifeblood of their religion. May the Holy Spirit show every unregenerate person the fatal nature of his soul's disease. For this, I trust, would lead to the making of a firm resolve to find salvation, if salvation is to be had.

No doubt some are held back from such action by the freezing power of despair. They have reached the conclusion that there is no hope for them. The promises of the Gospel they regard as the voice of God to *others* but as having no cheering word for them. One might suppose that they had searched the Book of Life and had made sure that their names were not written there. They act as if their death warrant had been signed. They cannot believe in the possibility of their becoming partakers of everlasting life. They are under a destroying delusion, which leads them to abandon hope. None are more presumptuous than the despairing. When men have no hope, they soon have no fear. Is not this a dreadful thing? May the Lord save you from such a condition!

Despair of God's mercy is an unreasonable thing—if you think you have grounds for it, the lying spirit must have suggested them to you. Holy Scripture contains no justification for hopelessness. No mortal has a just pretense to perish in despair. Neither the nature of God nor the Gospel of God, nor the Christ of God, warrant despair. Multitudes of texts encourage hope. But no one Scripture, rightly understood, permits a doubt of the mercy of God. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Jesus, the great Healer, is never baffled by any disease of human nature—he can cast out a legion of devils and raise the dead. Oh that I could whisper hope into the dull ear of yonder mourner! Oh that I could drop a rousing thought into the sullen heart of the self-condemned—how glad should I be! My poor desponding Friend, I would gladly see your chains snapped, your fetters broken off! Oh that the Spirit of God would cause you, like this woman, to resolve that if there is healing for your soul you will have it!

Alas, many have never come to this gracious resolution because they cherish a vain hope and are misled by an idle dream. They fancy that salvation will come to them without their seeking it. Certainly they have no right to expect such a thing. It is true that our Lord is found of them that sought Him not. But that is an act of His own sovereignty and is not a rule for our procedure. The plain directions of the Gospel are, "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near." How dare they set these gracious words aside? They fancy that they may wake up one of these fine days and find themselves saved. Alas, it is more likely to happen to them as the rich man in the parable, "In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments."

God grant that none of you may trifle your souls into such misery! Some fancy that in the hour of death they may cry, "God be merciful to

me a sinner,” and so may leap into salvation. It seems to them a very slight business to be reconciled to God. They imagine that they can be converted just when they will and so they put it off from day to day, as if it were of no more consequence than going to shop to buy a coat or a gown. Believe me, the Word of God does not set forth the matter in this way. It tells us that even the righteous scarcely are saved and it rouses us to strive to enter in at the strait gate. God save you from every false confidence which would prevent your being in earnest about the healing of your souls.

Spiritually, your case is as desperate as that of the poor woman now before us. May the Lord sweetly constrain you to feel that you must be healed and that you cannot afford to put off the blessed day! If beneath the firmament of Heaven there is healing for a sin-sick soul, seek it till you find it. When the Lord brings you to this resolve by His good Spirit, you will not be far from the kingdom of Heaven.

Let us next note that this woman, having made her resolve, adopted the likeliest means she could think of. Physicians are men set apart on purpose to deal with human maladies, therefore she went to the physicians. What better could she do? Though she failed, yet she did what seemed most likely to succeed. Now, when a soul is resolved to find salvation, it is most fit and proper that it should use every likely means for the finding of salvation, Oh that they were wise enough to hear the Gospel and to come at once to Jesus! But often they make grave mistakes. This woman went to gentlemen who were supposed to understand the science of medicine. Was it not natural that she should look for help to their superior wisdom?

She cannot be blamed for looking to the men of light and leading. Many, in these days, do the same thing. They hear of the new discoveries of professedly cultured men and hear their talk about the littleness of sin and the larger hope and the non-necessity of the new birth. Poor deceived creatures! They find in the long run that nothing comes of it. For the wisdom of man is nothing but pretentious folly. The world by wisdom knows neither God nor His salvation. Many there are who know less of the saving Truth of God because they know so much of what human fancy has devised and human search discovered. We cannot blame the woman that, being a simple soul and anxious for healing, she went to those first who were thought to know most. Let us not, with Christ so near, go round-about as she did but let us touch our Lord at once.

No doubt the sufferer also tried men who had diplomas, or were otherwise authorized to act as physicians. How can you blame her for going to those who were in the succession and had the official stamp? Many sin-sick souls nowadays are, at first, very hopeful that the ordained clergy can benefit them by their duly performed services and duly administered sacraments. At least, good men, eminent in the Church, may be looked to for aid—surely these know how to deal with souls! Alas, it is vain to look to men at all, and foolish to depend on official dignity, or special repute. Some teachers do not know much about their own souls and therefore know less about the souls of others.

Vain is the help of man, be the man who he may. Whatever his popularity, learning, or eloquence, if you seek him for his prayers, or his teachings, as able to save you, you will certainly seek in vain. As this poor woman did—she is not to be blamed but to be commended, that she did what seemed best to her, according to her light. But you are warned—go not, therefore, to men.

No doubt she met with some who boasted that they could heal her complaint at once. They began by saying, “You have tried So-and-So but he is a mere quack—mine is a scientific remedy. You have used a medicine which I could have told you would be worthless. But I have the secret. Put yourself absolutely into my hands and the thing is done. I have healed many that have been given up by all the faculty. Follow my orders and you will be restored.” Sick persons are so eager to recover that they readily take the bait which is offered them by brazen impudence. An oily tongue and a bland manner, backed with unblushing assurance, are sure to win their way with one who is anxious to gain that which is offered.

Ah, me, “All is not gold that glitters.” And all the professions which are made of helping sin-sick souls are not true professions. Many pretenders to new revelations are abroad but they are physicians of no value. There is no balm in Gilead. There is no physician there—if there had been, the hurt of the daughter of my people had long ago been healed. There is no medicine beneath the sky that can stay the palpitations of a heart which dreads the judgment to come. No earthly surgery can take away the load of sin from the conscience. No hand of priest or presbyter, Prophet or philosopher, can cleanse the leprosy of guilt. The finger of God is wanted here. There is one Heal-all, one Divine Catholicon and only one.

Happy is he that has received this infallible balm from Jehovah Rophi—the “Lord that Heals.” Yet we marvel not, that when souls are pressed down with a sense of guilt, they try anything and everything which offers even a faint hope of relief. I could wish that all my hearers had an intense zeal to find salvation. For even if it led them into passing mistakes, yet, under God’s blessing, they would find their way out of them and end by glorifying the Divine Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which never fails.

This woman, in the next place, having resolved not to die if a cure could be had and having adopted the likeliest means, persevered in the use of those means. No doubt she tried many and even opposite remedies. One doctor said, “You had better go to the warm baths of the lake of Tiberius—such bathing will be comforting and helpful.” She grew worse at the warm bath, and went to another physician who said, “You were wrongly treated. You need bracing up in the cold baths of the Jordan.” Thus she went from vanity to vanity, to find both of them useless. An eminent practitioner assured her that she needed an internal remedy and he alone could give her an infallible receipt.

This, however, was of no use to her. And she went to another who said that an external application should be tried, such as Isaiah’s lump of figs. What perseverance that woman must have had! I am not going to say anything about our doctors nowadays, no doubt they are the most learned

and skillful that can be—but in earlier times surgery was murderous and medicines were poisonous. Many of the prescriptions of those days are sickening and yet ridiculous. I read yesterday a prescription, of our Savior's time, warranted to cure many diseases which consisted of grasshopper's eggs. These were supposed to exercise a marvelous influence but they are no longer in the list of medicines.

The tooth of a fox was said to possess special powers. But I noticed that one of the chief drugs of all, the most expensive but the surest in its action, was a nail from the finger of a man who had been hanged. It was important that he should have been hanged—another fingernail might have had no efficacy. Poor creatures were made to suffer most painfully by cruel medicines which were far worse than the disease. As for surgical operations, if they had been designed to kill, they were certainly admirably arranged for their purpose. The wonder is that for twelve years poor human nature could stand out, not against the disease, but against the doctors.

Brethren, the case is much the same spiritually. How many, under their burden of sin, go first to one and then to another—practice this and agonize after that and pine for the other—perseveringly and still without avail! Travel as fast as you may in a wrong direction you will not reach the place you seek. Vain are all things save Jesus our Lord.

Have you been to Doctor Ceremony? He is, at this time, the fashionable doctor. Has he told you that you must attend to forms and rules? Has he prescribed you so many prayers and so many services? Ah, many go to him and they persevere in a round of religious observances but these yield no lasting ease to the conscience. Have you tried Doctor Morality? He has a large practice and is a fine old Jewish physician. "Be good in outward character," says he, "and it will work inwardly and cleanse the heart." A great many persons are supposed to have been cured by him and by his assistant, Doctor Civility, who is nearly as clever as his master. But I have it on good evidence that neither of them apart, nor even the two together, could ever deal with an inward disease.

Do what you may, your own doings will not stanch the wounds of a bleeding heart. Doctor Mortification has also a select practice. But men are not saved by denying themselves until they first deny their self-righteousness. Doctor Excitement has many patients but his cures seldom outlive the sunset. Doctor Feeling is much sought after by tender spirits. These try to feel sorrow and remorse. But, indeed, the way of cure does not lie in that quarter. Let everything be done that can be done apart from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ and the sick soul will not be better. You may try human remedies for the space of a lifetime but sin will remain in power, guilt will cling to the conscience, and the heart will abide as hard as ever.

But this woman not only thus tried the most likely means and persevered in the use of them but she also spent all her substance over it. That was perhaps the chief thing in ancient surgery!—the golden ointment which did good to the physician, whatever became of the patient. The

most important point was to pay the doctor. This woman's living was wasting away as well as her life. She continued to pay and to pay and to pay. But she received no benefit from it. You might say, rather, that she suffered more than she would have done had she kept her gold. Thus do men waste their thought, their care, their prayer, their agony over that which is as nothing—they spend their money for that which is not bread.

At last she came to her last shekel. In the end there was an end to her means. But so long as the silver lasted, she lavished it out of the bag. What would not a man give to be saved? I never wonder that dying men give their estates to priests in the hope that they can save their souls. If gold could purchase pardon, who would withhold it? Health of body, if it could be purchased with gold, would be cheap at any price. But health of soul, holiness of character, acceptance with God, assurance of Heaven—these would be cheap if we counted out worlds as poor men pay down their pence for bread. There are men so mean that they would not part with a pound for a place in Paradise. But if these once knew their true condition they would alter their minds. The price of wisdom is above rubies. If we had mines of gold, we might profitably barter them for the salvation of our souls.

Beloved, you see where this woman was. She was in downright, desperate earnest to have her mortal malady healed and so she spared neither her labor nor her living. In this we may wisely imitate her.

II. We have seen what the woman had done. Now let us think of WHAT HAD COME OF IT. We are told that she had suffered many things of many physicians. That was her sole reward for trusting and spending—she had not been relieved, much less healed. But she had *suffered*. She had endured much additional suffering through seeking a cure. That is the case with you who have not come to Christ but, being under a sense of sin, have sought relief apart from Him. All that you do apart from Jesus, in order to win salvation, will only cause you increased suffering.

You have tried to save yourself by prayers. Your prayers have turned your thoughts upon your sin and its punishment and thus you have become more wretched than before. You have attended to ceremonies and if you have used them sincerely, they have worked in you a solemn sense of the holiness of God and of your own distance from Him. And this, though very proper, has only increased your sorrow. You have been trying to *feel* good and to *do* good, that so you may *be* good. But the very effort has made you feel how far off you are from the goodness you so much desire.

Your self-denial has excited cravings after evil and your mortifications have given new life to your pride. Efforts after salvation made in your own strength act like the struggles of a drowning man, which sink the more surely. As the fruit of your desperate efforts, you have suffered all the more. In the end I trust this may work for your good, but up till now it has served no healing purpose—you are now at death's door and all your praying, weeping, Church-going, Chapel-going and sacrament-taking—do not help you one bit. There has been this peculiarly poignant pang about

it all, that you are not better. Cheerily did you hope but cruelly are you disappointed.

You cried, "I have it *this* time," but the bubble vanished as you grasped it. The evil of your nature, when repressed in one place, broke out in another. You dealt with the symptoms of your disease but you did not cut off the root of the mischief—it only showed itself in another form—it never went away. You gave up one sin only to fall into another—you watched at the front entrance and the thief stole in at the back door. Up till now, O Soul, you have not come to Jesus and after all your goings elsewhere, you are not better!

And now, perhaps this morning you are saying, "What can I do? What shall I do?" I will tell you. You can do nothing except what this woman ultimately did, of which I will speak by-and-by. You are now brought to this extremity—that you are without strength, without merit, without power, and you must look out of yourself to another—one who has strength and merit, and can save you. God grant that you may look to that glorious One before this service is over!

We read of this woman, that though she suffered much, she was not better but rather grew worse. No better after twelve years of medicine? She went to the Egyptian doctor and he promised her health in three months. She was worse. She tried the Syrian doctor—he was a man who had great knowledge of the occult sciences and was not ashamed to practice enchantments. She was bitterly disappointed to find herself decidedly weaker. Then she heard of a Greek practitioner, who would cure her, presto! in a instant. She paid her remaining money but she still went backward. She bought disappointment very dearly.

Friend, is this your condition? You are anxious to be right, and therefore you are earnest in every effort to save yourself. But still you are not better. You climb a treadmill and are no higher after all your climbing. You drift down the river with one tide and you float up again when it turns. Night after night you pull up in the same old creek that you started from. Oh, pitiful condition! Getting gray, too—becoming quite the old gentleman. And yet no nearer eternal life than when, as a lad, you used to attend the House of God and wish to become a child of God.

Was she better? No. She grew worse? Fresh mischief had developed—other diseases fed upon her weakness. She was more emaciated, more lifeless than ever. Sad result of so much perseverance! And is not that the case with some of you who are in earnest but are not enlightened? You are working and growing poorer as you work. There is not about you so much as there used to be of good feeling, or sincere desire, or prayerfulness, or love for the Bible, or care to hear the Gospel. You are becoming more careless, more dubious than you once were. You have lost much of you former sensitiveness. You are doing certain things now that would have startled you years ago and you are leaving certain matters undone which once you would have thought essential. Evidently you are caught in the current and are nearing the waterfall. The Lord deliver you!

This is a sad, sad case! As a climax of it all, the heroine of our story had now spent all that she had. She could not go now to the Egyptian doctor, or to the Syrian doctor, or to the Hebrew doctor, or to the Roman doctor, or to the Greek doctor. No. Now she must do without their flattering unction in the future. As for those famous medicines which raised her hopes, she can buy no more of such costly inventions. This was, perhaps, her bitterest grief—but let me whisper it in your ear—*this was the best thing that had yet happened to her*. And I am praying that it may happen to some of you. At the bottom of your purse I trust you will find wisdom.

When we come to the end of *self* we come to the beginning of Christ! That last shekel binds us to the pretenders but absolute bankruptcy sets us free to go to Him who heals diseases without money and without price. Glad enough am I when I meet with a man who is starved out of self-sufficiency. Welcome, Brother! Now you are ready for Jesus. When all your own virtue has gone out of you, then shall you seek and find that virtue which goes out of HIM.

III. This brings to our notice, in the third place, WHAT THIS WOMAN DID AT LAST. Weaker and weaker had she become and her purse had become lighter and lighter. She hears of Jesus of Nazareth, a man sent of God who is healing sick folk of all sorts. She hears attentively. She puts the stories together that she hears. She believes them. They have the likeness of the Truth of God about them. “Oh,” says she, “there is yet another opportunity for me. I will get in the crowd and if I can only touch the bit of blue which he wears as the border of his garment, I shall be made whole.”

Splendid faith! It was thought much of in her own day and we may still more highly prize it now that faith has grown so rare. Note well she resolved to trust in Jesus in sheer despair of doing anything else. My dear Friend, I do not know where you are sitting this morning in this great congregation—I almost wish I did, that I might come up to you and say to you personally, “Try Jesus Christ, trust Him and see whether He will not save you. Every other door is evidently shut—why not enter by Christ, the Door? There is no other life buoy. Lay hold on this! Say with our poet—

***“I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.”***

Exercise the courage which is born of desperation. May God the Holy Spirit help you now to thrust forth your finger and get into touch with Jesus! Say, “Yes, I freely accept Christ. By God’s grace, I will have Him to be my only hope. I will have Him now.” Be driven to Jesus by force of circumstances. Since there is no other port, O weather-beaten boat, make for this One! Wanderer, here is a Refuge! Turn in here, for there is no other shelter.

After all, this was the simplest and easiest thing that she could do. Touch Jesus. Put out your finger and touch the hem of His garment. The prescriptions she had purchased were long. But this was short enough. The operations performed upon her had been intricate. But this was simplicity itself. The suffering she had endured had complicated her case. But

this was as plain as a pikestaff. "Touch with your finger the hem of His garment—that is all." O my Hearer, you have tried many things, great things and hard things and painful things—why not try this simple matter of faith? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Trust Jesus to cleanse you and He will do it. Put yourself into your Savior's hands once and for all, and He will save you.

Not only was this the simplest and easiest thing for the poor afflicted one, but certainly it was the freest and most gracious. There was not a penny to pay. Nobody stood at the door of the consulting room to take her guinea. And the good Physician did not even give a hint that He expected a reward. The gifts of Jesus are free as the air. He healed this believing woman in the open street, in the midst of the crowd. She had felt that if she could but get into the throng, she would, by hook or by crook, get near enough to reach the hem of His garment and then she would be healed.

It is so this morning, dear Hearer. Come and receive Divine Grace freely. Bring no good works, no good words, no good feelings, no good resolves, as the price of pardon. Come with an empty hand and touch the Lord by *faith*. The good things which you desire, Jesus will give you as the result of His cure. But they cannot be the cause or the price of it. Accept His mercy as the gift of His love! Come empty-handed and receive! Come undeserving and be favored! Only come into contact with Jesus, who is the Fountain of Life and you shall be saved.

This was the quietest thing for her to do. She said nothing. She did not cry aloud like the blind men. She did not ask friends to look on and see her make her venture. She kept her own counsel and pushed into the press. In absolute silence she took a stolen touch of the Lord's robe. O my Hearer, you can be saved in *silence*. You have no need to speak to any person of your acquaintance, not even to mother or father. At this moment, while in the pew, *believe and live*. Nobody will know that you now are touching the Lord. In after days you will own your faith but in the act itself you will be alone and unseen. Believe on Jesus. Trust yourself with Him. Have done with all other confidences and say, "He is all my salvation." Take Jesus at once, if not with a hand's grasp, yet with a finger's touch. O you poor, timid, bashful Creature, touch the Lord! Trust in His power to save. Do not let me tell you to do it in vain but do it at once. May God's Spirit cause you to accept Jesus now!

This is the only effectual thing. Touch Jesus and salvation is yours at once. Simple as faith is, it is never-failing. A touch of the fringe of the Savior's garment sufficed—in a moment she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. "It is twelve years ago," she said to herself, "since I felt like a living woman. I have been sinking in a constant death all this while, but now I feel my strength come back to me." Blessed be the name of the great Healer! She was exceeding glad. Tremble she did, lest it should turn out to be too good to be true. But she was most surely healed. O my dear Hearer, do trust my Lord, for He will surely do for you that

which none other can achieve. Leave feeling and working and try faith in Jesus. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so at once!

IV. And now, poor convicted Sinner! Here comes the driving home of the nail. **DO AS THIS WOMAN DID**—ask nobody about it—but do it. She did not go to Peter, James and John and say, “Good Sirs, advise me.” She did not beg from them an introduction to Jesus but she went of her own accord and tried for herself the virtue of a touch. You have had advising enough. Now come to real work. There is too much tendency to console ourselves by conversations with godly men—let us get away from them and speak to their Master. Talks in the enquiry room and chats with Christian neighbors are all very well. But one touch of Jesus will be infinitely better.

I do not blame you for seeking religious advice—this may be a half-way house to call at but do not make it the terminus. Press on till, by personal faith, you have laid hold on Jesus. Do not tell anybody what you are about to do. Wait till it is done. Another day you will be happy to tell the minister and God’s people of what the Lord has done for you. But for the present, quietly believe in the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Do not even ask yourself about it. If this poor woman had consulted with herself she might never have ventured so near the Holy One of God. So clearly shut out from society by the Law of her people and her God, if she had given the matter a second thought, she might have abandoned the idea.

Blessed was the impetuosity which thrust her into the crowd and kept her head above the throng and her face towards the Lord in the center of the press. She did not so much reason as dare. Do not ask yourself anything about it. But do it. Believe and have done with it. Stop not to parley with your own unbelief, nor answer your rising doubts and fears. But at once, this instant, put out your finger, touch the hem of His garment and see what will come of it. God help you to do so while I am speaking!

Yield to the sacred impulse which is just now operating upon you. Do not say, “Tomorrow may be more convenient.” In this woman’s case there was the Lord before her. She longed to be healed at once and so, come what may, into the crowd she plunged. She was so enfeebled that one wonders how she managed to get near Him. But possibly the crowd took her off her feet and carried her onward, as often happens in a rush. However, there was her chance and she seized it. There was the fringe of the Lord’s mantle—out went her finger—it was all done.

O my Friend, you have an opportunity now, by God’s great grace, for you are in His House of Prayer. Jesus of Nazareth passes by at this moment. He who speaks to you is not trying to say pretty things but he is pining to win your soul for Jesus. Oh, how I wish I could lead you to that saving touch! The Spirit of God can do it. May He now move you to cry—“I will believe in the appointed sacrifice and trust my soul with Jesus”! Have you done so? You are saved. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.”

“Oh but I tremble so!” So did she whom Jesus healed. Her hand shook but she touched Him all the same for that. I think I see her quivering fin-

ger. Poor emaciated woman, with pale and bloodless cheeks! What a taper finger was that which she held out and how it quivered! However much the finger of your faith may tremble, if it does but touch the hem of the Lord's garment, virtue will flow from Him to you. The power is not in the finger which touches but in the Divine Savior who is touched. So long as there is a contact established between you and the almighty power of Jesus, His power will travel along your trembling finger and bring healing to your heart.

A telegraph wire may shake with the wind and yet convey the electric current and so may a trembling faith convey salvation from Jesus. A strong faith which rests anywhere but in Jesus, is a delusion. But a weak faith which rests alone on Jesus, brings sure salvation. Out with your finger, dear Soul, out with your finger! Do not go away till you have touched the Lord by a believing prayer or hope. Holy Spirit, do not suffer any to quit the Tabernacle until, by a believing desire, or trust, or confidence of some sort, they have established a contact between themselves and Jesus and have felt the virtue enter them for their instant healing.

O Lord, save this people! Why do you come, Sunday after Sunday, in such crowds? And why must I stand here and bleed my heart away in love to your souls? Is the sole result to be that I help you to spend an hour-and-a-half in a sort of religious amusement? What a waste it is of my labor and of your time unless some gracious work is done! O Sirs, if you are not brought to Christ, my preaching will prove a curse to you! It appalls me to think that the preaching of the Gospel will be a savor of death unto you unless it brings you life. Put not the day of Divine Grace from you.

By the living God, I do implore you, trust the living Redeemer. As I shall meet you all, face to face, before the Judgment Seat of Christ, I do implore and beseech you—put out the finger of faith and trust the Lord Jesus, who is so fully worthy to be trusted. The simple trust of your heart will stay the death which now works in you. Lord, give that trust, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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REAL CONTACT WITH JESUS

NO. 3124

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1908.

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

***“And Jesus said, Somebody touched Me:
for I perceived power going out from Me.”
Luke 8:46.***

[Other Sermons on the healing of this poor woman are Sermons #1809, Volume 30—MAY I?; Sermon #2018, Volume 34—CURED AT LAST!; Sermon #2019, Volume 34—SHE WAS NOT HID and Sermon #3020, Volume 53—GOOD CHEER FROM GRACE RECEIVED—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

OUR Lord was very frequently in the midst of a crowd. His preaching was so plain and so forcible that He always attracted a vast company of hearers and, moreover, the rumor of the loaves and fishes no doubt had something to do with increasing His audiences, while the expectation of beholding a miracle would be sure to add to the numbers of the hangers-on. Our Lord Jesus Christ often found it difficult to move through the streets because of the masses who pressed upon Him. This was encouraging to Him as a Preacher and yet how small a residue of real good came of all the excitement which gathered around His personal ministry! He might have looked upon the great mass and have said, “What is the chaff to the wheat?” for here it was piled up upon the threshing floor, heap upon heap, and yet, after His decease, His disciples might have been counted by a few scores, for those who had *spiritually* received Him were but few. Many were called, but few were chosen. Yet, wherever one was blessed, our Savior took note of it—it touched a chord in His soul. He could never be unaware when virtue had gone out of Him to heal a sick one, or when power had gone forth with His ministry to save a sinful one. Of all the crowd that gathered around the Savior upon the day of which our text speaks, I find nothing said about one of them except this solitary “somebody” who had touched Him! The crowd came, and the crowd went, but little is recorded of it all. Just as the ocean, having advanced to full tide, leaves but little behind it when it retires again to its channel, so the vast multitude around the Savior left only this one precious deposit—one “somebody” who had touched Him and had received power from Him.

Ah, my Master, it may be so again this evening! These Sabbath mornings and these Sabbath evenings the crowds come pouring in like a mighty ocean, filling this House of Prayer, and then they all retire again. Only here and there is a “somebody” left weeping for sin, a “somebody” left rejoicing in Christ, a “somebody” who can say, “I have touched the

hem of His garment and I have been made whole.” The whole of my other hearers are not worth the “somebodies.” The many of you are not worth the few, for the many are the pebbles and the few are the diamonds! The many are the heaps of husks and the few are the precious grains! May God find them out at this hour and His shall be all the praise!

Jesus said, “Somebody touched Me,” from which we observe that *in the use of means and ordinances, we should never be satisfied unless we get into personal contact with Christ*, so that we touch Him, as this woman touched His garment. Secondly, *if we get into such personal contact, we shall have a blessing*. “I perceived power going out from Me.” And thirdly, *if we do get a blessing, Christ will know it*. However obscure our case may be, He will know it and He will have us let others know it—He will speak, and ask such questions as will draw us out and manifest us to the world!

I. First, then, IN THE USE OF ALL MEANS AND ORDINANCES, LET IT BE OUR CHIEF AIM AND OBJECTIVE TO COME INTO PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Peter said, “The multitude throng You and press You,” and that is true of the multitudes to this very day. But of those who come where Christ is in the assembly of His saints, a large proportion only come because it is their custom to do so. Perhaps they hardly know why they go to a place of worship. They go because they always did and they think it wrong not to go. They are just like the doors which swing upon their hinges. They take interest only in the exterior parts of the service—into the heart and soul of the business they do not enter—and cannot enter. They are glad if the sermon is rather short, there is so much the less tedium for them. They are glad if they can look around and gaze at the congregation—they find in that something to interest them. But getting near to the Lord Jesus is not the business they come upon. They have not looked at it in that light. They come and they go. They come and they go—and it will be so till, by-and-by, they will come for the last time and they will find out in the next world that the means of Grace were not instituted to be matters of custom—and that to have heard Jesus Christ preached and to have rejected Him is no trifle, but a solemn thing for which they will have to answer in the Presence of the great Judge of all the earth!

Others there are who come to the House of Prayer and try to enter into the service and do so in a certain fashion, but it is only self-righteously or professionally. They may come to the Lord’s Table—perhaps they attend to the ordinance of Baptism. They may even join the Church. They are baptized, yet not by the Holy Spirit. They take the Lord’s Supper, but they take not the Lord, Himself. They eat the bread, but they never eat His flesh. They drink the wine, but they never drink His blood. They have been buried in the pool, but they have never been buried with Christ in Baptism, nor have they risen again with Him into newness of life! To them, to read, to sing, to kneel, to hear and so on are enough. They are content with the shell, but the blessed spiritual kernel—the true marrow and fatness—these they know nothing of. These

are the many, no matter into what Church or meetinghouse you enter. They are in the press around Jesus, but they do not touch Him. They come, but they come not into contact with Jesus. They are outward, external hearers only, but there is no inward touching of the blessed Person of Christ, no mysterious contact with the ever-blessed Savior, no stream of life and love flowing from Him to them. It is all mechanical religion. Of vital godliness, they know nothing.

But Christ said, "Somebody touched Me," and that is the soul of the matter. O my Hearer, when you are in prayer alone, never be satisfied with having prayed! Do not give it up till you have touched Christ in prayer or, if you have not got to Him, at any rate sigh and cry until you do! Do not think you have prayed, but try again. When you come to public worship, I beseech you, rest not satisfied with listening to the sermon and so on—as you all do with sufficient attention and to that I bear you witness—but do not be content unless you get at Christ, the Master, and touch Him! At all times when you come to the Communion Table, count it to have been no ordinance of Grace to you unless you have gone right through the veil into Christ's own arms, or at least have touched His garment, feeling that the first objective, the life and soul of the means of Grace, is to touch Jesus Christ Himself—and unless "somebody" has touched Him, the whole has been a mere dead performance without life or power!

The woman in our text was not only among those who were in the crowd, but she touched Jesus and, therefore, Beloved, let me hold her up to your example in some respects, though I would to God that in other respects you might excel her!

Note, first, she felt that it was of no use to be in the crowd, of no use to be in the same street with Christ, or near to the place where Christ was, but *she must get at Him—she must touch Him*. She touched Him, you will notice, *under many difficulties*. There was a great crowd. She was a woman. She was also a woman enfeebled by a disease which had long drained her constitution and left her more fit to be upon a bed than to be struggling in the seething tumult. Yet, notwithstanding that, so intense was her desire, that she urged on her way, I doubt not with many a bruise and many an uncouth push and at last, poor trembler as she was, she got near to the Lord. Beloved, it is not always easy to get at Jesus. It is very easy to kneel down to pray, but not so easy to reach Christ in prayer. There is a child crying, it is your own, and its noise has often hindered you when you were striving to approach Jesus. Or a knock will come at the door when you most wish to be retired. When you are sitting in the House of God, your neighbor in the seat before you may unconsciously distract your attention. It is not easy to draw near to Christ, especially coming as some of you do right from the counting-house or from the workshop with a thousand thoughts and cares about you. You cannot always unload your burden outside and come in here with your hearts prepared to receive the Gospel. Ah, it is a terrible fight sometimes—a real toe-to-toe fight with evil, with temptation and I know

not what! But Beloved, do fight it out, do fight it out! Do not let your seasons for prayer be wasted, nor your times for hearing be thrown away, but like this woman be resolved, with all your feebleness, that you will lay hold upon Christ! And oh, if you are resolved about it, if you cannot get to Him, He will come to you and sometimes, when you are struggling against unbelieving thoughts, He will turn and say, "Make room for that poor feeble one, that she may come to Me, for My desire is to the work of My own hands. Let her come to Me and let her desire be granted to her."

Observe again that this woman touched Jesus very secretly. Perhaps there is a dear Sister here who is getting near to Christ at this very moment and yet her face does not betray her. It is so little contact that she has gained with Christ that the joyous flush and the sparkle of the eyes which we often see in the child of God, have not yet come to her. She is sitting in yonder obscure corner, or standing in this aisle, but though her touch is secret, it is true. Though she cannot tell another of it, yet it is accomplished. She has touched Jesus! Beloved, that is not always the nearest fellowship with Christ of which we talk the most. Deep waters are still. No, I am not sure but what we sometimes get nearer to Christ when we think we are at a distance than we do when we imagine we are near Him, for we are not always the best judges of our own spiritual state. And we may be very close to the Master and yet, for all that, we may be so anxious to get closer that we may feel dissatisfied with the measure of Grace which we have already received. To be satisfied with self is no sign of Grace! To long for more Grace is often a far better evidence of the healthy state of the soul. Friend, if you are not coming to the Table tonight publicly, come to the Master in secret. If you dare not tell your wife, or your child, or your father, that you are trusting in Jesus, it need not be told as yet. You may do it secretly, as he did to whom Jesus said, "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael retired to the shade that no one might see him—but Jesus saw him and marked his prayer—and He will see you in the crowd, and in the dark—and not withhold His blessing!

This woman also came into contact with Christ *under a very deep sense of unworthiness*. I daresay she thought, "If I touch the Great Prophet, it will be a wonder if He does not strike me with some sudden judgment," for she was a woman ceremonially unclean. She had no right to be in the throng. Had the Levitical Law been strictly carried out, I suppose she would have been confined to her house. But there she was, wandering about, and she must go and touch the holy Savior! Ah, poor Heart, you feel that you are not fit to touch the hem of the Master's robe, for you are so unworthy! You never before felt so undeserving as you do at this moment. In the recollection of last week and its infirmities, in the remembrance of the present state of your heart and all its wanderings from God, you feel as if there never was so worthless a sinner in the House of God before. "Is Grace for me?" you ask. "Is Christ for me?" Oh, yes, unworthy one! Do not be put off without it! Jesus Christ does not

save the worthy, but the unworthy! Your plea must not be righteousness, but guilt! And you, too, child of God, though you are ashamed of yourself, Jesus is not ashamed of you. And though you feel unfit to come, let your unfitness only impel you with the greater earnestness of desire. Let your sense of need make you the more fervent to approach the Lord who can supply your need.

Thus, you see, the woman came under difficulties, she came secretly, she came as an unworthy one, but still she obtained the blessing!

I have known many staggered with that saying of Paul's, "He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself." Now understand that this passage does not refer to that unworthiness of those persons who come to the Lord's Table, for it does not say, "He that eats and drinks, *being unworthy*." It is not an adjective—it is an adverb—"He that eats and drinks *unworthily*," that is to say, he who shall come to the outward and visible sign of Christ's Presence, and shall eat of the bread in order to obtain money by being a member of the Church, knowing himself to be a hypocrite, or who shall do it jestingly, trifling with the ordinance—such a person would be eating and drinking unworthily and he will be condemned! The sense of the passage is, not, "damnation," as our version reads it, but "condemnation." There can be no doubt that members of the Church coming to the Lord's Table in an unworthy manner, do receive condemnation. They are condemned for so doing and the Lord is grieved. If they have any conscience at all, they ought to feel their sin. And if not, they may expect the chastisements of God to visit them. But, O Sinner, as to coming to Christ—which is a very different thing from coming to the Lord's Table—as to coming to Christ, the more unworthy you feel yourself to be, the better! Come, you filthy one, for Christ can wash you! Come, you loathsome one, for Christ can beautify you! Come utterly ruined and undone, for in Jesus Christ there is the strength and salvation which your case requires!

Notice, once again, that *this woman touched the Master very tremblingly and it was only a hurried touch, but still it was a token of faith*. Oh, Beloved, to lay hold on Christ! Be thankful if you do but get near Him for a few minutes. "Abide with me," should be your prayer, but oh if He should only give you a glimpse of Himself, be thankful! Remember that a *touch* healed the woman! She did not embrace Christ by the hour together. She had but a touch and she was healed! And oh, may you have a sight of Jesus now, my Beloved! Though it is but a glimpse, yet it will gladden and cheer your souls. Perhaps you are waiting on Christ, desiring His company, and while you are turning the matter over in your mind you are asking, "Will He ever shine upon me? Will He ever speak loving words to me? Will He ever let me sit at His feet? Will He ever permit me to lean my head upon His bosom?" Come and try Him! Though you should shake like an aspen leaf, yet come! They sometimes come best who come most tremblingly, for, when the creature is lowest, then is the Creator highest—and when, in our own esteem, we are less than nothing and vanity, then is Christ the more fair and lovely in our

eyes! One of the best ways of climbing to Heaven is on our hands and knees. At any rate, there is no fear of falling when we are in that position for—

“He that is down need fear no fall.”

Let your lowliness of heart, your sense of utter nothingness, instead of disqualifying you, be a sweet medium for leading you to receive more of Christ. The more empty I am, the more room is there for my Master. The more I lack, the more He will give me. The more I feel my sickness, the more shall I adore and bless Him when He makes me whole!

You see, the woman did really touch Christ, and so I come back to that. Whatever infirmity there was in the touch, it was a real touch of faith. She did reach Christ, Himself. She did not touch Peter, that would have been of no use to her any more than it is for the parish priest to tell you that you are regenerate when your life soon proves that you are not. She did not touch John or James—that would have been of no more good to her than it is for you to be touched by a bishop’s hands and to be told that you are confirmed in the faith when you are not even a Believer and, therefore, have no faith to be confirmed in! She touched the Master Himself and I pray you, do not be content unless you can do the same! Put out the hand of faith and touch Christ. Rest on Him. Rely on His atoning Sacrifice, His dying love, His rising power, His ascended plea—and as you rest in Him, your vital touch, however feeble, will certainly give you the blessing your soul needs!

This brings me to the second part of my discourse, upon which I will only say a little.

II. THE WOMAN IN THE CROWD DID TOUCH JESUS AND, HAVING DONE SO, SHE RECEIVED POWER FROM HIM.

The healing energy streamed at once through the finger of faith into the woman. In Christ, there is healing for all spiritual diseases. There is a speedy healing, a healing which will not take months nor years, but which is complete in one second! There is in Christ a sufficient healing, though your diseases should be multiplied beyond all bounds. There is in Christ an all-conquering power to drive out every ill. Though, like this woman, you baffle physicians and your case is reckoned desperate beyond all parallel, yet a touch of Christ will heal you! What a precious, glorious Gospel I have to preach to sinners! If they touch Jesus, no matter though the devil himself were in them, that touch of faith would drive the devil out of them! Though you were like the man into whom there had entered a legion of devils, the word of Jesus would cast them all into the deep and you would sit at His feet, clothed, and in your right mind! There is no excess or extravagance of sin which the power of Jesus Christ cannot overcome. If you can believe, whatever you may have been, you shall be saved! If you can believe, though you have been lying in the scarlet dye till the warp and woof of your being are ingrained therewith, yet shall the precious blood of Jesus make you white as snow! Though you have become black as Hell itself, and only fit to be cast into the Pit, yet if you trust Jesus, that simple faith shall give to your soul the healing

which shall make you fit to tread the streets of Heaven and to stand before Jehovah-Rophi's face, magnifying the Lord that heals you!

And now, child of God, I want you to learn the same lesson. Very likely when you came in here, you said, "Alas, I feel very dull. My spirituality is at a very low ebb. The place is hot and I do not feel prepared to hear—the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak—I shall have no holy enjoyment today!" Why not? Why, the touch of Jesus could make you live if you were dead! And surely it will stir the life that is in you, though it may seem to you to be expiring! Now, struggle hard, my Beloved, to get at Jesus! May the Eternal Spirit come and help you and may you yet find that your dull, dead time can soon become your best times! Oh, what a blessing it is that God takes the beggar up from the dunghill! He does not raise us when He sees us already up, but when He finds us lying on the dunghill—then He delights to lift us up and set us among princes! Before you are aware, your soul may become like the chariots of Amminadib. Up from the depths of heaviness to the very heights of ecstatic worship you may mount in a single moment if you can but touch Christ Crucified! View Him yonder, with streaming wounds, with thorn-crowned head as, in all the majesty of His misery, He expires for you!

"Alas," you say, "I have a thousand doubts tonight," Ah, but your doubts will soon vanish when you draw near to Christ! He never doubts who feels the touch of Christ—at least not when the touch lasts. For, observe this woman—she felt in her body that she was made whole, and so shall you, if you will only come into contact with the Lord. Do not wait for evidences, but come to Christ for evidences! If you cannot even dream of a good thing in yourselves, come to Jesus Christ as you did the first time! Come to Him as if you never had come at all. Come to Jesus as a sinner and your doubts shall flee away.

"Yes," says another, "but my sins come to my remembrance, my sins since conversion." Well, then, return to Jesus when your guilt seems to return. The fountain is still open and that fountain, you will remember, is not only open for sinners, but for saints! What do the Scriptures say? "There shall be a fountain opened *for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem*"—that is, for you Church members—for you Believers in Jesus! The fountain is still open! Come, Beloved, come to Jesus anew, and whatever your sins are, or doubts, or heaviness, they shall all depart as soon as you can touch your Lord!

III. And now the last point is—and I will not detain you long upon it—**IF SOMEBODY SHALL TOUCH JESUS, THE LORD WILL KNOW IT.**

I do not know your names. A great number of you are perfect strangers to me. It matters nothing—your name is "somebody," and Christ will know you! You are a total stranger, perhaps, to everybody in this place, but if you get a blessing, there will be two who will know it—you will and Christ will. Oh, if you should look to Jesus this day, it may not be registered in our Church book, and we may not hear of it, but it will still be registered in the courts of Heaven and they will set all the

bells of the New Jerusalem ringing and all the harps of angels will take a fresh lease of music as soon as they know that you are born-again!—

***“With joy the Father does approve
The fruit of His eternal love!
The Son with joy looks down and sees
The purchase of His agonies!
The Spirit takes delight to view
The holy soul He formed anew
And saints and angels join to sing
The growing empire of their King!”***

“Somebody!” I do not know the woman’s name. I do not know who the man is, but—“Somebody!”—God’s electing love rests on you! Christ’s redeeming blood was shed for you! The Spirit has worked an effectual work in you, or you would not have touched Jesus—and all this Jesus knows!

It is a consoling thought that Christ not only knows the great children in the family, but He also knows the little ones. This Truth of God stands fast, “The Lord knows them who are His,” whether they are only brought to know Him now, or whether they have known Him for 50 years. “The Lord knows them who are His.” And if I am a part of Christ’s body, I may be but the foot, but the Lord knows the foot—and the head and the heart in Heaven feel acutely when the foot on earth is bruised! If you have touched Jesus, I tell you that amidst the glories of angels and the everlasting hallelujahs of all the blood-bought souls around His Throne, He has found time to hear your sigh, to receive your faith and to give you an answer of peace! All the way from Heaven to earth there has rushed a mighty stream of healing power which has come from Christ to you! Since you have touched Him, the healing power has touched you!

Now, *as Jesus knows of your salvation, He wishes other people to know of it*, and that is why He has put it into my heart to say, “Somebody has touched the Lord.” Where is that somebody? Somebody, where are you? Somebody, where are you? You have touched Christ, though with a feeble finger, and you are saved! Let us know it. It is due to us to let us know. You cannot guess what joy it gives us when we hear of sick ones being healed by our Master! Some of you, perhaps, have known the Lord for months and you have not yet come forward to make an announcement of it—we beg you to do so. You may come forward tremblingly, as this woman did. You may perhaps say, “I do not know what I should tell you.” Well, you must tell us what she told the Lord—she told Him all the truth. We do not want to hear anything else. We do not desire any sham experience. We do not want you to manufacture feelings like somebody else’s that you have read of in a book. Come and tell us what *you* have felt! We shall not ask you to tell us what you have not felt, or what you do not know. But, if you have touched Christ and you have been healed, I ask it, and I think I may ask it as your duty, as well as a favor to us, to come and tell us what the Lord has done for your soul!

And you, Believers, when you come to the Lord's Table, if you draw near to Christ and have a sweet season, tell it to your Brothers and Sisters. Just as when Benjamin's brothers went down to Egypt to buy corn, they left Benjamin at home, but they took a sack for Benjamin, so you ought always to take a word home for the sick wife at home, or the child who cannot come out. Take home food for those of the family who cannot come for it. God grant that you may always have something sweet to tell of what you have experimentally known of the precious Truth of God, for while the sermon may have been sweet in itself, it comes with a double power when you can add, "and there was a savor about it which I enjoyed, and which made my heart leap for joy!"

Whoever you may be, my dear Friend, though you may be nothing but a poor "somebody," yet if you have touched Christ, tell others about it in order that they may come and touch Him, too! And the Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 3:1-21.**

[This Exposition belongs to Sermon #3121, Volume 54—THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION, but there was no space available for it there.—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Let us once more read together part of this blessed soul-saving chapter. I suppose that more souls have been saved through the reading of this chapter than through almost any other portion of Holy Writ.

Verses 1, 2. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night. He could not have come at a better time—the business of the day was over and all was quiet.*

2. *And said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do except God is with him.* It is always well to go as far as you can in your avowal of belief in Christ. Nicodemus confessed what he knew to be true and he drew from it the thoroughly accurate conclusion that Christ must be a Teacher come from God because of the miracles which He worked. Dear Hearer, if you do not yet fully know Christ, take heed that you do not trifle with the Truth of God which you do know. If God has taught you a little about Him, prize that little and you shall have more! As we have often said, "He that values moonlight shall yet have sunlight." Thank God if you know as much as Nicodemus knew—and ask Him to teach you more.

3, 4. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?* Staggering at the symbol, he stumbled at the letter of Christ's saying and did not perceive its inward sense.

5, 6. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh.* Flesh, and nothing more. And it never can be anything more than flesh. The first birth brings no one any further than that. The children of the most godly parents, so far as their sinful nature is concerned, are in precisely the same condition as the offspring of the most ungodly. If they are ever to be numbered among the children of God, they must be born-again, because “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.”

6. *And that which is born of the Spirit.* And that alone—

6. *Is spirit.* Now, the flesh cannot enter into the spiritual Kingdom, only the spirit can enter that realm and, hence the need of a new birth, that this spirit may be created in us.

7, 8. *Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* He is a mystery. The effect of the work of the Spirit upon him is seen in him, but no man understands what the Spirit of God is, or how He works, any more than he knows from where the wind [See Sermons #630, Volume 11—THE HOLY SPIRIT COMPARED TO THE WIND and #1356, Volume 23—THE HEAVENLY WIND—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] comes, or where it goes.

9, 10. *Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?* A very similar query to that might be put to some who are living now—“Are you profound philosophers, students deeply learned in classic lore, or wise concerning many of the mysteries of nature—yet know you not these things? What will be the good of all your knowledge if you do not know how to gain admission into the Kingdom of Heaven? It would be better for a man to be ignorant of all other things, and to know this one thing, than to have all possible human learning, and yet to miss this knowledge which is the most essential of all!

11. *Verily, verily, I say unto you.* [See Sermon #3053, Volume 53—JESUS CHRIST’S IDIOM—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Christ speaks with an authority that no mere human teacher can ever possess.

11. *We speak what We know, and testify what We have seen; and you receive not Our witness.* In a certain sense, every true minister of Christ and every true child of God can say this, for we know that there is a spiritual Kingdom. We have seen it, we have entered into it and we can testify that there is another life which is as much superior to the ordinary life of men as the life of men is superior to that of the brutes that perish! And we know that we have that superior life. We have other eyes than these eyes that are visible, and other ears than the ears of our flesh. There is a higher and better life to be enjoyed even now, and he that believes in Christ has that life. “We speak what we know and testify what we have seen,” and yet, though our testimony would be believed if

we gave it concerning anything else, we are not believed when we witness concerning this higher and better life!

12. *If I have told you earthly things.* Things that take place here below, such as the new birth.

12. *And you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* Christ will not go on to teach us the deepest Doctrines of the Christian faith if we will not learn that which is simplest. Shall the boy be taught the classics if he will not study the spelling book? If men will not believe that there is such a thing as the new birth, shall they be taught the Doctrine of Union to Christ, and all those higher Truths of God that rise out of it? They would not believe these things if they were taught them!

13. *And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* There was a nut that Nicodemus could not crack—a riddle that he could not solve—and the Savior left him thus puzzled, for the time being, that he might learn that unless he was taught of the Spirit, he could not understand the teaching of Christ. You and I, who have been taught of the Spirit, understand the meaning of these words, but Nicodemus did not, though he was “a master of Israel.” Now follows another passage of Scripture which I always rejoice to read in this Chapter. There are two great Truths revealed here—the one is that we must be born-again and the other is that whoever believes in Christ is saved. Sometimes those two Truths seem to come into conflict with one another. A man says, “You say to me, ‘Only believe, and you shall be saved.’ And then, by-and-by, you tell me that I must be born-again. Are both these statements true?” Yes, they are both true, and they are both in this Chapter. We have been reading about the necessity of regeneration, now comes the glorious freeness of the Gospel of Christ!

14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.* You must be born into a new life if you are to be saved! How are you to have that great blessing? There is life for a look at Jesus Christ lifted up upon the Cross and lifted up in the preaching of the Gospel. Look to Him, then, and as surely as those who were bitten by the serpents in the wilderness were healed the moment that they looked at the serpent of brass, [See Sermon #153, Volume 3—THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] SO surely shall every son or daughter of Adam who gives a faith-look at the Crucified Savior, be saved at once and forever!

16, 17. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.* There was no necessity for Christ to come here to condemn us, for we were already condemned by our sin! Why, then, did Jesus come? He must have come upon an errand of mercy, to bring salvation to the lost. It is even so—God sent Him for that

very purpose, that He might give eternal life to as many as believe on Him. Oh, the glorious freeness of this precious Gospel! Surely they deserve the deepest Hell who will not have Heaven upon such terms! They must forever perish if they reject life when it is set before them in this truly gracious manner!

18, 19. *He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation. The very first form of it, the proof of it, and the reason for it—"This is the condemnation."*

19-21. *That light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are worked in God. Those who love their sins cannot, at the same time, love the Savior! They must love the one and hate the other—and it is a terrible choice when they deliberately reject the only Savior, "the Light of the world," and choose the darkness of sin, the darkness of woe, the outer darkness where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!*

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

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

END OF VOLUME 54

“SHE WAS NOT HID”

NO. 2019

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, APRIL 15, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately.”
Luke 8:47.

LAST Sabbath morning we spoke upon the woman who was healed of her issue of blood. After having spent all her living upon physicians and being disappointed in them all, she touched the Savior’s garment and was healed immediately. She came behind Him, for she did not wish to be seen. She said not a word—she had not the courage to ask for the blessing in an open manner. When cured, she slunk away into the crowd—she was anxious to be unobserved. Now, if the story had ended here, you would not have been surprised. It was a case of extreme delicacy that might seem to require a specially secret ending by the woman’s being permitted to go her way home, happy and whole.

But now, suppose that in the tenderness of our Savior’s sympathy with this trembling woman, He had permitted her to depart without making an open confession, what would have been the consequence? The Savior willed that the miracle should be recorded in three of the four Gospels and if it had ended where we left it last Sabbath morning, then such is our human nature that we should have drawn from it the inference that saving faith need not be confessed. Our natural love of ease and our desire to avoid the Cross would have made us follow this woman’s example and we should have tried to touch the Lord for healing and then run away from Him without making any profession of discipleship.

Many would have quoted her case as a reason why they might be allowed to escape the responsibilities, duties and sufferings which discipleship might involve. If the Savior had permitted this woman to retire in silence, many cowardly Believers would have said that the Savior’s silence gave consent to her retiring without a word and that they might safely imitate her. I know men and their style of reasoning. This would have been fine food for them. Think how this story would have been used in times of martyrdom. The cowardly would have argued, “We may have to go to prison or to the stake if we confess Christ—why should we be so needlessly daring? We can receive grace from Jesus quite unknown to anybody and having gained salvation we can mingle with the crowd and avoid exposing ourselves to danger.”

The Savior would not allow us to find in this case an apology for an evil course and so He called out the woman whom He had cured. The spirit of hiding, thank God, was not found in the Church in martyr times—for holy

men and women came forward and confessed their faith with more than common eagerness.

If the narrative had ended where we left it last Sunday, what a quietus it would have afforded to those good, peace-loving people who, in these days of blasphemy and rebuke, will take no sides at all! "Anything for a quiet life." They are very comfortable and mean to remain so. What does it matter to them though the whole Church should be rotten with error? They hope to go quietly to Heaven—indeed, they feel they are going there. And, if they are not soldiers of the Cross, yet they trust they are followers of the Lamb. If they do not contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, yet still they eat the fat and drink the sweet and enjoy the privileges of a comfortable religion.

That is the present policy of many and gladly enough would they have sheltered themselves behind this woman. She, however, was not hid, nor may they be. We have enough apologies for selfishness and ease and compromise, without the Savior's supplying us with one. And so He took special care in this instance that nothing so evil should be made out of it. What might have been a defense for guilty silence He turns into a grand argument for open confession. He will not allow concealment in this case because He will not tolerate it in any case but will have us take up our Cross and follow Him.

That is the subject for this morning—may I be helped of the Holy Spirit so to handle it that any here who are sincere in their love to Christ but yet have never avowed it, may be forced to come out at once and before the Lord Jesus Christ and His people declare that they have touched Him and that they have been healed immediately. Let me say to you, her hiding seemed very excusable. But, secondly, her hiding was not permitted. And, thirdly, your hiding should not be excused nor permitted but should come to an end at once.

I. First, then, we say concerning this woman, that HER HIDING SEEMED VERY EXCUSABLE. I have already said that if, in any instance, a cure might have been concealed, this was one. And it was so for many reasons. First, because of this woman's natural timidity and because of the nature of her malady. It would appear that if in any case the thing might have been done in a corner, or if done in a crowd, might have been passed over without remark—this was an evident case in point. Yet the Savior, tenderly considerate as He is, will not have it so. And you, dear Friend, may say, "I am naturally so very timid and retiring, pray excuse me." This woman was not only bashful but her sickness made her rightly wish to remain in obscurity.

"He should not like my story to be known," says one. She might have justly said the same—it must have been hard indeed for her to confess what the Lord had done. Yet she had to acknowledge His grace openly and so must you. She is a woman sick and faint, who for twelve years has been growing weaker and weaker, yet when she is healed she must come forward and confess the cure. Does this seem harsh to you? Surely it is the least she can do and she ought to do it of her own accord. Yet if silence might have been allowed in any case, hers was so delicate a matter

that she might have had the doubtful privilege of receiving mercy without acknowledging it.

In addition to this, remember that the Savior did not court publicity. He laid no injunction upon those whom He healed that they should tell everyone of the marvel. He did not seek fame or observation—He did not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. In several cases He bade the healed ones tell no man what was done. And in this case He had given the cure without any open request for it. Might she not, from this, conclude that her secret act of faith was approved and that it might continue in secret, since it had gained the benefit of healing?

You may reason in that way about yourself and say that Jesus does not need that you should testify for Him. Indeed, it is true that He does not need anything of any of us. But is this a fit way of treating your Lord? You may say that quietude on your part would be excusable. But as the Savior did not think so in this woman's case, I believe that He will not think so in your case. I trust that in His mercy He will deal with you as with her and compel you to come out and own the wonders of His grace.

There was another reason why she might have thought she need not make a public confession and that was that the Savior was at that time exceedingly occupied. The multitude thronged Him and He was on the way to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, to attend to his child. She would only be stopping Him in His career of love. Should the Savior be detained for her? Already Jairus did not look upon her very cheerfully when he saw that Jesus stopped for her. What would he do if she caused a still longer delay? Besides, she might naturally argue, "Why should such an insignificant person as I am detain the Prophet? What am I that I should take up even a second of His time? Jairus is before me. Let him take his turn. I have the blessing and there is no need to detain the Lord."

You know how ready we are to make excuses when a duty is not pleasant—I suppose you are very handy at it yourself. But now since this excuse, if it ever occurred to the woman, was soon disposed of, I would advise you also to cast away all subterfuges and remember that it is written, "He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved," or quoting an equally plain Scripture, "He that *believes* and is *baptized* shall be saved." The faith and the *confession* are put together by the Holy Spirit—what God has joined together let no man put asunder.

Excuse might also have been found for the healed woman in the fact that her cure would make itself known by its results. When she reached home, everybody would see that she was quite another person. And when they asked how it came to pass, she could tell them all about it. They would see in her life the best evidence of the work of our Lord upon her. Is it not better to speak by your life than by your lips? Exactly so and herein lies the apparent force of this excuse for disobedience. It needs seen truth to keep a falsehood on its legs. Note well that this woman was not permitted to withhold the open avowal of her indebtedness to Christ even though it was certain that her health and her conduct would witness to His power.

I know what you say—"I need not join a Church—I can be a Christian at home. Better live a Christian life than wear a Christian name." My Friend, we never proposed to you that you should put the wearing of a Christian name in the place of a Christian life—we have solemnly spoken the reverse of such a notion. We would earnestly remind you of our Savior's words, "These things ought you to have done and not to have left the other undone." Attention to one duty is no justification for the neglect of another. I charge you, disobey not in *any* point. Confess your Lord. Own what He has done for you. And be sure that the outcome of your life supports your confession. Have the shaft of godly living, by all means, but crown it with the capital of a brave confession.

Another pretext might have served this woman, if she desired an excuse. She might truthfully have said, "It is evident that an open confession is not essential to my cure, for I am cured." She was healed immediately and it is added that she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague—so that she knew that she was healed and it was clear that an avowal of her faith was not necessary to her receiving that great benefit from the Lord. Hence, many argue, "To confess Christ and join with His people is not necessary to my salvation." Who said it was? Open confession is not necessary, no, is not *permitted*, till you are saved. How could this woman have made any confession of a cure till she was cured?

But being cured, it then became necessary that she should confess it—not necessary to the cure, that is clear, but necessary because *of* the cure. It is always necessary for a disciple to do what His Lord bids him. It is essential for a soldier of the Cross to follow his Captain's orders. Jesus bids us let our light shine—dare we hide it? If we have received grace at His hands He would have us confess that we have received it and surely our sense of justice makes it needful for us to own our obligation.

Thus I have shown you that in her case many excuses might have been made. And yet, after all, it would not have been a fitting thing if she had stolen away in the crowd and gone home cured without praising and blessing her Lord. It would have been to her everlasting dishonor. I think she felt this when the Savior fixed those dear eyes of His upon her and said, "Somebody has touched Me." What a vision of loving kindness and peace it was to her! In a moment she must have thought, "How foolish I was to go behind Him! The very look of His face is comfort, the glance of His eye is joy. He would have granted my request with a smile."

When she saw what He was like and perceived the right royal bearing of the Bountiful One, she blushed that she had thought to steal a cure from One so ready to give it. The sight of Him was rebuke enough for her clandestine snatching the blessing. As to going away then without thanking Him, why, methinks the moment she saw His majestic mercy, the Divine royalty of His goodness, she could not do otherwise than fall at His feet and worship such a glorious Lord. Within herself she felt that it was a marvelous cure which had come to her by a touch of Him and she could not praise Him enough. The stones would have cried out against her if she had not confessed His miracle of gracious power and the earth would have refused to bear up such a monster of ingratitude.

Instantly she fell down before Him and told Him all the Truth of God. The thoughts of her heart were revealed by her Lord and never was Jesus more truly adored than by this poor creature, whose silence stood rebuked by her Lord's love and condemned by His immeasurable goodness!

II. Secondly, HER HIDING WAS NOT PERMITTED BY THE SAVIOR. I told you, in the opening of the discourse, that to have let her story finish without bringing her out would have been an encouragement to that practical denial of Christ which consists in concealing our faith in Him. The unearthing of this woman from her hiding place was worked by the Savior Himself, and therefore, with all its apparent roughness, we may be sure that it was the kindest thing that could have been done. Her being brought out had the best of consequences.

First, an open confession on her part was needful in reference to the Lord's glory. Beloved, the miracles of Christ were the seals which God gave to His mission. He was a man sent of God and the wondrous things that He did proved that God was with Him. If the wonders which He worked were not made known, the seals of His mission would have been concealed and so would have lost much of their effect. How would men know that He was the very Christ, if they never heard that the sick were healed? If this woman concealed her cure others might do the same. And if they all did it, then Christ's commission would have no visible endorsement from the Lord God.

I should like to impress this idea upon those of you who do not confess your Lord—whatever is right for you to do is right for other people to do. If it is right for one Christian not to confess Christ and join a Church, it must be allowable for other Christians to do the same. Where would be Churches, where would be the continuance of Gospel Ordinances? And for that matter, who would be bound to be a preacher if no one is bound to make an open profession? If you may go to Heaven by the backstairs, so may I, and God's grand entrance to the kingdom may be deserted. Who will care to go to Heaven by the open way, with all its responsibility and opposition, if you can just as easily take the snug road behind the hedges and slink into Glory without observation?

It will not do, Brothers and Sisters, if we consider what the Lord Jesus Christ deserves of us and how our open confession tends to certify His mission. The change worked in the spiritual and moral condition of the saved is God's attestation of the Gospel. And if this is not to be spoken of, how is the world to know that God has sent the Gospel at all? Further, remember that our Lord's miracles were illustrative of His teaching. Properly viewed, the miracles of Christ are the pictures of a volume of which His sermons are the letterpress. You take *The Illustrated London News* and you get the description of a public building, or the account of a grand ceremony—you are glad of the printed account—but you are helped more to form an idea of the whole business by the engravings.

You would not like to lose the woodcut, which is the chief feature of value in the paper. Now, in our Savior's ministry His Words were the letterpress and His miracles were the engravings. If the engraving is to be torn away, or pasted over, a great injury is done to the paper. And even so

our Lord's teaching would be greatly marred if its miracles were concealed. I showed you last Lord's Day morning, that the healing of this woman was a wonderfully instructive incident—how could it remain unknown? Must it be passed over to gratify her fear? Must Jesus work this wonder and nobody ever hear about it? As God is seen in His works of creation, Jesus is seen in His miracles of Divine Grace. Shall we rob Him of His glory?

God forbid that we should do Him this serious dishonor. When first I knew the Lord, if anybody had said to me, "You will be ashamed to confess Christ although He has saved you. The day will come when you will blush to own His name," I should have felt indignant at the suggestion. Why, I wanted to tell everybody of the Savior's love. If there had been nobody else to hear me, I should have had to tell the cat. I felt like Bunyan did when he said he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land all about it. I cannot understand how it is that you who know the Savior, or think you do, can imagine it to be right to hide away and cover up the glory of Christ. Oh, proclaim it! Shout it to all the world over that He has healed us, forgiven us and saved us.

But the confession had to be made for the sake of others. Do any of you wish to live unto yourselves? If you do, you need saving from selfishness. I have seen it brought as a charge against evangelical religion that we teach men to look to their own salvation first and that this is a kind of spiritual selfishness. Ah, but if that salvation means salvation from selfishness, where is the selfishness of it? It is a very material point in salvation to be saved from hardness of heart and carelessness about others. Do you want to go to Heaven alone? I fear you will never go there. Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that. What is the most natural plan to use for the salvation of others but to bear your own personal testimony?

Our Lord healed this woman for the good of the whole crowd. They must have all been astonished when they heard her story. He did it especially for the good of Jairus. Jairus' little daughter had been living twelve years and this poor woman had been dying twelve years—note the exact time in each case. Surely there was a loud call to Jairus in this cure to exercise faith in Jesus and it must have greatly helped his faith, which was not quite so strong as it seemed.

Do you not think that her public declaration was required for the good of our Lord's disciples? When they heard her story did they not treasure it up and speak of it to one another in after days and thereby strengthen each other's faith? The remembrance of these remarkable miracles which they saw their Master work would serve them in good stead in times of persecution. Beloved, had not the Lord an eye even to you and to me, who were to be born by His Divine Grace centuries later? Do you not think that He fetched the healed one out on purpose that this being put into the Gospel might bring out hidden ones throughout all generations? Did not our Lord foresee that many would be encouraged to touch the hem of His garment by faith through hearing of her cure?

Thus, you see, the trembling woman must own her Lord, that her Lord's household may be blessed. But especially she had to do this for her own good. The Savior had designs of love in bringing this poor trembler forward before all the people. By this He saved her from a host of fears which would have haunted her. Suppose she had gone home healed and had never confessed it—surely she would have felt uneasy. A sense of having stolen the benefit without leave or license would have caused her uneasy dreams and sad apprehensions. She would worry herself with the fear that the disease would soon return again, or that she would die from a fearful judgment.

Besides, she would have said to herself, "I was little better than a thief. I did not come in by the door but climbed over the wall. I am afraid it will go hard with me at the Day of Judgment. Will a man rob God? Have not I robbed the Savior, Himself?" All such fears were rendered impossible by her open confession and that which followed upon it. Jesus assured her that He had taken no offense. He wished her to have no fears, for, said He, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

She had been a very timid and trembling woman, but now she would shake off all improper timidity. I have known many persons cured of timidity by coming forward to confess Christ. I could mention cases of persons who have been very retiring and scarcely able to say a word upon any subject, but when they joined the Church and were baptized, their open confession broke the ice and the waters of their life were set in motion. Our Lord removes this infirmity by our obedience—"in keeping His Commandments there is great reward."

Our Lord also gave her an increased blessing after her confession. Perhaps the Lord is reserving some great favor for some of you when you avow His name. You hide indoors and He allows you milk enough to live upon. But if you would come out and confess Him, He would feed you with the strong meat of the kingdom. You would become a braver and more useful person if you would take up your cross. You are now like Saul, the son of Kish, hiding among the stuff—come out and be a king. Confess what Christ has done for you. For what did the Savior give her?

He gave her clearly to know her relationship to Him. He said, "Daughter"! I do not know that the Savior ever called any other woman daughter, for He was guarded in His speech to women. But to this one woman He said, "Daughter." Oh, may the Lord give trembling ones to see and feel the near and dear relationship which exists between Christ and their souls! May your sonship come up before your minds most vividly, as a reward of obedience. May Jesus say to some of you, "Son, be of good comfort." Or to another, "Daughter, be of good cheer, your faith has saved you." "What would I give," says one, "if Jesus would call me 'daughter'!" Give Him your whole self by believing in Him and by confession of Him and see if He does not reveal to you His love.

What choice revelations you lose through sinful silence, I cannot tell you. But assuredly you miss many a cheering word from your Lord's own lip. If you will not own Him, how can you expect Him to give you the spirit

of adoption? If you receive instead the spirit of bondage you cannot wonder.

Next note that our Lord gave her joyousness. He said, "Daughter, be of good comfort." Smooth those wrinkles from your brow, My daughter—

***"Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?"***

"Be of good comfort." Ah, Friends! You hang your heads. Perhaps if you had grace enough to own Jesus more fully, you would hold your heads up and the sun would shine into your faces and you would march joyfully all the rest of your lives. I advise you to try it. One of the best medicines for low spirits will be found in a courageous obedience to Jesus. Keep close to the Crucified One and your own cross will grow light in fellowship with Him.

Next notice that He gave a commendation to her faith—"Your faith has made you whole." Why, it was not her faith which made her whole, was it? No, but Jesus puts His own crown upon the head of faith. It is always safe for Jesus to crown faith, because faith always crowns Jesus. Her faith would answer, "Lord, I did nothing, You did it all," and, therefore, Jesus ascribes her healing to her faith. How much I desire that you, who are now afraid of your own faith, would win your Lord's praise by coming out and bearing witness to what He has done for you! Then will you not only believe but also know that you have believed and end forever your present state of miserable doubt.

Then the Lord gave her a word of precious quieting. He said, "Go in peace." As much as to say—Do not stop in this crowd, to be pushed about or stared at, but go home in quietness. Go home to your house and to your friends, with a light heart. All is well. You enjoy My favor. I have called you, Daughter, and I will never disown you. I have blessed you and you shall be blessed. I give you peace on earth and peace in Heaven. O you that do love the Lord and trust Him but yet have never declared your faith according to His command, you say, "We do not know how it is but while we hear of God's people having great peace we do not enjoy it."

You cannot expect to have peace and yet be disobedient. If you do not side with Jesus, do you expect Him to be at your side? You shall have bread and water so that your soul shall be kept alive. But you cannot taste the wines on the lees, nor the fat things full of marrow so long as you do not confess your Lord. The dainties of the cupboard are not for disobedient children. Are you ashamed of Jesus? How, then, can you expect Him to give you the kisses of His mouth? That He should save you will be more than His promise. But as He loves you, He must and will discipline you unless you confess His name and His work. Why do you lose present comfort by neglect?

All in the train of faith will go to Heaven. But why do so many ride third class, or even get into cattle-cars? Why not ride first class? To be out-and-out for Christ is to ride first class. Confess your Lord. Determine never to hide your colors. Be heart and soul a Christian. Live for Jesus and be ready to die for Him. This is to go to Heaven first class. And why should you not? Why will you be fretting and fuming, moaning and mourning,

when you might as well be singing and dancing and feasting in the presence of your Lord and His household? Do you hesitate to own your Lord and Master? Ah, me! How shall I sufficiently grieve over you? Let not another day pass over your head till you have left Cowards' Castle and come into the ranks of the army of the Lord of Hosts.

III. Thus I have already reached my last point—YOUR HIDING OUGHT TO BE ENDED. "Whom are you speaking to, Sir?" Well, not to you, dear Friends, who are always to the front, lifting the banner of the Cross. "Whom are you speaking to, Sir?" To you, my Friend, if you are really a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. If you keep yourself to yourself, it is to you that I am speaking and I desire to press upon you your obligations.

What do you owe to my Lord? You are washed from your uncleanness. You are clothed with the robe of righteousness. You are accepted in the Beloved. You know that you have passed from death to life. Unless fearfully mistaken, you know that you are the Lord's. Well, then, declare it. Do not be ashamed to take your place in the cross-bearing procession and follow the Lamb wherever He goes. By your love to Jesus do not turn to the right, seeking your own ease. Nor to the left, aiming at the peace of others—but go straight on where duty and Jesus lead you. This is still the way to honor and immortality.

Do you not think you owe something to the Church of God, which kept the Gospel alive in the world for you to hear? Did not a band of godly men and women meet together and see that the Gospel was preached? Was it not so that you were saved? Should you not help to keep that Church going by whose means you were brought to Jesus?

May I be permitted also to say I think you owe something to the minister who led you to Jesus? What a cheer it is to us when we get a letter from one who has found the Lord through our teaching. And better still, when face to face we meet one who has trusted the Savior through our poor instrumentality! Those who are sowers of the Seed know what a joy it is to see it spring up. Who are the people who cause us needless depression? Who are those who withhold needful encouragement? Why, those who do not come out and tell what Divine Grace has done for them. For the sake of those who labor among you in Word and doctrine, I beseech you, come forward. Common gratitude should lead you to let us know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Besides, you owe it to yourselves. Are you going to be mere bats, fluttering out when none will observe you and hiding from the light? Are you going to be like mice which only come out at night to nibble in the pantry? O you that are hidden in the clefts of the rocks, let the Savior hear your voices and see your countenances! You owe it to your family. You should tell your household what Divine Grace has done for you. Many a person wonders that his sons and daughters do not turn out well, when he himself has never been openly on the Lord's side.

"Oh?" says one, "but then I am right in my heart." But is the light within to be shut up in a dark lantern? Who is to read a closed book? We want to see in the shop-window of your life some of the goods which are

stored in the warehouse of your heart, or how can you trade for your Lord? When a man boldly says, "I believe in Jesus," and proves it by his actions, it has a holy influence upon his children, his servants, his companions—do you not desire to influence them aright? Do you not think you owe it to your neighbors to show your colors? Why, there are whole streets in this city where scarcely a single person goes to a place of public worship. Should he slink there as if half ashamed of it?

What is to become of us if the little salt loses its savor? There are regions in this city in which dwell hundreds of thousands of inhabitants in which attendance at public worship is so scanty that the Churches and Chapels have only a sprinkling of people. Should not you that love the Lord be very earnest to let it be known that there is still a God to be worshipped, a Savior to be trusted? In these evil days above all others—

***"You that are men now serve Him,
Against unnumbered foes;
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose."***

Many crowd around Him when Christ is on the winning hand. What is the worth of their hosannas? The style of man that a crucified Christ delights in is he who follows his Lord in the day of blasphemy and reproach. A true soldier of Jesus can stand up for his Lord alone. He is as true to Jesus when he is the only one as he would be if all the million went after him. Blessed is he who is not offended with Jesus, nor ashamed of His Cross. O you saved ones, run up your colors—fly them at the masthead, *nail* them there. And never let the enemy take them down. Oh that God would move everyone here that has been a little shy or backward to go without the camp and bear the Lord's reproach!

Now let me hear some of your objections and answer them. I hope I have been answering them all through my sermon. Here is one. "Well, you know, Mr. Spurgeon, I am such an insignificant person. It cannot make any difference what I do." Yes and this woman was a very insignificant person—only a woman! When I speak thus in English, it is a very ungalant speech but if a Rabbi had said it in Christ's day, it would not have seemed at all out of place, for they taught that no holy person ought, in the streets, to allow a woman's dress to touch him lest he should be defiled thereby.

They thought that if a scribe tried to teach a woman the Law, he dishonored the Law by doing so. Religious men lightly esteemed women in the Savior's day. Our Divine Lord never gave the slightest sanction to such an abominable spirit and I am not going to lend any sanction to your saying, "I am only a poor feeble woman." God thinks much of the lowly—you must not talk so. Besides, many of you do not think so meanly of yourselves as you pretend to do when you want to avoid your duty. Do not excuse yourselves through pretended humility. If the Lord bought you with His blood, you are not so insignificant that you can be allowed to deny Him your service.

"But coming out and joining a Church and all that, is such an ordeal." So it may be. In this woman's case, it was a far greater ordeal than it can be to you. Picture her, with her delicacy of feeling called into the midst of

all that crowd to confess her cure! Ready to sink into the earth! An unclean person who had broken the ceremonial Law! How she longed to hide herself away! Yet the tender Lord, for her own sake, would have her stand forth and what seemed an ordeal became a joy. Jesus does not excuse one of His healed ones from owning the work of His Grace. A dear lady who has long since gone to Glory was once an honored member of this Church—it was Lady Burgoyne and when she wished to unite with us, she said to me, "Dear Sir, I cannot go before the Church. It is more than I can manage to make a confession of Christ before the members."

I told her that we could make no exception for anybody and especially not for her, who was so well established in the faith that she could surely answer a few questions before those who were Brothers and Sisters in the Lord. She came bravely and spoke most sweetly for her Lord. Some of you may remember her, with her sweet countenance and venerable bearing. When she had owned her Lord, she put both her hands on mine and said emphatically, "With all my heart I thank you for this. I shall never be ashamed of Christ now. When aristocratic friends call upon me I will speak to them of my Lord."

She did so constantly. You never found her slow to introduce the Gospel, whoever might be with her. She frequently said to me, "Oh, what a training that was for me! I might have been a timid one all my days if I had not made that confession before the Church." Now I say to you, if it is an ordeal, undergo it for Christ's sake. But, indeed, it should be a pleasure to own your Lord among His own disciples.

"Alas," says one, "I could not tell of what the Lord has done for me because mine is such a sorrowful story. You know what I used to be, Sir. Sovereign Grace has made me to differ but my former life silences me!" Was it not so with this woman? How could she tell her story? But then it was to the glory of God and so, "she told Him all the truth." Whatever you were before you were converted, *never boast of it*. But at the same time do not deny it but honor your Savior. Remember how often Paul tells us what he was before conversion? If any rake up your old sin, answer that it is sadly true but you have been washed and much has been forgiven you. Admit that you were the chief of sinners and that even now you are less than the least of all saints but the Lord has brought you from death to life to the glory of His name.

"I have so little to tell," says one. That is a good reason why you should tell it, for it will be all the easier for you to do so. He that has little to tell should tell it straight away. I will give you no other answer than that. But still, if you can tell that the Lord Jesus has washed you in His precious blood, I do not think it is a little thing to tell. If you can say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see," say it and do not think it a little thing. Once you thought it the greatest fact you could possibly know—think so still. Don't garnish the story but state it just as it happened.

"But perhaps people may not believe me." Did I tell you that you were to make them believe you? Is that your business? You are to do *right*—whatever the consequences may be. But they will believe you if you deserve to be believed. When we meet together as Believers and hear the

story of a sinner saved by Grace, we are none of us suspicious. Sometimes we are a little too quick to believe and are apt to be deceived. Do not fear that you will be distrusted. Confess your faith, at any rate, and God will bless your testimony.

"Ah," says one, "but suppose after I had confessed Christ I should become as bad as ever." Suppose that this woman had supposed such a sad thing, and had said, "O Lord I cannot confess that You have healed me, for I do not know how I may be in six months' time." She was not so mistrustful. "But suppose the Lord should leave me and suffer me to leave Him." Yes, and suppose you were to leave off supposing anything of the sort and just take His promise as it stands. "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Do you believe His Word? Then lay aside such suspicions.

Jesus does not give us a trumpery, temporary salvation. He does not save us for a quarter of a year and then leave us. If saved by Him, you will be forever saved! He is the Author of eternal salvation. If He gives you a new heart, it is a new heart and will never become an old one. If He puts the water of Life within you, He does not put it there as you sprinkle the pavement before your shop in the morning, which is soon dried up. But he says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." When I trusted Christ, I did not trust Him to save me for a year, or two, but forever.

When you go the heavenly journey, take a ticket all the way through. Some of our friends take a ticket to the next station and then rush out to get another. Take your ticket for the New Jerusalem and not for a halfway house. The train will never break down and the track will never be torn up. If you can trust Jesus Christ to carry you through to Glory, He will do it. Let not that fear disturb you.

"Ah," says one more, "it seems too good to be true. I cannot think that such a one as I may dare to link myself with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is so great and so glorious." Yet this is your only hope. You are only saved through being in Christ. This may be too great, too good, for us to imagine—but then we need not imagine it. It is clearly revealed in the infallible Word of God. He that believes in Jesus is one with Him. Come, then and claim that blessed oneness.

Be one with Christ today in His humiliation and you shall be one with Him by-and-by in His Glory. Be despised and ridiculed for His sake and you shall be honored and glorified with Him in the day when He appears. God bless you for Christ's sake! Amen.

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

WELCOME! WELCOME!

NO. 1624

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And the people, when they knew it, followed Him: and He received them, and spoke unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.”
Luke 9:11.***

MY subject has been suggested to me by the rendering of this passage given in the Revised Version, where we read—“But the multitudes perceiving it, followed Him; and He *welcomed* them.” The difference lies, you see, between the words, “He received them,” and, “He *welcomed* them.” The new version is an instructive improvement, of which we will, at once, make evangelical use. The multitude perceived that Jesus was departing and began to value His Presence, all the more, because they feared the loss of it. They could not tell where He might go, nor for how long, and they could not afford to part with Him—therefore no sooner did they see the boat leave with Him, than, watching the direction in which it was steered, they hastened along the shore to overtake Him at His landing.

They were not content to walk, but they ran afoot, and as they darted through the first village, the people enquired the reason of this rush—they were informed that the great Prophet was crossing the sea to the other shore! They joined in the pursuit and the running company was increased. When they reached the next town, there was quite a stir, as the citizens heard the crowd tramping through the gate and along the streets. And, again, the enquiry was heard, “What means this eager, anxious throng?” Again the crowd increased and on they went, hurrying as fast as they could go, till they actually reached the shore before the vessel which carried Jesus!

As for the Master, though He had taken a ship, on purpose, to be quiet and alone, He exhibited no signs of anger at their intrusion. He did not rebuke them as though they were rude and troublesome, but we are told that, “He *welcomed* them.” Had He been like ourselves, He would have regarded them as most unwelcome. But in the graciousness of His heart, He did not think them so, but honestly and heartily welcomed them. Now, if our Lord welcomed people at that inconvenient time, we might safely infer that He will welcome them at *all* times! But we are not left to draw inferences, for we find all through His life that He always received sinners and never rejected anyone!

Our Lord kept open house as long as He was here. It might always have been said of Him, “This man receives and welcomes sinners.” His motto was, “Whoever will, let him come.” If any desired to come nearer than being mere *hearers*, and would join the band of disciples, He was always ready to receive them! If many did not enter into the closest intimacy of His heart, it was because they were, themselves, unable to come—not be-

cause He shut them out. Publicans and sinners drew near unto Him—the very *look* of Him was an invitation, His finger beckoned, His eyes persuaded, His outstretched arms entreated—His whole *self* attracted all men unto Him!

At the door of His love there lay no growling dog of morose suspicion. Neither had He placed there the porter of stern rebuke. The door was set wide open and over the portal were written the words, “COME AND WELCOME.” That is the subject of this morning’s discourse—my earnest desire being that some who have been afraid to approach Him may be induced to come at once by learning how freely He welcomes all comers! First, we shall dwell upon the fact that Jesus welcomes all who come to Him. Secondly, we shall use it as an encouragement to all seeking souls and, thirdly, we shall employ it as a lesson, teaching those of us who are His disciples how to treat those who desire to see Jesus.

I. First, may the Holy Spirit help us while we dwell upon THE FACT that Jesus welcomed those who sought Him. We observe, first, that our Lord received all comers at all times. The time mentioned in our text was the most inconvenient possible. He was seeking rest for His disciples who had gone through the various towns and villages preaching and working miracles. They were a good deal elated at their success and it was necessary that they should have a little quiet retirement to think matters over and to come down into a calm state of mind.

Moreover, they were weary, for they were so thronged by the people that they had not time, even, for necessary refreshment and rest and, therefore, it was an absolute requisite, lest these few men, who were, in fact, the hope of the Church and of the world, should die of exhaustion! The Master put them into a ship that they might sail away and find retirement in a desert place. Rest was absolutely necessary to the overwrought workers. A great sorrow was on them, also, for John had been beheaded and it was meet that they should solace their grief by a short retirement. At this time, too, our blessed Lord desired obscurity, for Herod was enquiring for Him and even when that delightful king was in his best mood, he was not one whose near acquaintance anyone would wish to cultivate.

He might, perhaps, have listened to Jesus as he listened to John. But he would have sought Jesus’ life as soon as He had gratified his curiosity, or another Herodias would have goaded him on to murder the faithful Preacher who would have made the palace too hot for the wanton! Our Lord’s time was not yet come, either to be exhibited in a royal court, or to be slain as a royal Victim and, therefore, He sought a desert place for a little while. It was most inconvenient, therefore, to be followed by so great a crowd. Were the workers to have no rest? Could there be no retirement afforded, especially at a time when it was so necessary?

Is it not wonderful that under such circumstances our blessed Lord should welcome the insatiable throng? I think, too, that the Master desired, just then, to hold a conference with His Apostles as to the work they had done and the future which was opening up before them. Perhaps He willed to set apart a season for special prayer with them. Before any great effort, we always read that He retired to pray and so, depend upon it, *after* any great enterprise He would, again, seek private prayer. It would natu-

rally occur to Him to rake in the good seed which the 12 had so successfully scattered!

But peace and rest He must not have, for the multitudes are on the beach before He can set foot on it. The Apostolic conference was broken in upon and turned into a great camp-meeting! The Master and His disciples are not allowed to get alone, even, to hold high and solemn discourse upon the affairs of His Kingdom. But here come the crowds, pell-mell, crushing one upon another and the Master and His little band find themselves the center of a great mass of people! Rest, or quiet, or holy discourse are out of the question—preaching, healing and feeding must fill up every moment till the day is far spent.

Our Lord welcomed the throng with a gracious air! Full of tenderness, He smiled upon them as a captain smiles upon his soldiers at the muster. He did not lose His patience with them, nor chide them for their ill manners—but just as if He had asked them to come and had sent forth His heralds to summon them—He stood ready to receive them! It is wonderful that He did not say, “Go your way for this time—when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” I have heard those words, somewhere, but they were not used by our Lord! They were used by one at the door of whose conscience the gracious Lord had been knocking. If there are any put-offs, they are not on Christ’s side, but on ours. Oh sad, that men should ask for delay when Jesus, even at the most inconvenient season, is ready to welcome them!

Let me put the Truth of God before some of you here who, as yet, are unsaved. Come to Jesus when you will—it shall *always* be at the right time. Times consecrated to other purposes shall yet afford you welcome. The saints of God gather at the Communion Table and the spreading of that table is not intended to be a means of Grace to the unconverted! On the contrary, it is fenced and guarded and reserved for Believers only—and none have any right there but those who are in Christ. The object of the Lord’s Supper is not conversion, but edification—it is intended that as many as are alive unto God should be fed there, that those emblems should remind them of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which are the food of their spiritual life. Yet if any of you should be looking on—yes, and even if you should have intruded there without a right to come—yet if you seek the Savior, He will not be so occupied with the fellowship of saints as to refuse a sinner! His heart will not be so taken up with the near, dear and choice love of His own favored ones as to shut His ears to the cry of the humble and contrite! If you seek Him, even when you are intruding, He will be found of you!

Perhaps, also, I address some who have outlived revivals. You remember precious seasons when the power of God was present to heal men and many were, to your knowledge, healed. You sat side by side with some who sought and found salvation in Christ—you did not seek and you did not find—or if, perhaps, you exhibited some emotion, yet your search after Christ was very faint and dilatory and, consequently, you did not meet with Him to the joy and peace of your spirit. Now that the revival is over, and the flood-tide of Grace seems to have ebbed out, you have come, like the dying year, to a time when the harvest is past and the summer is

ended and you are not saved! Around you blow the fallen leaves and you, yourself, fade as a leaf, but you are not saved.

Opportunities of blessing have been plentiful with you, but you are not saved. You are now at the close of the day and your sun is going down, but you are not saved! Even yet there is hope, for our Lord's welcome is a long and lasting one! If you are drawn by invisible cords to seek the Savior, yield to those gentle drawings, for Jesus receives men even down to the shutting of the gate! It may be late, but it is not too late! You may go to Christ at midnight as well as at mid-day and He will never answer that the door is now shut, so that He cannot rise and welcome you. Even though the special means of Grace may have ended and the men whom God has blessed have gone elsewhere, yet still come and welcome, to Jesus Christ, for there never was an hour discovered in which Jesus would refuse a sinner that longed for Him!

Have you never read that text, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out"? There is no reserve as to the dead hours of night, or the raw hours of the morning! If a soul will but come to Christ, the Lord will never say no to him! It may be, dear Friend, that you think the present would be a very improper time to come to Christ because you have so lately been plunging into a fearful sin. You say, "Would you have me go black-handed to Christ, black-hearted to Christ?" Yes, I would have you fly to Him at once, even as the manslayer darted off to the City of Refuge with the blood of the slain still warm upon his hands! Do you put it to me as a question suggested by a sort of moral *decency*—"Must I not let an interval pass over me in which I may, in a measure, wash out the recollection of my present sin?"

No! I tell you, no! I rather dread, than desire, such a false washing as the mere lapse of time can give. *Time* cannot alter wrong, or make sin less heinous—and if it pacifies the conscience, it is an evil peace, a false peace, a peace to be abhorred. Come to Jesus while yet the wounds of your conscience are bleeding! Come while they are at their worst—neither washed, bound, nor mollified with ointment! When you are foul is the fittest time for washing! And when you are altogether undone and *conscious* of it, then is the season to hasten away to the great Savior! When Saul of Tarsus was about to hunt the saints of God, he saw Damascus lying in the plain below and he, himself, was ready, like a fierce tiger, to spring upon it!

But then and there Jesus appeared to Him. Might he not have said in answer to the voice from Heaven, "My Lord, let me go back to Jerusalem and endure a quarantine! Let me hide away for months and then come to You"? No! Then and there he was converted, though struck down in the act of persecution! Nothing could seem to be more inconvenient than for Christ to receive him then and there, with the writs upon him for the arrest of the saints! Yet the Lord welcomed the persecutor and He will welcome others in the same case! My Hearer, I will not try to describe your sin of last night, nor will I make a guess at what you propose to do in sin before tomorrow's sun has risen. But I will beseech you, *as you are*, to arise and seek the Savior!

Poor prodigal Brother, quit the husks and the swine trough—quit them *now* and without so much as tarrying to wash your hands, go home to your Father who will wash you and make you white as snow! Stop for nothing! Delay is your greatest danger! This very moment is the fittest for repentance and faith! Come now, for the Lord waits to be gracious. I do not find that when the prodigal reached his father's house, he came there at an unseemly hour. I never knew whether it was the middle of the night, the early morning, or the middle of the day, for the parable does not give us a hint. At any rate, it was at such an hour that the fatted calf was waiting to be killed, a ring and the best robe were ready to be brought forth and all in the house were ready to keep holiday over him that was lost and found! Sinner, fly away, fly away to Jesus, be the hour whatever it may! Our gracious Lord cannot repel you, for even those were welcomed who came at the most inconvenient hour which can be imagined—and since then He has refused none.

The same Truth will now be set in another light by a second remark. Our Lord received all sorts of comers. They were a motley throng and I fear that few, if any of them, were actuated by any high or exalted motive. No doubt some came to hear and others came to see—but many came for what they could *get*. They followed after Jesus because they were sick and He could heal them. “Ah me!” I have heard it said by awakened ones, “I am afraid, if I came to Christ, I should come from a selfish motive.” Dismiss that fear—which at bottom is self-righteous! What should a beggar come to your house for but to seek alms? To gain something is the *only* motive with which a poor sinner can come to Christ! Our fear of Hell, or dread of sin, or hope of pardon must drive or draw us to Christ—in any case, our motive must be to *receive*, at His hands.

I confess that I, at first, came to Christ only and solely for what I could get out of Him. It was an Apostle who said, “We love Him because He first loved us.” I have heard of a love of Jesus which is purely disinterested and I believe it *is* possible and that it may grow up in later Christian life. But at the first we must come to Jesus with an eye to what we shall obtain at His hands. We must come because we cannot do without Him! There is no other way of coming. “It is a low motive,” says one. So it may be, but it is a powerful motive for all that! At any rate, Christ exhorts us to come unto Him for rest and for salvation—and I do not remember a single exhortation to this ideal, disinterested love! The Lord Jesus welcomed the multitudes though they came from low motives and so will He welcome us if we do but come to Him.

If what we come for is something for ourselves—if we come to Him that sin may be forgiven and that we may be made the children of God—our motives will not be disgusting to Christ and He will welcome us. Among those who came to Christ there must have been all sorts of people, but the bulk of them had hurried to Him hastily and unprepared. They came afoot, it is said, running. They had not had time to prepare themselves with any kind of decent apparel. As they ran scampering through the villages, each one gathered others at his heels. They came helter-skelter, a most promiscuous throng. They were not dressed for solemn worship, but there they were—and the Savior welcomed them!

I wonder how long a man would need to spend in preparing himself for coming to Christ? When he had done it all, what would it be worth? Preparation for coming to Christ is simply this—If you are empty, you are prepared to be filled! If you are sick, you are prepared to be healed! If you are sinful, you are prepared to be forgiven. But all other preparation is quite out of the question. We must not supersede the Gospel by the Law and we would be doing so if we told the sinner to make himself *fit* for mercy. O weary, heavy laden souls, you may come just as you are! Hot from the fleshpots of Egypt! Grimy from Pharaoh's iron furnace, you may come and sit down and eat the Paschal Lamb and though every rag about you is defiled, yet just as you are, you may come to the fountain filled by Jesus Christ, Himself, and wash and be clean!

They were a most unprepared lot of people but Jesus welcomed them. Most of them might have been objected to, for various reasons, by our Lord if He had chosen to do so—the most of them on account of their poverty. They had not even a crust among them. They had come away in such a hurry that they had not brought a day's food with them and if they came to Christ, they must be fed by Him within a few hours, or else drop from sheer starvation. They were a ragged regiment, a hungry herd—what some fine folks call a mob, the riffraff—but Jesus welcomed them—and never said a syllable about their bare backs and empty pockets. How squeamish some of His servants are—but their Master had no such proud ways about Him!

I heard one say the other day that he could not attend a place of worship because he had not clothes that were fit to come in. I wonder what sort of garments the Lord Jesus would object to in a coming sinner! I am afraid if He were to see some of you, He would hardly think that you are dressed fit for public worship, for you are too smart by half—but I do not believe that He ever rejected a man or woman because of their patched or unfashionable garments. What did He care for court dress, full dress and all that nonsense? Our Lord was no flatterer of wealthy lords and handsome ladies! No robe or mantle ever charmed His eyes!

I never read in Scripture that Jesus said, "Come not between the wind and my nobility, you unwashed crowds." Never did He turn any away because they were beneath Him in condition and too poor for His notice. Nothing of the sort! It was the jewel of His ministry that "the poor had the Gospel preached to them." He delighted to see the needy gather about Him to be taught and comforted! So, then, none of *you* can plead poverty. If you have not a penny to bless yourselves with, Christ will bless you without money and without price! Many of the multitude might have been rejected on account of disease, for into the crowd the lepers came in spite of disagreeable neighbors everywhere. They certainly had no right to mingle with healthy people, but they did so, for they had hopes of being healed.

Men and women were there who labored under defiling disorders, for which, according to the Jewish Law, they ought to have been shut up in a separate house. Yet when the crowd came to Christ, these poor souls came in among the rest and there is no instance of the Lord's ever sorting them out and saying to anyone, "I cannot receive *you*, for you are a leper." What a melancholy sight the Master must have seen when He went out

into the streets and they laid there the sick *in their beds!* He always walked in the midst of a great hospital—among the most horrible diseases—yet never once did He turn any case away! O poor Souls, sick Souls, come to Jesus at once, for my blessed Master will welcome you all, whoever you may be!

Neither did our Lord ever reject one person on account of youth. His disciples thought that such a preacher as He was ought never to be listened to except by persons of intellect, or at least of ripe years who could appreciate what He would say. And when the mothers brought their children, the disciples were much displeased with them. But our Master welcomed the young, saying, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.” Dear boys and girls, Jesus will not put you by to wait till you are older, but He will welcome you just as you are! Ah, how sweetly Jesus is doing this, to my knowledge, with many little folks! I heard last week of a poor boy who lived near my house.

A meeting is held by some of our friends in a cottage and this boy came, one night, and said, “Please, Sir, may I come in?” The good man of the house answered, “You may if you will wash your face and hands.” “That I will do, Sir,” he said, and he soon returned and took his seat. He was an attentive hearer and a devout worshipper. Though only 12 years old, he loved the Prayer Meeting and was always there. One evening he said to the leader of the meeting, “Please, Sir, may I pray?” and this poor child then poured out his heart before God with such sweetness that he impressed all who listened to him. One night, as he went out of the room, he shook hands with the good man of the house and said, “Good-bye, Sir, perhaps we may not meet again till we meet in Heaven.”

His words seem prophetic, now, for before the next meeting a brewer’s cart passed over him and his sweet young spirit ascended to Jesus whom he loved so well. What a joy to know that this poor child is now beholding the face of our Father who is in Heaven! I am right glad to say that we are continually receiving boys and girls into the Church. Child-piety is no rarity among us! We find it no cause of difficulty, but a wellspring of delight! Dear children, do not be afraid to come because you are so little, for Jesus has told the big people that unless they receive Him as little children they shall in nowise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven! He also said, “They that seek Me early shall find Me.” Come to Him at once!

There were some in the throng, too, whom Jesus might have rejected because they were too old. Here they come! They can scarcely see their way! They limp, they use crutches, they are deaf and their limbs are very feeble. Surely, when these poor old souls come to Jesus, He might say to them, “What am I to do with you worn-out old creatures? Go and spend the rest of your days where you spent the first part of them! How dare you think of coming to Me when you are bald-headed, feeble, lame and blind! How can you be soldiers of the Cross?” Glory be to His name, our great Captain enlists old men, makes friends with old women and delights to magnify the greatness of His Grace in the salvation of the most infirm! Father William, though it is the 11th hour with you, our Lord still calls you into His vineyard! Come, and fear not.

“Well,” you say, “I can understand His receiving both young and old, but surely sin must have led Him to refuse a comer.” It was not so. Those who came to Christ were often very sinful, but He received sinners. Did you ever notice that the last person He spoke to before He died was the thief on the cross—and the first person He spoke to, when He rose, again, was Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils? My Lord delights to draw near to the guiltiest of the guilty, to blot out their iniquities and to receive them into His heart of love! So, I come back to what I said before—our Lord receives all sorts of comers!

Once more—our Lord receives all with a hearty welcome. He did not merely allow the people to come near, tolerating their presence, but, “He welcomed them”! When He saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd, His heart was stirred within Him and He at once laid Himself out to do them good. The sight of their need awakened His compassion—the deep fountains of His infinite love were broken up at once and flooded His whole Nature, so that—“He was moved with compassion.” He proved that He welcomed them by the deeds that He worked for them. He taught them concerning the Kingdom of God. He healed those that had need of healing and He fed the whole five thousand! There was not one single exception to this rule—He welcomed every one of them—taught, healed, fed and smiled on all!

He did not single out one, and say, “You, Sir, may go your way, I will have nothing to do with you.” But each one felt that he was welcome. It is just so now. My blessed Master is glad to receive sinners! His heart yearns over men! He longs for their salvation! He rejoices when they come to Him! He proves His willingness to receive them by the bounty of His Grace towards them! He multiplies His benedictions towards those that trust Him! He heaps on His favors! He does all that they need and grants them exceedingly more than all that they ask or even *think*—and this without a single exception on any ground, or for any reason whatever! “He that comes to Me,” He says, “I will in nowise cast out.” This is the blessed fact.

II. Now I come to use this as AN ENCOURAGEMENT. If Jesus Christ, when He was here on earth, welcomed all that came at all hours, then He will welcome you, my Friend, if you come to Him, now, for the circumstances are the same. You are the same sort of person as those whom Jesus used to welcome. They were good-for-nothing nobodies! They were persons that were full of need and could not possibly bring a price with which to purchase His favor. Are you not just like they? Are you a very special sinner? I am sure I could find another special sinner like you whom Jesus has received. I will not go into detail, but I will venture to ask you—Are you a thief?—

***“The dying thief rejoiced to see
In Christ salvation full and free.”***

Have you been unchaste? David was an adulterer and was pardoned and Jesus forgave a woman that was a sinner, who, therefore, loved Him much. The untruthful, the unclean, the ungodly are the sort of people that Jesus came to seek and save!

And then it is the same Savior. Jesus Christ is the same gracious Pardoner as He was in the days of His flesh. “Why,” you say, “He is in Heaven!” Yes, but I never knew anybody lose anything by going to Heaven!

It is all the other way! Jesus has not lost His tenderness nor His compassion, nor His delight in blessing the sons of men. He is the same Savior in Glory that He was in His humiliation. I invite you to come, dear Friend, though you are suffering from the same unfitness as these people were! Come just as you are and come with the same expectation as they did—for they expected Him to work wonders for them—and He did. Jesus is in the same mind as when He would not condemn the guilty woman and when He prayed for His murderers! He is still bent upon the one errand of saving men—He still welcomes sinners. Since, then, you are under the same conditions, come, and expect the same result from your coming. The welcome that you will receive from Christ, my dear Friend, will be as hearty as that which they received!

When is it that a man does *not* make all comers welcome? It may be a person calls for whom he has no liking and he does not invite him to a meal because he does not want him. He would sooner have his room than his company. But that is not true of our Lord, for He loves His enemies and seeks His foes! He has abundant love to guilty men and hears their cry for mercy. So glad is our Lord to see the marriage feast of His love furnished with guests that He sends out His servants to fetch in highwaymen and vagrants!

Sometimes people are not welcome because they come when you have not enough to feed them. The good housewife murmurs, “I wish they had come some other day.” It is never so with our Master. He has abundant provisions and there is room, yes, and there is food. There is enough in Christ Jesus for all that ever will come to Him for salvation! All that the Father gives Him shall come and there is not one that shall come whom He will send away because there is not due provision made for him. That reason cannot possibly exist when Jesus, Himself, in all His fullness, is the Covenant provision! Sometimes a host may not welcome an applicant because it would be dangerous to his reputation to entertain him. We would, none of us, be eager to entertain a thief or a burglar or a murderer hiding from justice—nor would vagabonds and tramps be our chosen guests—for it would lower our esteem among men.

As for our Lord Jesus, His reputation was gone long ago—“He made Himself of no reputation”—that He might welcome the disreputable to His house and heart! They sneeringly spread it about the streets, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” Yes, His reputation was gone among the Pharisees, but He has a new reputation, now, and His great Glory is that He cleanses the chief of sinners and makes them heirs of God! O my trembling Hearer, you need not be afraid! Sometimes a man who has been hospitable has been known to grow weary of it, for he says, “These people come and eat and drink—and then abuse me.” Jesus has never been hardened by this! His house is open and His table is still furnished.

He foreknew our ill manners and He has not been surprised by the conduct of any of His guests! He knew they were unworthy. He did not entertain one of them because they *deserved* it—He did it all because He is infinitely gracious and delights to do good to the unthankful and to the evil. This is why He keeps His house open, still—that those who are ready to perish may come—that the worthless and undeserving may come and

participate in the bounties of His Grace! Jesus Christ will make you welcome, though society will not *acknowledge* you! Is there any man here that doubts it? My Friend, come and try the Lord! There is not a man on earth that dares to say, "I went to Christ and He cast me away." You may inspect Hell, itself, and never find one who can truthfully say, "I believed in Jesus and He would not save me."

Come, Friend, if He rejects you, you will be the first of His castaways! We will have you up in the Tabernacle and exhibit you as *the* man that Jesus Christ would not save—and then I will shut up shop and hold my tongue forever! I will never dare to preach the Gospel, again, if one comes to Jesus is rejected by Him. It never has happened and never shall! Come and welcome! Jesus welcomed the crowd and He will welcome you—and He will prove that you are welcome by doing for you what He did for them! He will teach you, teach you concerning the Kingdom of God, teach you repentance, teach you faith! He will teach you so effectually that you shall truly learn and your heart, beneath His teaching, shall be changed and sanctified—and you shall become a new creature!

More than that, He will heal you. Whatever the disease of your soul may be, only come to my Master and He will banish every plague of doubt, or palsy of fear, or leprosy of sin, or fever of lust!. There is no balm in Gilead, but Jesus Christ is the never-failing Physician and He can make you whole at once! Nor is this all, for He will feed you with the Bread of Heaven—with better than angels' meat will He sustain you and satisfy your heart and mind with all that you can desire! Thus I have labored to encourage you. O that the Spirit of God may give effect to my words!

III. Thirdly, we use our text as A LESSON. Dear Friends, if Jesus Christ welcomes all that come to Him, let all of us who are His followers imitate His example and give a warm welcome to those who seek the Lord! Whatever their motive is, whenever we see people coming to the worship of God, and especially when we see them a little impressed, let us welcome them heartily! It is a grievous sin when strangers come in and find themselves stared at as if they were wild beasts—nobody offers them a seat—they may stand till they drop, but nobody cares an atom about them! And they may come again and go in and out for a month, together, and never a word is spoken to them. I pray you, do not so! But, on the contrary, personally look out for individuals and try to win them for Jesus.

There has been a great wind lately and it has shaken down much fruit. But windfall fruit is seldom good for much. Billy Bray used to say, "The best fruit is handpicked," and I believe the best converts in the world are those for whom loving hearts wait and pray and plead! Sometimes, after a great sermon, or when there has been a mighty shaking under a revival, many come down who are only windfalls and of very small account. But those whom you win one by one, by caring about them, minding their estate and watching their growth—*these* are the best of fruit and well worth storing!

Jesus welcomed men. His looks said, "I am glad to see you." He seemed to say to the people who flocked after Him into His retirement, "I did not invite you at this time, for I desired to be alone. But as you are so earnest and eager after Me, I am prepared to do what you desire. You are welcome

to all that I can do for you.” In winning souls, use an abundance of smiles. Have you not seen, in one of our magazines, an account of seven people saved by a smile? It is a pretty story. A clergyman passes by a window on his way to Church. A baby was being dandled there and he smiled at the baby, and the baby at him. Another time he passed—the baby was there, again, and once more he smiled. Soon baby was taken to the window at the hour when he usually passed.

They did not know who the gentleman was, but one day two of the older children followed to see where he went on a Sunday. They followed him to Church and as he preached in a winning way, they told their father and mother, who felt interest enough in their baby’s friend to wish to go. Thus, in a short time, a godless family that had previously neglected the worship of God, was brought to the Savior because the minister smiled at the baby! I never heard of anybody getting to Heaven through *frowning* at a baby, or at anyone else! Certain wonderfully good persons go through the world as if they were commissioned to impress everybody with the awful solemnity of religion—they resemble a winter’s night without a moon! Nobody seems attracted, nor even impressed by them except in the direction of dislike. Mind, then, this rule—when you go gathering fruit, go with a smile. Men are brought to Jesus by cheerfulness far quicker than by gloom.

I saw a life buoy the other day covered with luminous paint. How bright it seemed, how suitable to be cast upon the dark sea to help a drowning man! An ordinary life buoy he would never see, but this was so bright and luminous that a man *must* see it. Give me a soul-winner bright with holy joy, for he will be seen by the sorrowing soul and his help will be accepted. Cover your lives with the luminous paint of cheerfulness, compounded by joy and peace through believing! By God’s Grace, smile Christ into mourners’ hearts! It can be done if the Holy Spirit will only give you a lesson! Jesus welcomed them—let *us* warmly welcome all comers.

Do not seem to say to them, “You want to be saved, do you?” “Yes.” “You had better mind what you are about. You know there are a great many hypocrites. I am not sure of your sincerity. Do you really want to be saved?” If the seeker cries, “O Sir, what must I do to be saved?” do not answer with icy words—“Do not get too excited. Be calm and let me lay the Gospel before you in a clear, didactic manner, for fear you should be deceived. I hope it is all right with you and that these desires are not mere natural excitement, but are the fruit of the Spirit. Still, it is my duty to be faithful and put you to the test.”

Why, my dear Friend, if you had been in a right state of heart, you would have led that man into the Kingdom of Heaven before you had got half through those cautious remarks! Give Him a loving, hearty welcome—not a cold, suspicious searching! Say, “Do you want to be saved?” “Yes.” “Then come and welcome! Believe in the Lord Jesus and He is yours! You want Jesus Christ, do you?” “Yes.” “Come along—He waits to be gracious! He is here present and all you have to do is to trust in Him.” I put this in a very simple way, but there is very much in it. Jesus, the Master, welcomed sinners! Let all His servants wear the livery of love and set every door wide open for sinners to enter.

“But perhaps there is very little good in these who say they are seeking?” The remark is, no doubt, correct! Perhaps there is no good at *all* in them! What then? Let us welcome them all the same! Did not our Lord receive *you* when there was no good in you? Should not you, also, receive such and set the Gospel before them, that God the Holy Spirit may bless them? “But some are so poor that if they are received into the Church they will be of no service to it—they will be more dependent upon its charity than helpful to its funds.” Yes, but these are the sort of people that our Lord used to welcome and why should not we? It will be an evil day for any Church when it despises any class of men! There will come a curse upon a Church that looks to men’s garments and purses—and values them according to the guinea stamp. This will never do!

Is he a man? Then he has an immortal soul about him! Does he seek the Savior? Christ bids us encourage him! Is he a sinner? Christ can cleanse him! Is he troubled about his sin? Jesus can give him rest! Let us help him, however loathsome his past life may have been and however little he may be able to do in return. If anyone here wishes to find mercy and cannot find it, I would, during the last minute of my discourse, try to welcome him. Friend, you say, “How can I be saved!” Have you ever heard the Gospel, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved?’ “Yes,” you say, “but I do not think I believe aright.” Listen. Here is a verse for you. Get out your New Testament. Look at John 5:24. Turn it down. Turn it down and read it when you get home! I beg all of you who have not found the Savior to mark that passage—read it carefully and keep on reading it over and over again for an hour!

Read it over 10,000 times, if necessary, for I want you to find salvation through it. I know this text will save any man living, God blessing it to him. Here it is—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” What a grand verse! Is there anything in it about believing aright? Not a syllable! Only let a man truly believe and he, “*has*,” (it is not said, “shall have”)—he has *now*, “everlasting life.”

Mark that—not a life that will die out in a quarter of a year if he does not mind. No, but, “has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” Suck at that text, poor Soul—salvation lies in it! Believe in Jesus and you are saved! May God help you to believe it, by His blessed Spirit, and you shall live unto Him from now on and forever. Amen.

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REAL GRACE FOR REAL NEED

NO. 889

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“He healed them that had need of healing.”
Luke 9:11.*

“HE healed them that had need of healing,” that is to say, on this gracious occasion no single case came before Him which baffled Him. However rampant might be the disease, however extreme the condition of the patient’s malady, Jesus worked an instantaneous cure. And truly to this very hour no spiritual sickness has defeated the great Physician. No sick souls have ever been carried away from His feet to perish hopelessly because their need outreached His power. Satan’s worst is soon undone by Jesus’ best. The Son of God, in no solitary instance, has been foiled. Still in the goings forth of His mercy He has “healed them that had need of healing.”

The text also indicates that our Lord continued unweariedly to heal all the multitudes that came. From morning till night, as fast as the various patients presented themselves, He worked their care. There was an eye to be opened here—hearing to be given there, a lame man to be made to leap—a withered limb to be outstretched. There was leprosy to be cleansed, dropsy to be dried, fever, epilepsy, madness and all manner of maladies to be subdued, and Jesus paused not, virtue continued still to flow to heal “them that had need of healing.” Though they had been countless as the sands, His love, like the sea, would have touched them all. His restoring power was by no means exhausted—the oil only ceased to flow when there was not another vessel to fill!

Had the needy continued still to come even to this day, our Master would still have multiplied His miracles of mercy. In spiritual sicknesses, the great Healer of our sin-sick nature has by no means declined in power. He is far from being exhausted by the number of applicants who have come to Him. We do well to sing—

***“Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more.”***

If this present world should continue through a century of thousands of years, yet no sinner shall apply to Jesus for pardon and find that His cleansing efficacy has ceased! So long as sin shall pollute this earth, the Savior shall remain to purify those who believe in Him.

But the text seemed particularly, to me, as it flashed upon my mind, to indicate this further Truth of God—that as the Redeemer was neither baf-

fled by any one disease, nor drained of His healing virtue by the multitude—as the diseases which He healed were intense, the cures which He worked were memorable. They were not feigned sicknesses which were brought before Him, nor counterfeit miseries, else His cures also had been shams and He Himself had been a mock Savior. Those whom He healed had deep, true, undoubted, urgent need of healing! They were not pretended patients, with sores which they had manufactured for the occasion. They were not sentimental sufferers with griefs imagined but not existent.

Our Master worked health for persons who were well known to be cruelly diseased—in whom the mischief was no dream, the misery no fiction—and consequently the cures which He worked were no fictions. either. They were evident, permanent and true. Fancied ills He left to others. He healed those that had need of healing. Sentimental grievances may be left to jangling philosophers and hair-splitting rabbis—Jesus deals with actual evils whose cure is urgent. Of all men who ever lived, the Prophet of Nazareth was the most practical. He did nothing for show, nothing for mere custom, but everything to work solid good and erase real evil.

Not a motion of His finger has He for feigned or fancied grievance, but all His power goes forth to those who have true need of healing. We shall take this thought, this morning, and dwell upon it. It seems to us to be full of comfort. May God grant it may bring into light and liberty some who have long been bound.

I. Our first head, this morning, shall be that **THOSE WHOM CHRIST HAS SAVED WILL ALL CONFESS THAT THEY HAD NEED OF SAVING.** Out of the whole multitude who have believed in Jesus, there is not one to whom His salvation has been a superfluity. I will be spokesman for them, this morning, according to my ability—they will all confess that what they have received was what they greatly needed—that the salvation which Jesus has given them was a salvation without which they would have perished everlastingly.

For first, Beloved, all the saved saints confess that they had need of healing through *their natural depravity*. There is a sad bias in us all towards sin. Whoever may dispute concerning original sin as a universal fact, all the saints confess it as a particular evil in their own case. We are compelled to own that David's confession must be ours, "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Our nature was corrupted at its fountainhead. When at any time we were put upon right courses by the stress of moral persuasion, or by the urgency of fear, yet still our heart labored to follow its own devices against wind and tide.

Even as the bowl from the potter's hand, however straightly it runs for awhile, before long begins to curve according to the bias, even so under all circumstances we tend towards evil. To our nature, to do evil is easy—to do good is difficult. We loved darkness naturally rather than light. Uphill work it was to serve God, but as swiftly as a stone hurled down from a

crag pursues its downward course, so readily did we follow the way of rebellion. Our sin was of the *heart*, not of the surface, “The leprosy was deep within.” Our tendency to evil did not spring from imitation—for we had set before us, some of us, the noblest of Christian examples—but the prompting to evil was *within*—the taint was in our vital blood.

Now there was need of healing here, since the disease had corrupted our essential being and rendered us hopelessly unclean. To our heart’s center there was urgent need of healing. But, Beloved, many of us have been led to feel that in addition to ordinary original sin, evil tendencies had in the case of some of us assumed peculiar shapes and dreadful forms of *besetting and constitutional sin*. I will appeal to certain of my Brothers and Sisters here, whether they had not a natural tendency to a quick temper, an anger soon excited and exceedingly mad when once aroused? In others, there was a strong disposition to pride. Even now, with the Divine Grace of God in them, it costs them much to keep their heads in their proper places. Alas, in how many others the animal passions are forceful and eager like hungry lions roaring for their prey and nothing but Divine Grace can keep them in check?

Ah, there are some of us who may do well to imagine what we should have been if Grace had not interposed! We are bold in spirit, eager in desire, intent in purpose, stubborn in will, energetic and ardent—and had we been set on mischief—nothing could have restrained us in our headlong course. Grace leads us in glad captivity! And apart from this we would have been terrible sinners before the Lord. All Providences that might have thwarted us would but have incited us to more vehement endeavors to pursue our wicked and willful way! Divine Grace has conquered, but what if we had been left alone?

A Scotch gentleman was observed to look very intently upon the face of Rowland Hill. The good old man asked him, “And why are you looking at my face?” The observer replied, “I have been studying the lines of your face.” “And what do you make of them?” said Rowland. “Why I see,” said he, “that if the Grace of God had not changed your heart, you would have been a great rascal.” “Ah,” said Rowland, “you understand the Truth of God, indeed.” Many of us have to confess humbly that in us there was pressing need of healing, for if healing had not come we should not only have been sinful as others, but should probably have taken the lead in iniquity and been carried away by the wild sweep of inward passion to the utmost excess of riot.

Brethren, this need of healing will be confessed by the saints in this further respect—there was not only in us a tendency to sin, but we *had grievously sinned* in act and deed before conversion. I know it is very customary with those who are seeking Christ to imagine that the saints of God whom they respect and esteem could never have sinned before conversion as they, themselves, have done. They cannot imagine that the man who is now rejoicing in Christ was once as hardened in sin as them-

selves! Yet in truth we were even as you. When the Apostle mentioned the greatest of sinners, he added, "Such were some of us: but we are washed, but we are sanctified."

O dear Seeker, do not believe, as Satan tells you, that those who are washed were never as black as you! We were just as vile. It were a shame for us to confess in public all our transgressions and iniquities before we knew pardoning mercy of the Lord, but it will suffice us to say that the remembrance of them lays us in the very dust so that we should not dare to lift up our head were it not that we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous! There is not a saint in Heaven but what had sinned enough to damn him to the lowest Hell if he had not been saved by One who knew he had need of saving!

Where had Peter been? As bad as Judas, certainly, if Sovereign Grace had not prevented. Where had John been, even loving John? Cursing and blaspheming the very Christ upon whose bosom he laid his head if it had not been that converting love stepped in and made him, in the fullness of time, to become a child of God. There would have been no difference between the best and the worst of men if Divine favor had not worked some better thing in the godly. And let this always be treasured up as a hopeful circumstance to you who would be saved—that in the matter of actual sin there was a deep and real need of healing in the saints who are healed.

No, Sirs, our sins were not mere fiction. Our repentances were not fanatical sentiment. Southey, when he writes upon the repentance of John Bunyan and his terrible accusations of himself, cannot refrain from thinking him a little beside himself and morbid in his feelings. The good man is candid and honest and wants to make something out of it, but he cannot see in young Bunyan any cause for such outcries against himself. Had Southey been able to look upon sin in that same vivid but truthful light which had shone upon the young tinker's soul, he would have seen the *least* sin to be exceeding sinful and would have felt that exaggeration in horror against sin is not *possible*! To sin against light, against conscience, against the Holy Spirit is to sin with a vengeance!

No degree of outward moral purity can comfort a heart which is once made aware of its inward defilement and of the actual sinfulness of what man calls a trifle. Our actual sins would have been draughts of poison to our souls if the Divine antidote had not been given. There was, indeed, great need of healing. Further, let me say there was need of healing in our case because, in addition to having sinned, we willfully continued in it. In the very teeth of Divine mercy, in spite of conscience and of the invitations of the Gospel, we persevered in our sinful courses. Do I not remember how often I was invited to come to Christ and even felt the gentle drawings of His cords of love?

But I drew back like a bull unaccustomed to the yoke! Do I not recollect how God's Law plowed me again and again? And yet in those very furrows the cursed grasses and thistle of my sins dared to spring up! How often

have I stood and wept and trembled, but have procrastinated, and so have gone my way to dry those eyes and look again into the face of sin without alarm! Yes, there was need of healing in that heart which the Cross of Christ could not affect, which the terrors of Hell could not subdue, which the loving invitations of a mother could not persuade to holiness, and that even the warnings of sickness and the fear of death could not bend to the will of God!

Some of you were long years before you yielded to the power of Divine Grace. You will sorrowfully acknowledge, this morning, that in your obstinate will there was need of healing, for had not that healing come, it is as certain as that you are here, today, pilgrims on the way to Heaven, that you would have continued to pursue the road to Hell. There was need of healing, for the disease was not one that would have died out by itself—it would never have come to a head and then have lost its power. It was a disease that would have spread until it defiled you beyond bearing and until the righteous God would have said, “Put it away with the unclean forever and ever, for within the courts of Heaven it can never dwell.”

O praise your God, this morning, you that are saved, for you had solemn need of saving! The longer I live the more I feel the need of daily salvation. I have need of my great Master’s healing hand every hour! If the Lord does not carry on the work which He has begun, it will surely fail. If He does not continue to repress and destroy in us our carnal inclinations, they will get the better of us even now! If the Holy Spirit does not fan with His living breath that spark of Grace which lives within us, it will certainly be quenched with the floods of temptation. If there were no other proof of our need of healing than our experience *since* conversion, we should have more than enough! If ever I get to Heaven, I will praise God more loudly than any of you, for I shall owe more to the Grace of God that will bring me there.

But I suppose the same feeling is in every man that is conscious of the sin that dwells in him and trembles at his own lack of strength. God *will* carry on His work. He will not take away His hand from you, nor suffer you to perish. But in the fact that if He did so withdraw, the best of you would be cast away and before tomorrow would be apostates from the faith, you have proof that you have need of healing. You will have need of healing all along until you come to die. Even when just about to enter into the joy of your Lord, when the last sin is under your feet and your sanctification is all but perfect—when you have almost destroyed, by His Grace, the last indwelling lust—even then you will have need of healing! He must be the Omega who was the Alpha, or you can never finish. He must carry on even to its close the work which in His tenderness He has commenced, or else it will be incomplete to your eternal overthrow.

So, then, it is established beyond a doubt, and I speak as the witness of 10,000 of God’s servants, that those who are saved were such as had *need* of saving. The Son of Man came to seek and to save us when we were

lost, emphatically lost. He has healed us, but it has not been of a finger ache or a flea-bite—He has healed us of a disease most deadly and damnable. Blessed be His name, while we are forced to speak depreciatingly of ourselves, in that very proportion we can speak gloriously of Him! We had need of healing and He has given us just the healing that our spirits needed.

II. Having, as it were, cast up my earthworks round about the soul that I desire to win for Jesus, I shall now come point blank to the attack. You, dear Hearers, you unsaved hearers, **YOU ALSO HAVE NEED OF SAVING.** I am not going to talk to you, this morning, about your *feeling* your need of Christ. I know that you make that quite a favorite question and a fond excuse for unbelief. So we shall not speak of your sense of that need, but what is far more vast a subject, namely, your *need* itself.

You unsaved Souls, you have great need of saving! You have need of saving, *because you are inclined to evil.* You have lately been, in a measure, desirous to find eternal life. You are not, now, so callous as you once were. Conscience is awakened and you are seeking more or less earnestly after Christ. But still, with all this, your natural inclinations are towards evil. Your goodness will soon pass away like the dew of the morning—but your love to sin is engraved as with a diamond into your heart of stone. The strong self-will within your soul is still set on mischief. You will not come to Christ that you may have life! Perhaps you have never thought of your natural corruption and above all have never been humbled by it. But it is there notwithstanding your forgetfulness of it. You are a fallen, degenerate creature!

You are not a pure spirit, whose judgment is accurately balanced. You judge unrighteous judgment. You are not a creature with a free will that is equally inclinable either to good or evil, according as it may seem most beneficial to yourself. Your overpowering tendency, now, is towards that which is *evil.* Your mind puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness. And your nature, like an evil tree, brings forth evil fruit. You, perhaps, have never perceived this, but the very fact that you have not perceived it only proves that you have the greater need of healing—since the disease has become so thorough as to have made you insensible of its own existence! When there is no pain in the limb, then is it certainly in greater risk of mortification. And while your natural depravity causes you no pain whatever, and you are even inclined to deny it and take no shame to yourself concerning it, the more urgent is the need that the Holy Spirit should convince you of sin and that the Lord Jesus Christ should come and deliver you from it.

Ah, poor Sinner, what a ruin you are at best! Alas for human dignity, with its lofty pinnacles of morality and turrets of excellency. What theatrical pasteboard! What sand-built rubbish all appears when seen in the blaze of Divine light! Vain is your bandaging of your deadly sore! Your heart is, in itself, vile and deceitful above all things and desperately

wicked. You may wash the platter as you may. You may make the outside of the cup as clean as you will, but your inward parts are very wickedness. The imaginations of the thoughts of your hearts are evil, only evil and that continually. “You must be born again!” Your nature is too depraved for mending. You must be created anew in Christ Jesus! You have need of healing, indeed!

In addition to this, dear Hearer, you are, day by day, proving your need of healing by *your actual sin*. I cannot publicly rehearse your particular and personal sins, but I know this—the charge may be legitimately brought against every unconverted person here that you are daily living in sin. Take down the Ten Commandments and read them through. I will but remind you of one and beg you to examine yourself upon it, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Are you keeping that? Why, you live as if there were *no* God—you know you do! And day after day and even month after month, you never do anything to manifest love towards God!

You have some love towards your relatives, but no passion like that is kindled in your spirit towards your God! You have no love at all and yet the precept is, “You shall love Him with all your heart.” Why, that one command is lodging charges against you at the bar of God every day! Indeed, the whole 10 you are constantly breaking—there is not one that you keep! These sins of yours are speeding as messengers up to the record office in Heaven and there you shall find written down every idle word, every sinful thought and every guilty action of your whole life! How will you bear to hear of all these in the latter days, when your body shall have arisen from the grave at the archangel’s trumpet? How will you bear to hear the book read out that shall rehearse your sins?

At the very thought of it your bones may be dissolved within you—sins against a righteous God, sins against His people, sins against His Day—sins against His Book, sins against your bodies, sins against your souls! Sins of every kind, sins unseen of human eye—sins unknown to any but yourself and your God—all read and all proclaimed with trumpet voice while men and angels hear! You have need of healing, for you are scarlet, you are crimson, you are double-dyed with your iniquities! O that you did but know this! O that you did but feel this! You have need of healing and yet dark as the thought is, it gives *me* comfort and it ought to give *you* comfort to remember the text—“Jesus healed those that had need of healing”—and if you are such, why should He not heal you? Your many sins only prove that you have need of healing, and the desperate depravity of your heart only proves, still more, that you are such as Jesus came to heal. He healed those that had need of healing! He healed just such as you are!

Further, I think I hear some of you confess *that you do not feel this as you ought*. Now I was about to bring this to you as a proof that you have need of healing. When a man does wrong and yet will not confess it, how

wrong he must be! Or when, having confessed it, he feels not the proper shame, or feeling for awhile the proper shame, he yet returns to the same evil like the dog to his vomit—how deep must the evil be in his moral nature—how trebly diseased must he be, inasmuch as he does not feel sin to be sin at all! When a man has done wrong and knows it and stands with bitter repentance to confess the evil, why, you think hopefully of him—after all, there are good points about the man—there is a vitality in him that will throw out the disease.

But when the villain, having perpetrated a grave and causeless offense, does not for a moment acknowledge that he has done amiss, but continues calmly to perpetrate the offense again—ah, then—where is there any good in him? Is he not thoroughly bad? Now, such are *you*. If you were at all right with God you would fall at your Father's feet and never rise until you were forgiven! Your tears would flow day and night until you had the assurance of pardon! But since your heart seems to yourself to be made of Hell-hardened steel and to be like the nether millstone that feels not at all, why, then, there is more need of healing! And you seem to me, this morning, the very man I am after—the very man that Christ came to save—for he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, not to save those who had no need of healing, but to heal just such as you whose need is desperate, indeed.

As if to prove your own need of healing, you are, this morning, according to your own statement, *unable to pray*. You have been trying to pray of late and wished you could. You put yourself upon your knees, but your heart does not talk with God. A horrible dread comes over you, or else frivolous and vain thoughts distract you. "Oh," you have said, "I would give a thousand pounds for one tear of repentance! I would be ready to pluck out my eyes if I could but call upon God as the poor publican did, with, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' I thought it the easiest thing in the world once to pray, but now I find that a true prayer is beyond my power."

O Soul, you have need of healing, indeed, possessed with a dumb devil and all your other devils to boot, and unable to cry out for mercy! Yours is a sad case. You have need of healing and I cannot help repeating my text to you, "He healed them that had need of healing." Why should He not heal you? Ah, but you tell me your *feelings*, your *desires* after good things, are very often dampened. Perhaps this morning you are sincerely in earnest, but tomorrow you may be just as careless as ever. The other day you went into your chamber and did wrestle with God, but a temptation came across your path and you were as thoughtless about Divine things as if you had never been aroused to a sense of their value.

Ah, this shows what a need you have of healing! You are vile, indeed, when you dare to trifle with eternity, to sport with death and judgment and to be at ease while in danger of Hell—your heart, indeed, has need of healing! And though I grieve that you should be in such a plight, yet I rejoice that I am able to add, "He healed those that had need of healing."

Though you know your case to be so bad, yet at times you set up a kind of self-repentance and try to justify yourself in the sight of God. You say, "I have repented, or tried to do so. I have prayed, or tried to pray. I have done all I can to be saved and God will not save me!" That is to say, you throw the blame of your damnation upon God and make out yourself to be righteous in His sight. You know this to be wrong! If you are not saved it is because you will not *believe in Jesus*. There is the only hitch and the only difficulty.

Your damnation is not of God, but of yourself! It is necessitated by your own willful wickedness in not believing in Christ! And inasmuch as you are so wicked as to dare to excuse yourself—you have great need of healing—urgent need of saving. But, then, the minute that you have thus excused yourself, you rush to the opposite extreme—you declare that you have sinned past hope—that you deserve to be in Hell *now* and that God can never forgive you. You deny the mercy of God! You deny the power of Christ to forgive you and cleanse you! You fly in the face of God's Word, and you make Him out to be a liar! When He tells you that if you trust Jesus you shall find peace, you tell Him it is not possible there can be any peace with you! When He reminds you that He never rejected one, you insinuate that He will reject you!

You thus insult the Divine Majesty by denying the truthfulness and honesty of God. You have need of healing when you thus allow wicked despair to get the mastery over you—you are far gone, very far gone. But, oh, I rejoice to know that you are still among such as Jesus came to heal! He came to heal those that had *need* of healing and you cannot deny you are one of those! Why, Satan himself will not have the impudence to tell you that you have no need of healing! O that you would but cast yourself into the Savior's arms—not trying to make yourself out to be good—but acknowledging all that I have laid to your charge, and then, trusting as a sinner that dear Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world!

Remember, dear Hearer, you have need of healing, for unless you are healed of these sins and of all these wicked tendencies and thoughts of yours, as sure as you are living you will be cast into Hell. O my dear Friend, I know of no Truth of God that ever causes me such pain to preach as this—not that sinners will be damned, awful Truth as that is—but that *awakened* sinners will be damned unless they believe in Jesus! You must not make a Christ out of your *tears*. You must not hope to find safety in your bitter thoughts and cruel despairs. Unless you *believe*, you shall never be established. Unless you come to Christ, you may be convinced of sin, of righteousness and judgment, too, but those convictions will only be preludes to your destruction!

My dear Hearer, do you know what you are this morning? You call yourself a *seeker*, but until you are a *finder* you are an enemy to God and God is angry with you every day! Let but one drop of your blood go wrong this morning, let but your beating pulse be suspended and where are

you? Why, in Hell—in spite of those tears, in spite of those cries—for if you will not believe in Jesus, there is no “purgatory” for you, no place where afterwards you may find space for repentance and seek the Christ whom you today disregard! I have no alternative for you, however tender and broken-hearted you may be, but this one—believe and live! Refuse to believe and you must perish—for your broken-heartedness and tears and professed contrition can never stand in the place of Christ! You must have faith in Jesus, or you must die eternally!

I shall press on very briefly to the next point, but I pray God to make these words of use to you before you forget them. I am endeavoring to speak simply, personally and pointedly. He knows how my soul yearns over those who are here, that they may, this morning, find life in Jesus! O may He grant the desire of my soul and bring them to Himself now!

III. Our third point is to you, O needy Sinner. JESUS CAN SAVE YOU. I need not enter into what your case is. Remember, Jesus has saved a parallel case to yours. Yours may seem, to yourself, to be exceedingly odd, but somewhere or other in the New Testament you will find one as singular as yours. You tell me that you are full of so much wickedness. Did not He cast seven devils out of Magdalene? Yes, but your wickedness seems to be greater than even seven devils. Did not He drive a whole legion of devils out of the demoniac of Gadara?

You tell me that you cannot pray, but He healed one possessed of a dumb devil. You feel hardened and insensible, but He cast out a deaf devil. You tell me you cannot believe—neither could that man with the withered arm stretch out his arm—but he did it when Jesus bade him. You tell me you are dead in sin, but Jesus made even the dead live! Your case cannot be so bad but it has been matched, and Christ has conquered the likes of it. O poor Soul, if you do but come to Him, you shall not find yourself one half the singularity that you suppose, for another has been saved just like yourself!

Remember again, Christ can save you, for there is not a record in the world, nor has there ever been handed down to us by tradition a single case in which Jesus has failed. If I could meet anywhere in my wanderings a soul that had cast itself on Christ, alone, and yet had received no pardon. If there could be found in Hell a solitary spirit that relied upon the precious blood and found no salvation, then the Gospel might well be laid by in the dark and no longer gloried in. But as that has not been and never shall be—Sinner—you shall not make the first exception! If you come to Christ—and to come to Him is but to trust Him wholly and simply—you *cannot* perish, for He has said—“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Will He prove a liar! Will you dare to think so? O come, for He cannot cast you out! Think for a moment, Sinner, and this may comfort you—He whom I preach to you as the Healer of your soul is God! What can be impossible with God? What sin cannot He, who is God over all, forgive? If

your transgressions were to be dealt with by an angel, they might surpass all Gabriel's power. But it is Immanuel, God With Us, who is come to save! Though you were between the jaws of Hell, so long as the Pit had not shut her mouth upon you, He could save you! Doubt not, where you have to deal with Deity, nothing is impossible, or even difficult!

Moreover, you cannot doubt His will. Have you ever heard of Him—He that was God and became Man? He was gentle as a woman—

***“His heart is made of tenderness,
His heart melts with love.”***

It was not in Him to be harsh. When the woman taken in adultery, in the very *fact*, was brought to Him, what did He say? “Neither do I condemn you: go and sin no more.” It was said of Him, “This man receives sinners, and eats with them,” and He is not changed now that He reigns above! He is just as willing to receive sinners now as when He was here below.

Once more, do you still doubt? Remember what He has done to save sinners. My time fails me, else would I ask you to go with me to Gethsemane and view Him covered with the sweat of blood. I would ask you to stand with me in Pilate's hall when Pilate cries, “*Ecce Homo.*” To see the Savior as His shoulders are crimsoned with streams of gore for sinners who were His enemies. I would ask you, then, to stand beneath the Cross and view the hands and feet and side, all pouring forth His life-blood. These are the drops that take our sins away! These are the griefs of Him who took our guilt that our guilt might be forgiven. Can Jesus, the Son of God, suffer like this and yet there be no power in His blood to cleanse? What? Was the Atonement a fiction? Was the death of the eternal Son of God a thing without effect? There *must* be power enough there to take away sin! Come and wash, come and wash, you vile and black! Come and wash and you shall find instant cleansing the moment that, by faith, you touch His purifying blood.

Lastly, Jesus *demand*s of you, Sinner, this morning, your trust. He deserves it, let Him have it. You have need of healing. He came to heal those that have need of healing. He can heal you. What is to be done in order that you may be healed this morning, that all your sins may be forgiven and yourself saved? All that is to be done is to leave off your own doing and let Him do *for* you! Leave off looking to *yourself*, or looking to *others* and just come and cast yourself on Him. You know Dr. Watts' lines—

***“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arm I fall.
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my All.”***

“Oh,” you say, “but I cannot believe.” Cannot believe? Then do you know what you are doing? You are making Him a liar! If you tell a man, “I cannot believe you,” that is only another way of saying, “You are a liar.” Oh, you will not dare to say that of Christ! No, my Friend, I take you by the hand and say another word—*you must believe Him.* He is God, dare you doubt Him? He died for sinners. Can you doubt the power of His

blood? He has promised. Will you insult Him by mistrusting His Word? “Oh, no,” you say, “I feel I must believe, I must trust Him, but suppose that trust of mine should not be of the right kind? Suppose it should be a *natural* trust?”

Ah, my Friend, a humble trust in Jesus is a thing that never grew in *natural* ground. For a poor soul to come and trust in Christ is always the fruit of the Spirit. You need not raise a question about that. Never did the devil—never did mere Nature empty a man of himself and bring him to Jesus! Do not be anxious on that point. “But,” says one, “the Spirit must lead me to believe Him!” Yes, but you cannot see the Spirit—His work is a secret and a mystery. What you have to do is to believe in Jesus—there He stands, God and yet a suffering Man—making Atonement and He tells you if you trust Him you shall be saved. You must trust Him. You cannot doubt Him. Why should you? What has He done that you should doubt Him?—

**“O believe the record true,
God to you His Son has given.”**

And if you trust Him, you need not raise the question as to where your faith came from. It *must* have come from the Holy Spirit who is not seen in His works, for He works where He wills. You see the *fruit* of His work, and that is enough for you. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? If so, you are born of God! If you have cast yourself, sink or swim, on Him, then are you saved! We read in the papers, this week, how a man was saved from being shot. He had been condemned in a Spanish court, but being an American citizen and also of English birth, the consuls of the two countries interposed and declared that the Spanish authorities had no power to put him to death and what did they do to secure his life? They wrapped him up in their flags—they covered him with the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack—and defied the executioners! “Now fire a shot if you dare, for if you do you defy the nations represented by those flags and you will bring the powers of those two great nations upon you.”

There stood the man and before him the soldiery and though a shot might soon have ended his life, yet he was as invulnerable as though in a coat of triple steel! Even so Jesus Christ has taken my poor guilty soul ever since I believed in Him and has wrapped around me the blood-red flag of His atoning Sacrifice! And before God can destroy me or any other soul that is wrapped in the Atonement, He must insult His Son and dishonor this Sacrifice! And that He will never do, blessed be His name! May the Lord save each one of you. May He do it now and His shall be the Glory. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 7:1-30.

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THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST

NO. 3178

A SERMON
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“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.”
Luke 3:21, 22.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”
Luke 6:12, 13.

“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.”
Luke 9:28, 29.

“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.”
Matthew 14:23-25.

“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me.”
John 11:41, 42.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.”
Luke 22:31, 32.

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.”
Luke 23:46.

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preach-

er, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spoke like this Man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to *preach*, but we are told that, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior's life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the *preparatory prayers of Christ*—the prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all times—and yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual service—we shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22—"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying," (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faith—about to take up the soldier's life under the great Captain of our salvation—about to start out as pilgrims to Zion's city—I say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is

about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, “the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.” There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore *audible testimony to Christ*. And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christ’s prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Father—and if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your life—you must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, “Behold, he prays,” before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.”

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, “in a bodily shape like a dove,” to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! “Draw near

to God, and He will draw near to you,” not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayer—more power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Savior’s preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication *on our part in similar circumstances*. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayer—and so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirit’s blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13—“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14—SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, “I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them.” He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of God—but being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutes—but His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest

in heart and holy in life—and that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap it—as long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Father's ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Father's authority and the Spirit's power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the session—or an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one another—but when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with God's blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Savior's example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination—

***“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”***

When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satan's long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 dis-

ciples did when they returned to Him with joy, “Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!”

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29—“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” You see that it was *as He prayed that He was transfigured.*

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayer—only there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabor’s top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grass—but when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pastures—and get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Life—but that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORD’S PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25—“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.” He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and

then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of God's blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, "He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a man's hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42—"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me." He did not cry, "Lazarus, come forth," so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until *first* He had prayed, "My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead," and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETER'S FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34—

PETER'S RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34—PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter *before he was tempted*. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mind—and He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may *not* fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

“But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purse-proud.” Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not be—and do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

“Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him.” Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel—we do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgments—and let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him right—go and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts' hearts—and that pens need sharpening every now and then—but even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than

before! Do so, dear Friends—do not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORD'S PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." [See Sermons #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His people's Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, "He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem" and, in due time, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of John's Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayer—an example well worthy of His people's imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physically—you will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourself—body, soul and spirit—into His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumption—pray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordan's swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Cross—and pray even as He did—"Not my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconverted—who have imagined that prayer is the way to Heaven—yet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that *a saved man does is to pray*—and the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write—

***“Prayer is the contrite sinner’s voice,
Returning from his ways
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, ‘Behold, he prays!’
Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air!
His watchword at the gates of death
He enters Heaven with prayer!”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:1-14.**

Verse 1. *And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43—WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] An old writer says that many of Christ’s parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by it—“that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” And this is the parable.

2. *Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man.* It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear God—where they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this land—God grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. *And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.* She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. *And he would not for a while.* He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.

4, 5. *But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.* She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kind—but the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon him—for he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God,

nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted it—and though he was but little troubled about it—he said, “that I may not be worried to death by this woman’s continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary.”

6, 7. *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?* [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6—PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He is no unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose His people from eternity! “Shall not God avenge His own elect?” Yes, that He will—only let them persevere in prayer and “cry day and night unto Him.”

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* [See Sermon #1963, Volume 33—THE SEARCH FOR FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find it—although if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. *And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* It seems as if these two things went together—as our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes down—the scales seem to work that way.

10. *Two men went up into the Temple to pray.* [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41—THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in *these days*—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. *The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.* It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocrite—and if what he said was true—there was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer—but what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Temple—“or even as this publican.” What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in God’s sight!

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off*—Just on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* [See Sermon #1949, Volume 33—A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That was *all* prayer—it was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, “a sinner.” He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publican’s prayer, it is, “God be propitious to me,” that is, “be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice.” And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayer—while the Pharisee’s boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. *I tell you, this man*—This publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee did—this man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, “this man”—

14. *Went down to his house justified rather than the other.* He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justification—he had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46—TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

14. *For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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

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

WAKING TO SEE CHRIST'S GLORY NO. 2658

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 21, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1882.**

*"And when they were awake, they saw His glory
and the two men that stood with Him."
Luke 9:32.*

It seems, at first sight, a strange thing that the Apostles should have been asleep at such a time, yet, if we think of the circumstances in which they were placed and of the extreme excitement under which they must have labored, it will not appear at all amazing that "Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep." In the 28th verse it is written, concerning our Lord, "He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered and His raiment was white and glistening." We know that the Savior frequently retired to some quiet, secluded spot for fellowship with His Father and that, sometimes, He spent the whole night in prayer. It is very probable that on this occasion He had been engaged in earnest prayer for several hours before the Transfiguration came. And it is worthy of note that He was transfigured while He was praying. Every blessing comes to the great Head of the Church and to all the members of His mystical body through prayer! There is nothing promised to us without prayer, but, with prayer, everything is provided for us—and by prayer we shall ascend into Glory.

I cannot tell how long the Lord had been in prayer but, judging from His usual manner and custom, I should suppose that He had spent some hours in supplication. Even the three most highly favored Apostles were not as spiritually minded as He was and they grew weary while He was still full of holy vigor and fervor. The most zealous among us might be tired of listening to the best man in the world if he were to keep on praying hour after hour, yet he himself might be enjoying a special baptism of the Spirit and be quite unconscious of fatigue and, in his wrestling with God, might be all the while going from strength to strength. We, who were merely onlookers, would probably grow drowsy and be unable to keep up the strain as he would keep it up—our spirit might be willing enough to sympathize with him—but the weakness of our flesh would make us, like the Apostles, "heavy with sleep." I wonder not, therefore, if the Savior's supplication was long-continued and that His disciples grew weary and fell into a state of slumber!

Probably, however, their sleeping was the result of the extraordinary excitement through which they had passed, for, as in extreme pain, kind

Nature comes to the rescue and causes a swooning or fainting fit by which the poor sufferer is relieved. sometimes she comes in when there is a stress of mental excitement, whether joyous or grievous, and gives rest, even by unwilling slumber, to those who otherwise might have been exhausted. You remember, dear Friends, that these very persons fell asleep in Gethsemane. When their Master rose up from His agony of prayer and came back to them, "He found them sleeping for sorrow." They were themselves so depressed in spirit by His sufferings, that although they had true sympathy with Him, as far as they could have it, they fell asleep and their Master, while gently chiding them, made excuse for them as He said, "What, could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation: the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak."

These Apostles are not the only persons who have slept in the presence of the grandly supernatural. It happened so to Daniel—that Seer with the burning eyes who seemed as if he could look right into the glories of Heaven without blinking or being blinded by the wondrous vision! Yet we read in his 8th Chapter, at the 18th verse, when an angel appeared to him, "Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me and set me upright." And further, in the 10th Chapter, at the 8th verse, we read, "Therefore I was left alone and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground." These supernatural things are too much for mortal men to endure! The narrow compass of our mind cannot contain the Infinite and if, when we behold the Glory of God to an unusual degree, we do not die—if our lives are spared after we have seen that great sight—at least the image of death must come upon us and we must fall into a deep sleep. I will not, therefore, blame Peter, James and John for sleeping on that memorable occasion, for I do not think that there was any sin in their slumbering under such circumstances. They were Apostles, but they were only men and, being men, they were feeble creatures. And when they came into those deep waters, they were altogether out of their depth, so they began to sink in the ocean of the Divine Glory and soon were lost in the unconsciousness of sleep. Marvel not, therefore, Brothers and Sisters, that you find these three Apostles slumbering even in the Presence of their Transfigured Lord!

But, now—and this will be our first head—*it was necessary that they should be awake to see the glories of Christ.* Secondly, if you and I are to see the glories of Christ, *it is necessary that we, also, should be awake,* and that is more than can be said of all of us. I may say to some, "Let us not sleep as others do," for there are many who are so soundly sleeping that they are quite oblivious of the glories of Christ. When I have spoken on those two points, I want to close my discourse by showing you that *this doctrine of the necessity of our wakefulness explains many things.*

I. "When they were awake, they saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him." So, first, IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THEM TO BE AWAKE TO SEE CHRIST'S GLORY.

It was necessary, first, *that Christ's Transfiguration might be known to be a fact*—not a dream, nor a piece of imagination which had no real existence. “When they were awake, they saw His glory.” It was a literal matter of fact to them. As surely as Christ was born at Bethlehem. As certainly as He toiled in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. As truly as His blessed feet trudged over the holy fields of Judaea. As truly as He healed the sick and preached the Gospel wherever He went and as really as He did actually die upon the Cross of Calvary, so it is a matter of plain fact that Jesus Christ did, on a certain mountain—what mountain we do not know—undergo a wonderful change, for the time being, in which His glory was marvelously and distinctly displayed so that His three disciples could see it!

“And, behold, there talked with Him two men”—Elijah, who never died, and who was there with Him bodily. And Moses, who did die, and so may only have been there in spirit, unless that dispute between Michael the Archangel and the devil, about the body of Moses, may relate to the fetching away of that body that he might enjoy the same privilege as Enoch and Elijah did. Of that matter, I know nothing, but those two men, Moses and Elijah, were certainly there—not merely in appearance, but in reality. And our Lord Jesus Christ was really transfigured—“the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” It is true that Peter did not know what he said, but he knew what he saw when he was wide awake. The Revised Version renders our text, “When they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him.” They had not imagined this scene while they were in a semiconscious state between sleeping and waking! It was no night vision or daydream. It was not something painted by fancy upon their eyeballs and which had no actual existence, but it was a real meeting between their Lord and Moses and Elijah. They did see Christ and His two companions from Heaven and they did hear the Father's voice, saying, “This is My beloved Son: hear Him.”

Peter did not know what he said, but he knew what he heard. He was wide awake enough to understand that message and, long afterwards, he recalled it when he wrote concerning his Lord, “For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him on the holy mount.” So, you see, dear Friends, that they had to be awake in order that they might be able to confirm all this as an actual occurrence. And, to my mind, this is very pleasant. I like to remember that the Lord Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, let some beams of His glory shine out even while He was here below. And if, in His humiliation, His transfigured face appeared so bright, what must His glory be above where His face shines brighter than the sun, and His eyes are as flames of fire, and his feet like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace? What is now the matchless beauty of that Visage which was marred more than that of any other man? When He did but for a moment withdraw the veil, His disciples were overwhelmed with the magnificence of the display! But what must it be to see His face forever in Heaven above?

Next, it was necessary that the disciples should be awake, *that they might see the real glory of Christ*. I trust they were spiritual enough to know that the splendor which they saw was not the essential glory of Christ's Godhead, for that no man can see. Neither was it that secret spiritual glory which Christ always had, for that is not a sight for human eyes to behold, but for loving hearts to think of with reverent affection. But it was a special glow which was, for the time, shed upon His Humanity and even upon the garments in which that Humanity was arrayed, so that "His raiment was white and glistening." The Apostles then saw Christ in some measure as He will be, by-and-by, and, being fully awake, they knew that it was not an illusion that they were looking upon, but that it was real glory which streamed from the Savior's face and from every part of His most blessed and adorable Person. We are glad to know that Christ has no fictitious honors and no empty pomp, but that there is about Him a real glory which our opened eyes may see and which we may perceive without being fanatical or frenzied! Such a glory as we can see in the time of our quiet, calm judgment and earnest, deliberate thought, when every faculty is in full exercise and our whole soul is in the enjoyment of the utmost degree of vigorous health. I care little for the visions that need night, curtains and dreams before they can be perceived! I prefer the glory which can be seen by a man when he is fully awake and all his faculties are awakened so that he is able to discern between truth and fiction, and to detect any imposition that may be attempted to be played upon him.

Further, these disciples were fully awake *that they might perceive somewhat of the greatness of Christ's glory*. Do you not envy these three holy men who saw our Lord in the holy mount? So glorious was He that even the mountain, itself, was made "*holy*" wherein this transaction occurred, for so Peter called it. From that time it was as holy as Sinai, itself, where God came down in terrible pomp of power to proclaim His Law. Had not these Apostles been wide awake, they would not have perceived how truly marvelous is Christ's glory. What would not any of us give, just now, for a sight of Christ with our eyes wide awake? What must He be like who is the very center of Heaven's glory? All the grandeur of man is but external, but there is about Christ's very face a beauty of character which continually shines out—the luster of Deity which gleams through His Humanity so that to see Him as He is must be the fairest sight in the whole universe! To behold Him but for a *moment* must be the most dazzling vision that ever fell to the lot of men! Did you ever hear dying men and women talk about Him when they have begun to see Him? What strange words sometimes drop from their lips just as they are departing this life—giving us just a hint as to how grand He must be whose glory the Apostles saw when they were with Him on the holy mount!

One thing which they were fully awake to see was this, *the singularity of the glory*. If you read the text, you will notice that when they were awake, "they saw His glory"—and the glory of Moses and Elijah? Oh, no! Not at all. But did they not see Moses and Elijah? Yes, but mark how the text sinks, as it were, when it speaks of *them*—"They saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him." There is nothing about any glory being around or upon them—they are nothing but "the two men that stood

with Him.” He is fairer than the children of men, greater than Moses and greater than Elijah, mighty as both of them were! I think that we never truly see Christ until we behold Him all alone—as we never see the sun and the stars at the same time. If you once see the sun flooding the sky with its glow, you will find that the stars have disappeared. The Apostles saw the greatest of the Prophets and the great law-giver, after whom there was never the like till Christ Himself came—yet the Inspired record concerning the event is, “They saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him.” May you never see any earthly representatives of the Church of God in any higher place than this! In the Church and in all its ministers, may you see His glory and the men that stand with Him. And when you look upon those whose feet are beautiful because they proclaim the Gospel of Christ, yet may you only see His glory and the men that stand with Him to speak in His name!

The Apostles needed to be wide awake to discern this difference and so do we, for many, nowadays, seem to have no more respect for Christ than they have for His disciples. I know that there are some who think more of a dogma that was promulgated by Calvin, because it is Calvin's, than they do of that which Christ has preached because it is Christ's! And there are some who will refer everything they believe to “The Minutes of Conference,” or the sayings of Mr. Wesley, but some of the sayings of Christ do not seem to have as much weight with them. As for us, I trust that we may always see the true and noble men who stand with Christ, but, first of all, may we see His glory because Christ has awakened us out of that sinful sleep in which we make no distinction between the Master and the servant! Happy are we if He has taught us that the greatest of His servants is not worthy to unloose the laces of His shoes!

So much, then, upon the necessity for these three men being fully awake.

II. Now, Brothers and Sisters, let me speak to you upon the second part of our subject which is that **IT IS NECESSARY FOR US, ALSO, TO BE AWAKE IF WE ARE TO SEE CHRIST'S GLORY.**

We have not dreamt our religion. It has not come to us as a vision of the night, but when we were fully awake, we saw Christ's glory. We have seen His glory when we have been awake without weariness, awake without pain, awake without losses, awake without fears and trembling. In our coolest moments, when there was the least likelihood of our being deceived, we have seen His glory as our Savior, our Helper, our Keeper, our All-in-All. Set that fact down, then, and stand to it before the face of every man who dares to speak a word against Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, that just as truly as “when they were awake, they saw His glory,” so have we seen it in our most wakeful and calm and quiet moments!

But, dear Friends, let me impress upon your minds the truth that, in order to see the glory of Christ, it is necessary that we should be fully awake. Are we fully awake? Is there a man among us who has even one eye wide open? Is there not a corner of it still sealed? Are our mental and spiritual faculties really quickened to the utmost, or are we not still, to a large extent, as dreamers compared with what we ought to be in the Presence of Christ? Come now, Brother, are your highest powers thoroughly awakened? I believe that it was so with Peter, James and John,

and that what little spiritual faculty they then possessed—for they were then but babes in Grace—was fully awakened to learn all that could be learned from their Lord and Master in that mysterious manifestation of His glory. Are we in such a condition as that? There are many things that tend to make the soul go off into sleep, so let us bestir ourselves, for, unless all our powers of mind and heart are fixed upon our Lord, we shall not fully behold His glory. And if ever there was a sight that demanded and deserved all a man's powers of vision, it is the sight of the glorious Savior who stooped to die for us and who now is at the Father's right hand interceding for us! When you hear the Gospel, hear it with both your ears and with your whole heart and soul! When you are present in the assembly of the saints, be really there—do not come, as some men do, leaving their real selves at home or at their place of business. They sit here and we think that they are here, but they are not! Their thoughts are far away over the seas, or in their shops, even when the preacher is proclaiming the glorious Gospel of the blessed God! You know that it is so with many, but we cannot expect to have a clear sight of Christ until we are fully awake as these three Apostles were upon the mountain.

But to what shall we be awake? Well, first, it is a good thing to be *awake to our present condition and circumstances*. Brothers, Sisters, you would be in Hell within an hour if God did not keep you from it by His Grace. You who think you know Him best need constant supplies of His Grace, else you would fall into the most sorrowful condition. You are dependent upon Him every instant and for everything—for consistency of life, for the smallest grain of faith, for hope, for love, for peace, for joy, for steadfastness, for courage, for everything! Now, dear Friend, are you fully awake to that fact? Do any of us really feel how weak we are? How sinful we are? What floods of depravity there are pent up within us ready to burst out at any moment? Do we realize what terrible volcanic fires are hidden within our thoughts, as if the fury of Gehenna had entered our nature? And who alone can save us and who does save us? Brothers and Sisters, when you are thoroughly awake to your dangers, to your needs, to your weaknesses, then you will see Christ's glory! He is never rightly valued until we see ourselves to be utterly valueless! Low thoughts of self make high thoughts of Christ. Lord, awake us to know what we are, for then shall we begin to see the glories of Your Son!

We must also be thoroughly *awake to the mercies that we are constantly receiving*. Thousands of blessings come to us when we are sound asleep in our beds and, oftentimes, we know nothing of many favors that come to us in broad daylight—we are asleep, as it were, concerning them. Think, dear Christian people, of your election! Think of your redemption! Think of your effectual calling, of your cleansing by the precious blood! Think of your washing by the Spirit with water by the Word! Think how you have been held up, supplied, educated, comforted, strengthened! Think of what yet remains for you of peace and joy in this life and of the abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Let your mind contemplate all the mercies that are sure to come to you—and bless the Lord for them even before they come, as faith reckons them to be already here. When you are awake to all these mer-

cies, then you will see your Lord's glory. All these blessings will make you see what a glorious Savior—what an infinitely gracious Lord He is to you! Father of Mercies, wake us up to a sense of Your mercies, that we may see the glory of Jesus in them all!

And, dear Friends, we ought also to be *awake to all manner of holy exercises*. For instance, when we are awake to prayer, then we see Christ's glory. Often what are our prayers? At morning and night a few hurried sentences, when we are either half-asleep or scarcely awake. I mean that, at night, we are ready to go to sleep over our devotions and we nod even while we pray. And in the morning, when we get up, we have hardly time, through the demands of business, to spend a proper time in fellowship with our Lord. I bless God for our Prayer Meetings, for there is much that is good in them. But do we, even there, pray as we should? Those who speak for us are often graciously helped, but are not those of us who sit silent and who should be praying to God, often thinking of a thousand things instead of our supplications? We cannot expect to meet with Christ while we are in prayer unless we are wide awake! Then think of our singing. Praise is a blessed way of getting near to Christ, but sometimes people sing mechanically, as if they were wound up, like the old-fashioned organs that ground out a tune with painful regularity—the poor pipes knowing nothing, of course, about the sense or the meaning of the music—for there was no living hand to touch the keys. Yet we sometimes sing like that—

***“Hosannahs languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.”***

But, oh, when we are thoroughly awake in our singing, then are we able to—

***“Behold the glories of the Lamb
Amidst His Father's Throne”—***

and then we also—

***“Prepare new honors for His name,
And songs before unknown.”***

Many of us are coming presently to the Table of our Lord—what will happen if we come there half-awake? Well, we shall not see the glory of Christ in His ordinance! There will be bread and there will be wine, but, to us, there will be nothing more, no body of Christ, no blood of Christ, to be our spiritual meat and drink. The Master will not come and sit down with a company of nodding disciples, all fast asleep around the Table which is the special memorial of His great love to us. “When they were awake, they saw His glory.” And it must be the same with us, also.

Now I want to press this thought home a little more closely. Brothers and Sisters, if we are *fully awake to holy service*, then we shall see the glory of Christ. Those among you who live to win souls for Christ, whose soul is all on fire to try and carry the Gospel into some place where as yet it is not known, are certain to see the glory of Christ. While you serve Him, you shall see His face as they do who are with Him in Heaven! I have read a great many biographies of men and women who were full of doubts and fears, but when I have been reading about a man who was full of sacred zeal, one who was wholly consecrated to the service of his Savior, I have found very little about his doubts and fears. Those two seraphic men, Whitefield and Wesley, seemed to have no time for depres-

sion of spirits. They were always about their Master's business. They flashed through the earth like flames of fire! They seemed to be so girt about by God with His strength that they rode upon the whirlwind and, consequently, as a rule, they enjoyed the Presence of their Lord and were full of holy delight in Him.

So I believe it will be with those of us who addict ourselves to our Master's service with all our might. If you are doing nothing for Christ, you cannot expect to have His Presence and blessing. But if you are serving Him with all your heart, not from the low motive that you may win something by it, but entirely out of love to Him, then will He come and manifest Himself to you as He does not unto the world! Some Christians walk so slowly that sin easily overtakes them, while Christ goes far before them, for He always walks a good honest pace and likes not the sluggard's crawl. And some professors seldom get beyond that pace, so they see but little of Him whom they call Master. If they were awake—awake to His service—then they would see His glory!

But above all, dear Friends, we must be *awake with regard to our Lord Himself*. Oh, that our hearts were fully awake to His love! He says to each Believer, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Does our wakeful heart reply, "Yes, Lord, that You have"? Are we awake to remember all that He did by way of love even to the death for us? Are we so awake as to have continually before us His Divine and Human Person—His blessed condescending life—His wondrous atoning death? Are we wide awake enough awake to know that He is with us now? Do you not think that we are often like the disciples who *saw* Jesus standing by the sea and knew not that it was Jesus? He comes to us in the way of sickness, in the way of bereavement, in the way of heart-searching! We do not know that it is Jesus, yet it is. Our eyes are blinded because of our sleeping! If we were awake, we would soon perceive His glory. O blessed Savior, by Your Cross and passion, by Your glorious Resurrection and Ascension, awaken all our spirits to perceive that You are not far from any one of Your people and that Your Word is still true, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

III. I must not keep you much longer, but I want to say that THIS DOCTRINE OF THE NECESSITY OF OUR WAKEFULNESS IN ORDER THAT WE MAY SEE THE GLORY OF CHRIST, THROWS A LIGHT ON SEVERAL THINGS.

First, *it shows us why some see so little of the glory of Christ*. "Ah," says one, "I used to see it. I could not get through a sermon without being moved at the thought of my Savior suffering for me, and rising for me. But now I do not seem to get any good out of all the services I attend." Whose fault is that? It is not His, for He is unchanged. Is it mine? Perhaps so and yet, since others see him, surely the blame cannot be *all* mine. Is it not your fault, Friend? You are not as wide awake as you used to be! It is a curious thing when a man says, "I do not know how it is that I cannot see as I used to." Why, he has not got his eyes open! Foolish man, let him awaken himself and when he is thoroughly awake, then his eyes will be as good as ever and he will see as much of his Lord's glory as he used to! Old age has not come upon you yet, my Brother, my Sister, though you sorrowfully sing—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?”***

Let me alter one line of the hymn and then you may sing—

***“Where is the wakefulness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?”***

When you first joined the Church, you were all alive! Every power of your being was full of zeal and earnestness. Do you recollect how you stood in the aisle and never seemed to get tired? You wished that the preacher would keep on for another half-hour. You remember how you could walk several miles to the service, then, and when the minister said, “I think you live too far away to worship with us,” you replied, “Oh, no, Sir! The distance is nothing when I get such food for my soul as I find here. I am glad of the walk. It does me good.” Now you write a little note to say that you live so far off that you cannot often come to the services. It also happens that you live far from every other place of worship, too, so you begin to stay away from the House of God—and then do you wonder that you feel no power and no delight in your Lord? Of course you do not, for you are sound asleep! When you awake again, you will see Christ's glory. Oh, for wakeful piety, earnest religion—and plenty of it—no mere sprinkling of Grace, but a thorough immersion into the very depths of it! May the Lord, in His mercy, cause you to be filled with all the fullness of God, by the power of His Spirit, till you shall be carried right away into a holy life that shall write over the natural life of your manhood, “I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.”

Next, does not this fact explain why, *in trials, we often get our sweetest fellowship with Christ?* If I might mark out the happiest periods of my life, I would not choose those in which outward mercies have been multiplied and success has followed success. But I think that I would especially note those times when abuse followed abuse, when I could hardly say a word without its being misrepresented and something horrible being made out of things which were as good as good could be—when lies flew about me as bullets whistle round the warrior's ears in the midst of the battle! Then it was that I kept close to Christ and lived on Him, alone, and I was among the happiest of the happy! When the dog barks, then the people of the household wake up and the burglars will not be likely to get in! And, sometimes, our troubles are the very best things that can happen to us because they wake us up and drive Satan away and make us fit us to see Christ's glory! We got into a careless, drowsy condition when we were rich and increased in goods—and then we went to sleep. So our Master came and pulled the bed from under us and made us feel the cold—then we woke up and found that Christ was close beside us, and our heart was glad. Thus, affliction or trial is often a blessed means of Grace because it wakes us up so that we see Christ's glory.

This fact also explains why *dying saints often declare that they have such blessed sights of Christ.* Is it not because, as they die, they really begin to live? They shake off the dull encumbrance of this house of clay and they get into a clearer light, and so they truly live. They wake up when they die! All their lifetime their business engagements or other cares occupied their thoughts. But now they have done with business, with care and they begin to awake, for the morning comes—the blessed, ever-

lasting morning that shall never know an eventide—and they awake and see the glory of their Lord, and we, who sit by their bedside, are often amazed! We cannot understand what they describe, for we are the sleeping ones, and they are the awakened ones, waking up to see Christ's glory!

But suppose that I were to take my text for just a minute and project it a little way into the future? We shall soon fall asleep, Brothers and Sisters. Some of the older ones among us will *certainly* do so! Others of us very *probably* will do so, and all of us, unless the Lord shall come first, shall soon fall into that last quiet slumber which we call death. But, what a awakening there will be, first of our soul, when we shall see our Lord as He is! What must the first five minutes in Heaven be if there are any minutes where time is swallowed up in eternity? What must be the joy when, for the first time, we enter that land where “they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light”? When we shall see the saints in Heaven, I suppose that we shall not say much about them. They will be like Moses and Elijah, “the two men that stood with Him.” But, oh, when we shall get our first glimpse of Jesus on His Throne, that will be a ravishing sight beyond all conception! And then, when the next awakening comes, when the trumpet sounds its mighty blast, and these poor limbs arise out of their beds of clay, when we are awake, we shall see His glory! Then shall we be satisfied, when we awake in His likeness! And then shall His prayer be answered, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.”

Well, Beloved, be content to go to bed when there is such an awakening in store for you! Learn to die every day. Regard your bed as a tomb and every time you give yourself up to unconsciousness, and the image of death is upon you, be practicing the art of dying, so that when, for the last time, you must go upstairs and lie down once again, it may be very, very sweet to feel, “I shall awake in the morning, the everlasting morning, when all these shadows of this night of grief and toil shall eternally have fled away! When I am awake, I shall see His glory!”

The Lord grant to you and to me, dear Friends, to know all the bliss of awakening to behold His glory! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 17:1-5.**

[Mr. SPURGEON does not appear to have commented on the chapter read before he preached the foregoing Sermon. It has, therefore, been decided to insert his exposition of the parallel passage in Matthew, as he wrote it for The Gospel of the Kingdom. This will enable his Sermon readers, who do not possess his last literary work, to judge as to the contents of the volume upon which he was at work just eight years ago, within a few days of receiving the call Home. It is one of the most precious of the many memorials of the “promoted” Pastor.]

Verses 1, 2. *And after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, his brother, and led them up on a high mountain, and was transfigured before*

them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. Were these “six days” a week’s quiet interval in which our Lord prepared Himself for the amazing transaction upon the “high mountain”? Did the little company of three know from one Sabbath to another that such an amazing joy awaited them? The three were elect out of the elect, and favored to see what no one else in all the world might behold. Doubtless our Lord had reasons for His choice, as He has for every choice He makes, but He does not unveil them to us. The same three beheld the agony in the Garden. Perhaps the first sight was necessary to sustain their faith under the second. The name of the “high mountain” can never be known, for those who knew the location have left no information. Tabor, if you please. Hermon, if you prefer it. No one can decide. It was a lonely and lofty hill. While in prayer, the splendor of the Lord shone out. His face, lit up with its own inner glory, became a sun! And all His clothes, like clouds irradiated by that sun, became white as the light, itself. “He was transfigured before them.” He alone was the center of what they saw. It was a marvelous unveiling of the hidden Nature of the Lord Jesus. Then was, in one way, fulfilled the word of John—“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.” The Transfiguration occurred but once. Special views of the glory of Christ are not enjoyed every day. Our highest joy on earth is to see Jesus. There can be no greater bliss in Heaven! And we shall be better able to endure the exceeding bliss when we have laid aside the burden of this flesh.

3. *And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him.* Thus the Law and the Prophets, “Moses and Elijah,” communed with our Lord, “talking with Him,” and entering into familiar conversation with their Lord. Saints long departed still live! They live in their personality. They are known by their names and enjoy near access to Christ. It is a great joy to holy ones to be with Jesus. They find it Heaven to be where they can talk with Him. The heads of former dispensations conversed with the Lord as to His decease by which a new economy would be ushered in. After condescending so long to His ignorant followers, it must have been a great relief to the human soul of Jesus to talk with two masterminds like those of Moses and Elijah! What a sight for the Apostles, this glorious trio! They “appeared unto them,” but they, “talked with Him.” The objective of the two holy ones was not to converse with Apostles, but with their Master. Although saints are seen of men, their fellowship is with Jesus

4. *Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You will, let us make here three tabernacles; one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.* The sight spoke to the three beholders, and they felt bound to answer to it. Peter must speak—“Then answered Peter.” That which is uppermost comes out—“Lord, it is good for us to be here.” Everybody was of his opinion. Who would not have been? Because it was so good, he would gladly stay in this beatific state and get still more good from it. But he has not lost his reverence and, therefore, he would have the great ones suitably sheltered. He submits the proposal to Jesus. “If You will.” He offers that, with his Brothers, he will plan and build shrines for the three holy ones. “Let us make here three tabernacles.” He does not propose to build for himself, and James, and John,

but he says, "One for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." His talk sounds rather like that of a bewildered child! He wanders a little, yet his expression is a most natural one. Who would not wish to abide in such society as this? Moses, Elijah and Jesus! What company! But yet how unpractical is Peter. How selfish the one thought, "It is good for us"! What was to be done for the rest of the twelve and for the other disciples, and for the wide, wide world? A sip of such bliss might be good for the three, but to continue to drink thereof might not have been really good, even for them. Peter knew not what he said. The same might be said of many another excited utterance of enthusiastic saints.

5. *While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him.* "While he yet spoke." Such wild talk might well be interrupted! What a blessed interruption! We may often thank the Lord for stopping our babbling. "A bright cloud overshadowed them." It was bright and cast a shadow. They felt that they were entering it and feared as they did so. It was a singular experience, yet we have had it repeated in our own cases. Do we not know what it is to get shadow out of brightness and "a voice out of the cloud"? This is after the frequent manner of the Lord in dealing with His favored ones. The voice was clear and distinct. First came the Divine attestation of the Sonship of our Lord, "This is My beloved Son," and the Father's declaration of delight in Him, "in Whom I am well pleased." What happiness for us that Jehovah is well pleased in Christ and with all who are in Him! Then followed the consequent Divine requirement, "Hear Him." It is better to hear the Son of God than to see saints, or to build tabernacles. This will please the Father more than all else that love can suggest. The good pleasure of the Father in the Lord Jesus is a conspicuous part of His glory. The voice conveyed to the ear a greater glory than the luster of light could communicate through the eyes. The audible part of the Transfiguration was as wonderful as the visible!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 421, 292, 425.

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***“And as he was still coming, the devil threw him down
and tore him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean
spirit and healed the child and
delivered him again to his father.”
Luke 9:42***

THIS child, possessed with an evil spirit, is a most fitting emblem of every ungodly and unconverted man. Though we are not possessed with devils, yet by nature we are possessed with devilish vices and lusts which, if they do not distress and vex our bodies, will most certainly destroy our souls! Never was a creature possessed with an evil spirit in a worse plight than the man without God, without Christ and without hope in the world! The casting out of the unclean spirit was, moreover, a thing that was impossible to man and only possible to God. And so is the conversion of an ungodly sinner a thing beyond the reach of human ability and only to be accomplished by the might of the Most High! The dreadful bellowing, foaming and tearing caused in this unhappy child by the unclean spirit are pictures of the sins, iniquities and vices into which ungodly men are continually and impetuously hurried—and a type of that sad and terrible suffering which remorse will, by-and-by, bring to their conscience and which the vengeance of God will soon cause to occupy their hearts. The bringing of this child to the Savior by his parents teaches us a lesson that those of us to whom the care of youth is entrusted, either as parents or teachers, should be anxious to bring our children to Jesus Christ that He may graciously save them! The devout desire and compassion of the father for his child is but a pattern of what every parent ought to feel for his offspring. Like Abraham, he should pray, “O that Ishmael might live before You!” And he should not only put up prayer, but also strive in the use of the means to bring his child to the Pool of Siloam, that haply the angel may stir the stream and his son may step into the water and be made whole! The parent should place his offspring where the Savior walks, that He may look upon him and heal him. The coming of the child to Christ is a picture of saving faith, for faith is *coming to Christ*—simply believing in the power of His Atonement. And lastly, the casting down and tearing which is mentioned in my text is a picture

of the comer's conflict with the enemy of souls. "As he was still coming, the devil threw him down and tore him."

Our subject this morning will be the well known fact that coming sinners, when they approach the Savior, are often thrown down by Satan and torn so that they suffer exceedingly in their minds and are well nigh ready to give up in despair! There are four points for our consideration this morning. That you may easily remember them, I have made them alliterative—the devil's *doings, designs, discovery and defeat*.

I. First, THE DEVIL'S DOINGS. When this child came to Christ to be healed, the devil threw him down and tore him. Now this is an illustration of what Satan does with most, if not all sinners. When they come to Jesus to seek light and life through Him, Satan throws them down and tears them. Allow me to point out how it is that the devil causes those extraordinary pangs and agonies which attend conversion. He has a multitude of devices, for he is cunning and crafty—and he has many different ways of accomplishing that end.

1. First of all he does this by *perverting the Truth of God* for the destruction of the soul's hope and comfort. The devil is very sound in Divinity. I never suspected him of heterodoxy yet! I believe him to be one of the most orthodox individuals in Creation. Other people may disbelieve the Doctrines of Revelation, but the devil cannot, for he knows the Truth of God and though he will often belie it, he is so crafty that he understands that with the soul convinced of sin, his best method is not to contradict the Truth, but to pervert it. Now I will mention the five great Doctrines which we hold to be most prominent in Scripture—by the perversion of each of which the devil tries to keep the soul in bondage, darkness and despair.

First, there is the great Doctrine of *Election*—that God has chosen to Himself a number that no man can number, who shall be holy, since they are ordained to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Now the devil agitates the coming soul upon that Doctrine. "Oh," he says, "perhaps you are not elect. It is of no use your coming and struggling and striving. You may sit still and do nothing and yet be saved, if you are to be saved. But if your name is written among the lost, all your praying, seeking and believing cannot save you!" Thus the devil begins preaching Sovereignty in the sinner's ear, to make him believe that the Lord will assuredly cut him off. He asks, "How can you suppose that such a wretch as you can be elect? You deserve to be damned, and you know it! Your brother is a good moral man, but as for you, you are the chief of sinners! Do you think God would choose you?" Then if the tempted one is instructed that election is not according to merit, but of God's Free Will, Satan opens another battery and insinuates, "You would not feel like this

if you were one of God's elect. You would not be allowed to come into all this suffering and pray so long in vain." And again he whispers, "You are not one of His," and thus attempts to throw the soul down and tear it in pieces. I would just like to have a blow at his schemes, this morning, by reminding our friends that when they come to Christ, they never need puzzle themselves about the Doctrine of Election! No one, in teaching a child the alphabet, makes him learn Z before he has learned A. So a sinner must not expect to learn election until he knows faith. The text with which he has to understand is this—"he that believes on the Lord Jesus shall be saved." And when the Lord has enabled him to learn and believe that, he may go on to this—"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." But if he cannot shake off the subject from his mind, he need not do it, for he may remember that every penitent is elect, every Believer is elect! However great the sinner, if he does but repent, that is a *proof* that he is elect! If he does but believe on Christ, he is as certainly elect as his faith is genuine! I cannot tell that I am elect before I know whether I believe in God. I cannot tell a thing unless I see its effects. I cannot tell whether there is a seed in the ground unless you enable me to stir up the soil, or to wait till I see the blade shooting from under the earth—so I cannot tell whether your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life until I see God's love manifested in you in the stretching out of your hearts towards God! I cannot disembowel the deep rocks of obscurity to find out hidden things unless evidences and effects furnish me with spade and mattock. There is a newspaper in Glasgow called the *Christian News*, alias, the *Un-Christian News* or *Christian Wasp*—and the editor says of me, that I am not fit to preach God's Word because I do not know (can you guess what it is?) who God's elect are! He writes words to this effect—"According to his own confession, the young man does not know who God's elect are until he has asked them questions and knows their character." Well, if I did, I would be marvelously wise, indeed! Who can know them apart from those signs, marks and evidences in the heart and life which God always vouchsafes to His elect in due time? Shall I unlock the archives of Heaven and read the rolls, or, with presumptuous hands, unfold the Lamb's Book of Life, to know who are God's elect? No! I leave that for the editor of the *Christian News* to do—and when he publishes a full and correct list of the elect—no doubt it will be bought up tremendously and the printer will speedily make a fortune by it! Let not the soul be distressed about election, for all who repent and believe do so as the effect of their election!

The next Doctrine is that of *our depravity—the Total Depravity of Man*—that all men are fallen in Adam, that they are all gone aside from

the Truth and that, moreover, by their practice they have become full of sin. That in them dwells no good thing and that if any good thing shall ever come there, it shall be put there by God, for there is not even the *seed* of goodness in the heart, much less the flower of it. The devil torments the soul with that Doctrine. He says, "See what a depraved creature you are? You know how dreadfully you have sinned against God! You have gone astray ten thousand times. See," he says, "there are your old sins still crying after you." And he waves his wand and gives a resurrection to past iniquities which rise up like ghosts and terrify the soul! "There, look at that midnight scene! Remember that deed of ingratitude? Listen! Do you not hear that oath echoed back from the walls of the past? Look at your heart, can that ever be washed? Why, it is full of blackness! You know you tried to pray, yesterday, and your mind roved to your business before you were half through your prayer! And since you have been seeking God, you have only been half in earnest, knocking at the door, sometimes, and then afterwards giving it up. It is impossible you should ever be forgiven! You have gone too far astray for the Shepherd to find you—you are altogether filthy—your heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked and you cannot be saved." Many a poor soul has had a most terrible tearing with that Doctrine. I have felt something of it, myself, when I have verily thought that I must be torn in pieces by the dread remembrance of what I had been! The devil throws the sinner down and pulls him almost limb from limb by persuading him that his guilt is heinous beyond parallel and his iniquities are far beyond the reach of mercy—and his death warrant is signed! Ah, poor Soul, get up again—the devil has no right to throw you down! Your sin cannot be too great for God's mercy! It is not the greatness of sin that can cause any man to be damned if there is not a lack of faith! If a man has faith, notwithstanding all the sins he may ever have committed, he shall be saved! But if he has but one sin *without* faith, that one sin shall utterly destroy him. Faith in the blood of Christ destroys the sting of sin. One drop of the Savior's precious blood could extinguish a thousand flaming worlds if God should will it! How much more can it put out the burning fears of your poor heart! If you believe in Christ, you shall say to the mountain of your guilt, "Be you removed far from here and cast into the depths of the sea."

Then, there is the Doctrine of *Effectual Calling*, or, *Irresistible Grace*—that God calls His children effectually—that it is not the power of *man* which brings us to God—but it is the work of God to bring man to Divine Grace! That He calls those whom He would save with an effectual and special call which He vouchsafes only to His children. "There now," says the Evil One, "the minister said there must be an effectual call. Depend

upon it, yours is not such a call, it never came from God! It is only a few heated feelings—you were excited a little under the sermon—and it will all be gone, directly, like the morning cloud or the early dew. You have strong desires, sometimes, but at other seasons they are not half so vehement. If the Lord drew you, you would be always drawn with the same power. It will be over, soon, and you will be all the worse for having been inclined to go to God under these legal convictions and then, afterwards, running away from Him!” Well, Beloved, tell Satan that you don't know whether it is an effectual call, but you know this, that if you perish, you will go to Christ and perish only there! Tell him you know it is so effectual that you cannot help going to Christ—that whether it is to last or not, you cannot say—you will let him know, by-and-by, but that you are resolved (for this is your last defense), if you perish, to perish at the Cross of Christ! And so, by the help of God, you may, by some means, overcome him when he throws you down on that Doctrine.

The devil will also pervert the Doctrine of *Final Perseverance of the Saints*. “Look,” says Satan “the children of God always hold on their way—they never leave off being holy, they persevere. Their faith is like the path of the Just, shining more and more unto the perfect day—and so would yours be if you were one of the Lord's. But you will never be able to persevere. Don't you remember six months ago, when you were lying on a sick bed, you resolved to serve God and it all broke down? You have vowed many times that you would be a Christian, but it has not lasted a fortnight! It will never do, you are too fickle! You will never keep fast hold on Christ. You will go with Him a little while, but you will be sure to turn back. Therefore, you cannot be one of the Lord's, for they never turn back!” And so he tries to pull and tear the poor soul on that great and comforting Doctrine. The same nail on which a sinner must hang his hope, Satan tries to drive into the very temples of his faith, that he may die like Sisera in the tent of Jael! Oh, poor Soul, tell Satan that your perseverance is not yours, but that God is the Author of it—that however weak *you* are, you know your weakness—but that if God begins a good work, He will never leave it unfinished. And repelling him thus, you may rise up from that throwing down and tearing which he has given to you!

Then there is the Doctrine of *Limited Atonement* with which the unclean spirit will assault the soul. “Oh,” says Satan, “it is true Christ died, but not for *you*! You are a peculiar character.” I remember the devil once made me believe that I was one, alone, without a companion. I thought there was no one like myself. I said that others had sinned as I had done and had gone as far and bad, but I fancied that there was something peculiar about my sin. Thus the devil tried to set me apart as if I did not

belong to the rest of mankind! I thought that if I had been anybody else, I might have been saved. How often I wished I had been a poor swearing drunk in the streets and then, I thought, I might have a better chance. But as it was, I thought I was to die alone, like the deer in the shade of the forest. But well do I remember my friends singing that sweet hymn—

***“His Grace is Sovereign, rich and free,
And why, my soul, why not for thee?”***

One of the hymns in Denham's selection and it ought to have been in Rippon's, as well as I can remember, it ends like this—

***“He shed His blood so rich and free,
And why, my soul, why not for thee?”***

That is just the question we never put to ourselves. We say, “Surely, my Soul, why not for anybody else but you?” Up, poor Soul! If Satan is trying to tear you, tell him it is written, “He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.” Tell Satan that, “whoever comes, He will in no wise cast out.” And it may be that thus God will deliver you from that desperate conflict into which, as a coming sinner, you have been cast.

2. But Satan is not very scrupulous and he sometimes throws the coming sinner down and tears him by *telling horrible lies*. Some of you may not have known this, and I thank God if you do not understand some of the things of which I am about to speak. Many a time when the soul is coming to Christ, Satan violently injects infidel thoughts. I have never been thoroughly an unbeliever but once, and that was not before I knew the need of a Savior, but after it. It was just when I wanted Christ and panted after Him, that all of a sudden the thought crossed my mind which I abhorred, but could not conquer, that there was no God, no Christ, no Heaven no Hell! I thought that all my prayers were but a farce and that I might as well have whistled to the winds or spoken to the howling waves! Ah, I remember how my ship drifted along through that sea of fire, loosened from the Anchor of my faith which I had received from my fathers. I doubted everything, until, at last, the devil defeated himself by making me doubt my own existence—and I thought I was an idea floating in the nothingness of obscurity! Then, startled with that thought and feeling that I was substantial flesh and blood, after all, I saw, by God's grace, that God was, and Christ was, and Heaven was, and Hell was and that all these things were very Truths of God! I would not be astonished if many, here, have been upon the very verge of infidelity and have doubted almost everything. It is when Satan finds the heart tender, that he tries to stamp his own impression of infidelity upon the soul. But, blessed be God, he never accomplishes it in the truly coming sinner!

He also labors to inject blasphemous thoughts and then tells us they are ours. Has he not sometimes poured in most vehement torrents of blasphemy and evil imaginations into our hearts, which we ignorantly

thought must be our own? Yet not one of them, perhaps, belonged to us. I remember when I, once, was alone, musing on God, when all of a sudden it seemed as if the floodgates of Hell had been loosened! My head became a very pandemonium—ten thousand evil spirits seemed to be holding carnival within my brain and I held my mouth lest I should give utterance to the words of blasphemy that were poured into my ears! Things I had never heard or thought of, before, came rushing impetuously into my mind and I could scarcely withstand their influence! It was the devil throwing me down and tearing me! Ah, poor Soul, you will, perhaps, have that, too. But remember, it is only one of the tricks of the arch-enemy! He drives his unclean beasts into your field and then calls them yours. Now, in old times, when tramps and vagrants troubled a parish, they whipped them and then sent them on to the next parish. So when you get these evil thoughts, give them a sound whipping and send them away! They do not belong to you if you do not indulge them—but if you fear that these thoughts are your own, you may say, “I will go to Christ, and even if these blasphemies are mine, I will confess them to the great High Priest, for I know that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.”

3. Then if the devil cannot overcome you, there, he tries another method. He takes all the threatening passages out of God's Word and says they all apply to you! He reads you this passage, “There is a sin unto death; I do not say that you should pray for it.” “There,” says the devil, “the Apostle did not say he could even pray for the man who had committed certain sins!” Then he reads that sin against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven. “There,” he says, “in your character you have committed sin against the Holy Spirit and you will never be pardoned.” Then he brings another passage—“Let him alone; Ephraim is joined unto idols.” “There,” says Satan, “you have had no liberty in prayer lately. God has let you alone. You are given unto idols—you are entirely destroyed!” And the cruel fiend howls his song of joy and makes a merry dance over the thought that the poor soul is to be lost! But do not believe him, my dear Friends. No man has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit as long as he has Divine Grace to repent! It is certain that no man can have committed that sin if he flies to Christ and believes on Him! No *believing soul* can commit it! No penitent sinner ever has committed it. If a man is careless and thoughtless—if he can hear a terrible scream and laugh it off and put away his convictions—if he never feels any strivings of conscience—there is a fear that he may have committed that sin. But as long as you have any desires for Christ, you have no more committed that sin than you have flown up to the stars and swept cobwebs from the skies! As long as you have any sense of your guilt, any desire to be redeemed,

you cannot have fallen into that sin. As a penitent, you may still be saved, but if you had committed it, you could not be penitent.

II. Let me dwell for a moment or two upon the second point—the DEVIL'S DESIGN. Why does he throw the coming soul down and tear it?

First, because *he does not like to lose it*. “No king will willingly lose his subjects,” said Apollyon to Christian when he stretched himself across the road, “and I swear you shall go no farther; here will I spill your soul.” There he stood vowing vengeance at him because he had escaped from his dominion. Do you suppose that Satan would lose his subjects, one by one, and not be angry? Assuredly not! As soon as he sees a soul hurrying off to the Wicket Gate, with his eyes fixed on the Light, away go all Hell's dogs after him! “There is another of my subjects leaving. My empire is being thinned. My family is being diminished.” And he tries with all his might and main to bring the poor soul back again. Ah, Soul, don't be deceived by him! His design is to throw you down—he does not tell you these things to do you good, or to humble you—but in order to keep you from coming to Christ! He tries to decoy you into his net, where he may utterly destroy you.

Sometimes, I believe, he has the vile design of *inducing poor souls to kill themselves* before they have faith in Christ! This is an extreme case, but I have met with not a few who have been thus tempted to take away their lives and rush before their Maker with their hands red with their own blood! Satan knows full well that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. But he has never accomplished his design in the soul of one elect sinner yet!

Then Satan has another motive. *When the soul is coming to Christ, he tries, out of spite, to worry that soul*. Satan's heart is made up of that which is just the opposite of benevolence—malevolence—he hates everything and loves nothing. He hates to see any creature happy, any soul glad. And when he sees a soul conning to Christ, he says, “Ah, I have nearly lost him. I shall never have an opportunity of bringing thundering condemnation into his ears and dragging him about in the flames of Hell as I thought. And now, before he is gone, I will do something—the last grip shall be a hard one—the last blow shall be dealt with all my power.” And down he comes upon the poor soul who falls wallowing upon the earth in despair and doubt. Then he tears him and will not leave him until he has worked as much of his way with him as the Lord will let him. Don't be afraid, Child of God! “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” And even though he may cast you to the ground, remember that the righteous falls many times, but he rises up again! And so shall you—and the designs of the enemy shall be frustrated, as it is written, “Your enemies shall be found liars unto you.”

III. In the third place, there is the DEVIL'S DISCOVERY. I do not think the devil would be able to throw one poor sinner to the ground if he came as the devil. But it is seldom he does that. He presents himself to us as an angel of light, or even as the Holy Spirit! He knows that the Holy Spirit does all the work of salvation and, therefore, he tries to counterfeit the operations of the Holy Spirit. He knows it is the Holy Spirit's work to take away pride from man and to humble the soul. Well, Satan counterfeits that blessed work and takes away *hope* from man as well as pride. Under the pretense of humbling the poor sinner and telling him that he ought to lie lower in the dust, he not only humbles the poor soul but puts it down so low that he dishonors God, too, in the sinner's estimation, by telling him that God, Himself, cannot save him. Satan will try, if he can, to mar God's work. While it is yet upon the potter's wheel, he puts on his own instrument while the clay is whirling round upon the wheel, that it may not assume the Holy Spirit's shape, but that there may be some marks of the devil's workmanship in the article! Sometimes you ask God that you may be able to agonize in prayer. "That is right," says Satan, "agonize in prayer. But remember, you must receive the mercy *now*, or you are lost." So he glides in and adds a little piece to the Truth, making you believe it is an impulse of the Holy Spirit, while it is, after all, a deception of the Father of Lies! The Holy Spirit tells you that you are a lost sinner and undone. "Ah," says the devil, "you are and you cannot be saved!" And thus, again under the very garb of the Spirit's operations, he deceives the soul. It is my firm belief that very much of the experience of a Christian is not Christian experience—many Christians experience things that have nothing to do with Christianity, but more to do with demonology! When you read the convictions of John Bunyan, you may think that all that terror was the fruit of the Holy Spirit—but be assured it was the fruit of Satanic influence! You may think it is God's Holy Spirit that drives sinners to despair and keeps them shut up in the iron cage so long. Not at all. There was God's Holy Spirit and then Satan came in to mar the work if he could.

Now I will give the poor sinner a means of detecting Satan, so that he may know whether his convictions are from the Holy Spirit or merely the bellowing of Hell in his ears. In the first place, *you may always be sure that that which comes from the devil will make you look at yourselves and not at Christ.* The Holy Spirit's work is to turn our eyes from ourselves to Jesus Christ, but the Enemy's work is the very opposite. Nine out of ten of the insinuations of the devil have to do with ourselves. "You are guilty," says the devil—*that is self.* "You have not faith"—*that is self.* "You do not repent enough"—*that is self.* "You have got such a wavering hold of Christ"—*that is self.* "You have none of the joy of the Spirit and, there-

fore, cannot be one of His"—*that is self*. Thus the devil begins picking holes in us—whereas the Holy Spirit takes self entirely away and tells us that we are “nothing at all,” but that—

“Jesus Christ is All-in-All.”

Satan brings the carcass of self and pulls it about—and because it is corrupt—tells us that most assuredly we cannot be saved. But remember, Sinner, it is not *your hold* of Christ that saves you—it is Christ! It is not *your joy* in Christ that saves you—it is Christ! It is not even faith in Christ, though that is the *instrument*—it is Christ's blood and merits! Therefore, look not so much to your hand with which you are grasping Christ, as to Christ! Look not to your hope, but to *Christ*, the *source* of your hope! Look not to your faith, but to Christ, the Author and Finisher of your faith! As you look at yourself, the meanest of those evil spirits may tread you beneath his feet. Look, therefore, to Christ!

You may discern the devil's insinuations in another way—*they generally reflect upon some attribute of God*. Sometimes they reflect upon His love and tell you that God will not save you. Sometimes upon His long-suffering and they tell you, you are too old and that God won't save you. Sometimes upon His Sovereignty and they tell you that God does not choose as He wills, but that He has respect to characters and takes men according to their merits. Sometimes they reflect upon God's Truth and they tell you that He will not keep His promise. Yes, and sometimes they reflect upon the very Being of God and tell you that there is not such a One. But O poor trembling Soul, Satan shall not get an advantage over you—but take care—detect him! And when you have found out the devil, you have frustrated his aims as far as you are, yourself, concerned.

IV. Now, in the last place, we have to consider the DEVIL'S DEFEAT. How was he defeated? Jesus rebuked him. Beloved, there is no other way for us to be saved from the castings down of Satan but the *rebuke of Jesus*. “Oh,” says one poor soul, “many months and years have I been distressed for fear I should not be saved. I have gone from place to place in hopes that some minister might say something which should rebuke the evil spirit.” Sister, or beloved Brother, have you not been doing wrong? Is it not *Jesus* who rebukes the evil spirit? Or perhaps you have been trying to rebuke the evil spirit yourself!. You have tried to argue and dispute with him. You have said that you are not so vile as he described you to be. Beloved, have you not been doing wrong? It is not *your* business to rebuke Satan—“The LORD rebuke you,” that is what you should say. Oh, if you had looked to Jesus and said, “Lord, rebuke him,” He had only need say, “Hush!” and the demon would have been still in a moment, for he knows how Omnipotent Jesus is, since he feels His power. But you get to striving to pacify your own heart when you are under these temp-

tations, instead of remembering that it is *only Jesus* who can remove the affliction. If I had one here who suffered the most from this ailment—the possession of Satan—I would say to him, “Beloved, sit down. Remember Jesus. Go to Gethsemane and, depend upon it, the devil will never stay there with you! Think on the agonies of your Savior covered with His blood. The devil cannot bear Christ’s blood—he goes howling away at the very thought of it! Go to the pavement where Christ endured the accursed flagellation. The devil will not stay long there with you. And if you sit at the foot of His Cross and say—

**“Oh, how sweet to view the flowing,
Of His ever precious blood,”**

you will not long find the devil vexing you! It is no use to get simply to praying. Prayer is good, in itself, but that is not the way to get rid of Satan—it is *thinking of Christ*. We get to saying, “Oh, that I had stronger faith! Oh, that I had love to Jesus!” It is good for a Christian to say that, but it is not enough. The way to overcome Satan and to have peace with God is through Christ, “I am the Way.” If you would know the Way, come to Christ. “I am the Truth.” If you would refute the devil’s lies, come to the Truth. “I am the Life.” If you would be spared from Satan’s killing, come to Jesus. There is one thing which we, all of us, too much becloud in our preaching, though I believe we do it very unintentionally—namely, the great Truth that it is not prayer, it is not faith, it is not our doings, it is not our feelings upon which we must rest—but upon Christ and on *Christ alone!* We are apt to think that we are not in a right state, that we do not feel enough, instead of remembering that our business is not with self, but Christ. Our business is only with Christ!

O Soul, if you could fix your soul on Jesus and neglect everything else—if you could but despise good works and all else, so far as they relate to your salvation and look wholly, simply on Christ, I tell you Satan would soon give up throwing you down! He would find it would not answer his purpose, for you would fall on Christ and, like the giant who fell upon his mother, the earth, you would rise up each time stronger than before. Do I have, then, within hearing, one poor tried, tempted, devil-dragged soul? Has Satan been pulling you through the thorns and briars and thickets until you are scarred and bruised? Come now, I have tried to preach a rough sermon to you because I knew I had rough work to do with roughly-used souls! Is there nothing here, poor Sinner, that you can lay hold upon? Are you so locked up that not one ray of light comes through the iron bars? What? Are you so chained that you cannot move hand or foot? Why, Man, I have brought you a pitcher and a piece of bread, today, even in your dungeon! Though you are cast down, there is a little here to comfort you in what I have said. But oh, if my Master

would come, He would bring more than that, for He would rebuke the unclean spirit and it would immediately depart from you! Let me beseech you, look only to Christ—never expect deliverance from self, from Satan, from ministers, or from means of any kind apart from Christ! Keep your eyes simply on Him. Let His death, His agonies, His groans, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, His intercession be fresh upon your mind. When you wake in the morning look for Him! When you lie down at night look for Him! Oh let not your hopes or fears come between you and Christ. Seek only Christ! Let the hymn we sang, be your hymn and your prayer—

***“Lord, deny me what you will,
Only ease me of my guilt,
Prostrate at Your feet I lie,
Give me Christ, or else I die.”***

And then, even though the devil throws you down and tears you, it were better he should do so, now, than that he should tear you forever.

I have some here, however, who will laugh at what I have been preaching this morning. Ah, Sirs, you may do so. But bitter though my text may be, I wish you had it in your mouths. Though sad is the experience of being torn when coming to Christ, I had rather see you so than see you whole, away from Christ! It is better to be torn in pieces coming to the Savior, than to have a sound, whole heart away from Him! Tremble, Sinner, tremble—for if you come not to Christ, *He* shall tear you at the last. His eyes shall not pity, neither shall His hands spare you! He has said, “Beware you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.” Sirs, within another hour some of you may know this! Certainly, before long there are some who will be torn in pieces by the wrath of God! Why will you die? Why will you die? You cannot answer the question! But let it rest upon your hearts. What profit will you have in your own blood? What will you profit if you gain the whole world and lose your soul? Remember, Jesus Christ can save even you! Believe on His name, you convinced sinners, believe on Christ! The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

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

THE DEVIL'S LAST THROW

NO. 1746

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 10, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**On an evening when the regular hearers
left their seats to be occupied by strangers.**

***“And as he was still coming, the devil threw him down, and convulsed him.”
Luke 9:42.***

OUR Lord Jesus Christ taught the people much by His Words, but He taught them even more by His actions. He was always preaching—His whole life was a heavenly discourse on Divine Truth—and the miracles which He worked were not only the proofs of His Deity, but the illustrations of His teaching. His wonders of mercy were, in fact, acted sermons, truths embodied, pictorial illustrations appealing to the eyes and thus setting forth Gospel teaching quite as clearly as vocal speech could have done. When we read of the miracles of our Lord, we should not only accept them as proofs of His Deity and seals of His commission, but as instructions as to the manner of His gracious working.

What He did of old to the *bodies* of men should be received as a prophecy of what He is, today, prepared to do to the *souls* of men. I am sure I shall not be straining the meaning of the text, or the intention of the miracle, if, instead of preaching about the youth possessed of the devil and dwelling only upon that wonderful display of power, I endeavor to show that there are parallel cases, at this time, in the world of men. Jesus is able to work in the unseen spirit-world miracles such as were foreshadowed by those which He worked in the visible natural world. I suppose that we have never seen Satanic possession, although I am not quite sure about it, for some men exhibit symptoms which are very like it. The present existence of demons within the bodies of men I shall neither assert nor deny, but certainly, in our Savior's day it was very common for devils to take possession of men and greatly torment them.

It would seem that Satan was let loose while Christ was here below that the serpent might come into personal conflict with the appointed Seed of the woman—that the two champions might stand foot to foot in solemn duel—and that the Lord Jesus might win a glorious victory over him. Since his defeat by our Lord and by His Apostles, it would seem that Satan's power over human bodies has been greatly limited. But we have, still, among us the same thing in another and worse shape, namely, the power of sin over men's *minds*. That this is akin to the power of the devil over the body is clear from holy Scripture. “The god of this world has blinded the eyes of them that believe not.” “The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience,” says the Apostle Paul.

Satan works in all ungodly men, as a smith at his forge—do you wonder that they sometimes curse and swear? These are only the sparks from the forge below, flying out of the chimney. The Evil One is found cooperating with evil natures, finding fire for their tinder, blowing up the flame that is within them and, in every way, assisting them and exciting them to do evil—so that, albeit men are not possessed of devils in the sense in which they were so in Christ's day—yet the Evil One still has power over them and leads them wherever he desires. Do we not constantly meet with persons of this kind? I do. I know passionate men in whom the fiercest of devils appear to rave and rage! And I could point out others whose love of lying betrays the presence of the father of lies!

One blasphemes and uses such filthy language that we are sure his tongue is set on fire from Hell, even if the prince of devils is not ruling it. A man says, "Drink is ruining me, body and soul. I know that it is shortening my life. I have had delirium tremens and I know that I shall have them again if I continue as I am—but I cannot leave the drink. Sometimes the craving comes over me and I seem as if I must swallow the intoxicating drink whether I will or not." Whether this is the devil, or whether it is altogether the man, himself, I am not going to argue—but the drink-devil, whose name is Legion, is certainly among us this day and we hear persons tell us that they are anxious to escape from its power—and yet they return to it, rushing to intoxication as the swine rushed into the sea when the demons had entered into them!

Need I mention another form of this evil in the shape of unchastity? How many a man there is—alas, it is true of women, too!—struggling against a fierce passion and yet that passion conquers them! The unclean desire comes upon them like a hurricane bearing all before it and they yield to it as the sere leaf yields to the blast. No, more—they rush into a sin which they, themselves, condemn—of which they have already tasted of the bitter fruit! They could not be more eager for it if it were the purest of all enjoyments! As the moth dashes again and again into the candle, which has burned its wings, so do men and women hurry into the vice which has filled them with misery! They are possessed and domineered over by the spirit of lust and return to their crimes as the oxen return to the stream.

I need not go further into details, for one man falls into sin in one way, and another falls after quite a different fashion. All devils are not alike—though they *are* all alike evil. Anger differs from lust and profligacy laughs at covetousness, yet they are all of one brood, privates in the same dreadful legion. Men practice differing sins, but their sins all manifests the same evil power. Unless Christ has set us free, we are all, in some shape or other, under the dominion of the Prince of Darkness, the master of the forces of evil! This poor young man of whom we are to talk, tonight, was brought into a most horrible condition through the influence of a Satanic spirit. He was a lunatic—his reason had been dethroned! He was an epileptic, so that if left alone he would fall into the fire or into the water.

You have yourself seen persons in fits of epilepsy and you know how dreadful would be their danger if they were taken in a fit in the middle of a

street, or by the side of a river. In this youth's case, the epilepsy was only the means by which the demon exercised his power and this made the boy's condition seven-fold worse than if it had been simply a disease. This afflicted one had also become deaf and dumb, and very violent, so that he was capable of doing a great deal of mischief. In all the Holy Land there was only one who could do anything for him! There was one name by which he could be cured, and only one! It was the name of Jesus! The Lord Jesus had disciples who had worked miracles in His name, but they were baffled by this extraordinary case. They tried what they could do, but they were utterly defeated and gave up the task in despair.

And now there remained only one Person beneath the canopy of Heaven that could touch this child's case and drive out the devil. Only one Person could now answer the poor father's prayers—every other hope was dead. That is just the state in which we are—there is but one name under Heaven whereby we must be saved! Many are the pretended salvations, but only one is real—

***“There is a name high over all,
In Hell, and earth, and sky.
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly.”***

That one name is the name of Jesus, the Son of God, to whom all power is given! He is God and can deliver any man from the dominion of evil, whatever form it may have assumed, and however long established the dominion may be. There is no cure besides His. Nothing else can rescue a man from the thralldom of his sin but the Word of Jesus. When the Word of power is spoken from His Divine mouth, all things obey—and none out of the millions of voices on earth can deliver us from evil. We are shut up to Heaven's unique remedy—God grants that, being so shut up, we may avail ourselves of it.

This poor lad, although nobody could cure him but Jesus, had a father that loved him and nobody could tell the sorrow of that father's heart because of his poor son. The father had a sharp struggle to get his son to the disciples, for epileptic persons who are also insane are hard to manage. I cannot tell how many round about assisted to hold him, all pitying the poor creature. But alas, the Lord Jesus Christ was away! The parent's heart was heavy when he found that the great Healer to whom he looked was, for a while, absent. But when Jesus came down from the mountain-top, the poor demoniac had this one great advantage—that he had friends to aid in bringing him to Christ.

I hope that all here who are not saved are privileged with relationship to some friend who seeks their salvation. Perhaps it is a wife who cannot bear that her husband should remain out of Christ, or a husband who pines till his spouse is turned to the Lord—in either case it is a great help. How often a mother bears a secret anguish in her breast for her unconverted sons and daughters! I have known a sister in the family to be the only one who knew the Lord—and she has pleaded with the Lord day and night, entreating Him to bless the whole of her household. Frequently a servant in the house becomes its best helper, or it may be a neighbor who has seen the ungodly conduct of his neighbors—who never ceases to pray

for them. When some few get together to bring an especially hard case before Jesus, it is blessed work—for desperate cases grow hopeful under the influence of prayer. Come, you saved ones, pray with me, now, for these unrenewed sinners, that at this moment they may feel the power of our Lord Jesus!

I. So, then, my first point shall be that OUR HOPES ARE ALL AWAKENED. Here is a poor youth, but as bad as he is terribly possessed, he is coming to Christ! Prayer has been offered for him by his father and Jesus is near. All looks well! We will take the case of a sinner who is in a similar condition. Prayer has been offered for him and that prayer has, in some measure, been heard. We have in this congregation, I trust, some who are coming to Christ and I am right glad of it! Coming to Christ, however, is not the best possible condition, for the best condition is to have already come to Him. For a hungry man to be coming to a dinner is not enough—he must actually reach the table and eat. For a sick man to be coming to an eminent physician is hopeful, but it is not enough—he must get to that physician, take his medicine and be restored.

That is the point. To be coming to Christ is not enough—you must actually come to Him and really receive Him—for to such only does He give power to become the sons of God! This poor child was coming and so are some here—that is to say, they have begun to hear the Gospel with attention. They did not, before, go anywhere on the Sabbath nor did they get up very early on a Sunday morning. I can see a man who seldom rose on a Sunday morning—and when he did, he read his newspaper! You might see him, anytime before one o'clock, in his shirtsleeves. Half this city of London is in that condition every Sunday morning because they look upon the day as simply their own day—not the Lord's Day. They have very short memories and do not "remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy." They forget all about its being the Lord's Day and do not reverence it. This is shameful conduct towards God!

If a man on the road were to meet with a poor beggar and give him six out of the seven shillings he had with him, the beggar would be a wicked wretch if he afterwards knocked the man down and stole the other shilling. Yet there are multitudes of people to whom God gives six days out of seven—but nothing will satisfy them but they must have the seventh all to themselves and rob God of it! The man I refer to is repenting of this wrong and, so you see him coming upon the Sunday morning to hear the Gospel. He hears it very attentively. He leans forward to catch every word and he treasures up what he hears. We are sure that he is coming to Christ, for when he gets home, he reaches for his Bible. He has begun to read the Word of God in an earnest way! He thought, at one time, that it was about the dullest book in the world. He even dared to turn it into a jest and all because he never read it—for those who deny the Inspiration of Scripture are almost always people who have never read it for themselves!

It is a book which carries conviction within itself to candid minds when they carefully peruse it. Assuredly this man is coming to Christ, for he searches the Scriptures. I feel sure he is coming to Christ, for he has begun to mend in many respects. He has dropped his frequent attendance at

his usual place of worship, namely, the public house. He keeps more at home and is, therefore, sober. Plenty of people in London need no bell to fetch them into the temples of their gods. We see in some of our churches and chapels persons going in 20 minutes or half-an-hour after service begins—but look at the temples of Bacchus at one o'clock, and at six in the evening, and see how punctual are his votaries! The worshippers of liquid fire stand outside till the shrine is opened—they are afraid of being late! They are so thirsty that they long for the time of the deadly libation. Drink seems to be the water of life to them, poor creatures that they are!

But now our friend of whom we are so hopeful is not seen waiting at the posts of the doors—the “Blue Posts,” I mean. Thank God! He is looking to another Fountain for comfort. Note, also, that he has dropped his blasphemy and his unchastity. He is a purer man in mouth and body than he used to be. He is coming to Christ. But, as I said, coming is not enough. The thing is to really reach the Lord Jesus and to be healed by Him. I pray you, do not rest short of this! Still, this is all hopeful, very hopeful. The man is a hearer. He is also a reader of the Scriptures—he has begun to mend a bit—and now he is a thinker, too, and begins to be a little careful about his soul. While he is at his labor, you can see that there is something working in his brain, though once it was filled with vanity and wickedness.

He has a weight, too, at his heart, a burden on his mind. He is evidently in earnest, as far as he knows the teaching of Scripture, because he is deeply affected by it. He has learned that he will not cease to exist when he dies, but that he will continue to be when yonder sun becomes black as a burnt-out coal! He knows that there will be a day of judgment, when throngs upon throngs, yes, *all the dead*, shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of the things which they have done in the body. He has thought this over and he is alarmed. He chews the cud upon the Divine Truth of God and finds time for solitary meditation. That man is coming to Christ, for there is no better evidence of the face being set towards Christ and Heaven than a thoughtful state of mind!

And I have heard—of course I cannot tell, for I was not there to see—I have heard, I say, that the other night he began to pray! If so, I *know* that he is coming to Christ, for prayer is a sure token. He has not yet cast himself fully at the feet of Jesus, but he cries, “Lord, save me.” He is coming and I am as glad as the birds on a spring morning! The angels are watching—they are leaning from the battlements of Heaven to see whether it will end rightly—and you and I are very hopeful, especially those of us who have been praying for this man, for since we see that there is some change in him and he has begun to think and pray, we look for his salvation, as men look for flowers when April showers are falling! So, you see, our hopes are excited.

II. And now I will read the text again—“And as he was still coming, the devil threw him down, and convulsed him.” By this OUR FEARS ARE AWAKENED. What a sight it must have been! Here is the poor father bringing his lunatic son and friends are helping him. They are getting him near the Savior, and he is just coming to Him who can cure him, when, all

of a sudden, he is taken in a fearful fit, worse than he has ever suffered before. He is cast down, thrown about, dashed to and fro—he wallows on the ground—he seems to be flung up and down as by an unseen hand! We fear that he will be torn to pieces. Look! He falls down like a dead man and there he lies. As the crowd gathers around him, people cry, “He is dead!”

Does it not seem a dreadful thing that when hope was at its brightest all should be dashed aside? I have observed this thing scores of times! I might say, I think without exaggeration, *hundreds* of times. I have seen men, just when they were beginning to *hear* and beginning to *think*, taken, all of a sudden, with such violence of sin and so fearfully carried away by it, that if I had not seen the same thing before, I should have despaired of them! But, having often seen it, I know what it means and I am not so dismayed as a raw observer might be, though I must confess that it half breaks my heart when it happens to some hopeful convert whom I hoped to receive into the Church and to rejoice over. We mourn when we hear that the man who was somewhat impressed has become worse than before and has gone back to the very vice from which we had rescued him. The case runs on the same lines as our text—“As he was still coming, the devil threw him down, and convulsed him.”

How does the devil do this? Well, we have seen it done in this way—When the man had almost believed in Christ, but not quite, Satan seemed to multiply his temptations around him and to bring his whole force to bear upon him. There is a wicked man in the shop and the devil says to him, “Your friend is beginning to be serious—ridicule him! Tempt him all you can. Treat him to strong drink. Get him away to the theater, the music hall, or the brothel.” It is amazing how the ungodly will lay all kinds of traps for one who is escaping from his sins! They are fearfully set on keeping him from Christ. This is a free country, is it not? A wonderfully free country when a Christian man in the workshop has to run the gauntlet for his very life to this day. A man may swear, drink and do what he likes that is detestable—and is there ever a word of rebuke for him. But the moment he begins to be serious and thoughtful, the wicked are down upon him like so many dogs on a rat!

The devil finds willing servants and they worry the poor awakened one—is there any wonder that, as he has not yet found Christ and is not yet saved, he should, for the time, be carried away by these assaults and feel as if he could not go further in the right road? I have known, in addition to all this, that Satan has stirred up the anxious one's bad passions. Passions that lay asleep have suddenly been awakened. Moreover, the man has become thoughtful and from that very fact, doubts which he never knew before have come upon him. He begins to mend and now he finds a difficulty in getting his needle through where the tear was made. He finds that tearing is easier work than mending—and that running into sin is a much more easy thing than rising out of the black ditch into which he has fallen. So now, what with those about him tempting him, his bad passions responding to the temptation and his doubts clouding every-

thing up, it is not a marvelous thing that the poor creature grows worse before he gets better!

The disease, which before had been concealed in more hidden and vital parts, seems to be thrown out upon the surface and the sight is sickening! This, however, is not always a bad sign. Doctors rather prefer it to an inward festering. So have I seen it when men have been coming to Christ—their boat has been tossed with tempest—and they have been driven far out upon a raging sea. Yes, and I will tell you what I have seen. I have seen a man almost converted—well-near a believer in Christ—all of a sudden become more obstinate in his opposition to the Gospel than ever before. A man that was quiet and harmless and inoffensive before, has, under the influence of Satan, just when we hoped the best things of him, turned round in a rage against the people who sought to do him good. And he has spoken evil of the Gospel which a little while before he seemed anxious to understand.

Sometimes such persons act as if they were reckless and profane, just as boys, when they go through a graveyard, whistle to keep their courage up. Many a man says big things against the Gospel when he is pretty nearly caving in and he does not want anybody to know that he is beaten. He is coming to Jesus, but still he does not want anybody to see that he is and, therefore, he pretends to an opposition which is not sincere. Have you not discovered that a man is never so violent against a thing as when he is unwillingly convinced of the truth of it? He has to try and demonstrate to himself that he does not believe it by being very loud in his declarations—a secret something in his soul makes him believe and he is mad because he cannot resist the inward conviction.

Do not be astonished, you that are trying to bring men to Christ—if it should often happen that these lunatics break loose—that these epileptics have a worse fit just before Christ cures them than ever you knew them to have had! I will describe the usual way in which the devil throws men down and tears, or convulses them. You need not listen to this unless you like, because it does not relate to all of you here—but it is true of a sufficient number to render it necessary for me to speak of it. It is a very curious thing that if there is a poor soul in London that is well-near insane through despair of heart, he wants to talk to me. I am often sorely burdened by the attempt to sympathize with the distracted. I do not know why they should be attracted to *me*, but they come to tell me of their evil state of mind—people who have never seen me before. This fact gives me a wide field of actual practice and careful observation.

I frequently meet with persons who are tempted with blasphemous thoughts. They have not yet laid hold on Christ, but they are trying to do so. And at this stage of their experience, most horrible thoughts pass through their minds. They cannot prevent it—they hate the thoughts and yet they come till they are ready to lose their reason. I will tell you what happened to me. I was engaged in prayer in a quiet place one day when I had just found the Savior and while I was in prayer a most horrible stream of blasphemies came into my mind, till I clapped my hand to my mouth for fear that I should utter any of them! I was so brought up that I

do not remember ever hearing a man swear while I was a child, yet at that moment I seemed to know all the swearing and blasphemy that ever was in Hell, itself, and I wondered at myself! I could not understand from where this foul stream came.

I wrote to my venerable grandfather who was, for 60 years, a minister of the Gospel, and he said to me—"Do not trouble about it. These are no thoughts of *yours*. They are injected into your mind by Satan. The thoughts of man follow one another like the links of a chain—one link draws on another—but when a man is in prayer the next natural thought to prayer is not blasphemy! It is not, therefore, a natural secession of our own thoughts. An evil spirit casts those thoughts into the mind." I also read in an old book what they used to do years ago in our parishes in the "good old times" when nobody had any sense of humanity. If a poor wretch came to a parish begging, they whipped him through the place and sent him on to his own parish. Thus should we treat these diabolical thoughts! Whip them by hearty penitence and send them off to where they came from—back to their own parish, which is far down in the deeps!

Thoughts of this sort, seeing you loathe them, are none of yours. Do not let Satan lay his brats at your door, but send them packing! Perhaps when you know this, it may help to break the chain, for the devil may not think it worth his while to worry you in this way any more, when he cannot, by this means, lead you to despair. He seldom wastes his time in spreading nets when the bird can see them. Therefore, tell Satan to be gone, for you can see him and you are not going to let him deceive you. It may be he will take the hint and leave. When this does not answer, I have known Satan to throw the coming sinner down and convulse him in another way. "There," he says, "did you not hear the preacher speaking about election? You are not one of the elect!" "Perhaps I am not," says one. Perhaps you are, I say, and I think that whether you are one of the elect or not, you had better come on the ground that Jesus says—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

If you come, He will not cast you out—and then you will find that you *are* one of the elect! You need not trouble about predestination—you will see that, clearly enough, very soon. If any man had a ticket to go to a meeting and he said, "I do not know whether I am ordained to get in or not," I should think it very probable that he was not ordained to enter if he sat at home in the corner and did not make the attempt to go! But if, having his ticket, he walked to the place and went in, I should feel sure that he was ordained to go in! You will know your election when you have *obeyed* your calling! Go to Christ because you are *commanded and invited*, and leave the deeper question to be answered by the facts! Satan will throw men down and convulse them in another way. "Ah!" he says, "you are too big a sinner!" I make short work of that. *No* man is too big a sinner—"All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men."

"Oh but," says Satan, "it is too late." Another lie of his! It is *never* too late so long as we are in this world and come to Jesus for pardon! Generally, in the case of young people, he winds the clock back and says, "It is too soon." And then when they get old, he winds the clock ahead and

says, "It is too late." It is never too late as long as Jesus lives and the sinner repents. If a sinner were as old as Methuselah, if he came to Christ and trusted Him, he would be saved. "Oh but," the devil says, "it is no use your trying at all. The Gospel is not true." Yes, but it *is* true, for some of us have proved it. I could bring before you, tonight, if it were necessary, men and women who lived in sin and wallowed in it—and yet the Lord Christ has saved them by His precious blood! They would rejoice to tell you how they have been delivered from the reign of sin by faith in Jesus, though they could never have delivered themselves. The Gospel is true! Our converts prove it. Conversion is the standing miracle of the Church—and while we see what it works every day in the week, we are confident and sure.

When men that were passionate, dishonest, unchaste and covetous become holy, gracious, loving, pure and generous, *then we know* that the Gospel is true by the effect which it produces! A lie would never produce holiness and love! Out of the way, devil! It is all in vain for you to come here with your lies! We know the truth about you and about the Gospel—and you shall not deceive us! And then the devil will come with this—"It is of no use. Give it up. Give it up!" Many and many a man who has been on the brink of eternal life has been thrown down and convulsed with this—"It is of no use. Give it up! You have prayed and you have not been answered—never pray again! You have attended the house of God and you have become more miserable than ever—never go again! Ever since you have been a thinking man and a sober man, you have had more trouble than you ever had. See," says the devil, "what comes of your religion?"

Thus he tries to induce the newly awakened to give it up. But oh, in God's name let me implore you, do not turn from it, for you are on the brink of the grand discovery! Another turf turned and there is the golden treasure! After all your striving—your long striving—never give up the search until you have found your Savior, for your Savior is to be found! Trust in Him this night and He is yours forever!

III. I shall not detain you much longer. But as our hopes have been awakened and our fears have been awakened, let us look on the scene till OUR WONDER IS EXCITED. Did you notice, when I was reading in the 9th chapter of Mark, how Jesus healed this poor child? He *did* heal him—He healed him of all those complications—healed him of the devil's domination; healed him of the epilepsy; healed him of being deaf and dumb; healed him of being a lunatic; healed him of pining away! In one moment that young man was completely saved from all his ills! He could speak! He could hear! He was cured of his epilepsy and was no more a lunatic, but a happy rational being! The whole thing was done at once. Wonder and never leave off wondering!

"Can a man be changed all at once? It must take a long time," says one. I admit there are certain qualities which come only by education and patient watchfulness. There are certain parts of the Christian character that come of culture and must be watered with tears and prayer. But let me assure you, not as a matter of theory, but as a matter which I have seen for 30 years—a man's character may be totally changed in less time than

it takes me to tell you of it! There is such power in the name of Christ that if that name is preached and the Spirit of God applies it, men can be turned right around. There can be a total reversal of all their conduct and, what is more than that, of all their inclinations, desires, wishes, delights and hates—for God can take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh! The child of darkness can be translated into the Kingdom of Light! The dead heart can be quickened into a spiritual existence and that in a single moment, by faith in Jesus Christ!

When that poor epileptic child was healed, it is said that the people were amazed. But how much greater will be our amazement if we see the Lord Jesus work such a miracle upon you! You have struggled to get better. You have prayed to get better and all seems to be unavailing. Now, just trust Christ, the blessed Son of God who reigns in Heaven, who died for sinners and now lives for sinners! Only trust Him and this blessed deed is done—you become a new creature in Christ Jesus—and commence a holy life which shall never end. This wonder can be performed now! This cure was perfected at once and it remained with the youth. The most charming point about it was that the Lord Jesus said, “You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him.” *Enter no more into him*—there is the glory of it! Though the epileptic fit was ended, yet the young man would not have been cured if the devil had returned to take possession of him again. The Savior’s cures endure the test of years!

“Enter no more into him” preserved the young man by a lifelong word of power. I never dare to preach to anybody a temporary salvation. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” not for merely tonight, but forever! When God saves a man, he is saved—not for weeks and years, but eternally! If Christ turns the devil out of him, he shall enter into that man no more, forever! Now this is a salvation that is worth your having and worth my preaching! A temporary, I had almost said, a *trumpery* salvation, that saves a man for a few months and then lets him perish, is not worth preaching or having! But that which so makes a man new as to put into him, “a well of water springing up into everlasting life”—that is worth worlds!

I will tell you a story of Christmas Evans which I like to tell on this point. Christmas Evans was once describing the prodigal’s coming back to his father’s house, and he said that when the prodigal sat at the father’s table, his father put upon his plate all the daintiest bits of meat that he could find. But the son sat there and did not eat—and every now and then the tears began to flow. His father turned to him and said, “My dear son, why are you unhappy? You spoil the feasting. Do you not know that I love you? Have I not joyfully received you?” “Yes,” he said, “dear Father, you are very kind, but have you *really* forgiven me? Have you forgiven me altogether, so that you will never be angry with me for all I have done?” His father looked at him with ineffable love and said, “I have blotted out your sins and your iniquities, and will remember them no more forever. Eat, my dear son.”

The father turned round and waited on the guests, but by-and-by his eyes were on his boy. They could not be long removed. There was the son weeping again, and not eating. "Come, dear child," said his father, "come. Why are you still mourning? What is it that you need?" Bursting into a flood of tears a second time, the son said, "Father, am I always to stay here? Will you never turn me out of doors?" The father replied, "No, my child, you shall go no more out forever, for a son abides forever." Still the son did not enjoy the banquet. There was still something rankling within and, again, he wept. Then his father said, "Now, tell me, tell me, my dear son, all that is in your heart. What do you desire more?" The son answered, "Father, will you *make* me stay here? Father, I am afraid lest, if I were left to myself, I might play the prodigal again. Oh, constrain me to stay here forever!" The father said, "I will put my fear in your heart, and you shall not depart from me." "Ah! then," the son replied, "it is enough," and merrily he feasted with the rest!

So I preach to you just this—that the great Father, when He takes you to Himself, will never let you go away from Him again. Whatever your condition, if you trust your soul to Jesus, you shall be saved, and saved forever—

***“Once in Christ, in Christ forever—
Nothing from His love can sever.”***

"But what if we fall into great sin?" asks one. You shall not abide in great sin. You shall be kept and preserved by that same power which has begun the good work, for it will surely carry it on even to the end.

Just two or three sentences and I have finished. I have been speaking about the devil throwing some down and tearing, or convulsing them when they are coming to Christ. Are there any of you who do not know anything about it? Well, I am glad that you do not. If you come to Christ without being thrown down and convulsed I am glad of it. I have endeavored to help those that are terribly tormented—but if you are not so tried, do not wish to be! There were here, this morning, two or three of the good fish-people from Newhaven, and when I saw them in their picturesque costumes they reminded me of a story that I heard about an old fishwife who used to live near Edinburgh. A young man visited her and began speaking to her about her soul. She was going out and she took up her great load of fish to carry on her back, much more than most men would like to carry.

The young man said to her, "Well, you have got a great burden there, good woman. Did you ever feel a spiritual burden?" She put down her load and said, "You mean that burden which John Bunyan speaks about in the Pilgrim's Progress, do you not?" "Yes," he said. "Well," she said, "I felt that burden before you were born and I got rid of it, too! But I did not go exactly the same way to work that John Bunyan's pilgrim did." Our young friend thought that she could not be up to the mark to talk so, for he fancied that John Bunyan could not make a mistake. "Well," she said, "John Bunyan says that Evangelist pointed the man with the burden on his back to the wicket gate and when he could not see the gate, Evangelist said, 'Do you see that light?' And he looked till he thought he saw some-

thing like it. 'You are to run that way—the way of that light and that wicket gate.'

"Why," she said, "that was not the right direction to give a poor burdened soul! Much good he got out of it, for he had not gone far before he fell into the Slough of Despond, up to his neck in the mire, and was almost swallowed up! Evangelist ought to have said, 'Do you see that Cross? Do not run an inch, but stand where you are and look to that—and as you look, your burden will be gone!' I looked to the Cross at once and lost my load." "What!" said the young man, "did you never go through the Slough of Despond?" "Yes," she said, "I have been through it far too many times. But let me tell you, young Friend, that it is a deal easier to go through the Slough of Despond with your burden off than it is with your burden on!"

There is much blessed truth in this story! Do not any of you be saying to yourselves, "How I wish I could get into the Slough of Despond!" If you say that, you *will* get in and then you will say, "How I wish I could get *out* of the Slough of Despond!" I have met with persons who fear that they never were saved because they have not experienced much terror. I meet with others who say that they cannot be saved because they experience too much terror! There is no pleasing people. Oh that they would look to Jesus whether or no! After I was preaching Jesus Christ from this platform once, there came a man into the vestry who said to me, "Blessed be God that I entered this Tabernacle. I come from Canada, Sir. My father, before he found true religion had to be locked up in a lunatic asylum, and I always thought that I must undergo a similar terror before I could be saved." I said, "No, no, my dear Friend, you are to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you do that, despair or no despair, you are a saved man."

This Gospel I preach to you! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust Him quietly, humbly, simply, immediately. Trust Him to make you a holy man—to deliver you from the power of the devil and the power of sin—and He will do it! I will be bound for Him that He will keep His Word. Jesus is Truth, itself, and never breaks His Word. He never boasts that He can do what He cannot do! He has gone into Heaven and He is, therefore, "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Only trust Him! Trust Him to overcome the evil you have to fight! You will conquer it, Man, if you will only trust Jesus! Woman, there is hope for you if you will trust the wounded, bleeding, dying, risen, living Savior! He will battle for you and you shall get the victory!

God bless you, everyone, and may we all meet in Heaven to praise the Son of God forever and ever! Amen.

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WHY MEN REJECT CHRIST

NO. 2463

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 3, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 11, 1886.**

***“And sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.”
Luke 9:52, 53.***

YOU hardly need that I should explain this action of the Samaritans. Probably our Savior's nearest road to Jerusalem lay through Samaria and He did not avoid that district, as many Jews did who went a long way around rather than pass through that unfriendly country. The Lord Jesus was so gentle, so meek and lowly, so much more a Man than a Jew, that it is somewhat strange that the Samaritans did not make an exception in His favor and treat Him courteously when He passed through their land. He, Himself, was quite free from all bigotry and was glad to mingle with all sorts of men, whatever their nationality. He sent His messengers to the Samaritan village to say that Jesus of Nazareth was passing through and wished to lodge there for a night—but they refused Him because it appeared to be His intention to go up to Jerusalem to keep the feast and it was their opinion that the feast ought to be kept in their own temple on their own mountain, Gerizim. Therefore, because the Christ was going up to the Jewish feast at Jerusalem, they would not receive Him. They were guilty of gross inhospitality in thus refusing to entertain a servant of God, for He was that in the esteem of many of them. And they were also guilty of still greater inhospitality which they did not understand, for they refused to receive the Son of God who, in human flesh, had come down to bless the sons of men!

I do not mean to say much about Samaritans in my discourse, for we have little or nothing to do with them, but I am going to use the text with reference to ourselves. I am sure that there is, here, a picture of many to whom I am now speaking.

I. First, I would remind you that the LORD JESUS CHRIST STILL SENDS MESSENGERS TO THE SONS OF MEN BEFORE HE COMES.

Before He comes, Himself, He sends His heralds. His own personal coming to the earth was heralded by a long line of Prophets and especially by John the Baptist. And when He had come into the world, He did not usually enter a place without giving some kind of notice to the inhabitants. He frequently sent before Him either evangelists, by two and two, to go into every place where He, Himself, would come, or else He commissioned certain messengers to give notice that the Christ of God was on His way to pay a visit of mercy. I believe that, nowadays, the Lord

Jesus Christ comes to many men in a very surprising manner. Before they are aware of it, His Grace steals into their hearts—He says to many what He said to Zacchaeus, “Make haste and come down, for today I must abide at your house.” He speaks out of Heaven to some as He did to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus. He has differing ways with different men, but often, and with the most of us, He sends His messenger before Him before He comes Himself.

The message that we who are Christ’s messengers have to bring is this—*we have to tell who He is* that has come among the sons of men, asking for entertainment in their hearts. Brothers and Sisters, it is God, Himself, the Lord of Glory, who has appeared in human flesh and has become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He has come in the fashion of a Man. He has lived and loved and labored here below. He has died, He has been buried, He has risen again, He has gone back into Glory and now, spiritually, He is present among us! Here is His own declaration, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” We preach not to you, a merely human teacher—we preach One who is certainly Human, but who is also Divine. We preach not, only a Teacher, but a *Savior* who offered Himself without spot to God that He might put away the sin of all who believe in Him. And now, in the message of the Gospel, He comes again into our midst, even He whom angels worship, who is His Father’s joy, the delight of His people, the hope of all who have a living hope, the pattern and the mirror of what His saints are yet to be! It is He of whom we speak—Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, who is also very God of very God!

As His messengers, we have further to say that *He is willing to come and dwell in men’s hearts*. The messengers who came to that Samaritan village proclaimed the good tidings, “The Christ is coming! The Christ is coming! He is willing to come and lodge with you.” I think the loungers at the gate were, at first, astonished that the great Miracle-Worker should come to *their* village, to the Samaritans with whom the Jews had no dealings! And they went in and said to the people, “Jesus, who healed the sick, and raised the dead, is willing to come and stay a night with us.” We tell you, dear Friends, that the Lord Jesus is willing to come to *you*, that He will be glad to find admission at the door of your hearts! It were good news if we could tell you that He would let you come to Him, but we tell you something better, that is—that He is willing to come to you! It were good news if we said, “If you entreat Him, if you beseech Him, if you constrain Him, He may, perhaps, come and stay an hour with you.” But instead, thereof, we can come and say, “Our Master bids us tell you that He is willing to be received by you and that to as many as receive Him, to them will He give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name!” Oh, what glad tidings for your sinful hearts that the pure Christ is willing to come and live in you! Oh, what good news for you guilty men that the pardoning Christ is willing to come and take a lodging within your spirits! Tell it to one another wherever you dwell. Tell the good news that Jesus comes, not to pass by, nor even to sojourn merely for a night, but to come and take possession of the heart forever!

These messengers of Christ were also *to tell the people to make ready for His coming*. According to our text, Jesus sent “messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him.” Make ready, then, for the coming of Christ into your hearts. “But,” you say, “we cannot entertain Him as such a King should be entertained.” It is true, Beloved, you cannot. But remember that this royal Guest asks nothing of you but that you give Him room to abide in your heart. The Master still says, as He did of old, “Where is the guest chamber?” He does not ask you to provide the fare for the feast, but only to prepare the guest chamber. He still says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Our great Melchizedek, when He comes to meet us, brings with Him the bread and the wine—the bread, His body—and the wine, His blood. He gives us food to eat that the world knows not. Whatever preparation you have to make is *not* a matter that is beyond your power!

I will tell you what to do to make ready for Christ—give Him a room that is *empty*. Drive out the sin that rules there, or rather, ask Him, *by His Grace*, to come and drive out His enemy and yours. If you are willing to have him driven out, Christ is both willing and able to drive him out. Say to the Lord, “Here is my heart, such as it is. It is all Yours.” If you really say that from your heart, you are ready for Him! Tell Him that you grieve over your sin, for repentance will make you ready for Christ. Tell Him that you are a lost sinner and that your sense of need has made you ready to be saved by Him. Tell Him that you are willing to be renewed by His Grace. Tell Him that you desire to be holy, that you wish to be cleansed in His precious blood—this is the kind of readiness which Christ wants! The best preparation for a feast is hunger—there is no sauce like it. Readiness for being clothed is to take off your rags. Readiness to be washed is to see, and lament, and abhor your filthiness! Readiness to receive alms is to take the place of a beggar and to confess how poor you are. So, you see, I have asked no hard thing of you when, as the messenger of my Lord, I tell you that the King, Himself, draws near, even the Incarnate God, and that He is willing to enter into your hearts—and that all the readiness that He asks of you is that you open the door to let Him in!

But, my Brothers and Sisters, *the messengers of God have come to some of you a great many times*. I wonder whether some of you can remember the first sermon that ever made you weep? Do you remember the first holy book that awakened your sleeping conscience? Can some of you unconverted people call to mind your mother’s tears and your father’s prayers for you? You will have, as it were, to swim through the river of your mother’s tears if you are resolved to go to Hell. Some of you will have to ride roughshod over your father’s entreaties before you will be able to reach Hell! You have been called many times. You have been invited again and again! Take heed lest, one day, even the Christ should say, “Because I have called and you refused and I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded, but you have set at nothing all My counsel,

and would have none of My reproof, I, also, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes.” The messengers of God and the messages of God are not to be trifled with! Sickness, losses, convictions of conscience and a thousand other things are messengers from the Most High! Let us not trifle with them any longer, but even now, as the Christ sends out His messengers, let us receive them gladly and say to them, “Tell your Master that we shall be glad if He will come to us.”

II. Now, secondly, it appears from the text that although Christ sends out messengers to announce His approach, THERE ARE SOME WHO WILL NOT RECEIVE HIM.

These Samaritans would not receive Him and alas, the people who will not receive Christ are still very many! One would be glad to preach until midnight to sinners who would receive the Savior—no exhaustion would we mind if we could but preach to people willing to welcome our Master! We cannot make it out why some of you do not receive Christ as your Savior. There is so much about you that is hopeful and good that we cannot understand why you refuse Him. There are such blessings attached to the reception of Christ—even eternal life hangs on it—that it puzzles us how you can bar your door against this blessed Friend of ours—yet so it is.

Let me put it to you, dear Friends—I would like to “buttonhole” you, to take you by the hand and to say to you, “*God has sent His Son to be the Messiah*, the Mediator between Himself and you—why do you deliberately turn away from Him? He sent that dear Son of His into the world to save sinners and, in order that He might save them, He died in unutterable pangs upon the Cross! Do you really refuse to be saved by the merits of that matchless death? Is it so that you will both tempt the justice of God and reject the mercy of God?” The plan of salvation cost God His darling Son! Do you mean, in indifference, to say that you care not what it cost? Will you fling the Atonement to the winds and have nothing to do with it? Well, then, what I ask of you is just this—to really make this decision with deliberation if you are resolved to be lost. But I am not half as much afraid of you who would thus reject Christ as I am of the many who will not even think of Him—who take up neither one position nor another—but who let the whole subject slip by with a neglect that is a thousand times more contemptuous towards Christ than even if they had thought it out and had decided not to believe it. O Sirs, do not, I pray you, neglect the Christ of God and refuse Him whom God has sent to save you!

But there are some who *never think about Christ at all*. The year rolls on with scarcely a thought of Him. Look on the vast mass of London’s population never going to any House of Prayer to hear about Jesus. There is but little reading of the blessed Book which tells us of Him! One might imagine that they regarded it as all old wives’ fables, or a dream from the “Arabian Nights.” Yet they do not go quite that length, for they have not thought enough about it even to say as much as that! What? Shall Christ die and yet you do not think His death worth a thought? Shall He, with His pierced hands, open the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers and will you not even look to see what He has done? Oh, how

shall I plead with you? Would God that I had voice and heart commensurate to so stern a labor as that of pleading with consciences that go to sleep and hearts that lie dead in the Presence of a bleeding Christ!

There are also, alas, many who, though they *do* think of Christ, yet *reject the plan of salvation by the great Substitute*. They cannot see it, they say—they mean that they will not have it! They do not care to be saved by the atoning Sacrifice—they would sooner trust in something else. Oh, dear Friends, I am sure that if you would work that problem out with a little care, you would soon come to a different resolve! I remember, when under deep conviction of my guilt, with a strong desire to be better and to have peace with God, I tried prayer. I tried Bible reading. I tried diligent attendance to the means of Grace. I tried a change in my manner of life. I tried everything I could think of, but I never could find peace and rest until I cast myself on Christ's atoning work and trusted Him to save me! Then did I enter into the peace of God and found a joy and rest of spirit which I would not barter for all the crowns of all the kings who ever lived! I entreat you to think much of the sufferings of our Lord and consider what they meant. And I should not wonder that you will, at length, fall in love with the great plan of redeeming mercy by which Christ was made to suffer in our place, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree! At any rate, do give a full and fair consideration to God's way of salvation. Make room for it in your heart. Be ready to entertain the Savior, at least go as far as this—weigh His claims, judge His doctrine, see whether there is not about His atoning Sacrifice something of promise which is not offered anywhere else.

Yet it would not be sufficient, even if I could bring you to think of Christ and to judge somewhat more favorably concerning Him. I long—oh, that I had power to work this miracle, but I have not—I long to open some sinner's heart to let the Savior in! I know who will be the man who will be the first to welcome Christ. He who has no righteousness of his own! He who longs to escape from the wrath to come. I think I hear him say, "Sir, you put a question to me and I will put one to you. You say, 'Will you open your heart for Christ to enter?' O Sir, that is not the question! My heart is ready enough to receive Him, but can I *hope* that He will come in?" Soul, there was never a heart, yet, that was willing to have Christ but Christ gave Himself to that heart! There is no question about *His* will—the question is about *your* will. He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Now, if I were struck dumb—if this throat were choked up, from which for so many years has pealed forth as with the sound of a trumpet the Gospel of Christ, I should like my last words to be, "Come to Christ just as you are!" Never was a soul repulsed that came to Him, though black as midnight, though guilty of enough crimes to condemn it to all eternity! Only come to Jesus! Be willing and obedient, and you shall have Christ, for it is written, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Lord make all of you willing this very hour!

III. But now, thirdly, CHRIST IS OFTEN REFUSED FOR THE MOST ABSURD REASONS.

The Samaritans did not receive Him because He was going up to Jerusalem—so that theirs was a *sectarian reason*. They were Samaritans and He was siding with the Jews. I think that sectarianism anywhere is an evil thing, but let no man ruin his soul for the sake of being a sectarian! If I were the strictest Churchman, I would rather go to Heaven through hearing the Gospel preached by a Dissenter than I would be lost in order to remain a staunch member of the Established Church! And if I were a Dissenter, I would sooner go hear the Gospel fully preached in the Church of England and find Christ, there, than I would go and sit down in my own conventicle and listen to a sort of semi-Unitarianism of modern thought. The first and chief thing for my soul's good is that I must have Christ and, for my part, I care not where I find Him! Whether it is in a barn or in a cathedral, He is the same Christ to me. I would meet Him on the mountain's brow if He bade me go there, but I would also meet Him on the surface of the lake if He said to me as He said to Peter, "Come." Anywhere with Jesus, all is well! But away from Jesus, all is ill. Let nobody, then, refuse to accept Jesus Christ because of sectarian bigotry.

Was it not also for a *proud reason* that the Samaritans rejected Jesus Christ? What right had these Samaritans to dictate to the Messiah where He should go? If He chose to go to Jerusalem, had He not a right to go where He pleased? How often we, also, try to dictate to Christ! We think that He ought to save us this way, or that way. O Sirs, be willing to let the sinner's Savior save the sinner in His own way! Never dictate to Him who is Lord of all, nor reject Him through foolish or wicked pride!

It was a *selfish reason*, too, that made these Samaritans refuse to receive Christ. Dog-in-the-manger-like, they would not accept Christ, themselves, but they did not want Him to go to Jerusalem. I have sometimes heard it said, "If this Gospel is preached to the scum of society, to the outcast and the low, I am not going to hear it." Ah, my fine gentleman, you will not have it, yourself, and you do not want others to have it. I would be glad to come to Christ side by side with the foulest harlot who ever rotted into infamy! I would be glad to come to Christ with a criminal who was standing with the rope about his neck, about to be hurled into eternity by the common hangman! I would be glad enough to come to Christ with the poorest, meanest beggar who ever picked foul crusts from off a dunghill! So long as I can but get to Christ, who am I that I should find fault with my company? Come, Sirs, away with your pride! Yes, My Lady, or My Lord, you must come to Christ like anybody else! He cares nothing for earthly stars and garters, or honors and titles. He died to save sinners, even the very chief of them—and you are not in a fit state to be saved until you come down to the level which you think, now, so much beneath you, but which is, indeed, the true level upon which we must stand if we are to close in with Christ. O pitiful Samaritan pride and selfishness, unwilling that Christ should go to the despised Jews, for the proud Samaritan thinks, "If He comes to me, He ought to go to nobody else."

I do not think there ever was a *good reason for not believing in Christ*. I believe that the most unreasonable things in all the world are doubt and unbelief—in fact, atheists and infidels are the most gullible persons living! The modern scientist who does not believe in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis and who pours scorn upon the New Testament, believes things infinitely more incredible than he can ever detect in Sacred Scripture! I do not hesitate to say that the whole theory of evolution is more monstrously false and foolish than any other ever conceived beneath high Heaven! It is a marvelous thing that men should be able to squeeze their minds into the belief of an absurdity which, in time to come, will be ridiculed to children in the schoolroom as an instance of the credulity of their ancestors. As one science, falsely so-called, has passed away, devoured by the next notion that men have adopted, so shall it be to the end of the chapter. He who will not believe God shall be the dupe of lies, but there is no good and valid reason why men should not accept the Christ.

You dear people who believe your Bibles and listen to the Gospel from week to week—yet who do not accept Christ as your Savior—are the most unreasonable of all people! If this Gospel is true, why do you not receive it? If Christ is the Savior of sinners, why do you not believe in Him? I could understand your casting your Bibles behind your backs and never coming to a House of Prayer again, however greatly I might lament such conduct, but I cannot understand the diligent hearer of the Word who commends and approves it all, yet never believes in Christ to the salvation of his soul! These Samaritans would not receive Christ and they gave as the silly reason for their rejection of Him that He was going to Jerusalem—and many who do not receive Christ must give equally unreasonable reasons for their unreasonable conduct!

IV. Now I must close by noticing that JESUS STILL ACTS VERY MUCH AS HE DID THEN.

First, *He does not send fire from Heaven to consume those who reject Him*. James and John came to their Master, when the Samaritans would not receive Him, and said to Him, “Lord, will You that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did?” Oh, dear! Well might the Master rebuke them, and say, “You know not what manner of spirit you are of.” But have not I seen men so eager to convert their fellow men that they would even bully them to Christ? There never yet was a man bullied to the Savior! Men do not believe in Christ through being threatened and coerced. Persecution is the devil’s work from beginning to end and it never succeeds and never will. The Savior gives us no permission to put it in action! He abhors it, for it is not at all according to His mind.

What, then, did the Master do? As He would not bring fire from Heaven upon the people who rejected Him, so also *He would not force Himself upon them*. Now, if you, my dear Hearer, do not accept Christ, you may not at once drop down dead—you may not find your house on fire when you get home or you may not become a beggar—that is not God’s way of dealing with those who reject Christ! I have heard of an im-

pious man who said, "If there is a God, let Him strike me dead." It was because He *is* God that He did not take the wicked man at his word! Why should He? It is not according to the nature of God to act after that fashion. While you are in this world, listening to God's terms of mercy and Grace, if you choose to receive Christ it shall be a blessed thing for you. But if you refuse Him, there is not one of us who would lay a finger upon you to harm you, or who would desire that you should suffer in your mind, your person, or your estate! Our Lord and Master would not treat you so and He will not force Himself upon you.

When these Samaritans would not receive Him, He did not say, "Come, John, James and Peter, we will burst open the village gates—we will enter their homes—we will claim the lodging to which we have a right." Oh, no! That was not His way of working! The Lord Jesus Christ must be served willingly if He is served at all. And He must be received cheerfully if He is received at all. In many cases those who received Christ when He was upon the earth received Him gladly, and that is the only reception which He desires. Forced Christianity would be no Christianity! One volunteer here is worth 10,000 pressed men! Indeed, Christ will have no pressed men—all His soldiers must be volunteers. There is a delightful pressure of His Grace, but that never violates the will of man, though it sweetly inclines that will towards Christ.

What *did* the Master do when these Samaritans rejected Him? *He went elsewhere.* We read that "they went to another village." I fancy that I can see the Master and His little band of disciples waiting outside that village gate as the sun is going down. The Samaritans ask, "Is He going to *Jerusalem*?" Yes, He is. Then they tell Him that He cannot enter, He may go away and they will not entertain Him. He says not a word. He utters no complaint, but He just goes quietly down the hill, the little band following at His heels, and He walks away until He knocks at the gate of another village where they lodge Him for the night. That is all that will happen if you reject Him—He will go somewhere else.

But when I say that is all that will happen, it is a very great, "all." It is a very dreadful, "all," for my Master never seems to me more terrible than in His gentleness. You have refused Him, so He is going away. No thunder peals to alarm you, no lightning dashes to destroy you. Only He is going away! There is more terror in that going away than there would be in the tempest! One day, my Hearer, if you continue to reject Jesus Christ, when you shall be in another world, you will have to read, written in letters of fire above your head, these words, "He came to you and you would not receive Him, so He went to another." In the parable of the wedding feast, they that were invited, with one voice, began to make excuses and the Master of the house, being angry, said to His servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." Is it not an amazing thing that, even when the Master was angry, He only did a *kind* thing to show His anger? And, dear Hearer, when Christ shall turn away from you because you refuse to receive Him, it will be only that He may turn somewhere else.

When Dr. Hawker was preaching, once, a learned man from London, who had listened to him, said, "I could not make heads or tails of the man's talk." Someone told the doctor what had been said. "Ah," he remarked, "I daresay the learned man could not understand the Truth of God I was preaching, but there were scores of old women in the aisles who could." So, if there are some who will not have Christ, there are plenty of others who will! If you who are rich, or learned, or great, will not have Him, He will give Himself away to the poorest, the lowest and the meanest who will accept Him—and they shall be in the bosom of their God at last, while you who were too proud to come to Him shall be cast away forever. O my dear Hearers, He stands before the door of your heart right now! He is gently knocking, not with a sledge hammer, but with His own pierced hand! Admit Him, admit Him, I beseech you! Admit Him at once! If not, it may be that He will never knock again. Probably He never again asked those Samaritans to welcome Him, but some other Samaritans did receive Him. He might reasonably have expected to be received by these villagers, but inasmuch as they said no to Him, He just turned His face from them and went away.

Shall He turn away from you like that, my Hearer? Shall He depart from you thus? What is your answer? "Yes," or "No"? Before you go out of this House, I beseech you to answer me, and I pray God to help you say, "Come in, my Lord, come in." May He grant it, for His name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 3:1-24.**

This is a very wonderful chapter because, while it teaches the doctrine of regeneration and the necessity of a great moral and spiritual change, it also reveals the doctrine of salvation by faith alone—a very wonderful combination which puzzles many who read what is recorded here. Many have been staggered by one or other of these great Truths of God, yet they evidently agree, for they are taught by the same unerring Teacher and they are preserved to us by the Spirit of God in the same chapter!

Verses 1, 2. *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him.* Nicodemus was very candid. He went as far as he could go. If he had not yet learned to believe in Christ as his Savior, he did, at least admit that Christ, upon the evidence of His miracles, was "a Teacher come from God." There is always hope of a man who is willing to see all that he can and who acknowledges what he can see. He will see "greater things than these" if he is willing to use his eyes.

3. *Jesus answered and said to him, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* Without a new birth, "he cannot see," he cannot comprehend, he cannot understand, he cannot know *anything* about "the Kingdom of God."

4. *Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?* Ah, me! Our blessed Master taught much by parables and parabolic teaching is the best of teaching, but you see how readily it can be misunderstood—how men can take the emblem in a carnal way and not understand its *spiritual* meaning. This is how the false doctrine of transubstantiation is taught. When Christ says of the bread, “This is My body,” the Romanists take His words *literally*, and so miss their *spiritual* meaning. It was in the same way that Nicodemus fell into error concerning Christ's teaching.

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* If the water here signifies *Baptism*—mark you, *if it does*—then, observe, that there is no entering into the Kingdom without it. I do not think that *Baptism* is here intended at all, but the purifying influence of the Word of God symbolized by water. We might read the verse, “Except a man is born of water, even of the Spirit, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” There is a great change of character necessary for entrance into the Kingdom—seeing it is one thing, *entering* into it is another matter—yet one cannot even see the Kingdom of God without being born again, or born from above.

6, 7. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said to you, You must be born again.* Nicodemus was well born, no doubt. Probably he was a pure Jew. Yet he must be born again. And you may have descended from a long line of saints—your parents may be in the Church of Christ and your parents' parents, too—but still the Truth of God remains, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” At its very best, it cannot rise above that which gave it birth, it is but flesh. “You must be born again.” There is no hope for you apart from the new birth from above! You cannot see and you cannot enter the Kingdom of God merely by your first birth. Birthright-membership is a great delusion, for, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” And only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

8. *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* It is a mystery. You can never fully understand it, but you can enjoy it. If you are born again, you will know what it is—but you can no more discover your second birth than your first birth except by its results and effects. May God give you to know what it is to be born again! There are many doctors of divinity and men of great learning who know nothing about this new birth. And there are many who are mere babes in Christ who nevertheless enjoy the fruit of this blessed regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

9, 10. *Nicodemus answered and said to Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said to him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?* These A B C Truths which are taught in the very first schoolbook used by Christ's scholars—“Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?”

11. *Verily, verily, I say to you, We speak that We do know, and testify that We have seen and you receive not Our witness.* This is true of all faithful ministers of the Gospel! We do not preach theories, we preach facts. We do not talk about speculations, we speak of a new birth through which we have, ourselves, passed. If there is no such thing, we are liars! But there *is* such a thing and this is our witness—"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." The fashion, nowadays, is to make statements upon religious matters with great caution, expecting to have them disputed. But we need exercise no caution when we state what we know to be true! We will be positive, we will utter our, "verily, verily," when we speak what is a matter of fact to our own consciences—"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and you receive not our witness."

12. *If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* Regeneration is a work that is worked here on earth and belongs to this present life. High as the mystery is, it lies but at the very threshold of the temple of Divine Truth—"If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" No doubt unbelief hides much of heavenly Truth from us, but if we begin to doubt the very elementary doctrines of our holy faith, how shall the great Master take us on and up to the higher science that He is ready to teach us?

13. *And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* This saying must have puzzled Nicodemus! He had, doubtless, read a great many riddles, but into the meaning of this riddle he could not enter. Yet, Beloved, any child of God, though he was converted only yesterday, may know what Jesus meant! Now observe that, as the first part of this chapter sets forth the need of a great and supernatural change, the latter part of the chapter shows us the door of mercy wide open and tells us that faith in Christ will save us.

14, 15. *And, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* There is no contradiction here to what we have been reading. He that believes in Christ receives the new birth, receives eternal life and thus, by *faith*, gets that which is essential to a sight and entrance into the Kingdom of God.

16-18. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned.* What a charming sentence! What comfort it ought to bring to the mind of every sinner who will now believe in Christ!

18. *But he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* "He that believes not is condemned already." If you have heard of Christ's salvation and you have not believed in Him, that is evidence enough of your condemnation! There is no need to prove your evil works. No need to fetch your diary

and turn over the record of your life. If you have not believed in Jesus Christ, it shows a natural lack of holiness, a lack of love to the loving God and, by that evidence you are condemned, already, because you have not believed in the name of the Son of God.

19. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* The dislike of Christ is caused by a love of sin. If men did not hug their sins, they would embrace the Savior.

20, 21. *For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are worked in God.* If you do not like self-examination, you can be sure that you are wrong. If you do not like reading heart-searching books, or listening to a faithful Gospel ministry, you can be sure that you are wrong. If you do not like that part of the Word of God which judges you and makes you tremble, you can be sure that you are wrong! The man in business who cannot bear to look at his books, most probably has good reason to be afraid of his books. He shuts them up because they would shut him up if he were to pay attention to them! O Sirs, there is no more damning sign of human's condition than his endeavor to avoid the light! Search and see, look and examine! Make sure work for eternity—whatever you trifle with, trifle not with your souls! Take other things on hearsay, if you please, but not your condition towards God. Let that be searched into with all earnestness and sincerity—and be not satisfied till the Truth of God has satisfied you.

22-24. *After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judea; and there He tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.* We ought to be thankful that God's ministers are not silenced in this age. May the Lord raise up, in these evil days, many a John the Baptist who shall faithfully declare his testimony concerning the Lamb of God!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—552, 491, 549.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
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FICKLE FOLLOWERS

NO. 2273

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1892.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 27, 1890.**

*“And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go you and preach the Kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow You; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.”
Luke 9:57-62.*

SOMETIMES nobody appeared to come to Christ. He preached, but no followers appeared as the result of His preaching. At another time, we see that many came and desired to be numbered with His disciples, but they were not all of the right kind. Luke has collected here three instances which I think are typical of many more of those who seemed to be true followers of Jesus, who, nevertheless, did not continue with Him and were not really converts. I think that these three are put together, here, for the comfort of those of us who preach the Gospel—that when we are disappointed, we may perceive that we are not worse off than our Master was—and that, when we think that we have brought men to conversion and find, after all, that they are not converted, we may not give up the work or be discouraged, but may say to ourselves, “It was always so. It was so with the Prince of Preachers. May we not reasonably expect that it will be so with us, also?”

Our Savior never refused anybody who came to Him and who ought to have been accepted by Him. His own words were, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” That is a true description of His dealing with men at all times. If they do but come sincerely and truly, He always welcomes them. On the other hand, He did not shovel them in indiscriminately—He did not gather them to Himself wholesale. He did not go about, as it were, soliciting their patronage, willing to take in anybody so long as he could swell the number of His followers. Oh, no! We have good evidence here that He knew how to shut the door as well as to open it. He knew as well how to warn the pretentious as to accept the penitent. He was ready for the sincere with open heart and open hands—but He was faithful to those who were self-deceived, or those who, through ignorance, professed

what was not really true. Now, we ought to be the same, dear Friends. We should always be anxious to receive all who will come to Christ. At the same time, we must exercise judgment and not put down everybody as converted simply because he says that he is, but we must judge, watch, try and test—lest we help self-deception—and come to be the servants of Satan by bolstering up the delusions of mistaken men and women!

One thing I do not like about these three people of whom I am going to speak to you tonight, and that is, that in the case of no one of them does there appear to be any sense of sin. There is nothing said about repentance, or about their feeling their deep need of a Savior. They are like many we know. With no tears in their eyes, strangers to a broken heart, they become religious mainly of themselves, and they become irreligious of themselves. What they gained themselves they lost themselves. But, where there is really a deep plowing work done, when the seed comes up, it lives. Where the foundation is dug deep, when the house is built, it stands. When there is stripping, there is afterwards real clothing. When there is a probing of the wound, the healing is a true healing and not a pretense. I regret, therefore, that there should be so many persons outside of my text who have not any repentance. They seem to jump into their religion as men do into their morning bath, and then jump out again just as quickly, converted by the dozen, and unconverted, one by one, till the dozen has melted away—not really converted—otherwise they would never be unconverted again!

I believe that we are going to have a great many converts. We are praying over them and praying for them—and we need to know what sort of men and women they ought to be. We need to know how to deal wisely with them in the name of our loving, tender, but faithful Savior. We shall learn from His treatment of those who came to *Him*, how we should deal with those that come to *us*.

Now, first, *there are some would-be followers of Christ who do not consider, as in the first case. Secondly, there are some would-be followers of Christ who do not put Christ first, as in the second case. And, thirdly, there are some would-be followers of Christ who still hanker after the world—and want to have Christ and the world, too. Neither of these three sets of followers will ever prove a comfort to us or a glory to God.*

I. First, THERE ARE SOME WOULD-BE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST WHO DO NOT CONSIDER. The first man, and he was a scribe, too, said, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” What that might mean—what that might involve—he did not ask and, therefore, did not know. He was sincere as far as he knew—but then he did not know much. Had he known more, he would have said less.

Like our Lord, we meet with many persons who are great at resolving! “I will. That I will. Solemnly, I declare that I will.” They are willing to make that declaration as publicly as you like—and stand up, or fall down—or do anything else to declare that they have resolved. I frequently hear persons exhorted to give their hearts to Christ, which is a very proper exhortation. But that is *not* the Gospel! Salvation comes from something that *Christ gives you*, not something that *you give* to Christ! The giving of your heart to Christ *follows* after the receiving from Christ of eternal life by faith. It is easy to work our friends up so that they say, “We will give our hearts to

Christ,” but they may never do it, after all. If, with broken heart and contrite sigh, they had confessed their guilt and had penitently cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” they might not have looked quite so well, but there would have been more hope for them. We cannot come to Christ unless Christ comes to us and gives us a broken heart and a contrite spirit! If there is no repentance, depend upon it that that faith which we *think* we have is not the faith that will save us! Give me Faith with tears in her eyes—I know her to be the true child of God. The faith that makes me feel my ruin, confess my sin and lay hold of eternal life because otherwise my merits will bring me to eternal death—this is the faith which saves! But some people are very great at resolving rather than repenting and believing.

These people show, generally, *very great confidence in themselves*. This man said, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” There is no prayer, “Lord, help me to follow You,” “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe,” “Leave me not, or I shall wander from You.” No, it is just this—“I have made up my mind to this, and I am a strong-minded person, and able to carry out what I determine. Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” That is our duty, but that duty we shall never attain apart from Divine help. “He that trusts in his own heart is”—what? A convert? No, “a fool.” And “a fool” is another name for a *sinner*. Go, write on water, and return tomorrow to read the phrase you have inscribed! And when you have done that, trust your own determinations! Go and say that you will pluck the moon out of her orbit, or stop the sun in his blaze at mid-day! And when you have done these things, then can you so control yourself as to be always faithful to your Lord without His help. I would have you deal far more in *confession* than in *resolving*. Much more in *believing* than in bearing testimony to anything you have done, yourself, or hope to do, yourself, or resolve to do, yourself! This first man is very big—he talks great swelling words and he feels that he can do what he says and, in the simplicity of his ignorant heart, he says—“Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.”

Do you not think that, perhaps, there was at the back of that declaration, *some secret idea that he would be a gainer by it?* May not this man have thought that Jesus Christ had come to set up a *temporal* kingdom and that, by following Him, he would get a high place in that new kingdom? If even Christ’s *at His left*, I cannot wonder if this half-disciple had some idea that he was going to be a great deal better off as to carnal things for being a follower of Christ!

Now, it may be that some here imagine that the Christian life is all pleasure and joy, that there will be no persecution to endure, no affliction to bear. It may be that you have imagined that the way to Heaven is by a grass path, rolled, every inch of it, and that when you say, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go,” you mean that you will follow Him through Jerusalem when everybody waves the palm branches and casts his garment in the way. Do you know anything about Gethsemane and the bloody sweat? About Gabbatha, and the cry, “Crucify Him!”? And about Golgotha, that scene of deadly woe? Will you follow Him there when the many turn aside? Will you witness there that He, alone, has the Living Word? You think it shall be all king’s weather with you if you go with Christ? Know you not that Christ leads us where the fiercest winds blow and

where the stormy blast pitilessly hurls the sleet into our faces, and where we must perish if we live on earthly comforts? The people of God are a *tried* people—but many fancy that it cannot be so—and so they say, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.”

Now, notice that *Christ undeceived this man in a very amazing way* by telling him, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.” He told that scribe that if he became His follower, he must share with Him, for the disciple is not above his Lord, nor the servant above his Master. What will you have to share if you follow Christ? You will have to follow a friendless Man without a home and often with no one to understand Him! If you take Him to be your Leader, you will have to travel over a rough road. Oh, may none of you ever profess Christianity for the sake of what you can get! I can assure you that, in these days, those who follow Christ for loaves and fishes will find the loaves very small and the fishes very full of bones!

The Savior meant this scribe to know, also, that, if he followed Him, not only would he gain no wealth by it, but he would get very little kindness as the result of it, for our Savior had no home of His own. There were kind friends, like those at Bethany, who often entertained Him, yet there were nights when the fox went to his lair, and the crow went to the woods, but the Savior had to tarry till His head was wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, for no man gave Him shelter. Christ says to this scribe, “You will be treated like that. You will lose many of your friends and those who are of your own household will become your enemies. Those who now admire you will abhor you—and those who now call you a fine fellow and are pleased to entertain you—will shut the door in your face! That is what you have to expect.” When this man heard that, his enthusiasm, I suppose, cooled down. He was like Mr. Pliable, when he tumbled into the Slough of Despond. He said the Celestial City might be a very fine place, but, if the way to it was so bad as *that*, anybody might have that city for himself—he should not go plodding through miry ways in order to get to it! Many a man, when he has found that there is a Cross as well as a crown, has foregone the crown because he could not bear the Cross.

Does anyone here say, “That was rather a hard method of our Lord, to tell this hopeful person that, and so discourage him”? Ah, dear Friend, *it was a very safe and proper method*. Our Lord wants not to gather to His army those who cannot be soldiers. If we cannot endure what lies before us, it is honestly better for us to turn back than to pretend to go forward. If we enlist a man who is not sincere at the first, we are doing him a serious injury. We are doing *ourselves* an injury—we are doing the whole cause of Christ a solemn injury before the eyes of men—for all they that go back, like dogs to their vomit, bring disgrace upon the good cause. All those who say that they are Christ’s and then go and live ungodly lives, stain the name of Christ! They do more injury through having made a profession than they would have been capable of doing if they had never made that profession.

Now, as the Church hastily counts up her numbers and says, “So many were converted,” the world has another register and counts up the apostates, the backsliders, the wanderers! And it is a serious blow struck at

the Crown and the Glory of Christ when the world can say, "Such-and-such a man bore Christ's name, but he acted like a servant of the devil." Hence our Lord was wise, as the great heart-searching Savior, to let this man know the worst side of religion, so that, if he did take up with it, he might know what the cost of it would be. And so would I say to everyone here—we want you to come, we want you to join the army of Christ, we want you to be followers of the Redeemer—but not unless you will first count the cost! We beg you not to take the name of Christ upon you unless you are truly His in your very soul!

Do not dare to be added to the Church of God, unless heart, soul, and spirit—your whole nature goes with your profession—and you become truly and really a follower of Christ. The enthusiastic often comfort a preacher, but they as often delude him. Let him be on his guard and try well, with searching Truths of God and with the untiring preaching of the whole Gospel to those who come to him, lest the great heap on the threshing floor should suddenly prove to be nothing but chaff, when God's great fan comes to blow upon it! We must keep the fan of the Gospel going, that the chaff may be divided from the wheat, for God would have us separate between the precious and the vile—and then shall we be as His mouth.

II. Now, secondly, THERE ARE SOME WOULD-BE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST WHO DO NOT PUT CHRIST FIRST.

The second case mentioned in this chapter is different from the first—"And He said unto another, Follow Me." This man was not a volunteer. The first man was—and he broke down in his preliminary examination. This man was, so to speak, a pressed man, impressed by the command of Christ, "Follow Me," and he broke down, too. Every true volunteer into the army of Christ is a pressed man. The Grace of God has pressed him in, but everyone who is impressed into the army of Christ is also a volunteer, for *he is made willing in the day of God's power*, so that, in the Kingdom of Christ, the pressed man and the volunteer are the same.

Still, there is a difference in this case. *This man had a distinct command from the Lord*—"Follow Me." That is a very solemn thing, to have a command from the Lord coming to the heart—and then to repel it! I would have you very cautious when you hear the Word of God preached, or when you read it. If, at any time, it comes to you with unusual power—if it seems to arrest you, to lay an iron hand upon your shoulder—if you feel it difficult to get away from it, I pray you, do not try to get away from it, for, if you do, you will add very greatly to your guilt. When Jesus, Himself, seems to say to you, "Follow Me," be not deaf to the Divine message! Close not your ears to the heavenly command! Have not some of you sat in these seats, sometimes, and felt that if you could but get home, if you could but be spared to get to your little chamber to bow your knees in prayer, you would be very different from what you had ever been, for a voice which seemed more than human was calling to you, and you could not but hear it? I beseech you, never trifle with such a message as that! O my Hearers, never trifle with the Truth of God at all, but especially with a Truth of God that has a voice which you are compelled to hear, for, if you do, it will go hard with you. This man was called by Christ, who said to him, "Follow Me."

The excuse which he made seemed very natural. “He said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” To bury his father might be a duty of nature, but to put that *first*—“Suffer me first”—indicated where his heart was. He was willing to be a Christian—that is to say, a Christian *and something else*—but the something else must be written in large capitals, and then, at the bottom, in very small type, “and a Christian.” Do you not know a great many people of that sort? Philosophical and Christian, but the Christian is quite the secondary consideration. They are like the man whose child was asked, “Is your father a Christian?” and who replied, “He is a Christian, I think. But he has not worked much at it lately.” There are many Christians of that sort nowadays. They work at their own business and they do a little, now and then, *between whiles*, in Christianity.

You are no Christian unless you put Christ first! He will not come into your heart to sit in the worst chair in the house! He will not come into your soul to be lodged in the attic! He must have the best room and the best seat in the room—He must be first—and not even father and mother may come before the Lord Jesus Christ! A young man says, “Yes, I must *first* become a journeyman or a master. I must first be married. I must see to the main chance.” Oh, the world is your main chance, is it? Then you are no follower of Christ! If Christ is not first with you, Christ is *nothing* to you. You cannot have Him to play with—you must surrender your whole life to Him and make Him the first and last object of your life’s ambition, if you have Him at all.

But with regard to what this man said about burying his father, if there were some force in it to our ears, the Savior who knew everything saw that *there was no force in it*, for He said, “There are other people to bury your father; but I have called upon you to come and follow Me now. Nobody else can do that for you, but the burial of your father can be done by others whom I have never called, and who know nothing about the Divine Life. Let the dead bury their dead.” You would be surprised if I were to read you the letters which I receive about different things which the writers say I ought to do and could do. Of course I ought to take a side in politics and appear at the next political meeting. Of course, I shall *not*, because there are plenty of dead people to bury dead politics—and they may go and do it! My business is to preach the Gospel. Someone then says, “You should take up social questions.” There are plenty of dead people to handle social questions—let them handle them if they like the work—my business is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Then it is said, “You ought to provide amusements for the people.” Ought I? There are plenty of fools to do that without my going into competition with them! My business is to preach the Gospel. When a man is once called by Christ he may say of a great many things, “Well, they are very proper. Very proper, indeed, for *others* to attend to. Dead people need burying and ought to be buried. It is a pity that there should be any difficulty about their being buried, but there are enough dead people to bury them. There are not enough living ones to preach the Gospel—there are not enough to follow Christ.” “Follow Me,” said Christ, “I must be first, and as for these other things, there are other people who can properly attend to them. It is more in their line. The dead know where the graves are.

The dead know all about funerals. Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead.”

After all, if he had gone home to bury his father, *it would have involved so much loss of time to him*. As a follower of Christ, during that time he would not have been attending to his work. If he could have gone home to the funeral and preached Christ to the mourners, it would have been all in his day's work. But as he would not have done so and did not *think* of doing so, he was only going simply to pay his debt of courtesy. He was losing so much time that ought to be given to his Master. And here was the worst result of this request—it produced unsound discipleship. Oh, what a mass we have of very questionable discipleship towards Christ—where somebody or *something* is put before Christ!

If you judge the man's life as it really is, you will find there is something that has a higher place in it than love to Christ. Judge him by his conversation—is Christ first? There is a deeper emotion in his heart caused by politics, it may be, than by religion. I know some of our Brothers and Sisters—I have no doubt they are most respectable people—but if there is a meeting upon some political question, they are all excitement! They shout, “Hurrah!” They nearly rave and act as if they ought to have a strait waistcoat on! But go to the Prayer Meeting and you will find that *there* they are as dull as death! When there is anything to be done for Christ, you cannot stir them—they seem to have gone into a soporific condition.

May God save us from that state of heart and life! If Christ is not first, He ought to be, and if we do not make Him first, above all other things put together, we do not know Him at all. You are no Christian if you are not altogether a Christian. If every part of you is not consecrated to Christ, I fear that no part of you is consecrated to Him! At all events, this faulty discipleship will never produce much fruit, or bring much glory to God. With this second class of would-be disciples, our Master was troubled, and so are we.

III. Now, thirdly, THERE ARE SOME WOULD-BE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST WHO STILL HANKER AFTER THE WORLD. “And another also said, Lord, I will follow You.” He is another volunteer—“but let me first.” Something must be done first by him, too. There would have been no hurt in what he said if he had not put in that word “first.” “Let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.” Well, now, the objection to this was that he did not intend to come right straight out from the world. He did not mean to come out then and there for Christ—but he must first go home and bid them farewell.

We know, first, that *this was a very dangerous procedure*, because the probability was that when he went home to bid them farewell, they would get to crying over him, so that it would take a month to say farewell. And then he would have to say farewell again and, perhaps, keep on saying it all the rest of his life! No man leaves sin little by little. No, there is nothing that will do as an escape from sin but total abstinence from it—to have done with it—and cut the connection altogether, by God's Grace, and that without taking a farewell of it. O young man, when you are thinking of leaving the world, be afraid of those farewells! They have been the ruin of hundreds of hopeful people. They have been almost persuaded, but they have gone to their old companions just to give them the last kiss and the

last shake of the hand—and we have not seen anything more of them! It is a dangerous operation—this trying to part with the world by degrees—gently, in a courteous way, little by little. You will never do it! No man becomes a follower of Christ in that mode. No, like Paul on the way to Damascus, turn at once from being an enemy into a friend of Christ and cry directly, “Who are You, Lord?” and, “What will You have me to do?” Only this is true conversion.

Next, I do not know that this young man was wrong in his proposition to go home, but, *he was going for the wrong purpose*. You notice that his objective was to “bid farewell” to all his friends. Suppose he had said, “Master, I will follow You, and to prove how I will follow You, I will go home and fetch my wife. I will go home and bring my children. I will go home and talk to my brother. I will go home and, in Your name and by Your power, I will bring my cousin to You”? But, no—he says that he is going to bid them “good-bye”—so he is not going with the heroic motive of winning them to Christ, like Matthew, when he called his old companions together—and Christ sat at the table and preached the Gospel to them. That was a grand bidding “good-bye” to the world! But this young man is simply going to bid them all farewell. Beloved, if you go to your old companions, go and tell them what the Lord has done for you!

It was a manifestation of indecision. He would follow Christ, but, well, that home of his, all those dear faces at home. Our Lord would not have forbidden his seeing them again at another time, but now, *first*, he asks to go and see them *first*, as if they would not be there another week, or another month! He must go there first. So we find plenty of people who are thus undecided. They would like to go to Heaven by that broad road along which the multitude of men are going down to Hell. “Yes, write my name in the Church rolls, but I shall keep it on the books of the club where I go and do a little bit of gambling, also. At any rate, just for a time. I must keep to my old companions for a while. I will be a Christian one of these days, but just now I have, well, the fact is, I have an engagement—I promised, and I must keep my promise.” Oh, there is no hope of men while they are like this, swinging between the two states! They must take the grand decisive step and say, “Now I have cut the cable that bound me to the world. I have done with these dangerous shores. I have put out to the broad deep sea of consecration to God, never to come back to these rocks again.”

This man’s request *showed a need of appreciation of Christ*. Do you not think so? Why, if Jesus said to any one of us who are in our right minds, “Follow Me,” should we not think it our highest honor, our greatest delight to be His followers? Yes, let Him lead us over the ground where we see His blood-stained footprints and we will glory in following Him wherever He goes! Oh, when we start back, and must have a little more sin, and a little more of the pleasures of worldly company, and a little more going out with others where we ought not to go, it shows that the root of the matter is not in us and we are not really brought to the Lord!

And, finally, *it showed great unfitness for the holy work*, for the Master said, “No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.” When the plowman starts with his plow, he keeps his eyes right in front, looking straight ahead. If his heart is not in

his work, every now and then, when he ought to be driving one way, he looks the other, and so he makes his plow boggle and get out of the rut. On he goes a little way and then looks back. He plows another bit and again looks back. He is a fine plowman! He will never win the gold medal in a plowing contest, I am sure! He is not fit to follow the plow at all—he is not up to his work. The plowman who is always looking here and there and everywhere, instead of looking straight ahead, is a most faulty plowman.

Now, we need for Christ, tonight, and every day and every night, men and women who will say, “I am for Christ, for Him to live, for Him to labor, for Him to suffer, for Him, if need be, to die! Straight ahead, turning neither to the right hand for this, that I may gain, nor to the left hand for fear of what I may lose, but straight ahead, by that Divine Grace which has come into my soul and made me feel that Christ is all my salvation, and all my desire—straight ahead I plow towards the end of the field.” God grant us to have many such converts! They only come by a simple faith in Christ, by having done with self, by having laid aside self-righteousness and sin, and coming straight away to Him who alone can make sinful men to be His true disciples.

If there is anything in this discourse that belongs to any of you, will you kindly take it home? If you do not like it, take it home all the more! And if you even get angry at the Truth of God that I have proclaimed and think that it is very personal, then hug it closely to you because it must be meant for you! That truth which pleases us is often stolen, but that Truth of God which grieves us is our own property! We had better keep it until it has grieved out of us the sin which makes us grieved at it! I do not ask you to put on any cap that does not fit you. But, if there is one that *does* fit, wear it, and go with it before the Throne of Grace and cry to God to set the wrong right.

May God bless these words of mine to the warning of many, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON **LUKE 9:37-62.**

Our Lord had been on the mountain and had been transfigured. When He came down, the first person that He met was the devil, with whom He had to come in contact. Whenever you or I get up on the mountaintop and have a very happy and delightful experience, we may expect to be in a battle before long. Our joy is, however, a *preparation* for the conflict—it nerves our spirit and makes us strong to meet the great enemy of our souls.

Verses 37-40. *And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met Him. And, behold, a man of the company cried out saying, Master, I beseech You, look upon my son: for he is my only child. And, lo, a spirit takes him, and he suddenly cries out; and it tears him that he foams again, and bruising him hardly departs from him. And I besought Your disciples to cast him out; and they could not. There they were, all baffled and defeated—and their enemies were looking*

at them with many a grin of contempt and scorn. Now comes the conquering Captain. He will turn the tide of battle when His troops are flying before the enemy! He comes and with a word He gathers them together again.

41. *And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring your son here.* If you have been praying for some dear one and the devil is not cast out, but the one for whom you have pleaded seems to be worse, rather than better— notwithstanding all your prayers and all your efforts—hear the Master, Himself, saying to you, tonight, as He said to the father of this child, “Bring your son here.”

42. *And as he was yet coming, the devil threw him down and convulsed him.* This is Satan’s usual way. Whenever he is about to be cast out of anyone, he grows angry. And if he cannot destroy, he will worry, just as a bad tenant will do injury to the house if he cannot any longer keep possession of it. “As he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and convulsed him.” Perhaps I speak to some, tonight, who are coming to Christ and yet have worse fears than ever. They are more troubled than ever they were before. Well, you are like this poor child—“As he was yet coming, the devil threw him down, and convulsed him.” It was, however, the devil’s last throw.

42. *And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.* How well it is done! How perfectly it is done, how easily it is done, how quickly it is done when Christ comes on the scene! Let us pray distinctly, tonight, for those who have been our failures up to now. They will not be Christ’s failures if in prayer and by faith we bring them to Him.

43. *And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.* But while they were amazed, many of them did not believe! It is one thing to be astonished. It is another thing to be humbled and to be led to simple faith in Christ. Never be content with any emotion but that which leads you to believe in Jesus for yourself.

43, 44. *But while they wondered, everyone, at all things which Jesus did, He said unto His disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men.* Just after the Transfiguration. Just after He had cast out the devil, He tells His disciples that “the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men.” The shadow of the Cross fell upon Christ long before the substance of the Cross was on His shoulder. He never forgot that the day would come when He must lay down His life as a ransom for many. And He never started back from it, either—

***“This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity ne’er withdrew.”***

45. *But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask Him of that saying.* They were not as yet spiritual enough to spy out His meaning. And when they had even a faint glimmering of it, it made them feel so sad, so cast down, that they did not dare to go and ask Him to explain it fully. Do you not think

that you and I may have, tonight, something pressing upon us that would all vanish if we but took it to Jesus? And yet we fear to ask Him! Let us drive away that fear and be familiar with our Lord, and tell Him everything that vexes our spirit.

46. *Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.* Sad, sad, sad, a hundred times sad! When He was talking of His death and of His being delivered into the hands of wicked men, His disciples were disputing as to who should be the greatest! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we may be guilty of quite as great an inconsistency! If, after Christ's death for us on the Cross, and after He has given up everything for us, and has washed us in His heart's blood—if we begin to want to be great and famous in the eyes of men, what wretches we are! May God deliver us from all ambition, from every kind of self-seeking and from any measure of pride! Otherwise, we are inconsistent in pretending to follow such a Master as the Lord Jesus.

47, 48. *And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by Him, and said unto them, Whoever shall receive this child in My name receives Me: and whoever shall receive Me, receives Him that sent Me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.* The way to rise in the ranks of Christ is to go down. Be willing to do the meanest thing and you are growing in Christ's esteem. When you are great, you are little. When you are nothing, then are you great. The Lord take away from us the black drops of pride that make us stand up on our dignity and think we must be somebody! Somebody? God will not use you as long as you are somebody! But when you are *nobody*, then will God greatly magnify you and use you in His Church.

49. *And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Your name; and we forbid him, because he follows not with us.* This man who was casting out demons was a Dissenter—he was not with the regular Church. He was doing good, but still, what right had he to do it? John said, "He follows not with us." He was outside the pale! And even John, with all his loving disposition, felt that he must blow that candle out! He had no right to shine in anything but the regular, orthodox candlestick. "We forbid him, because he follows not with us."

50. *And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.* Jesus also said that no man could do a miracle in His name and then lightly go and speak evil of Him, so that it was for the good of the cause to let the irregular practitioner go on with his business. Besides, if anybody can cast a devil out, by all means let him do it, for there is none too much of the power of casting out devils! And, remember, that these gentlemen who found fault could not cast the devil out themselves. They had been beaten in this very task and yet, when somebody else did it in the power of God, they began to complain and forbid them! That is surely being like the dog in the manger. God save us from falling into that spirit!

51. *And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up.* Is not that a wonderful expression? Christ is to die and to be buried. Ah, but this word comprehends everything, "that He should be received up." Think not of the gloom of death, especially concerning your dear friends who have lately fallen asleep. Think of their being received up! They did *seem* to go down—they went as low as the grave but they

could not go any lower! Thank God for His abounding mercy in receiving them up.

51. *He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. To go where He must He scourged, spit upon and crucified—“He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”*

52, 53. *And sent messengers before His face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. He used to be welcomed in Samaria, but now the evil spirit has come to the front again—“They did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem,” and they wished nobody to go up to the feast at Jerusalem, but desired all to stop and worship God with them on Mount Gerizim. So they would not receive Him.*

54, 55. *And when His disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, will you that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did? But He turned and rebuked them, and said, You know not what manner of spirit you are of. When you read the Old Testament, you will remember that the spirit of the Old Testament was in accordance with the Law of Moses. But you are not under the Law but under Grace, and the Spirit of Christ is another spirit, not the spirit of judgment, bringing down fire from Heaven, but the Spirit of mercy, bringing life and blessing from above!*

56. *For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. That was all Christ did by way of punishment of these Samaritans—He “went to another village.” Yet, gentle as was this treatment, it was really a very severe punishment—such a punishment as will fall on all of you who reject Christ. If you will not receive Him, He will go to somebody else! If you will not hear Him, somebody else will. And if, when you hear Him, you will not accept Him, it may be that you will not hear Him many more times—the Word of God may never again be spoken with any power to you—Christ will go to somebody else.*

57-62. *And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go you and preach the Kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow You; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—45, 636, 667.

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THE BROKEN COLUMN

NO. 403

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 4, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And another also said, Lord, I will follow You; but...”
Luke 9:61.***

WHEN you have walked through a cemetery you have frequently seen over a grave a broken column intended to memorialize the death of someone who was taken away in the prime of manhood—before his life had reached its prime. I shall take that picture of the broken column to represent my text. It is a broken text. You expected me to go on and to conclude the sentence—I have broken it off abruptly. That broken column shall also represent the broken resolutions of many who were once in a hopeful state. As if prepared to witness a good profession, they said, “Lord, I will follow You.” But when there came a heavy blow from the withering hand of sin the column was broken short with a “but.”

So let my text stand. I will not finish it. But so let not your determination stand. The Lord grant by His effectual grace that while you mourn with sincere grief the grave of many a fair resolve which never attained the maturity of true discipleship—cut off with the fatal “*but*” of indecision—you may now be quickened to newness of life. Thus you shall come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ. Thus, as a building fitly framed together and growing to completeness you shall be made meet for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

“Lord, I will follow You; but...” How remarkably does Scripture prove to us that the mental characteristics of mankind are the same now as in the Savior’s day! We occasionally hear stories of old skeletons being dug up which are greater in stature than men of these times. Some credit the story, some do not—for there are many who maintain that the physical conformation of man is at this day just what it always was. Certainly, however, there can be no dispute whatever among observant men as to the identity of the *inner nature* of man.

The Gospel of Christ may well be an unchanging Gospel for it is a remedy which has to deal with an unfaltering disease. The very same objections which were made to Christ in the days of His flesh are made to His Gospel now. The same effects are produced under the ministry of Christ’s servants in these modern times as were produced by His own ministry. The promised hopes which make glad the preacher’s heart are still blasted and withered by the same blights and the same mildews which of old withered and blasted the prospects of the ministry during our Lord’s own personal sojourn in the world.

Oh, what hundreds, no, what myriads of persons have we whose consciences are aroused, whose judgments are a little enlightened and yet they vacillate—they live and die unchanged. Like Reuben, “unstable as water, they do not excel.” They would follow Christ, *but* something lies in the way—they would join with Him in this generation *but* some difficulty suggests itself—they would enter the kingdom of Heaven *but* there is a lion in the street. They lie in the bed of the sluggard instead of rising up with vigor and striving to enter in at the strait gate.

May the Holy Spirit in all the plenitude of His power be with us this morning so that while I shall deal with the character indicated by the text, *He* may deal with the conscience of those assembled. I can merely attempt what He can effectually perform. I can but speak the words. It is for Him to draw the bow, fit the arrow to the string and send it home between the joints of the harness. May some who have been in the state of those described by the text be brought today to solemn consideration and to a serious decision through the Holy Spirit of God.

Three things we would labor to do. First of all, let us endeavor to *expose your excuses*, “Lord, I will follow You; but...” Secondly, I will try to *expose the ignorance which lies at the bottom of the objection* which you offer. Then thirdly, in the most solemn manner would I endeavor to bring before your mind’s eye, O you who vacillate like Felix, *your sin and your danger*—that your “*buts*” may now be put away—that your profession may be made with unfaltering tongue—that you may henceforth, in very deed, follow Christ wherever He goes.

I. First, then, TO EXPOSE YOUR OBJECTIONS.

I cannot tell, man by man, what may be the precise “but” that causes you to draw back. But perhaps, by giving a list, I may be directed to describe full many a case exactly and with precision. Some there are who say and seem very sincere in the utterance, “Lord, I would be a Christian, I would believe in You and take up Your Cross and follow You, but *my calling prevents it*. Such is my state of life that piety would be to me an impossibility. I must live and I cannot live by godliness, therefore I am to be excused for the present from following Christ.

“My position is such in trade that I am compelled by its practices to do many things which would be utterly inconsistent with the life of Christ in my soul. I know that I have been called to be where I am but it is a position which renders my salvation hopeless. If I were anything but what I am, or anywhere but where I am, I might follow Christ, but under existing circumstances, it is far beyond my power.” Let me answer that excuse of yours and show how stupid it is. Man, would you make God the author of sin? And yet if you are prepared to say that God has put you in the calling where you are and that that calling absolutely necessitates sin—do you not perceive that you make the sin to be God’s and not yours?

Are you prepared to be so blasphemous as that? Will you bring the tricks of your trade, your dishonesties and your sins and say, “Great God,

You have compelled me to do this”? Oh, methinks you cannot have so hardened your brow until it has become like flint. Surely you have some conscience of rectitude left and if you have, your conscience will respond to me when I say you know you are speaking a lie! God has not put you where you are compelled to sin—and if you have put yourself there—what ought you to do but to leave that place at once? Surely the necessity to sin, if it arises from your own choice, does but render your sin the more exceeding sinful.

“But,” you reply, “I will confess, then, that I have put myself there by choice.” Then I say again, if you have chosen so ill a trade that you cannot live by it honestly—in the fear of God and in obedience to His precepts—you have made an ill and wicked choice. At all hazards—for the salvation of your soul rests on it—give it up though it be the renouncing of every worldly prospect. Though wealth be all but in your grasp—unless you would grasp damnation and inherit everlasting wrath—you must renounce it and renounce it now.

Scarcely, however, can I credit that such is the fact—for in all callings—except they are in themselves positively unlawful—a man may serve God. Perhaps the most difficult post for a Christian to occupy is the army and yet have we not seen—and do we not see at this day—men of high and exemplary piety, men of undoubted and pre-eminent godliness who are still in the ranks and are soldiers of Christ? With the example of Colonel Gardner in years gone by—of Hedley Vicars and Havelock in these modern times—I will not, I dare not, take your excuse. Nor do I think your conscience would permit it.

But if while the temptations are strong and your strength is small, you really think that there you cannot serve God, then resign your commission, give it up. It were better for you to enter into life poor and penniless and without fame or honor, than having glory and pomp and wealth, to enter into Hell. After all, to come nearer to the point, is it your occupation at all? Is it true? Is it not *your sin* that has made your “but,” and not your calling? Be honest with yourself, Sir, I pray you. You say that your calling throws temptations in your way—is it so? Do not other men avoid the temptations and because they hate sin—being taught of God the Holy Spirit—are they not able, even in the midst of temptation, to keep themselves unspotted from the world?

It is, then, in your case not *necessity*, but *willfulness* that makes you continue impious and impenitent. Put the saddle on the right horse. Put it not where it should not be, take it home to yourself. There is no objection in the calling, unless, again I repeat it, it is an objectionable calling. The root and real cause of your hardness of heart against Christ is in *yourself* and *yourself* alone. You are willingly in love with sin—it is not in your calling in Providence.

“Yes, but,” says another, “if it is not in our calling, yet in my case it is my peculiar position in Providence. It is all very well for the minister—who

has not to mingle with daily life but can come up into his pulpit and pray and preach—to make little excuse for men. But I tell you, Sir, if you knew how I was situated, you would say that I am quite excusable in postponing the thoughts of God and of eternity. You do not know what it is to have an ungodly husband, or to live in a family where you cannot carry out your convictions without meeting with persecution so ferocious and so incessant that flesh and blood cannot endure it.”

“Besides,” says another, “I am just now in such a peculiar crisis, it may be I have got into it by my sin, but I feel I cannot get out of it without sin. If I were once out of it and could start again and stand upon a new footing, then I might follow Christ. But at the present time there are such things in the house where I live, such circumstances in my business—there are such peculiar trials in my family—that I think I am justified in saying, ‘Go your way this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.’”

Ah, but, my Friend, is this the truth? Let me put it to you in other words than you have stated it. You say if you follow Christ you will be persecuted. And does not the Word of God tell you the same? And is it not expressly said, “He that takes not up his cross and follows not after Me cannot be My disciple”? Did not the Apostle say, “He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution?” What? Is nature to be changed for *you*? Must the Apostles and the martyrs endure and suffer great things and are the little trials that you have to bear to be valid *excuses* for *you*?

No. By that host who waded through slaughter to a throne—the slaughter of themselves—no. By the men who wear the crowns which they have won on racks and stakes, I pray you, do not think that this shall be any excuse for you at God’s great day. Or if you think that it be an excuse that is valid for you now, remember—if you reject Christ you reject the crown. If you cannot bear the reproach of Christ, neither shall you have Christ’s riches. If you will not suffer with Him, neither shall you reign with Him. You say that your circumstances compel you to sin or else you would get into a world of trouble. And what do you mean by this but that you *prefer your own case* to the Master’s service?

You have made this your God. Your own emoluments, your own aggrandizement, your own rest and luxury. You have set these up in preference to the command of the God that made you. O Sir, do but see the thing in its true light! You have put yourself where the Israelites put the golden calf and you have bowed down and you have said, “These be your gods, O Israel!” To these you have offered your peace offerings. Oh, be not deceived! “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” “He that would save his life shall lose it, but he that will lose his life for Christ’s sake shall save it.”

Away, then, with these excuses about your circumstances! It is an idle one and will not endure the light of the Day of Judgment. “Yes,” says another, “I would follow Christ. I have often felt inclinations to do so. And I

have had some longings after better things—but the way of Christ is too rough for me. It demands that I should give up pleasures which I really love. I know if I should promise to give them up, I should go back to them very soon. I have tried, but they are too much for me. I did not think at one time that I was so thoroughly chained to them. But when I tried to break away I found the chains were not as I thought they were—of silk—but of iron—of triple steel.

“I cannot, Sir, I tell you plainly, I cannot. If to be saved requires me to give up my worldly amusements, I cannot do it.” Well, Sir, I reply, you have spoken with the candor of an honest man. But will you please understand the bargain a little more clearly? Remember, soul, when you say, “I cannot give up the world” you have said, “I cannot be saved. I cannot escape from Hell. I cannot be a partaker of the glories of Heaven.” You have preferred the dance to the entertainment of glory. You have preferred the reveling merriments at midnight to the eternal splendors of the Throne of God.

You have in cold blood—now mark it—you have in *cold blood* determined to sell your soul for a few hours of giddiness, a little season of mirth. Look it in the face and God help you to understand what you have done. If Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, what have you done? Lift up your eyes to Heaven, behold the golden harps and listen to the harmony of the glorious song and then say, “But I prefer your music, O earth, to Heaven.” Look yonder to the golden streets and the joy and the bliss which await the true believer—and then coolly write it down and say—“I have chosen the casino, I have preferred the house of sin to Heaven.”

Look up and behold the draughts of joy that await believers and then go to the tavern and sit down in the tap room and say, “I have preferred the enjoyments of intoxication to the mirth of eternity.” Come, I say Sir, do look it in the face—for this is what you have done and if—after weighing the two things in the scales together you find that the momentary enjoyments of the flesh are to be preferred to the eternal weight of glory which God has reserved for them that love Him—then choose them. But if it be nothing in comparison with eternity—if the flesh be but dross in comparison with the Spirit—if this world be emptiness when compared with the world to come, then reverse your foolish decision! May God the Holy Spirit make you wise.

“Oh,” says another, “but it is not *exactly* my pleasures. For I have found no pleasure in sin. It is some time since iniquity ministered pleasure to me. I have drunk the top of the cup. The froth I have already daintily sipped but now I have come to the dregs”—I know I am speaking to some men today, in this very state—“I have jaded myself,” says such-an-one “in the race of pleasure. I have exhausted my powers of enjoyment and yet though the wine yields no lusciousness to my taste, I drink—for I cannot

help it. And though lust affords me no longer any exquisite delight, still impelled as by some secret force, I am driven to it.

“From old habit it has become a *second nature* with me and I cannot—I have tried, I have tried awfully and solemnly, I cannot—I cannot break it off. I am like a man whose boat is taken up by the rapids. I have pulled against the stream with both my arms till the veins start like whip-cords on my brow. And the blood runs from my nose in agony of vigor and yet I cannot reverse the stream. Nor can I set my boat’s head against it. I can see the precipice. I can hear the roaring of the dashing water as it leaps the cascade. I am speeding on swifter and swifter and swifter, till my very blood boils with the tremendous vehemence of my crimes. I am speeding onward to my merited damnation.”

Ah, Man! Yours is a solemn “BUT,” indeed! If I thought you meant it all, I would rather speak to you words of encouragement than of warning. For remember this—when you are ready to perish God is ready to save. And when *your* power is gone, then the plaintive cry, “Lord, save, or I perish,” wrung from a despairing heart shall reach the ears of the Most High and He that delights in mercy shall stretch out His arm to save. There is hope, there is hope for you yet. What? is the boat’s bow already out of the water and does she seem to leap like a live thing into the midst of the spray?

O Eternal God, You can save him! You can come from above and take him out of the deep waters and pluck him out of the billows that are stronger than he. Yet say now, is this just as you have described it? I fear lest perhaps you make “cannot” only a substitute for “will not.” Do you not love those ways of the transgressor? Can you honestly say you loathe them? I do not believe you can. Remember the dreadful alternative when you say I cannot renounce these things and will not look to God to enable you to do it. You have said, “I cannot escape from the flames of Hell. I cannot be rescued from the wrath to come. I am damned.”

You have, in fact, announced your own doom. That awful sentence you have pronounced upon yourself. You have sat in judgment on your own soul—put on the black cap and read out your own sentence. You have put yourself upon the death wagon. You have adjusted the rope about your own neck and you are about to draw the bolt and be your own executioner. Oh, weigh your words and measure your acts—and wake up to a consciousness of what you are about to do. Do not take the leap in the dark. Look down the chasm first and gaze a moment at the jagged rocks beneath which soon you must lie a mangled corpse. Now, before you drink the cup, know the poison that is in the bottom of it.

Make sure of what you are doing and if you are determined that you will clasp your sins with the spasmodic and terrific grasp of a dying, drowning man—then grasp your sins and lose your soul. Then keep your sins and be damned! Hold fast to your iniquities and be dashed forever from the Presence of the Eternal One. If it is horrible to *hear*—how much more horrible to *do*? If it is dreadful to *speak*—how much more solemn to

perform in cold blood that which our lips have spoken? “But,” says another, “that is not my case. I can say I will follow Christ, but I am of such a volatile, changeable disposition that I do not think I ever shall fulfill my purpose. When I heard you preach a few Sabbaths ago, Sir, I went home to my chamber and I shut the door and I prayed.

“But, you know, some acquaintance called. He took me away and soon every good thought was gone. Often have I sat shivering in the pew while the Word of God has been quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword—piercing to the dividing asunder of my joints and marrow. It has been a discerner of the thoughts and intents of my heart—but the world comes in again. And even though I seem sometimes as if I were almost a saint—then again the next day I am almost a fiend. Sometimes I think I could do anything for Christ and the next day I do everything for the world. I promise, but I do not perform. I vow and break my vows.

“I am like the smoke from the chimney—soon blown away and my good resolutions are like a morning cloud. They are there but for the morning and soon they are gone.” Well, certainly you have described a case which is too frequent. But will you allow me to put that also in a true and Scriptural light? Soul, do you know you have played with Heaven? You have made a game of eternity. You are like those men in the parable of whom it is said “they made light of it.” You have thought that the things of this world are more engrossing to you than the things of the world to come.

You are perhaps less excusable than any other—for you know right and do it not. You see your sin and yet you cling to it. You perceive your ruin and yet you go onwards towards it. You have had wooings of love. You have had warnings of mercy and yet you have shaken all these off. Oh remember that text, “He that being often reproved hardens his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.” “Because I have called,” says God, “and you refused, I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded. But you have set at nothing all My counsel and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes.”

You may perhaps soon be given up to a seared conscience. The Word may be powerless upon you. You may become hardened and desperate. Ah, the devils in Hell are not in a more hopeless condition than you may be.

I have thus gone through the most prominent excuses which men make for scattering from themselves those good thoughts which sometimes seek to get possession of their hearts. “I will follow you Lord, *but...*” I cannot, of course, point out the distinct persons in this large assembly who are in this condition. That there are such is certain. I pray God the Holy Spirit to find them out and make them judge themselves that they be not judged.

II. I shall now come to the second part of my discourse. May the Lord be our helper. Soul, you who say, “I will follow Christ, *but...*” I now come to EXPOSE YOUR IGNORANCE AND THE ILL STATE OF YOUR HEART.

Soul, you have as yet no true idea of what sin is. God the Holy Spirit has never opened your eyes to see what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God or else there would be no “buts.” Picture a man who has lost his way, who has sunk into a slough. The waters and the mire are come up to his very throat. He is about to sink in it when some bright spirit comes, stepping over the treacherous bog and holds out his hand to him. That man, if he knows where he is, if he knows his uncomfortable and desperate state, will put out his hand at once.

You will not find him hesitating with “but,” and “of,” and “perhaps.” He feels that he is plunged into the ditch and wants out of it. And *you* apparently are still in the wilderness of your natural state. You have not yet discovered what a fool might see—though a wayfaring man—that sin is a tremendous evil—that your sin is all destructive and will yet swallow you up and utterly destroy your soul. I know that when God the Holy Spirit tells me to see the blackness of sin I do not need any very great pressing to be willing to be washed. My only question was, “Would Christ wash me?” Ask any poor penitent sinner that knows what the burden of sin is, whether he will have it taken off his shoulders and he will not say, “I would have it taken off; but...” No, he will need but the very mention of the removal of his load. “Lord,” says he, “do but take it away from me—do but take it away and I am well content.”

Again—Soul, it seems plain to me that you have never yet been taught by the Holy Spirit what is your state of condemnation. You have never yet learned that the wrath of God abides on you. So long as you are out of Christ you are under a curse. If that word “*condemnation*” had once been rung in your ears, you would have no *ifs* and *buts*. When a man’s house is on fire and he stands at the fire escape and his hair begins to be crisp with the hot tongues of fire that scorch his cheeks, he has no “buts” about it—but down the escape he goes at once. When Lot began to see the fiery shower coming down from Heaven he had no “buts” about making the best of his way out of the city and escaping to the mountains.

And you. O may God the Holy Spirit show to you, Sinner, where you are today! Oh that He would make you know that your sentence is pronounced, that God’s messengers are out after you to take you to prison. Then you will leave off your “buts.” You will say, “Lord, what would You have me to do?” And be it what it may, your soul will make no hesitation about it. Surely, methinks you cannot have felt the danger you are in of daily destruction. If you have not felt that, I do not think the Spirit of God has ever come into your soul after a real and saving fashion. You have no proof that you are one of Christ’s unless you have felt the danger of your natural state.

Do you see there?—there is a scaffold raised. A man is brought out to execution—there is the block and here stands the headsman with his sharp gleaming axe, gleaming in the morning sun. The man has just laid his neck upon the block in the little hollow place shaped out for it. There

he lies and the headsman has just lifted up the axe to cleave his head from his body As that man lies there, if a messenger should come from the king and say, "Here is a pardon, will you accept it?" Do you believe he would say, "I will accept it, *but...*"? No, springing up from what he thought would be his last resting place, he would say, "I thank his majesty for his abundant grace and cheerfully do I rejoice in accepting it."

You cannot have known where you are, or else "but" would be impossible to you. Such is your state, remember, whether you know it or not—you put your neck upon the block of insensibility, but the axe of Justice is ready to smite you down to Hell. The Lord help you to see your state and put the "buts" away from you.

It seems to me, too, that you are ignorant altogether of what the wrath of God must be in the world to come. Oh, could I take you to that place where hope has ever been a stranger—if you could put your ear a moment to the gratings of those gloomy dungeons of which despair is the horrid warder—if I could make you listen to the sighs, the useless regrets and the vain prayers of those who are cast away—you would come back affrighted and alarmed. And I am sure your "buts" would have been driven out of you. You would say, "Great God, if You will but save me from Your wrath, do what You will with me. I will make no conditions. I will offer You no objections.

"If I must cut off my right arm, or pluck out my right eye, be it so. If from this place of woe You will but save me. Oh, from this fire that never can be quenched. From this worm of endless fires which can never die, great God deliver me! If rough be the means and unpleasant to the flesh, yet grant me but this one request—save me, O God—save me from going down into the pit!" If a soul were just sinking to Hell and God could send some bright angel to pluck it from the flames just as it entered there, can you imagine its being so mad as to say, "I would be plucked as a brand from the burning, *but...*"? No, no. Glad to embrace the messenger of mercy, it would rejoice to fly from Hell to Heaven.

Again—Sinner it seems clear to me, inasmuch as you say, "but," that you can have no idea of the glory of the Person of Christ. I see you sitting down in your misery—in the bare uncomfortable cottage of your natural estate—yourself naked and filthy, with your hair matted over your eyes. Behold a bright chariot stops at your door, the sound of music is heard and the King Himself, stepping down from the chariot of His glory comes in. And He says, "Sinner, poor, hopeless, weak, miserable sinner, look unto Me and be you saved. The chariot of My mercy awaits you. Come you with Me., My chariot is paved with love for such as you are. Come with Me and I will bear you to My splendors away from your degradation and your woe."

You sit there and you will not look at Him, for if you did look, you must love Him. You could not behold His face, you could not see the mercy that is written there, the pity that trembles in His eye, the power that is in His

arm. But you would say at once, “Jesus, You have overcome my heart, Your gracious beauty is more than a match for me—

**“Dissolved by Your goodness I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”**

Shall I say more? Yet this once again I will admonish you. O you procrastinating, objecting Sinner! You have never known what Heaven is, or else you would never have a “but.” If you and I could peep but for an instant within the pearly gates. If we could listen to that seraphic song—could behold the joy which flows and overflows the bosoms of the blessed—could you but spell Heaven—not in letters but in feelings. Could you wear its crown a moment, or be girt about with its pure white garments, you would say, “If I must go through Hell to reach Heaven, I would cheerfully do it. What are you, riches? You are bubbles. What are you, poms? You are driveling emptinesses.

“What are you, pleasures? You are mocking, painted witcheries. What are you, pains? You are joys. What are you, sorrows? You are but bliss. What are you, tribulations? You are lighter than feathers when I compare you with this exceeding and eternal weight of glory! If we could have but a glimpse of Heaven—but a shadow of an idea of what is the eternal rest of God’s people—we should be prepared to endure all things, to give up all things, to bear all things, if we might but be partakers of the promised reward. Your “buts” betray your ignorance. Your ignorance of self, ignorance of sin, ignorance of condemnation, ignorance of the punishment, ignorance of the Savior’s Person and ignorance of the Heaven to which He promises His people.

III. Now, I have my last work to do and that would I do briefly. Oh, may Strength superior to mine come now and tug and strive and wrestle with your hearts! May the Spirit of God apply the words which I shall now use! “Lord, I will follow You; but...” Sinner, sinner, let me SHOW YOU YOUR SIN. When you said, “But,” you did contradict yourself. The meaning of that rightly read is this, “Lord, I will *not* follow you.” That “but” of yours puts the negative on all the profession that went before it. I wish, my Hearers, that this morning you would either be led by grace to say, “I will believe,” or else were permitted honestly to see the depravity and desperate hardness of your own hearts so as to say, “I will *not* believe in Christ.”

It is because so many of you are neither this nor that but halting between two opinions, that you are the hardest characters to deal with. Sinners who reject Christ altogether willfully are like flints. When the hammer of the Word comes against them the flint gives forth the precious spark and flies to atoms. But you are like a mass of wax molded one day into one shape and molded the next day into another. I know a gentleman of considerable position in the world, who, after having been with me some little time, said, “Now that you are going away I shall be just what I was before.” For he had wept under the Word. He compared himself, he said, to a gutta-percha doll. He had got out of his old shape for a little while—but he would go back to what he was before.

And how many of you there are of this kind. You will not say, "I will not have Christ," you will not say, "I will not think of these things." You dare not say, "I disbelieve the Bible," or, "I think there is no God and no hereafter." But you say, "No doubt it is true, I'll think of it by-and-by." You never will, Sinner, you never will. You will go on from day to day harping that till your last day shall come—and you will be found then where you are now—unless sovereign grace prevent it. I could have more hope for you if you would say at once, "I love not God, I love not Christ, I fear Him not, I desire not His salvation," for then methinks you would get an idea of what you are and God the Spirit might bless it to you.

Let me show you again your sin in another respect. How great has been your pride! When Christ bids you believe on Him, take up His Cross and follow Him, He tells you to do the best thing you can do and then you set up your judgment in contradiction to Him. You say, "But." What? Is Christ to mend His Gospel because of your whims? What? Is the plan of salvation to be cut and shaped to suit you? Does not Christ know what is best for you better than you do yourself? Will you snatch from His hand the balance and the rod, rejudge His judgment and dictate to God, the Judge of all the earth?

And yet this is exactly what you attempt to do. You set up your throne in rivalry to the Throne of Grace and insist upon it that there is more wisdom in being a sinner than in being a believer—that there is more happiness to be found apart from God than there is with Him. You make God a hard Master, if not indeed call Him a liar to His face. Oh, you know not what is the quintessence of iniquity which lies within those words so easily spoken, but which will be so hard to get rid of on a dying bed—"I will follow You; but..."

I close when I have just, in a moment or so only, described your danger. Soul, you are quieting yourself and saying, "Ah, it will be well with me at the last. For I intend to be better by-and-bye." Soul, Soul, think how many have died while they have been speaking like that. There were put into the grave, during the past week, hundreds of persons, no doubt, who were utterly careless. But there were also scores who were not careless and who had often been impressed and yet they said "But, but, but," and promised better things. But death came in and their better things came not.

And then, remember how many have been damned while they have been saying "But." They said they would repent, meanwhile they died. They said they would believe, meanwhile in Hell they lifted up their eyes being in torments. They meant what they said, but inasmuch as they did it not they came where their resolutions would be changed into remorse and their fancied hopes turned into real despair. On such a subject as this I could wish Baxter were the preacher and that I were the hearer. As I look around you, though there are full many who can read their title clear

to mansions in the skies, yet along these pews what a considerable proportion there is of my Hearers who are only deceiving their own selves!

Well, Sinners, I will make the road to Hell as hard for you as I can. If you will be lost, I will put up many a chain and many a bar and shut many a gate across your way. If you will listen to my voice, God helping me, you shall find it a hard way—that way of transgressors. You shall find it a hard thing to run counter to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. But why will you die, O house of Israel, why will you die? Where is your reason fled? Have beasts become men and men become beasts? “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib,” but you know not.

What? Are you like the silly sheep that goes willingly to his slaughter? Are the swallows and cranes more wise than you? For they know the senses and they judge the times—but you know not that your summer is almost over—that your leaves are falling in the autumn of your life and that your dreary winter of despair and of hopelessness is drawing near. Souls, are these things fancies? If so, sleep while I preach of them. Are they dreams? Do I bring out these doctrines but as bugbears to alarm you as if you were some children in a nursery?

No. As God is true, are not these the most solemn realities that ever rested on the lip of man or moved the heart of hearer? Then why is it, why is it, why is it that you make light of these things still? Why is it that you will go your way today as you did before? Why will you say, “Well, the preacher has warned me faithfully and I will think of it, but...”? “I was invited and I will consider, but... I did hear the warning, but...”? Ah, Souls, while you shall be saying, “But,” there shall be another “But” go forth and that shall be, “But cut him down, why cumpers he the ground?”

Wake, Vengeance, wake! The sinner sleeps. Pluck out your sword, O Justice! Let it not rest in its scabbard, come forth! No, no! Oh come *not* forth devouring sword! Oh, come *not* forth! O Justice, be still! O Vengeance, put away your sword and Mercy, reign still!

“Today if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation,” but if you harden your hearts, remember He will swear in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest. Oh, Spirit of God, turn the sinner, for without You he will not turn. Our voice shall miss its end and he will not come to Christ. Hear my cry, O God, for Jesus’ sake!

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WHY MAY I REJOICE?

NO. 1321

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 29, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven.”
Luke 10:20.***

You will remember that last Lord's-Day we saw our Lord correcting a very natural *grief* and supplying its place by a more necessary sorrow, as He said to the women, “Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.” [See No. 1320—“*Why Should I Weep?*”] Now, this morning we shall see Him correcting a very natural *joy* and directing its gladness into a more elevated channel. “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven.” If we commit ourselves to Him, He will guide us aright in all things and teach us to sanctify, alike, our grief and our gladness.

We shall commence our discourse by saying that our Lord did not blame or upbraid the 70 for rejoicing that the devils were subject to them. It would have been a very strange thing if they were not joyous on the occasion of so great a success. They had been sent forth upon their Lord's errand. They had gone forward unhesitatingly in His name, girded with His strength. And His power had been revealed so that His name had been glorified—should they not rejoice? It was the Kingdom of God which they had proclaimed—should they not be joyful? It was their Lord's enemy, as well as their own, who had “fallen like lightning from Heaven”—should they not exult? It was not likely, therefore, that the Lord Jesus was angry at their joy when they returned, saying, “Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us through Your name.”

We must read our Lord's words according to the manner of Oriental speech. The peculiar idiom of our Savior's speech often makes Him appear to be actually forbidding what He only places in a secondary place. He did not mean, in the present instance, to censure their joy in their success, but only to make it *subordinate* to another rejoicing and to prevent its growing to excess. Some have thought that they detected in the 70 too much personal exultation, if not an almost childish triumph in the success which they had achieved. I must confess I see small traces of such a feeling in their report to their Master. Our Lord Himself evidently coincided with the truth of their report, for He, also, said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven.”

I can hardly think that He could have seen that sight without joy and, therefore, in some measure, He shared in the feelings of His servants. Had He observed in these Brothers that excess of childish exultation and vain-glory which is supposed, I think He would hardly have gone on to invest

such novices with yet more power—but yet, He did so, for we read in the 19th verse—“Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” Had they been intoxicated with a sort of childish glee, the wisdom of our Lord, as Commander in that Crusade, would have led Him to say to them, “I had many things to have given unto you, but you cannot bear them now. I see already that you are intoxicated with your present victories and, therefore, I must withhold from you the extraordinary gifts of My kingdom till you are better prepared to receive them with humility and to use them with wisdom.”

Such prudent conduct would have been in accordance with the usual proceedings of our wise Teacher. But He saw no such excessive exultation. Whatever He might fear as likely to occur, by-and-by, He saw nothing, as yet, to blame in them and so He went on to say, “therefore I give you power over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” We cannot understand Him to be condemning their rejoicing over the fall of devils, for He says, “Rejoice rather,” and this almost implies that you may rejoice in the first subject of joy in some degree. “Notwithstanding,” He says, “in this rejoice not; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven.” The one is forbidden only in comparison with the other. We may rejoice that God blesses our labors, but still, it must be a far less prominent joy than that which springs out of our personal interest in the salvation of God! Church members may be glad when they see a great revival and their numbers largely increased. But, at such times it is *doubly* necessary to look to vital godliness and personal religion or the joy may be turned into mourning.

Now, my Brothers, taking the incident as it will apply to ourselves, there may be some of you, here present, to whom God has given many gifts for use in the kingdom of Heaven. He may also have given you influence in His Church and power among men of the world. And, moreover, your gifts and your power have not been used in vain, they have been made useful in many ways so that your course has been one of honor and success. The kingdom of God has come near to many through you and the great enemy’s kingdom has suffered injury by your means. Because of all this, you are greatly cheered. Is this wrong? Ought you not to be full of joy? I say yes, assuredly, you are bound to be glad! We should all be grateful for gifts, grateful for influence, grateful for success—but a gratitude which is not attended with joy can scarcely be called gratitude at all!

Would you have gratitude lament the possession of the blessing for which she is grateful? There must be joy in the thing received or else one can hardly be imagined to be thankful! If gratitude for these things is a duty, then surely a measure of joy concerning them must also be a duty! You may rejoice that to you is this Grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And you may be glad that from you the Word of God has sounded forth throughout all the region in which you dwell. Thus far we go, but we must not exceed due bounds lest we become transgressors—this joy must be held within its own lines and never suffered to run riot. Let us pause and see how our Lord Jesus puts a re-

straining, “notwithstanding,” and a repressing negative upon this joy when He judges that it is in danger of passing due bounds.

And let us also note how He supplies the place of this joy by something higher and better when He says—“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven.” We shall dwell upon three things this morning. First, *the joy which needs moderating*—“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not.” Secondly, *the joy which needs exciting*—“Rather rejoice.” And then, thirdly, *the joy of the Lord in sympathy with this last joy*. Just read the first line of the 21st verse—“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit.” Our Lord could unite in this joy under certain aspects of it.

I. First, then, THE JOY WHICH NEEDS MODERATING. It is the joy of triumph over evil spirits, the joy of having preached the Gospel and worked wonders—in a word, the joy of gifts, power and success. This needs moderating, first, because *it is so apt to degenerate into pride*. The 70 were not proud, for they said, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us *through Your name*.” This was a very proper way of reporting results. They did not arrogate any measure of the success to themselves, but they ascribed it to the matchless, all-conquering name which they had used. So far, all was well.

But, my Brothers, the tendency of human nature is towards self-exaltation and so, by degrees, we come to emphasize the, “*to us*,” and we allow the, “*through Your name*” to be uttered softly, and yet more softly until it is only used as a matter of form—and we, in our hearts, ascribe the whole success to ourselves. If God shall bless any man with long-continued success in soul-winning, even though that is a higher achievement than the casting out of devils, there is an evil tendency in our corrupt nature which will tempt such a man to dream that in him there is some peculiar excellence or special virtue. He will say in his heart, “Lord, even great sinners and proud infidels have been turned to You by my preaching,” and he may, at the same time, forget that it was not his preaching, but the *name of Jesus*, which accomplished the notable deed.

We are nothing, however much God may have worked by us! All the glory is due unto the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, yet we are so base as to take credit to ourselves! Who among us can claim to have been perfectly free from this temptation? True, the Lord keeps His servants humble when He uses them, and if they abound in Grace they may safely abound in gifts, also. Saints may be safely trusted with abundant influence if they are abundantly under the influence of the Holy Spirit. But to be preserved when thus eminently honored is an exceedingly great favor! When we see a successful worker walking very humbly, we may say, “This is the finger of God.” Leave corrupt nature to itself and as a warm atmosphere soon causes dead flesh to become putrid, so will the ease and comfort of self-congratulation and prosperity speedily breed corruption in human nature! Therefore it is necessary that joy in gifts and success should be kept under due control and, if it is tolerated in a measure, as it may be, it must, nevertheless, not be indulged to any great extent lest evil consequences come to us. To here may it come, but no further, lest the

Lord behold us waxing exceedingly proud and put us aside from His work, altogether, and take unto Himself other instruments which will not attempt to rob Him of His Glory.

Again, this joy which needs to be moderated should be restrained by the reflection that *it is no evidence of Grace in the heart that we possess gifts, or that we are successful*. Talents are possessed even by wicked and slothful servants. Grace without talent will save, but talent without Grace will only increase our condemnation! “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” The highest conceivable gifts for Church work and the greatest influence in the Church are *worthless* apart from Divine Grace!

The possession of such powers may be accompanied by hypocrisy and falsehood—it was so in our Lord’s day. Judas worked miracles. Judas preached the Gospel. Judas was not only a member of the Church, but a trusted officer in it. Yet Judas went unto his own place, for he was a son of perdition. Our Lord tells us to expect many cases of graceless workers, for He says, “Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.”

Observe that this warning speaks not of a few, but of many! We shall not only see a Judas once in 18 centuries, but *many* of whom this shall be the case. Men have gone forth making use of the name of Jesus and God has honored the name though He has not accepted the men who used it. They have preached and the message has been true, and God has acknowledged the Truth—but the men have not been true and, consequently, they have been abhorred of the Lord. Good seed will grow even though it was scattered by a leprous hand. Let us beware, however, of speaking the Truth of God with lying lips. Let us beware, lest we be like Balaam, who had his eyes opened to see marvelous visions of the future and his tongue inspired to utter deep things, and yet he fell among the accursed because he ran greedily after a reward.

Do not rejoice, then, dear Brothers, because God blesses you in what you are doing, so that you see souls saved and yourself honored, for this might happen to one for whom the Lord has no regard. But rather rejoice in being really and truly one of the Lord’s own people, written in Heaven. Let us keep under our body and watch unto prayer, lest haply, after having preached to others, we, ourselves, should become castaways. It will be a dreadful thing to keep the door of the King’s great banquet hall and open it to others—and yet to perish with hunger!

Moreover, it is very unsafe to rejoice unduly in the work which we have done because *the work, after all, may not turn out to be all that it appears*. I do not know how much of real good the 70 had worked. There can scarcely have been very many converts, for otherwise the number of the names would have been greater when the disciples assembled in the up-

per room at Pentecost. We will not, however, judge the work of the seventy. But we do know this, that it is very easy for us to go forth and, for a time, to succeed so that it seems as if even the devils were subject to us. And yet there may be no true Word of God. Crowds may gather to listen. There may be manifestations of deep emotion. The number of the conversions put down on paper may be very great and yet there may be little or nothing in the whole matter worthy of real joy.

So it may be in other forms of service—in the Sunday school or in any other place, we may think we have succeeded and yet we may have only been building a baseless structure on sand which the next tide will carry away. We ought to remember that every man's work must be tested before long, "for the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." It is too early to begin to rejoice until the fire has passed over our lifework. The edifice is very lofty and apparently very fair, but what if those walls should turn out to be composed of straw, the foundations of stubble and the rafters of dry wood? How soon will they yield to the fire and how rapidly will the fabric disappear!

He who has built the tiniest cell of sparkling gems, or the smallest cottage of gold, has done more than he who has heaped aloft into the air a pyramid of hay! It is not the quantity of work done, it is not the space occupied in Church history, it is not the noise of our great works—the question is, what is really and truly done? The *quality* is far more important than the quantity. The enduring character of the work is far more to be considered than the flash and the glare of it. Therefore rejoice not, O young man, in all the brilliant success which has, for the present, attended you. And rejoice not even you, old man, though you have had half a century of prosperity! Rejoice not so much in this as to exalt yourself because of it. But rather rejoice in something safer and more gracious—rejoice that your name is written in Heaven, if so it is!

This joy, again, however good our work may be, is to be moderated because *it does not prove that we are anymore gracious than others of far less gift and usefulness*. Did you notice in the chapter which precedes my text, that nine of the Apostles attempted to cast out a devil from a lunatic child, but were unable to accomplish it, so that they said to the Master, "Why could not we cast him out?" The majority of the sacred conclave of Apostles failed to cast out a devil and yet 70 inferior persons all return with joy, and say, "Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us." Do you draw the inference, therefore, that the 70 were superior to the Apostles? If you do, you have made a very grand mistake, for they were by no means so! And it would be a very great pity for any person who has been made useful in the kingdom of God to infer that he is, therefore, better than those whose earnest labors are crowned by no such apparent results.

An obscure child of God whose name has never been mentioned in the Church may yet be more worthy than we are! Of all estimates of ourselves, that which is founded upon our apparent usefulness is likely to be most deceptive! Be very careful, Sir, if you consider yourself to be something because you have worked wonders! I will show you the choicest of my Master's children on sick beds! I will show you the richest and rarest piety

connected with illiterate poverty! I will show you a man who cannot speak a sentence, grammatically, who lives in the very bosom of Christ! And you will blush for the depth and power of his vital godliness!

I will find you one who shines as a precious jewel in Jehovah's sight, compared with whom you are a poor dull pebble—and yet you are highly esteemed—and he has little honor. His prayers have been of a thousand times more use to the Church than your preaching! Yes, it may be that your preaching has owed its success to his prayers! We cannot judge character by gifts! He who has one talent, and uses it well, shall have better acceptance at the last than he who has five talents and uses them ill. And he who fills his circle, though that circle is small, shall have far more comfort, therein, than he who, with a vast field, has, nevertheless, left the major part of it altogether unfilled. Great importance in the public mind is no argument of great Grace! A man is none the worthier for being successful! The best may not be the most prosperous. Boast not yourself, O fisherman, because your net is filled, for as good men as you are have toiled all night and taken nothing!

Again, this joy in success needs to be kept under tight rein because *it is not an abiding joy*. If you, O man, rejoice to-day because of subject devils, what will you do tomorrow when the devils break loose again? If you return from your labor full of success and rejoice, what will you do when, another time, you will have to plow the thankless rock and break the plowshare? What if your Master should send you where there will be no response to your invitations? What if He should send you among Samaritans who will not even hear you and you shall have to go from city to city and wipe off the dust of your feet against them? What if you should meet a child possessed of a devil and find that you cannot cast out the evil spirit because this kind goes not out except with prayer and fasting? Why, Man, you will be sorely depressed, then, and your courage will fail!

If you have fed your soul upon such light bread as apparent success, it will enfeeble you and what will you do when your prosperity wanes? You will not have steadfastness enough to go on under discouragement and you will shun your Lord's service. This will be evil, indeed! O for a faith that is nourished on something better than appearances—a faith which does not live on gifts or influence, or present success, but sustains itself upon the unfailing promise of the ever blessed God. This is what we need!

Once again, this joy, if we were to be filled with it to overflowing, would be found *unable to bear the strain of trial, trouble, temptation and especially of death*. Take the last—will any man, when he lies dying, be able to console himself with the reflection, "I have testified of Christ to others"? Will he not need some other confidence? Will he not require something far more personal? Will this be the sweet morsel that shall stay the hunger of his soul? What if he had power over devils? May not devils yet obtain power over him? Will he be able to cheer himself amidst death's chilly waves with this boast—"I was a loud talker and a mighty professor, and the cause of Christ grew under my leadership"? No, in such times as that we shall need surer consolations and more Divine stays than these.

Unhappy will he be who has accustomed himself to live upon the excitement of crowded meetings, or upon the laudatory criticisms of friends. Gifts, attainments, labors, successes all heaped together cannot support a soul on the verge of eternity! There is ever present the fact that such things are no sure sign of regeneration. Did not the sons of the Pharisees cast out devils? Did not the people say of Simon Magus, "This man is the great power of God"? Yet these were graceless deceivers! We must have sure evidence of the new birth. We must know that our citizenship is in Heaven! We must know that we belong to Jesus! In one word, we must know that our names are written in Heaven or else we shall find ourselves utterly undone in our dying hours!

For all these reasons, then, be not too elated because of devils conquered, crowds gathered, or souls saved. But hearken to your Lord's voice while He points you to other reasons for rejoicing.

II. So now we come, secondly, to consider THE JOY WHICH NEEDS EXCITING. "Rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." I am glad, my Brothers and Sisters, that this is the joy in which we indulge to the full, because it is one in which *all the saints may unite* and take their share. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, my dear Brother, though you can do but little for Him, you may rejoice that your name is written in Heaven! Here the bedridden Sister may rejoice! Here the incurably diseased may exult! The child of God, whose tongue is silenced by infirmity, and whose conflicts with devils are confined to his closet and his chamber, may come in and say, "I, too, can rejoice that my name is written in Heaven."

Have you ever remarked how our aged friends always delight to sing—

***"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes"?***

They do so because experience has led them to dwell much on the joy of having their names written in Heaven! The joy which our Lord commends is one which *springs from faith*, while the other joy arises alone from sight. A man can see that he has gifts. He can see that he has power and influence. He can see that he has success. But rest assured that every joy which comes to Believers through the sight of the eyes is a doubtful joy! It is a dainty of which we must eat in scanty measure. Have you found such honey as this? Do not eat too much of it lest it sicken you.

But the joy caused by our names being written in Heaven comes of *faith*, for eye has not seen the record, neither has any angel read it to us—and only because we believe in Jesus are we assured of it—for this reason the joy grows in good soil and is, in itself, safe. All the joys of faith are safe as the water which flowed from the smitten Rock. No poisonous streams can ever issue from that source! This joy is a heavenly manna of which a man may eat according to his eating and let his soul be satiated. This is healthy meat which breeds no plague in the camp as the eating of the quails did, for the quails were sent in wrath to satisfy their fierce desires.

We never hear of men dying of eating the manna which came down from Heaven, but they did die through eating the quail—which was food

for their lusts. Be it yours to get as much as ever you can of the joys of faith and especially of this—"Rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven." *This joy consists in knowing our election*—"knowing, dearly Beloved, your election of God"—knowing that your names were written in Heaven from before the foundation of the world! Oh, what an inconceivable delight is this! To be God's choice is the choicest of delights! The joy of having your name written in Heaven includes the joy of knowing that you are precious to the Lord, for it is written, "a book of remembrance was kept for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name, and they shall be Mine, said the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels."

To be written in Heaven means that we are precious in the sight of the Lord, that He has noted us down in the list of His crown jewels and will preserve us for Himself till the day in which all His sacred regalia shall be complete. Blessed are those who stand recorded in the inventory of Heaven's jewel house! To be written in Heaven means that you claim the right of citizenship in the New Jerusalem, "the Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven." Just as there is a roll kept by great cities in which they inscribe the names of citizens, so do we rejoice that our names are written in the roll of the City above, and that, from now on, our citizenship is in Heaven, from where we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus!

This is a broad subject for rejoicing, for it includes priceless privileges and honors more than royal. We also rejoice that our names are written, that is, known and published in Heaven. Paul mentioned certain of his fellow servants of whom he said, "whose names are written in Heaven." As much as to say though they have neither fame nor honor *here*, they have a perpetual record where honor is worth receiving, namely, before the Throne of God! The heavenly writing signifies that we are part and parcel of Christ's new kingdom! We are inscribed among His soldiers, we are commissioned to bear hardness for His sake. We are written in Heaven among the friends of Jesus, we are accounted as of the sacred brotherhood! In the great book of the Divine Fatherhood, we are numbered among the children and, from now on, we shall be regarded and treated as belonging to the one family in Heaven and in earth. This is the matter concerning which we are called to rejoice. "Rejoice that your names are written in Heaven."

I see in this fact abundant cause for joy, but I cannot stay, this morning, to bring it out in detail. I would have you joy in the great Grace which first inscribed your name in God's eternal book. Oh, bless the sovereign, distinguishing, discriminating Grace which wrote down your unworthy name where there might have stood the name of a king, or of an emperor, or the name of a person of great repute, of superior talent, or of great eloquence and learning! Instead of those which men esteem to be great names, there stands *your* common name! Therefore give the Grace of God all the glory evermore! And then rejoice in the Grace which has *kept* your name inscribed in that heavenly roll, so that over you that ancient threat of the Law has had no power—"Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of my Book." (Exo. 32:33).

But up to now you have stood among those of whom the Spirit speaks expressly in the Book of the Revelation—"He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." There stands your name, still recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, though many a tear of yours might well fall upon it to think what Grace it is which keeps it there and will keep it there forever! A name among God's sons and daughters is better for you than if your name were in Debrett's Peerage, or in the Royal Almanac de Gotha. Being in the Book of Life guarantees you peace, joy, security, blessedness now—and secures you a place hereafter among the blood-washed host in the "many mansions," which Christ has gone to prepare for those whom His Father has given Him!

Sit down now, Beloved, and let your soul triumph to the last degree of joy in this—your names are written in Heaven! Forget the falling devils for awhile, forget your abilities, forget your successes. Cast these all at your Redeemer's feet, where they ought to be, and then take this to yourself as your joy, your portion, your Heaven below—that your name is written in the family register of the Eternal! May the Holy Spirit inspire you with this sublime delight. Brothers and Sisters, *this is a joy which can be cultivated*. How are we to cultivate it? If we desire to have much of this joy, we must make the fact *sure*. We must be *certain* that our names are written in Heaven, or else we cannot rejoice in it. Let your faith grow until it reaches the full assurance of faith and then shall you rejoice that your names are written in Heaven!

"How am I to know it?" one asks. Well, Friend, one thing is sure, if God has written you down among those who are saved, you can soon know it because you are saved! If you are forgiven, your name is written among the forgiven. If you are, indeed, quickened and made alive, your name is written among the living in Zion. I will not invite you to go further and peer into that which is unrevealed, for if I did so I should be as much out of my sphere as those are who pretend to bring men messages from the spirit world! The Lord gives not to any soul, dead in sin, the least right to believe that it is written among the living. Neither gives He to any ungodly man the liberty to hope that he is written among the elect of God.

We must have *evidence*, not dreams and airy suppositions! And the evidence of our name being written in Heaven is that we have been called by Grace out of the world to follow Jesus. We see our election by our calling, and nothing else. We may know what is written about us in Heaven by that which is written *within* us on earth. If Grace has written upon your heart till you are "an Epistle of Christ, known and read of all men," your name is in His secret book! If you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are His, and the Lord knows them that are His. He has written them down in His own private tablets which He carries in His bosom. If your name is among true Believers on earth, it is among the redeemed in Heaven—you need not question that, for the declarations of Scripture put it beyond a doubt.

If you would rejoice in your name's being written in Heaven, not only be assured of the fact, but meditate much upon it. Let this be frequently on your mind, "My name is written in Heaven. Beneath the name of my Lord, the Lamb, it is inscribed. I am one of His redeemed and He writes me down among His dearly purchased property. He knows me, looks upon me and regards me as His treasure. I am not my own, I am bought with a price, I belong to Him." Go, Brothers and Sisters, and exult in this and let the sweet influence of it be daily seen upon your life—for this joy, dear Friends, *will make all else on earth pale*, in comparison, with the fact your names are written in Heaven!

What if you are rich? Rejoice not in this, for riches take to themselves wings and fly away, but rather rejoice because your name is written in Heaven! If you are a man of learning, thank God for your knowledge and use it for His Glory, but, nevertheless, rejoice not in this, for what is earthly knowledge often but learned ignorance? "Rather rejoice because your name is written in Heaven." If you are a person of position in the Church, thank God if you may glorify Him thereby! But rather *rejoice* because your name is written in Heaven. Are you strong and in good health? Be grateful for the privilege, but rather rejoice because your name is written in Heaven!

Turn this Inspired text round another way and if you have any sorrow, or if you mourn the absence of any earthly good, do not lament too bitterly—but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven! You are poor. Well, be not despondent, for your name is written in Heaven! You are despised and your name is cast out as evil—but rejoice, none the less, for it is written in Heaven! You have but few gifts and abilities, but your name is written in Heaven! You could not stand up and edify a multitude, but your name is written in Heaven! When you die your departure will make but a small gap in the Church's ranks, but your name is written in Heaven! Whatever you lack or whatever you suffer, let this console you and, at the same time, *let it strengthen you for service*.

The joy of the Lord is your strength, you will feel able to go forward in God's work when you can boldly say, "My name is written in Heaven. I may well serve Him who has so graciously redeemed me! He has put me down among His people, why should I not, therefore, expect Him to be with me when I go upon His errands and attempt to win Him honor? My name is written in Heaven and, therefore, I will live for Him to the utmost of my strength and spend and be spent for His name." There seems to me to be such a wonderful moral and spiritual power about this joy in having one's name written in Heaven that it does not require me to explain why the Savior encourages you to indulge in it!

It is a corrective to the other joy, but it has about it, also, independently of that, so many admirable uses that we need not add a word by way of guarding it, or restraining it, but may, on the contrary, earnestly invite you to partake of it without stint! Eat the fat and drink the sweet! Rejoice, yes, rejoice abundantly! Rejoice and yet again rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven!

III. Now, lastly, into this joy the Savior enters and we have to look in the third place to THE JOY OF THE LORD IN SYMPATHY with it. And so we add to our text the first sentence of the 21st verse—"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit." Why did He rejoice? I think it was with a very same joy that He bids us cultivate as far as it related to Himself, for you see, He rejoiced because *Grace was given*. He said, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes." It makes Christ's heart glad to think that God has been gracious to the sons of men—to think that He has plucked some of the race out of the horrible pit and lifted them up from the miry clay—and brought them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

It makes His soul glad to see that sin has been overcome in many men and that many have been renewed in the spirit of their minds by Divine Grace. Jesus was also glad at *the Father's choice*. He said, "I thank You, O Father." He looks at these 70 babes out of whose mouth He has ordained strength, and He says, "I thank you, O Father, for having chosen these." They looked a wretched regiment to conquer the world with, did they not? A company of fishermen and peasants, men of the lower order! If a man had to shake the world, he might naturally wish for choice spirits, the *elite*, the aristocracy of thought, at any rate, if not the aristocracy of gold and silver! He might wish to select the refined, the noble, the educated, for his great enterprise.

But Jesus Christ is perfectly satisfied with His Father's choice. It has given me intense joy, sometimes, to think that our dear Savior is perfectly satisfied to think that His Father should have chosen *me*. He is not like Hiram, who, when King Solomon gave him certain cities, was discontented with them. But our Lord has never spoken a word against any of the sheep His Father gave Him, nor has He despised any of the elect ones whom the Father has put into His hands. He is perfectly content with you, Beloved, perfectly satisfied that you should be chosen, though you are not one of the wise and prudent, that you should be chosen, though you are like one of the "base things of this world." Jesus rejoiced and thanked the Father because of the choice which His Sovereign Grace made.

Notice the spirit in which Jesus puts His thanksgiving—He is satisfied with the choice *because it is God's choice*. "Even so, Father," He said, "for so it seemed good in Your sight." That is the true spirit of Christ, to be content with what God wills because God wills it—He has no questions, no judging, but shows an entire submission, no, an intense delight, in the august will of God! Let us, also, delight ourselves, this morning, in the fact that our names are written in Heaven because God willed them to be there! How well satisfied we ought to be with that will, but how much more joyous may we be because Christ, also, is content with that will, by which we are given to Him that we may be His people.

Then our Savior went on to rejoice *because the Grace of God given to us has revealed to us Christ, and revealed to us the Father*, for He says, "no man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." Now, the Grace of God has

manifested itself to you and to me, Beloved in Christ, by revealing the Father, whom we now inwardly and truly know. We can say in our very souls, “Our Father which are in Heaven.” And we also know the Son. We cannot tell others all we know of Him, all the secret fellowships we have had and into what deep communion we have entered, but we know Christ and are known of Him—and this is our life’s work to go on to know Him yet more and more—and to know the Father in Him.

Jesus exulted because *there was a fellowship about all this*, for He speaks of His knowing the Father and the Father knowing Him—and then of *our* knowing the Father because the Son has revealed Him to us—all of which implies a wondrous communication and communion with the Father and with the Son. Now, this, I take it, is the cream of joy, a joy in which Christ partakes as He has fellowship with the Father and with us, and of which we partake as we have fellowship with Him and with the Father. Now, mark, there is nothing of this in, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us.” There is nothing of this when we merely have success in soul-winning. A man may work marvels and yet have no fellowship with the Father and with the Son and, therefore, he may lack that which is the essence, the center point, the focus of all true joy!

But he who has his name written in Heaven has had the Father revealed to him through the Son and in this he may exceedingly rejoice, for the very news of this is what kings and Prophets waited for and found not. This is that which even angels desire to look into! Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say rejoice! My last word is for those who know nothing about their names being written in Heaven. I would like to turn the text upon you for a second or so, for it has a dark side to you, and I pray God that as you see it, you may tremble and fly to Christ!

Whatever you have in this world, Sinner, you have nothing worth rejoicing in because you cannot say your name is written in Heaven! Rejoice neither in your wealth, your health, your children, your prosperity, your position, your success—for if your name is not written in Heaven, Ichabod is written over all your choicest possessions! As you look on all that you have gained, remember that God can make your souls to hunger and faint even in the midst of all these things! Listen to the thunder of that dreadful sentence, “I will curse your blessings.” “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but He blesses the habitation of the righteous.”

Oh that your names may be written in Heaven for His mercy’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 9:51-62; 10:1-24.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—219, 239, 719.**

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THE LORD'S CHOSEN MINISTERS

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*"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Your sight."
 Luke 10:21.*

THE habitual state of mind of Jesus was, I think, a deep calm. Beyond all ordinary men, He possessed His soul in peace. We find Him sleeping in the midst of a storm, the very best thing that He could do. He knew that, rocked in the cradle of the deep by His great Father, He was supremely safe, so, finding a pillow, and going near the stern of the ship, He fell asleep.

But there were times when His spirit ebbed out. He was always a Man of Sorrows—the surface of His soul was often disturbed with storms of grief—and then we read that "Jesus wept." Sometimes, however, the tide was at the flood, and so we here, read, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." It is very seldom that we read this. So seldom did He show His joy that it was recorded at once by the Evangelist. Luke took care to note that, even as others had mentioned His tears. Jesus was a man of constant grief, a mourner all his days, and yet at times the deep calm of His spirit was stirred by something other than the north wind. The south wind blew and all was joyous and bright with Him—"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." I thought that this would be a profitable theme for meditation for a short time, tonight, in contrast to that of this morning. [Sermon #2091, Volume 35—*Jesus Wept*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I do not intend to go so deeply into this subject as I did into that, but I think that there are some matters here which may be instructive to us.

I. First, let us ask, WHAT WAS THE OCCASION OF OUR MASTER'S JOY? "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." You may judge a man by his joy—as a man rejoices—so is he. What made Christ rejoice? If I were to put the question to all of you who are happy, tonight, "What makes you rejoice?" some might, perhaps, be ashamed to answer my enquiry, but there was no reason why Jesus should blush at that which made Him glad.

First, I notice that *He rejoiced in stirring times*. He had sent out the 70 disciples. They had gone, in 35 pairs, all over the country, telling that He was coming and He was reckoning upon going to every city and place to

which He had sent His heralds. Seeing what was done and what was going to be done, the Savior's heart rejoiced. Some people like laziness—Christ loved activity. This morning I showed you that there was no indolence in Him, for He wept, and that old word, indolence, means not grieving, does it not? But He *did* grieve, so there was no indolence in Him in the old and literal classic sense and, certainly, no indolence in Him in the sense in which we now use the word. He could weep and, therefore, He could work. He could feel and, therefore, He could bestir Himself. And in stirring times He felt Himself glad. How some of us long to see the Church of God fully astir! We seem to have a dreadful calm, nowadays, like that of the "Ancient Mariner" when—

***"The very deep did rot.
Alas, that ever this should be!"***

We need the wind from Heaven to stir our sails and set the ship in motion. We need the breath of the Holy Spirit to speed us to our desired haven. It was not thus with Christ, for He rejoiced in times of activity!

He rejoiced, next, when *He was surrounded by faithful preachers*. There were 70 of His disciples—quite a little Conference! He felt Himself in good company with the seventy—all faithful preachers of the Word—gathered around Him. You say that it was not many. No, but it was a good beginning! It was a noble beginning that, out of a few disciples (and He had not many, at most), He should be able to pick out 70 who were fit to be sent out to preach! They must have been a fine class of men, though they were simple-minded fishermen and peasants. And to find 70 of them who could be sent to preach and declare that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, who were fit to be trusted with miraculous power, might well make Him glad! Brothers, when we see plenty of preachers of the Gospel, when we see the Lord calling one and another to go forth and proclaim His Word of Grace, then do we, also, rejoice in spirit!

Jesus also rejoiced because *all these 70 had found a welcome*. It seemed rather an experiment to send out 70 unlettered men to proclaim the Kingdom of God. It was like sending lambs into the midst of wolves! Would not some of them be stoned to death? When the muster-roll was read, would not one or two, at least, be missing? But no, "the seventy returned again with joy." They had all been welcomed! Everybody seems to have received them and entertained them—and they came back in high spirits! And the Savior, seeing them return thus, not as preachers without congregations, but itinerant ministers who had been listened to, everywhere, with respectful attention, our Master felt, I say, that He, also, must rejoice, so, "Jesus rejoiced in spirit."

It is of no use having ministers if they have nobody to preach to and it is very likely that, before long, we shall have more ministers than hearers if things go on as they now go! We have so many of our brothers with marvelous gifts of dispersion that we have seen magnificent congregations that used to gather around earnest Evangelical preachers, scattered to the winds! There is nothing in that to rejoice over, except for Satan to rejoice! But when you see a people made willing, in the day of God's Power, to listen to the heralds of the Cross, then you may, indeed, rejoice!

Jesus rejoiced, further, because *He heard that the Power of God had rested on them all*. The 70 had healed the sick and, to their own astonishment, they had cast out devils—and they mentioned it with great exultation! “And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven.” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we need not rejoice because there are many professed preachers! And it might not be a sure ground of rejoicing if they all had congregations. But it is a safe reason for joy when the Power of God rests upon them! Only give a man that old Power of God with him and I am not afraid but what he will have a congregation, and I am certain that grand results will come of his work! If God is with us, His Word which we preach cannot fail! It will not only reach the ear, but it will pierce the heart! It will awaken the spiritually dead! It will turn hearts of stone to flesh! There is still a Divine Power going with the preaching of the Word of God. The Gospel is still the Power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes! And when we see that that is the case, and that men and women are being converted, then I am sure that, like our Master, we shall do well to rejoice in spirit!

Further than this, our Savior rejoiced in spirit because *He saw that Satan's kingdom was being shaken*. To fetch Satan down from his throne, is no small thing—how is it to be done? Well, the philosophers may try their magnetism, but the devil is too strong for them. The orators and rhetoricians may try their rounded periods and decorate their orations with quotations from the poets, but the devil never stirs for them. But *preach Jesus Christ*—say that His Kingdom is at hand, proclaim that He is come to save the lost and that whoever believes in Him shall live eternally—in a word, preach up Christ, and you soon preach down the devil! He does not come down by slow degrees. He falls, like lightning, from Heaven! You have seen lightning—you may have seen it in that great storm a fortnight ago—it took no time at all to come down from Heaven! Just a flash and it was here! So, where the Gospel is preached with Divine Power, Satan comes down from his throne in human hearts and human minds as rapidly as the lightning flash falls from Heaven! And when we see his kingdom shaken, then, like Jesus, we rejoice in spirit.

Still, I do not think that I have hit the center of the target yet. The Lord Jesus deeply rejoiced in spirit because of the *men by whom this work had been done*. What sort of men were they? Upon this I shall have to dwell a little further on. But there was this about them—they were glad to have been put into the King's commission. “The seventy returned again with joy.” They had never been so happy before—this doing of the Lord's will had been a great delight to them! You could see it by the very spring of their feet and the flash of their eyes. They came back to their Master, delighted, and Jesus caught the contagion of their joy and He rejoiced in spirit! People who serve Christ, willingly, who feel a delight in doing His will, are sure to bring delight to Christ's heart. Are you, dear Friends, in your holy work, doing it with joy, or do you serve the Lord because you cannot help it, like slaves driven to their toil by the overseer's lash? Jesus cannot rejoice over you if that is the case. But if you can say, “I delight to do Your will,” then you will make His heart rejoice!

He rejoiced in these men because, when they came back, having done wonders, they ascribed it all to Him. They said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Your name." They did not begin to pilfer the Glory and take the honor to themselves. Christ is glad to have a people who lay all the honor where it ought to be laid, and put the crown on the right head. I believe that there is nothing that angers Christ more, in His ministers, than to hear them talk about what *they* have done, without duly ascribing all the Glory to Himself. When they do ascribe it to Him, then Jesus rejoices in spirit.

But He rejoiced most of all that, of all these seventy, He could say that their names were written in Heaven. It is an easy thing to become a preacher, or a teacher, an evangelist, or what not—but are our names written in Heaven? As Christ would have us rejoice most over that, no doubt He rejoices most over it when He sees that we not only have our names written down in the Clergy List, or our denominational Handbook, but that our names are really written among the living in Zion—those who are quickened by His Grace, washed in His blood and truly made to live by His Spirit! "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." I have shown you the occasion of His joy. When you have similar occasions, dear Brothers, dear Sisters, mind that you rejoice in spirit, too!

II. But now, secondly, WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S JOY? Jesus rejoiced in spirit."

The answer to this question is, first, that *it was spiritual joy*. There is a good deal of joy in the world, even among religious people, that could not be called spiritual. I am not certain whether all the expressions of joy one hears at some excited meetings are worthy to be put on the same heap with this joy of Christ. There is mental joy. There is a sort of physical joy, when one gets excited and stirred up—this is but bronze or silver—but *spiritual* joy is the gold of joy and the gold of that land is good! If, down deep in his inner life, one's spirit can rejoice in God, he is the man who is like his Master when He rejoiced in spirit!

You who have the Revised Version, which often teaches us much, will, I dare say, be surprised to read in the margin the following rendering, "In that same hour He rejoiced by the Holy Spirit." That is a very remarkable rendering, and I think a correct one. That is the kind of joy that Jesus had, *joy worked in Him by the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit was poured upon Him without measure and, as part of the fruit of the Spirit is joy, the Spirit gave Him much joy, as well as much love. Beloved, pray God to give you joy by the Holy Spirit! All the other joy in the world, if heaped up together, would be only so much smoke and vapor! But joy in the Holy Spirit is solid bliss and lasting pleasure. Here you have the great ingots of joy. How ponderous they are, how precious they are, how immeasurably valuable, how infinitely beneficial! Joy by the Holy Spirit—often very calm and quiet, for, "He leads me beside the still waters"—but a very wonderful joy. The joy of God, like the peace of God, which passes understanding—this is a joy which passes all measure or bound. That was the joy of Christ—spiritual joy and joy by the Holy Spirit.

Notice, also, that it *was joy about others*, a perfectly unselfish joy. Jesus had seen others blessed, healed, prepared, instructed, made ready to hear more of the Gospel—and He rejoiced in that. And He had seen others made useful. Oh, what a mercy it is when you can rejoice in other people's usefulness! Did God ever bless you very largely and did there come along somebody whom He blessed more than you? Now, I am sure that you rejoiced in that other man's success if he was a hundred miles off! But I am not quite so certain that you rejoiced in it if he came into your Sunday school and had a class that took some of the scholars away from you. I am not quite certain that every minister in the world would leap for joy if a Brother settled close beside him and had twice as large a congregation as he had, and did 10 times as much good. Hearts need a little schooling at such a time as that, for, as the stars love to shine, they sometimes like not only to shine out but to outshine!

Now shine out as much as you like, but never mind about *outshining*, for that is emulation of a kind of which Christ will never approve. He rejoiced to see the 70 shining. He delighted to see them all useful. Pray for your Brothers and Sisters, that God may make them more useful than *they* are and more useful than *you* are. Did not your Lord say, "He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do, also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father," as if it were a delight to the Master that His pupils should, in some respects, excel Him? Remember Moses, when they came to him, and said that Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp? Those two fellows had not been properly ordained, yet they were prophesying in the camp! What did Moses say? "Stop them directly. They have not, 'Rev.' before either of their names and certainly they have not D.D., or any of the other letters of the alphabet after their names! Shut those fellows up"? No, no! Moses said, "Would God that *all* the Lord's people were Prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" And is not that what Christ would say and have *you* say? Oh, let us have joy in our hearts when souls are saved, even though we may not be the instruments of their salvation, or any of our denomination, but somebody quite apart from us! God has blessed him and God be blessed for blessing him!

Our Savior's joy, again, was *quiet and devout joy*. "Jesus rejoiced in spirit." I do not find that He sang a Psalm, or even a hymn from Moody and Sankey, or that He took a timbrel and danced. I think it would have been very much out of place for Him to have done that—for Him it would have looked very eccentric. But our Savior, when He rejoiced in spirit, prayed and thanked God. The same calm which had sustained Him in His seasons of sorrow, supported Him in His hour of joy and kept Him sober, still, quiet! The Lord give us much of this joy! Still waters, you know, run deep. Let me also say that deep waters run without turmoil. When the river is very deep, there will not be half as much noise as when it is but shallow and, therefore, rattles and raves over the stones which it barely covers!

Christ's was quiet and devout joy and it was also *meek and lowly joy*. Though He rejoiced in spirit, what He said was, "I thank You, O Father."

There was no assumption, no taking of anything to Himself. Did not He send out the seventy? Were they not called by Him? Yes, but He said, "I thank *You*, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth." Perhaps God would give us more joy if we were more meek when we had it, but, sometimes, when our heavenly Father trusts us with a few jewels, we hang them in our ears and are as pleased with them as children with new toys—and we forget our Father and only remember how pretty we look—as *we* think. Then the Lord takes them away again. Many a child would have more sweets to eat if they did not make him sick. Many a preacher of the Gospel would have more success if it did not make him proud—and many a laborer for the Lord would bring more souls to Christ if there were not danger of his losing his own soul if he were much honored in that way. Our Master, when He rejoiced in spirit, was as meek and as lowly as when He stood before His adversaries and was led as a sheep to the slaughter.

III. But I must not detain you much longer and, therefore, I come to the last point which is the special one upon which I want to dwell at this time. **WHAT WAS THE EXPRESSION OF OUR SAVIOR'S JOY?** When Jesus rejoiced in spirit, how did He show His joy?

Well, He showed it, first, by *thanks to His Father*. He said, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth." Oh, that our joy might never take the form of a foolish song, but might always be in the shape of thanksgiving or thanks-living, or both of them together—a happy combination—thanksgiving with the mouth and thanks-living with the life! Our Savior, I say, praised God when He felt joyful. Do you not think that that should be a lesson to us to try to be joyful before we praise God? Do you feel very dull and heavy? Well, sing! Remember that the Apostle James said, "Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms." Psalms are best sung when the heart is glad, therefore seek to shake off your sadness when you come into the House of God! And before you begin to praise the Lord, endeavor to be joyful, cheerful, happy. Did I not say, the other day—"Do not leave your bedroom until you feel that everything is right between you and God"? I would also add to—"Do not begin to sing until your *heart* sings." Try as much as possible to be glad. Does God want slaves to Grace His Throne? It is the *heathen* who cut themselves with knives and think that their god is pleased with their misery! But our God delights in the joy of His people. Be glad before Him. "Let us come before His Presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms." Sing unto the Lord all you people and rejoice before Him. The singing of God's praises should be accompanied with joy—and when there is joy it should be attended with the singing of His praises.

But why does Jesus Christ thank God? What is His special objective in thanking Him? Well, He thanks Him for a great Truth of God that some of you do not like. I cannot hide it, whether you like it or not. *Jesus thanks His Father for the Doctrine of Election*—"I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Your sight." With whom does the choice of men lie? With God! And in His choice His Son greatly rejoices! So let it be with us—let

Him do what He wills, and let us rejoice in Him! "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Let Him do whatever He wills, I know that it is right. It is not for us to judge God's conduct, but to let God's conduct be to us the rule of our life, the rule of right—

***"He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be,"***

nor does He stand at your bar, or mine, to ask us what He shall do, or what He shall not do. "He gives not account of any of His matters." And over the head of us all there rolls the thunder of this Word of God—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." No claim can be set up by the creature! None have any merit whatever before Him and, therefore, with that absolute Sovereignty which He claims as God, He distributes His favors according to this rule, "Shall I not do as I will with My own?" But many hearts cannot bow to that Law of God—the iron sinew of their neck will not bend to a God who is God! A nominal god is all very well, but a real God of Infinite Power and Divine Sovereignty is rejected by many, but not by His dear Son! He says, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth." We who truly know the Lord, adore the God of electing love! He cannot do wrong. He must be right. And if He chooses to let the wise and prudent be blinded, while He opens the eyes of babes, we thank Him. What we do not understand, we accept with reverent adoration.

The Savior *especially thanks His Father for the chosen ministers round about Him*. Somebody might have said, "Why, these 70, You are their Leader, but they are a precious poor lot! Look at them! Put the whole 70 together and they would not make one man of the size of a Pharisee, either in property, or in propriety, or in power to boast and say that they have kept the Commandments from their youth up! Why, they are a parcel of *sinner*s, the whole 70 of them! And besides that, look at their coats—nothing but working-men's jackets. There is one of them, Peter, who has an extra coat, but he is only a fisherman. What a lot they are! And these are the men who are to proclaim the religion that is to conquer the world? It is certainly not abreast of the times—it is not up to the modern thought of this period—very far from it! All that it has gathered is a parcel of poor, illiterate persons."

Well, the Savior thanks God that He has not given Him any wise men. He thanks God that He has not saved any of the people who think that they have great understanding. He congratulates Himself that, upon the whole, He has the people He likes best—"I thank You, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto"—what? Well, He says, "*babes*." They cannot say anything worse than that of the Lord's chosen ministers—just a lot of babies! Jesus thanks God that He has revealed the Truth to these babes and so do I! Oh, Beloved, what a mercy it is that the Lord does, by His Grace, call these babes, while the wise men, and the understanding men are not called!

Suppose the very wise and prudent had been called to go and preach? What would they have done? Why, in the first place, they would not have gone at all because any prudent man would have said, "He sends us forth

as lambs in the midst of wolves! That is not prudent, so I shall not go." Certainly no wise men would have gone upon such an errand—they would have said, "No, thank you." And so you still find the wise and prudent. They will not go on Christ's errands. They have errands of their own—they have plenty of their own work to do—they are going to reform the world by their own inventions! But to go on Christ's errands and simply to say what Christ tells them, oh, no, not they! They have such a lot to say of what they have made out of their own heads that they cannot go out to simply repeat what Christ has said to them.

Suppose, again, that the 70 had been wise and prudent men? What next would they have done? Why, they would have tinkered the message, for certain! There is one of them who would have said, "Well, now, I am going, you see, to a town of very respectable people—I must tone my message down for them." Another would have said, "I am going where they are rather a democratic set—I must introduce a little bit of politics of a popular kind to suit them." Another would have said, "Well, now, these people will not come and hear me preach the Gospel, so I shall have an entertainment, a penny reading, or something of that kind." All the wise and prudent would have thought that they could do better than Christ told them to do—therefore He was very glad that He had not any of them to pester Him! He had only these who would do just what He told them and say just what He told them—and that was exactly the kind of people that He needed—men who would do His bidding without question.

Then, besides that, if they had been very wise and prudent, they would have inevitably clouded the message, for they would have delivered it in their own grand style—and you know how wise men talk, do you not? Unless you are a very wise man, you cannot understand them. But these poor babes, when they went into a town, talked as the people talked, and everybody *could* comprehend them! Nowadays, it is thought to be an evidence of lack of education if you talk so that everybody can understand you, but, dear Friends, we are not afraid of what anyone says on that point. Depend upon it, the best education in the world is that which enables you to convey your thoughts to other people's minds in a way in which you really get them into their brains! These babes went and preached what Christ told them because they did not know anything else. They were men of plain speech—they were Galileans! They had never learned the scholastic style of speech—Galilee was a notable place for spoiling the language! These were rough-hewn men and they spoke out their message with all their might—and Christ was very thankful that they were not other than they were, for they did His work right grandly.

Besides, I think that if they had been wise and prudent, they would not have come back rejoicing—they would have come back with that cold propriety which is most consistent with the dignity of cultured intelligence! Are you not all aware that it is vulgar to be happy, that it betrays the feebleness of your minds if you enjoy anything? The proper thing is to pick the Truth of God to pieces and find all the fault that you can with it. When the Bread of Heaven is set before you, if you are a cultured person, you should not eat it, but try to find out who baked it and whether they put as

much yeast in it as usual. Such people always quarrel with the Truth if they can. Sometimes I take up a commentary on some part of the Bible and think that I am going to learn something. And so I do. And when I have learned it, I wish that I had never seen it! A vain attempt is made to take the juice out of God's wheat and to reduce it to dry, useless husks which cannot cheer the heart, or comfort the spirit. I thank You, Lord, when I get away from these gentlemen, even as You did thank Your Father that there were none of them around You. They would have been almost enough to chill the very life of Christ, Himself.

Once more, if they had all been wise and prudent, they would have come back, every one of them taking a little of the praise. One wise man would have said, "I put that point beautifully down at Chorazin." Another would have said, "I drew a wonderful distinction down at Bethsaida." "If any good comes of this," another would say, "it was that wonderful peroration of my discourse that did it. I must have the credit of it." These poor babes could not think or talk like this, for, if God did anything by *them*, they were such nobodies that He must have all the Glory!

Now I have done when I just say to you that I wonder whether this brings comfort to you? One poor soul says, "I am not clever. I cannot be saved." Why not? Why not, when God has chosen the foolish things of this world? I often hear a person say, "But I have not head enough for these things." You do not need a head so much as you need a *heart*, for the Grace of God works on the heart, first, and on the head, afterwards. When the head drags the heart, it is often slow work, but when the heart goes first and the head *follows*, then it is a blessing, indeed! If you love Christ and trust in Him, you have all the head that you need for Eternal Life. "O," says one, "but I am a person of such small capacity!" Never mind. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" whether they are of large capacity or small capacity.

Have you a teachable spirit? Are you willing to believe what the Holy Spirit reveals? Are you willing to sit at Jesus' feet and learn of Him? Are you like the babe that does not doubt its mother, but takes, unquestioningly, the nourishment she gives? If that is so, you are of the kind that God has chosen! Come at once to Him. You cannot understand all mysteries if you need to do so. Give up all your vain attempts to sweep the cobwebs from the sky, or to climb up among the stars. Oh, the questions that people can ask you when they really do not want answers, and if they did, would never receive them! I know some who are lost in their thoughts—

***"Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute"***

or some other tremendously knotty question. Why do you get out of your depths? Be a babe and come—simply believe yourself to be a sinner and trust Christ as your Savior—and you will know more than all the philosophers can ever teach you! Come and trust the Lord Jesus Christ and you will find how true it is that He has revealed these things unto babes.

Are you willing to be what Christ was? He was the childlike Man. He is called, "The Holy Child, Jesus." Will you be a child to Him and let Him be a Man for you? Will you take His Book and believe it as you read it? Will

you take Him and trust Him as you find Him? Will you take His Cross and rest upon it as your only hope? Then, blessed are you, for you are in the election of Grace! You are one of those whom God has chosen and for whom Christ thanks Him that He did choose people of that quality! And while Christ thanks God, you may thank Him, too, and go home tonight rejoicing! If you are too wise, too clever, too critical to trust Christ, there is no other way to Heaven—so you see where you must go. The Lord change your foolish opinion and teach your reason, reason—and your sense a little commonsense, and save you, for His mercy's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
LUKE 10:1-22.

Our Lord was about to send out 70 disciples to preach the Gospel. He had already chosen His 12 Apostles. Now there must be 70 disciples, something like Moses had 70 elders to serve under him. Some have fancifully likened these two sets of men to the 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees at Elim, and certainly they were for the refreshment of the people.

Verse 1. *After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, where He Himself would come.* They were to go before Christ and be His heralds. What a mercy it is when the preacher knows that his Master is coming after him—when he can hear the sound of his Master's feet behind him! What courage it gives him! He knows that, though it is very little that he can do, he is the thin end of the wedge preparing the way for One who can do everything!

2. *Therefore said He unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest.* The 70 were very few compared with the many that were needed. There were many loiterers about, then, as there are now, but the laborers were few. There were preachers of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but they were not worth a penny a hundred. But the true laborers, who watched for souls, and preached Christ with all their hearts, were very few. It is the same, today, and, therefore, we are to pray for more laborers. A good minister always desires to see more good ministers. In a trade, every tradesman would be glad if those of the same trade as himself would move to another parish, but in the profession of a Christian minister, the more the merrier! "Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest."

3. *Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.* "Defenseless, harmless, into the midst of those who would devour you if I did not send you. It would be foolhardiness to go on your own account, but I send you and He who sends His lambs among wolves will take care of them." As I have often reminded you, the lambs and the sheep are very defenseless and yet, after all, there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves. And although it looked as if the wolves would soon devour the sheep, the wolves are extirpated in many a country and the sheep are still prized—and it will be so till the end.

4. *Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes.* This time, when Christ sent out the seventy, He bade them take no provision, for they might depend upon the kindness of the people. Afterwards, when He was about to leave His disciples, He bade them take both purse and scrip, for they were going among an unfriendly people. But on this first mission He knew that there was a kindly feeling towards them, so He said, "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes."

4. *And salute no man by the way.* Eastern salutations by the way took up a very long time—the people saying a lot of fine nothings to one another. Christian ministers ought to be excused from many of the lengthy courtesies of life, but if they are not excused, if they are faithful, they will take French leave to be excused. We have not time for all those pretty things that some people attend to. If we are to win souls, we must go to work like the king's couriers who turn not aside to attend to anything else, but devote all their energies to the mission on which they are sent.

5, 6. *And into whatever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.* So that it will not be wasted. Wish well and your well-wishing will do you good, even if it does nobody else good. Our chickens come home to roost. If they are curses, they will come upon ourselves. If they are blessings, they will bless ourselves as well as others.

7, 8. *And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatever city you enter, and they receive you eat such things as are set before you.* The Jewish Rabbis, in their perambulations, were very particular about food. It is said to have been very difficult to find a dish to their taste. This might be unclean in one way, and that not up to the mark in another—but here the Master exempts His ambassadors from attention to these minor matters. They had something better to do than to be always careful about what they should eat or what they should drink, so He said to them, "Eat such things as are set before you."

9-11. *And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The Kingdom of God is come near unto you. But into whatever city you enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaves on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be you sure of this, that the Kingdom of God is come near unto you.* We are not to stop and argue—that is no business of ours. We have to tell our message. If men will receive it, we are glad. If they will not hear it, with a heavy heart we turn aside and go elsewhere. Our work is to proclaim the glorious message of mercy through a dying Savior, salvation through the great Atonement. It is our business to proclaim it and leave it—the responsibility of receiving or rejecting it rests with our hearers.

12-14. *But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the*

Judgment, than for you. Hearing and rejecting the Gospel is the crowning sin of all. Whatever else men are guilty of, if they have not rejected Christ, they have not yet reached the summit of iniquity.

15, 16. *And you, Capernaum, which are exalted to Heaven, shall be thrust down to Hell. He that hears you hears Me and he that despises you despises Me; and he that despises Me despises Him that sent Me.* If the messenger delivers His message correctly, and as his Master would have him deliver it, the rejection of it, when brought by him, has the same guilt in it as the rejection of Christ, Himself, and the rejection of Christ is the rejection of God! So Jesus tells us here.

17. *And the seventy returned again with joy,* Not one of the lambs had been eaten by the wolves!

17. *Saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Your name.* Christ had not mentioned that in the commission. He sent them to heal the sick. The casting out of devils was included, no doubt, but it was not specifically mentioned, and this being an extra beyond the words of their commission, they were especially delighted with it! "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Your name."

18-20. *And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.* That is a higher privilege than to be master over demons, or to be able to tread on serpents! That day of miracles is past, but the power of the Gospel is a spiritual power the same as before. We still cast out devils. Still are men delivered from the dominion of Satan.

21, 22. *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knows who the Son is, but the Father.* You know that He is the Son of God. You know that He is Jesus of Nazareth. But you do not know Him, you cannot know Him, as His Father knows Him! He is known in His fullness only to the Father.

22. *And who the Father is, but the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.* "Can you, by searching, find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection?" No, you cannot. The Son of God must reveal His Father to you, or you will never know Him!

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

THE JOY OF JESUS

NO. 1571

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

***“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.”
Luke 10:21, 22.***

LAST Lord’s-Day morning we considered the lamentations of Jesus. [#1570 – *The Lamentations of Jesus.*] We will now turn our thoughts to the joys of Jesus. It is remarkable that this is the only instance on record in the Gospels in which our Lord is said to have *rejoiced*. It stands alone and is, therefore, the more to be prized—“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit.” He was the “Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” for our sakes and, therefore, we are not astonished to find few indications of joy in the story of His life. Yet I do not think it would be fair to infer from the fact of a solitary mention of His rejoicing that He did not rejoice at other times. On the contrary, our Lord must, despite His sorrow, have possessed a peaceful, happy spirit.

He was infinitely benevolent and went about doing good—and benevolence always finds a quiet delight in blessing others. The joy of the lame when they leaped and of the blind when they saw must have gladdened the soul of Jesus. To cause happiness to others must bring to a sympathetic bosom some degree of pleasure. Sir Philip Sydney was known to say, “Doing good is the only certainly happy action of a man’s life,” and assuredly it is hard to see how the love of Jesus could refrain from rejoicing in blessing those around Him. Moreover, our Lord was so pure that He had a well of joy within which could not fail Him. If it is, indeed, true that virtue is true happiness, then Jesus of Nazareth was happy. The poet said—

***“What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
The soul’s calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy,
Is virtue’s prize.”***

Such calm and joy must have been the Savior’s, though, for our sake, He bowed beneath the heavy load of sorrow.

The perfectly holy God is the perfectly happy God and the perfectly holy Christ, had it not been that He had taken upon Himself our griefs and sicknesses, would have been perfectly happy. And even with our griefs and sicknesses there must have been a deep peace of soul within Him which sustained Him in His deepest woe. Did not the Father, Himself, say of His beloved Son, “You love righteousness and hate wickedness: there-

fore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows”? Nor is this all, for our blessed Lord lived in unbroken fellowship with the Father and fellowship with God will not permit a soul to abide in darkness for, walking with God, He walks in the Light as God is in the Light. Such a mind may, for certain purposes, come under clouds and glooms, but the Light of God is sown for the righteous and it will speedily break forth as the dawn of day.

Those nights of prayer and days of perfect service must have brought their own calm to the tried heart of the Son of God. Besides, Christ Jesus was a Man of faith—He was faith’s highest exposition and example. He is “the Author and the Finisher of faith,” in whom we see its life, walk and triumph. Our Lord was the Incarnation of perfect confidence in the Father—in His life all the histories of great Believers are summed up. Read the 11th chapter of Hebrews and see the great cloud of witnesses and then mark how, in the 12th chapter, Paul bids us look to Jesus as though in His Person the whole multitude of the witnesses could be seen!

He it was, who, “for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame.” His faith must, therefore, have anticipated the reward of His passion and have brought the joy there home to Him even while He sorrowed here. His joy was a light from the lamps of the future which were to be kindled by His death and victory! He had meat to eat that His disciples knew not of for His long-sighted eyes saw further than they and while *they* mourned His departure, He saw the expediency of it and told them that if they loved Him they would rejoice because He was going to the Father! Be sure of this, that our Lord felt, beneath the great floods of outward affliction, an under-current of joy, for He said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.”

What did He mean by this if He had no joy in His people? Could He have spoken so many happy words and so often have said to His disciples, “Be of good cheer,” if He had been always downcast? But it is still remarkable that our text should be the only recorded instance of His joy, so far as the Evangelists are concerned. It is clear that joy was not a distinguishing feature in our Lord’s life so as to strike the beholder. Peace may have sat serenely on His brow, but nothing of the exuberant spirits which are seen in some men, for His countenance was marred with lines of care and grief.

We do not hear that He laughed, though it is thrice recorded that He wept and here, for once, as quite unique, we find the Inspired assurance that He rejoiced. Because of its singularity, the record deserves to be looked into with care that we may see the cause of delight so unusual. The words here used are very emphatic. “He rejoiced.” The Greek word is much stronger than the English rendering—it signifies “to leap for joy.” It is the word of the blessed Virgin’s song, “My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” Strong emotions of delight were visible upon our Lord’s face and were expressed by the tones of His voice as well as by His Words.

It is clear that He was greatly glad. The text also says, He “rejoiced in spirit,” that is, deep down in the very center of His Nature—in that largest and most capacious part of His human being, the Redeemer rejoiced! Man

is body, soul and spirit, but the spirit is the nobler and most vital part and it was with a spiritual, inward and most living joy that the Lord Jesus Christ rejoiced. It was joy of the truest and fullest sort which made the Savior's heart dance! Let us come, then, near to this rejoicing Savior who wraps the garments of praise about Him, perfumed with delight! Let us see if we cannot learn something from His joys, since, I trust, we gathered something from His griefs.

I. First, let us look at our Lord and note that His joy was JOY IN THE FATHER'S REVELATION OF THE GOSPEL. "I thank You, O Father, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes." He rejoices in His Father's revelation of the Gospel! It was not joy in the fame which had gathered about His name insomuch that John heard of it in prison. It was not joy in the manifest tokens of power that went forth with His commissioners, though they rejoiced that devils were subject unto them. No, it was joy in God's revealing the Gospel to the sons of men!

I call your attention to the fact that He ascribed all that was done to the *Father* and rejoiced that the Father was working with Him. His disciples came back to Him and said, "Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name." And they spoke not amiss, for the name of Jesus was their strength and deserved honor. But the Lord, with that sacred self-abnegation which was so natural to Him, replies, "I thank You, O Father, that You have revealed these things." He takes no honor unto Himself, but ascribes the Glory unto the Father who worked with Him. Imitate Him, O you who call Him Lord! Let the work of the Father be your joy!

If God gives us any success in the preaching of the Gospel, let our joy be that the Father's power is going forth with His Word! We are not so much to joy in our instrumentality as in the hand which uses the instrument and works by it. Oh, misery! Misery! To be attempting Gospel ministry without God! But oh, bliss, unspeakable bliss to feel that when we lift our hand, God's hand is lifted, too, and when we speak the Word, the voice of God is ringing through our feeble speech and reaching the hearts of men! It is to true Believers a great joy that the Father is bringing home His wandering children and receiving penitents into His bosom!

The Savior's joy was that through the Father's Grace men were being enlightened. The 70 disciples had been from city to city, working miracles and preaching the Gospel and their Master was glad when they returned with tidings of success—"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." It pleases Jesus when the Gospel has free course and God is glorified thereby. Then, in a measure, He sees of the travail of His soul and is filled with satisfaction. Shall we not find our joy where He finds His? Shall we not enter into the joy of our Lord? Whenever we hear good news of a village evangelized, of a township moved by the glad tidings, of a country long shut up from the Gospel at last opened to the Word of God, let us feel our highest and deepest joy!

Rather let us rejoice in this than in business prosperity or personal advantage. What if we can find no joy in our own circumstances? What if even spiritual affairs within our soul are full of difficulty? Let us joy and rejoice that God the Father is revealing the Light of His Gospel among the

sons of men! Be this our highest wish, “Your kingdom come,” and in that coming kingdom let us find our utmost happiness! Be sure that the joy which warmed the heart of Christ can do us no harm—it must be a pure, sacred and ennobling joy and, therefore, let us indulge in it very largely! Christ’s joy lay in the Father’s sending forth His Light and His Truth—making men to see things which Prophets and kings had desired to behold, but had not been favored to see. Jesus rejoiced in this, that the blessings of Divine Grace were being revealed by the Father!

Further, our Savior’s joy lay very much in this, that this revelation to men was being made through such humble instruments. We read that, “He lifted up His eyes on His disciples and said, Blessed be you poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.” There was not among the 12 or the 70, one person of any social status. They were the common people of the field and the sea. In later years Paul was raised up—a man richly endowed in learning, whose great abilities were used by the Lord—but the first ministers of Christ were a band of fishermen and countrymen, altogether unknown in the schools of learning and regarded as “unlearned and ignorant men.”

The grandest era in the world’s history was ushered in by nobodies! By persons who, like their Leader, were despised and rejected of men! To any one of them it might have been said, “For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence.”

Observe carefully that the persons whom our Lord had been employing were not only obscure in origin, but they were of a low degree of *spiritual* understanding. They were, in fact, babes in Grace as well as worldly wisdom! Their joy, when they came back to tell what had been done, was evidently childish as well as gracious. They rejoiced in their success as children do in their little achievements. But their Lord was thankful because He saw the open-heartedness and the simplicity of their characters in the gladsome way in which they cried, “Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Your name.” And He thanked God that by such babes as these, such *children*, such true-hearted *children* and yet such mere *children*, He was pleased to make known His Word among the sons of men!

Rest you sure that our Lord, even at this day, finds a delight in the weakness of the instruments He uses—

**“He takes the fool and makes him know
The mysteries of His Grace;
To bring aspiring wisdom low,
And all its pride abase.”**

Not you, you scribes who have counted every letter of the Old Testament, does He elect to be filled with the Spirit! Not you, you Pharisees who so abound in outward religion, does He choose to spread the inward Life and Light! Not you, you Sadducees who are versed in skeptical philosophy and boast your cleverness, does He call to preach His Gospel to the poor! He has taken to be the heralds of His Glory men from the sea of Galilee whom

you despise—simple-hearted men ready to learn—and then as ready to proclaim, again, the message of salvation! Our Lord was by no means displeased with the absence of culture and learning in His followers, for the culture and learning of the period were utter vanity!

He was glad to see that they did not pretend to wisdom or astuteness, but came to Him in all simplicity to accept His teaching because they believed Him to be the Son of God. Jesus rejoiced in spirit about this. And yet, further, His great joy was that the converts were of such a character as they were. “You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.” It is true that certain persons sneeringly asked, “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in Him?” There were some who thought little of Jesus because those whom they imagined to be learned men had not expressed their approval of His cause. Our Lord, Himself, had no concern in that direction, but called the Pharisees blind and the scribes hypocrites, as they assuredly were!

Other voices may have inquired, “Who are these that follow Jesus? Of what class are His converts?” The answer would have been, “They are rustics, fishermen and common people with, here and there, a woman of substance and a man of means. The bulk of them are the poor to whom, for the first time, the Gospel is preached. Such have gathered to Christ and received His Word.” Some even said that a parcel of boys and girls were in the streets crying, “Hosanna,” and this showed how commonplace the Preacher was. At this day I have heard the Lord’s people spoken of as a poor set of people of no position—a lot of persons whose names will never be known—a mere assembly of Jack, Tom, Harry, Mary, Susan and the rest.

This was the very thing to which Jesus refers with thankfulness! He was glad that He was surrounded by unsophisticated, childlike natures, rather than by Pharisees and scribes who, even if they are converted, are sure to bring some of their old manners with them. He was glad that the Father had revealed His Light and His salvation to those who were lowly and humble, who, though poor in this world, were “rich in faith, giving glory to God.” Thus you see that the very fact which certain very superior people fling in our teeth as a disgrace, was to our Savior a subject of joy! I have heard foolish ones sneer at certain Churches which are earnest for the Truth of God by affectedly asking, “Who are they? A mob of common people, tradesmen or working men and the like. Are there any of the aristocracy among them? Do you find any of the highly intellectual in their ranks?”

What if we do not? We shall not, therefore, sorrow, but join with Jesus in saying, “We thank You, O Father, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.” Christ found Himself at home among those open-hearted folks that gathered around Him, for He was, Himself, a Child-Man, who wore His heart upon His sleeve, boasting of no wisdom though He was Wisdom itself! Our Lord never sought Himself, as the wise and prudent of His age did. He was meek and lowly in heart and, therefore, found Himself at home among a people who were willing to receive His teaching and eager to proclaim it,

again, to their countrymen. And so He blessed and praised God that such were chosen.

Oh, Friends, it is not that Christ would not have the greatest come to Him! It is not that Christ would not have the learned come to Him! But so it is that His greatest joy is that those come who, whatever the greatness or the littleness of their learning, are childlike in *spirit* and, like babes, are willing to learn and prepared to receive what He shall teach them! He was glad to receive persons with lowly notions of their own intelligence and a supreme belief in the veracity of their great Teacher. If those who are reckoned to be learned, profess to come to Christ, they are generally a trial to the Church. All the merely human learning that has ever come unto the Church has, as a rule, been mischievous to it—and it always needs great Grace to keep it in its right place.

At first came the Gnostics with their philosophy and into what perils they dragged the Church of God, I cannot stop to tell you! Then arose others out of whose wisdom grew Arianism and the Church was well-near withered to her very heart by that deadly form of heresy! The schoolmen did for her much the same and to this day whenever any of the would-be-thought-wise men meddle with religion, they tell us that the plain Word of God, as we read it, must be interpreted by modern thought and that it bears another meaning which only the cultured can possibly comprehend. When philosophy invades the domain of Revelation, it ends in perverting the Gospel and in bringing in “another gospel which is not another.”

It is with human wisdom as it is with human riches—how difficult shall they that have it enter into the Kingdom of God! True wisdom is another thing—that is a gift which comes from above and causes no puffing up of the heart, for it adores the God from whom it came! The wisdom which is true and real, the Lord is prepared to give to those who confess their ignorance—to those who will be babes in His sight. It is not ignorance which God loves, but *conceit* that He *hates*! Knowledge is good, but the affectation of it is evil! O for more true wisdom! May God give us much of it and may those who are babes, as yet, come to be men of full stature in Christ Jesus! Yet forget not your Lord’s joy in the character of His converts, but remember the lines in which the poet of the sanctuary paraphrases our text—

***“Jesus, the man of constant grief,
A mourner all His days,
His Spirit once rejoiced aloud,
And turned His joy to praise.
Father, I thank Your wondrous love,
That has revealed Your Son
To men unlearned and to babes
Has made Your Gospel known.
The mysteries of redeeming Grace
Are hidden from the wise,
While pride and carnal reasoning join
To swell and blind their eyes.”***

Our Lord’s joy sprang from one other source, namely, His view of the manner in which God was pleased to save His people. It was by revealing these things to them. There is, then, to every man who is saved, a revelation, not of anything over and above what is given us in the Word of God,

but of that same Truth of God to himself, *personally*, and with *power*. In the Word of God is the Light of God, but what is needed is that each man's eyes should be opened by the finger of God to see it! Truth in the Scriptures will never save till it becomes the Truth of God in the *heart*—it must be “revealed” unto the most unprejudiced and true-hearted.

Even men of childlike spirits and receptive natures will not see the Truth unless it is especially revealed to them. There must be a work of the Father through the Holy Spirit upon each intellect and mind before it can perceive the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Therefore, when unregenerate men tell us that they cannot see the beauty of the Gospel, we are not at all astonished—we never thought they could! And likewise with boastful men of “culture, for we knew that they would say so! Blind men are little pleased with color and deaf men care little for music. Human wisdom cannot make a man without eyes see the Light of God!

What do you know about the Gospel, oh you blinded wise men? What judges can you be of the Light of Revelation who seal up your eyes with the mud of your own cleverness and then say you cannot see? Christ never intended that you should! He will only reveal Himself as He pleases and He has pleased to do this to another kind of persons from what you are. Oh, you that are wise in your own conceit, the gate of true Wisdom is barred against you! You cannot, by searching, discover God and when He graciously reveals Himself you refuse to see Him and, therefore, it is just that you should perish in the dark! Well do you deserve this judgment. Let justice be done!

That God had been pleased to reveal Himself to many through the preaching of the 70 was a great joy to Jesus and let us also rejoice whenever God reveals Himself to men! Let us be glad when one who is simple in heart is made a child by Divine Grace through being born again. Let us, furthermore, rejoice whenever conversion is worked by instruments that cannot possibly claim the glory of it. Let us praise and bless God that salvation is His own work from first to last! Come, all you who love the Father and say, with the great Firstborn, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

II. I have thus tried, as far as I am able, to explain the cause of the Savior's joy. I would now call your attention to HIS MODE OF EXPRESSING THAT JOY. I have noticed some kind of joy in conversions which has not been wise in its expression, but has savored of glorying in the flesh. “Oh, we have had a wonderful time, we have had a blessed season! We have been visited by those dear men and we have exerted ourselves in downright earnest to get up a revival. We have done wonders.” Such talk will not do! Hear how the Savior speaks. His joy finds tongue in *thanksgiving*—“I thank You, O Father.” He ascribes the work to the Father and then renders all the praise to Him. This is the eloquence of joy—“I thank You, O Father.”

Brothers and Sisters, whenever you are happy sing hymns of thanksgiving! “Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms.” The most fit language for joy, whether it is on earth or in Heaven, is adoration and thanksgiving to God!

Blessed be the name of the Lord that we are gladdened in the harvest field of Christian work, for it is He that gives Seed to the sower and causes the Word to spring up and bring forth fruit a hundred-fold. Our Lord found expression for His joy in declaring the Father's sovereignty. "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth." Some shrink back from the idea of God as Lord of all things above and below. To them the free will of man seems the greatest of all facts and, lest there should be the slightest intrusion upon man's domain, they would have God limited as to His absolute power.

To magnify man they would minimize God! You will hear them talking against those of us who magnify Divine Sovereignty and imputing to us the notion of a certain arbitrariness in God, although such a thought has never entered our minds! Jehovah, who gives no account of His matters, but orders all things according to the good pleasure of His will, is never arbitrary, unjust, or tyrannical—and yet He is absolute and uncontrolled—a Sovereign who reigns by His own self-existent power. He is, Himself, the source and origin of all law. He can be trusted with absolute Sovereignty because He is Infinite Love and Infinite Goodness. I will go the utmost length as to the absolute supremacy of God and His right to do as He wills and especially to do as He wills with His own, which Gospel Grace most certainly is.

He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, "What are You doing?" When Christ was most glad He expressed that gladness by ascribing unto God an Infinite Sovereignty and shall that Truth of God be gloomy to us? No, rather we will, each one, view the work of the Father's Grace and cry, "I thank You, O Father and I thank You all the more because I know that You are Lord of Heaven and earth!" If I am addressing any who quarrel with the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God, I would advise them to cease their rebellion, for "the Lord reigns." Let them at least go as far as the Psalm, "Let the people tremble" even if they cannot go a little further and sing, "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."

Power and rule are best in the hands of the great Jehovah who always links together, in His own single Character both Fatherhood and Sovereignty. "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth." Dismiss from your minds all caricatures of the doctrine and receive it in its purest form—"the Lord is king forever and ever. Hallelujah!" Your joy, if it is deeply spiritual and very great, will never find room enough for the sweep of its Atlantic waves till you delight yourself in the absolute supremacy of God. The deep groundswell of delight within the Redeemer's soul could find no grander space over which it could expand its force than the unlimited power and dominion of the Lord of Heaven and earth—whose key it is which opens or shuts the kingdom of Heaven—whose Word it is which hides or reveals the things of eternity!

Our Lord delighted in the special act of Sovereignty which was before Him, that the Lord had "hid these things from the wise and prudent and had revealed them unto babes." He communed with God in it! He took pleasure in it and said, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your

sight.” His voice, as it were, went with the Father’s voice. He agreed with the Father’s choice, He rejoiced in it, He triumphed in it! The will of the Father was the will of Christ and He had fellowship with the Father in every act of His Sovereign choice, yes, He magnified God for it in His inmost spirit! He says, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight,” for He knew that what seems good to God must be good. Some things seem good to us which are evil—but that which seems good to God is good!

Jesus praises God about it for no other reason than it is God’s good pleasure that it should be so. Oh, what a state of heart it will be for you and me to get into when we can express our highest joy by a perfect acquiescence in the will of God, whatever that will may be! See *here*, Brothers and Sisters, the road to contentment, to peace, to happiness, yes, heavenly life this side of the grave! If you ever come to feel that what pleases God pleases you, you will be glad, even, in affliction and tribulation!

If your heart is ever schooled down to accept as your will that which is God’s will and to believe anything to be good because God thinks it good, then you may go through the rest of your days singing and waiting till your Lord takes you to His bosom! Soon will you rise to the place where all the singers meet and sing forever unto God and the Lamb—all self and rebellion being forever banished. Herein, then, Christ found a channel for His joy—in thanksgiving, in magnifying the Divine Sovereignty, in having communion with it and in delighting in it!

III. Thirdly and briefly, I want you to see OUR LORD’S EXPLANATION OF THE FATHER’S ACT. The Father had been pleased to hide these things from the wise and prudent and to reveal them unto babes. And Jesus Christ is perfectly satisfied with that order of things, quite content with the kind of converts He has and the kind of preachers that God had given Him. For, first, the Lord Jesus does not need prestige. Read the 22nd verse—“All things are delivered to Me of My Father.” A mere pretender, when he begins to prophesy and set himself up for a religious leader—how pleased he is when some learned doctor endorses his claims! If some man of wealth and station comes to his side, how he plumes himself!

The Savior of our souls sought no such aids. The verdict of the world’s literary intelligentsia could not make His Word more truthful than it is, nor more convincing, for its power lies in the Spirit which reveals it. If great men say “Yes,” they will not make His doctrine more sure! Nor will they make it less truthful if they all say, “No.” Prestige for Christ? It is blasphemy to think of such a thing! “All things,” He says, “are delivered to Me of My Father.” High Priests and leaders of religion denounce Him, but all things are delivered to Him of His Father! The Sanhedrim determines to put Him down, but all things are delivered to Him of the Father! The learned deride His claims to be the Messiah! What does it matter to Christ? The Father has committed all things into His hands! He stands alone and asks for no allies. His own power, unborrowed and unaided, is quite sufficient for His purposes.

Do you think, Brothers and Sisters, that we are going to stop our preaching of the Gospel until we shall have the so-called “culture and in-

tellec” of the age upon our side to say, “It is even so”? Not we! But rather do we believe God in the teeth of the wiseacres and say, “Let God be true and every man a liar!” Jesus needs no imprimatur from scholars, no patronage from princes, no apologies from orators! The pomp and power and wisdom and cunning of the world were not with Him and He thanks God that He is not encumbered with such doubtful gain, but that this Truth has been revealed to those who are not wise in their own eyes, nor intelligent in their own esteem, but, like children, willing to learn from God and glad to believe all that He reveals!

See how the Lord explains it further, by showing that human wisdom cannot discover God. “No man knows who the Son is but the Father and who the Father is but the Son.” No man though he is a master in Israel! Men of science may puzzle their brains and with great ingenuity they may try to thread the intricacies of the unknown, but they must err from the truth if they refuse the Revelation of God! Such a thing as natural religion, spontaneously born of man’s intellect, does not exist. “Oh,” you say, “surely there is *much* of it!” I say that whatever is *truly* religious in it was borrowed from Revelation and has been handed down by tradition! Talk of comparative religions—there is but one and the other pretenders have stolen certain of its clothes.

Men see, no doubt, much of God in Nature, but they would not have done so had there been no Revelation. First came the Light through Revelation and then, afterwards, when men saw it reflected from various objects, they dreamed that the Light came out of the reflectors! Men hear something of revealed Truth and when their thoughts run in that line, that which they have heard is awakened in their minds and they think *themselves* the inventors. God is not known except as He reveals Himself, nor can He be discovered by human ingenuity! Carnal wit and thought tend not that way, but tend from God unto blackest darkness. God is ONLY to be known THROUGH CHRIST, so the text says—“No man knows who the Father is but the Son and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.”

As the light, after God had created it, was lodged in the sun, so is all knowledge of God treasured up in Christ as the Sun of Righteousness. He it is that in Himself has Light, the Light that lightens every man that comes into the world, if he is lightened at all. We must receive Christ or abide in darkness! Yes, and the Light which is in Christ is not perceptible by any man except by revelation. What does the text say?—“No man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.” There must be a *special* and distinct revelation of Christ and of the Father *by* Christ to each man, or else he will remain in blindness to the day of his death. The power, then, which lies in merely *human* wisdom is a force which often hinders men from coming under the influence of revelation. Only by revelation can they know and by a revelation personally receive.

But the man is so wise that he does not want to be taught—he can find it out for himself. Yield himself to an Infallible Book or an Infallible Spirit? Not he! Well, then, because of his very wisdom, he becomes incapable of learning! Truth to tell, what is human wisdom? The supposed wisdom of man is folly—that is the short for it all. They write a history, sometimes, of

religious thought and of the various phases through which Christianity has gone and on this they ground remarks! But I should like somebody to write a truthful history of philosophy. The history of philosophy is a record of the insanities of mankind—a catalog of lunacies! You shall see one generation of philosophers busily engaged in refuting those that went before them and doing it very well, indeed!

But what will the next generation do? Why, refute this one! The philosophies that were current 100 years ago are all exploded, now, and all the teachings of today, except such as are clear matters of fact, will be exploded before I go down to my grave if I live to be gray-headed! There is not a philosopher now living that can be sure but what there is some other fact to yet be discovered which will upset every hypothesis that he has sent forth into the world! Philosophers who conceitedly glory over believers in Revelation are fools, for they know nothing with certainty and absolute certainty appertains only to Divine Revelation! In those who pretend to wisdom apart from God, folly abounds. There is no light in them, nor in any man except that which comes from the Spirit of God.

That wisdom which sets itself up apart from God is atheism, because God knows and He says to man, "I will teach you. I will reveal Myself to you by My Son." But that wisdom says, "We do not want to be taught—we know by ourselves." Then you are a rival to God! You pretend to be superior to God since you are not willing to learn of Him, but will rather trust yourself. This folly and this atheism are the reasons why God hides His mind from the wise and the clever—they reject Him and, therefore, He gives them over to a judicial blindness and Christ thanks Him that He does, for it is but justice that He should do so.

When the Lord is pleased to give to any man a childlike spirit, then is he on the road to knowledge. This is true even in science, itself. The secrets of Nature will never be revealed to the man who believes that he already knows them. Nature herself does not teach the man who comes to her with prejudice. A man who thinks he knows beforehand, sits down to study Nature and what does he generally discover? Well, he learnedly dreams of a universal solvent, or that the baser metals can be transmuted into gold, or that there is a perpetual motion. Those, you say, are things philosophers believed years ago. Yes, but their theories of today are just as stupid and the science of today will be the jest of the next century!

The greatest absurdities have been the pets of philosophy for hundreds of years and why was it that men did not know better? Because they did not go to Nature and ask her to teach them what was *fact*—they made an hypothesis and then they went to Nature to force her to prove it, as they do now. They start with a prejudgment of what they would like to be and then take facts and twist them round into their system and so they blind themselves by their own wisdom! Well, if it is so in Nature and I am sure it is, it is certainly more so in Grace, for when a man comes to the Word of God and says, "Now, *I* know theology beforehand. I do not come here to find my creed in the Bible and learn it like a child, but I come to turn texts about and make them fit into my system." Well, he will blind himself and will be a fool and it is right he should be blinded, for has he not done that willfully which must of necessity lead to such an end?

Brethren, simple teachableness is the first essential for the reception of a Revelation from God and if you have it today, if you are seeking after the Truth of God, if you are crying after her and if you are willing that God should reveal her to you—if you are anxious that He should reveal His Truth to you in Christ—you are the sort of person upon whom God in Sovereignty looks with Divine favor and unto such as you will He reveal Himself. What is needed is faith, a childlike, receptive faith—not faith in a pope, not faith in a man, not faith in an old established creed, but faith in God! Oh, my Hearer, if you are willing to learn of Him, you shall not be left uninstructed!

Now a lesson or two and I have done. The first lesson to be learned is this. If great men, if eminent men, if so-called learned men are not converted, do not be cast down about it—it is not likely they will be. In the next place, if many converts are obscure persons, persons without note or name, do not be at all disgusted with that fact. Who are you that you should be? Who are you that you should despise any upon whom God has looked in favor? Rather rejoice exceedingly with your Lord that God has chosen the despised and you with them!

Next, learn that the Sovereignty of God is always exercised in such a way that the pure in heart may always rejoice in it. God never did a Sovereign act that the loving Christ, Himself, could not rejoice in. Be you content, therefore, to leave everything in the hands of God that you do not understand and when His way is in the sea, be quite as glad as when His way is in the sanctuary! When His footsteps are not known, feel that they are quite as righteous and quite as holy as when you can perceive the path in which He moves. The ultimate honor of the Gospel is secured unto God alone—let that be our last lesson.

When the wind-up of all things shall come, there shall be no honor to any of *us*, nor would we desire it. But out of it all, out of the choice of each one and out of the Revelation made to each one, will come up, multiplied into a thousand thunders, the voice as of Christ in His whole mystical body, “I thank You, O Father.” This shall be the song of Heaven concerning the whole matter—as well concerning the lost as the saved. “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth.” There shall be no quibbling among the pure in heart, nor questions among the perfected spirits, but the whole family reviewing the whole of the Father’s government—the hiding as well as the revealing, shall at the last say, Christ leading the utterance—“I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.”

Brothers and Sisters, let us learn our need of a personal revelation! Let us seek it if we have not yet received it! With a childlike spirit let us seek it in Christ, for only He can reveal the Father to us! And when we have it, let it be our joy that we see Him revealing it to others and let this be our prayer, that the God of Jacob would yet bring others unto Christ who shall rejoice in the Light of God that has made glad our eyes! The Lord be with you. Amen.

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THE GOOD SAMARITAN

NO. 1360

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 17, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

[On behalf of the Hospitals of London.]

“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the Law? How Do you read it? And he, answering, said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. And He said unto him, You have answered right; do this, and you shall live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? And Jesus, answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you. Which now of these three, do you think, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do you likewise.”
Luke 10:25-37.

OUR text is the whole story of the Samaritan, but as that is very long, let us, for our memories' sake, consider the exhortation in the 37th verse to be our text. “Go, and do you likewise.” There are certain persons in the world who will not allow the preacher to speak upon anything but those doctrinal statements concerning the way of salvation which are known as “the Gospel.” If the preacher shall insist upon some virtue or practical Grace, they straightway say that he is not preaching the Gospel, that he has become legal and is a mere moral teacher. We do not stand in any awe of such criticism, for we clearly perceive that our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, would very frequently have come under it.

Read the Sermon on the Mount and judge whether certain people would be content to hear the likes of it preached to them on the Sabbath. They would condemn it as containing very little Gospel and too much about good works. Our Lord was a great practical Preacher. He frequently delivered addresses in which He made answer to questioners, or gave direction to seekers, or upbraided offenders—and He gave a prominence to practical truth such as some of His ministers dare not imitate! Jesus tells us over and over again the manner in which we are to live towards our fellow men and He lays great stress upon the love which should shine throughout the Christian character.

The story of the good Samaritan, which is now before us, is a case in point, for our Lord is explaining, there, a point which arose out of the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The question is legal and the answer is to the point. But let it never be forgotten that what the Law demands of us, the Gospel produces in us. The Law tells us what we ought to be and it is one objective of the Gospel to raise us to that condition. Therefore our Savior's teaching, though it is eminently practical, is always evangelical. Even in expounding the Law He has always a Gospel design. Two ends are served by His setting up a high standard of duty. On the one He slays the self-righteousness which claims to have kept the Law by making men feel the impossibility of salvation by their own works.

And, on the other hand, He calls Believers away from all content with the mere decencies of life and the routine of outward religion and stimulates them to seek after the highest degree of holiness—indeed, after that excellence of character which only His Grace can give! This morning I trust that though I keep very much to practical points, I shall be guided by the Spirit of Holiness and shall not be guilty of legality, nor will any of you be led into it. I shall *not* hold up the love of our neighbor as a *condition* of salvation, but as a *fruit* of it. I shall not speak of obedience to the Law as the road to Heaven, but I shall show you the pathway which is to be followed by the faith which works by love. Let us proceed to the parable at once.

I. Our first observation will be that THE WORLD IS FULL OF AFFLICTION. This story is but one among a thousand based upon an unhappy occurrence. "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves." He went upon a short journey and almost lost his life on the road. We are never secure from trouble—it meets us around the family hearth and causes us to suffer in our own persons or in those of the dearest relatives. It walks into our shops and counting-houses and tries us—and when we leave home it becomes our fellow traveler and communes with us on the road.

"Although affliction comes not forth of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Frequently the greater afflictions are not occasioned by the fault of the sufferer. Nobody could blame the poor Jew, that when he was going down to Jericho about his business, the thieves beset him and demanded his money, and that when he made some little resistance they wounded him, stripped him and left him half dead. How could he be blamed? It was to him a pure misfortune. Believe me, there is a great deal of sorrow in the world which does not arise out of the vice or folly of the persons enduring it—it comes from the *hand of God* upon the sufferer, not because he is a sinner above others—but for wise ends unknown to us.

Now, this is the kind of distress which, above all others, demands Christian sympathy and the very kind which abounds in our hospitals. The man is not to blame for lying there beaten and bruised—those gaping wounds from which his life is oozing are not of his own inflicting, nor received in a drunken brawl or through attempting a foolhardy feat. He suffers from no fault of his own and, therefore, he has a pressing claim upon the benevolence of his fellow men. Still, very much distress is caused by

the wickedness of others. The poor Jew on the road to Jericho was the victim of the thieves who wounded him and left him half dead. Man is man's worst enemy!

If man were but tamed to peace, the wildest beast in the world would be subdued. And if evil were purged from men's hearts, the major part of the ills of life would cease at once! The drunk's wastefulness and brutality, the proud man's scorn, the oppressor's cruelty, the slanderer's lie, the trickster's cheat, the heartless man's grinding of the faces of the poor—these, all put together, are the roots of almost all the poisonous weeds which multiply upon the face of the earth to our shame and sorrow. If dominant sins could be taken away, as blessed be God they shall when Christ has triumphed through the world, much of human sorrow would be relieved.

When we see innocent persons suffering as the result of the sin of others, our pity should be awakened. How many there are of little children starving and pining into chronic disease through a father's drunkenness which keeps the table bare! Wives, too, who work hard, are brought down to pining sickness and painful disease by the laziness and cruelty of those who should have cherished them. Laborers, too, are often sorely oppressed in their wages and have to work themselves to death's door to earn a pittance. Those are the people who ought to have our sympathy when accident or disease bring them to the hospital gates, "wounded and half dead."

The man in the parable was quite helpless. He could do nothing for himself. There he must lie and die—those huge wounds must bleed his very soul away unless a generous hand shall interfere. It is as much as he can do to groan. He cannot even dress his wounds, much less arise and seek shelter! He is bleeding to death among the pitiless rocks on the descent to Jericho and he must leave his body to be fed upon by hawks and crows unless some friend shall come to his help. When a man can help himself and does not, he deserves to suffer. When a man flings away opportunities by his idleness or self-indulgence, a measure of suffering ought to be permitted to him as a cure for his vices.

But when persons are sick or injured and are unable to pay for the aid of the nurse and the physician, then is the time when true-hearted philanthropy should promptly step in and do its best. So our Savior teaches us here. Certain paths of life are peculiarly subject to affliction. The way which led from Jerusalem to Jericho was always infested by robbers. Jerome tells us that it was called the "bloody way" on account of the frequent highway robberies and murders which were committed there. And it is not so long ago as to be beyond the memory of man that an English traveler met his death on that road, while even very recent travelers tell us that they have been either threatened or actually attacked in that particularly gloomy region—the desert which goes down to the city of palm trees.

So, also, in the world around us there are paths of life which are highly dangerous and fearfully haunted by disease and accident. Years ago there were many trades in which, from lack of precaution, death slew its thousands. I thank God that sanitary and precautionary laws are better regarded and men's lives are thought to be somewhat more precious. Yet

there are still ways of life which may each be called “the bloody way”—pursuits which are necessary to the community, but highly dangerous to those who follow them. Our mines, our railways and our seas show a terrible roll of suffering and death. Long hours in ill-ventilated workrooms are accountable for thousands of lives and so are stinted wages, which prevent a sufficiency of food from being procured. Many a needlewoman’s way of life is truly a path of blood!

When I think of the multitudes of our working people in this city who have to live in close, unhealthy rooms, crowded together in lanes and courts where the air is stagnant, I do not hesitate to say that much of the road which has to be trod by the poor of London is as much deserving of the name of the way of blood as the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. If they do not lose their money it is because they never have it! If they do not fall among thieves, they fall among diseases which practically wound them and leave them half dead.

Now, if you have not to engage in such avocations. If your pathway does not lead you from Jerusalem to Jericho, but takes you, perhaps, full often from Jerusalem to Bethany where you can enjoy the sweetnesses of domestic love and the delights of Christian fellowship, you ought to be very thankful and be all the more ready to assist those who, for your sakes, or for the benefit of society at large, have to follow the more dangerous roads of life. Do you not agree with me that such persons ought to be among the first to receive our Christian kindness? Such abound in our hospitals and elsewhere. Let that stand. It is clear that there is a great deal of affliction in the world and much of it is of the sort which deserves to be relieved at once!

II. Secondly, THERE ARE MANY WHO NEVER RELIEVE AFFLICTION. Our Savior tells us of two, at least, who “passed by on the other side” and I suppose He might have prolonged the parable so as to have mentioned two dozen if He had chosen to do so—and even then He might have been content to mention but *one* good Samaritan, for I hardly think that there is one good Samaritan to two heartless persons. I wish there were, but I fear the good Samaritans are very few in proportion to the number who act the part of the priest and the Levite.

Now, notice who the persons were that refused to render aid to the man in distress. First, they were brought to the spot by God’s Providence on purpose to do so. What better thing could the Lord, Himself, do for the poor half-dead man than to bring some man to help him? An angel could not well have met the case. How could an angel, never wounded, understand binding up wounds and pouring in wine and oil? No, a man was needed who would know what was necessary! Someone was needed who would, with brotherly sympathy, cheer the mind while doctoring the body. In our English version we read, “By *chance* there came down a certain priest that way,” but learned Greek scholars read it, “By a coincidence.”

It was in the order of Divine Providence that a priest should come first to this afflicted person, so that he might go and examine the case as a man of education and skill. And then when the Levite came afterwards, he would be able to carry on what the priest started—and if one could not carry the poor man—the two might, between them, be able to carry him to

the inn, or one might remain to guard him while the other ran for help. God brought them to this position, but they willfully refused the sacred duty which Providence and humanity demanded of them! Now, you that are wealthy are sent into our city on purpose that you may have compassion upon the sick, the wounded, the poor and the needy. God's intent in endowing any person with more substance than he needs is that he may have the pleasurable office, or rather let me say, the delightful *privilege*, of relieving need and woe!

Alas, how many there are who consider that store which God has put into their hands on purpose for the poor and needy to be only so much provision for their excessive luxury—a luxury which pampers them but yields them neither benefit nor pleasure! Others dream that wealth is given them that they may keep it under lock and key, cankering and corroding, breeding covetousness and care. Who dares roll a stone over the well's mouth when thirst is raging all around? Who dares keep the bread from the women and the children who are ready to gnaw their own arms for hunger? Above all, who dares allow the sufferer to writhe in agony uncared for, and the sick to pine into their graves unnursed?

This is no small sin! It is a crime to be answered to the Judge when He shall come to judge the quick and dead! Those people who neglected the poor man were brought there on purpose to relieve him, even as you are, and yet they passed by on the other side. They were both of them people, too, who *ought* to have relieved him, because they were very familiar with things which should have softened their hearts. If I understand the passage, the priest was coming down from Jerusalem. I have often wondered which way he was going—whether he was going *up* to the Temple and was in a hurry to be in time for fear of keeping the congregation waiting—or whether he had fulfilled his duty and had finished his month's course at the temple and was going home.

I conclude that he was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, because it says, "By chance there came *down* a certain priest that way." Now to the metropolis it is always, "going up"—going up to London, or up to Jerusalem—and as this priest was coming *down*, he was going to Jericho. It was quite literally going down, for Jericho lies very low. I conclude that he was going home to Jericho, after having fulfilled his month's engagements in the Temple where he had been familiar with the worship of the Most High. He had been, in that month, as near to God as man could be, serving amidst sacrifices and holy Psalms and solemn prayers! And yet he had not learned how to make a sacrifice, himself! He had heard those prophetic words which say, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," but he was entirely forgetful of such teaching! He had often read that Law, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," but he regarded it not.

The Levite had not been quite so closely engaged in the sanctuary as the priest, but he had taken his share in holy work and yet he came away from it with a hard heart. This is a sad fact. Both men had been near to God, but were not like He. Dear people, you may spend Sabbath after Sabbath in the worship of God, or what you think to be so, and you may behold Christ Jesus set forth visibly crucified among you—and themes which ought to turn a heart of stone to flesh may pass before your minds

and, nevertheless, you may return into the world to be as miserly as ever—and to have as little feeling towards your fellow men as before! It ought not to be so. I beseech you suffer it not to be so in any case again.

These two persons, moreover, were bound by their profession to have helped this man, for though it was originally said of the high priest, yet I think it could be said of *any* priest, that he was taken from among men that he might have compassion. If anywhere there should be compassion towards men, it should be in the heart of the priest who is chosen to speak for God to men and for men to God. No stone should ever be found in his bosom. He should be gentle, generous-hearted kindly, full of sympathy and tenderness. But this priest was not so, nor was the Levite who ought to have followed in his wake.

And oh, you Christian ministers and all of you who teach in schools, or who undertake any service of Christian ministry—and you ought *all* to do so for the Lord has made all His people to be priests unto Him—there ought to be in you from your very profession, a readiness of heart towards kind actions for those who need them! And there is one thing to be mentioned, also, against this priest and Levite—they were very well aware of the man's condition. They came close to him and saw his state. It is a narrow track way down to Jericho and they were obliged to go almost over his wounded body. The first comer looked at him, but he hurried on. The second appears to have made a further investigation, to have had sufficient curiosity, at any rate, to begin to examine the state of the case. But his curiosity being satisfied, his compassion was not awakened and he hurried away.

Half the neglect of the sick poor arises from not knowing that there are such cases, but many remain willfully in ignorance and such ignorance is no available excuse! In the case of the hospitals for which we plead today, you know that there are persons in them at this moment suffering—persons suffering grievously for no fault of their own—and you know that these need your aid. As I rode, the other evening, by that noble building on our side of the water, St. Thomas' Hospital, I could not help meditating upon what a mass of pain and suffering was gathered within those walls. But then I thanked God that it was within those walls where succor would be most surely rendered to it to the best of human ability. So you know that there is poverty and sickness around you. And if you pass by on the other side you will have looked at it, you will have known about it—and on your heads will be the *criminality* of having left the wounded man unhelped!

Yet the pair had capital excuses! Both the priest and the Levite had excellent reasons for neglecting the bleeding man. I never knew a man refuse to help the poor who failed to give at least one admirable excuse! I believe there is no man on earth, who wickedly rejects the plea of need, who is not furnished with arguments that he is right. They are arguments eminently satisfactory to himself and such as he thinks should silence those who press the case. For instance, the priest and Levite were both in a hurry. The priest had been away for a month at Jerusalem from his wife and dear children—he naturally wanted to get home. If he lingered, the sun might go down—it was an awkward place to be after sundown and

you could not expect him to be so imprudent as to stay in such a with darkness coming on.

Had he not spent a very laborious month in the temple? You do not know how exhausting he had found it to act as a priest for a whole month! And if you did, you would not blame him for wanting to get home to enjoy a little rest! Besides, he had promised to be home at a certain hour and he was a man of punctuality—he would, by no means, cause anxiety to his wife and children who would be looking from the housetop for him. A very excellent excuse was this! But he also felt that he really could not do much good. He did not understand surgery and could not bind up a wound to save his life! He shrank from it—the very *sight* of blood turned his stomach! He could not bring himself to go near a person who was so frightfully mangled.

If he did try to bind up a wound, he is sure he would make a muddle of it. If his wife had been with him, she could have done it, or if he had brought some plaster, liniment, or strapping, he would have tried his best—but as it was, he could do nothing. The poor man, moreover, was evidently half dead and would be quite dead in an hour or two and, therefore, it was a pity to waste time on a hopeless case. Then the priest was only one person and could not be expected to carry a bleeding man—and yet it would be idle to begin with the case and leave him there all night. True, He could almost hear the sound of the Levite's feet—indeed, he *hoped* he was coming up behind, for he felt very nervous at being alone with such a case. But then that was all the more reason for leaving the matter, since the Levite would be sure to attend to it.

Better still was the following line of excuse—you would not have a person stop in a place where another man had been half killed by thieves! The thieves might be back again—they were scarcely out of hearing, even then—and a *priest*, after a month's service, ought to have some fees in his purse! And it was important not to run the risk of losing the support of his family by stopping in a place which was evidently swarming with highwaymen. He might be wounded, too, and then there would be two people half dead and one of them a valuable clergyman! Really, philanthropy would suggest that you take care of yourself, as you could not possibly do any good to this poor man.

And then the man might die and the person found near the body might be charged with the murder. It is always awkward to be found alone in a dark spot with the corpse of one who has evidently suffered from foul play. The priest might be taken up upon suspicion—did not all the principles of prudence suggest that the very best thing that he could do was to get out of the way as quickly as possible? Moreover, he could pray for the man, you know, and he was glad to find that he had a tract with him which he would leave near him—and what with the tract and the prayer, what more could a good man be expected to do?

With this pious reflection he hastened on his way. It is just possible, also, that he did not wish to be defiled. A priest was too holy a person to meddle with wounds and bruises. Who would propose such a thing? He had come from Jerusalem in all the odor of sanctity! He felt himself to be as holy as he could conveniently be and, therefore, he would not expose

such rare excellence to worldly influences by touching a sinner. All these powerful reasons put together made him content to avoid trouble and leave the doing of kindness to others.

Now, this morning, I shall leave you to make all the excuses you like about not helping the poor and aiding the hospitals. And when you have made them, they will be as good as those which I have set before you. You have smiled over what the priest might have said, but if you make any excuses for yourselves whenever real need comes before you and you are able to relieve it, you need not smile over *your* excuses—the devil will do that—you had better cry over them, for there is the gravest reason for lamenting that your heart is hard toward your fellow creatures when they are sick and, perhaps, even sick unto death.

III. In the third place THE SAMARITAN IS A MODEL FOR THOSE WHO HELP THE AFFLICTED. He is a model, first, if we notice who the person was that he helped. The parable does not say so, but it implies that the wounded man was a Jew, and, therefore, the Samaritan was not of the same faith and order. The Apostle says, “As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” This man was *not* of the household of faith, as far as the Samaritan’s judgment went, but he was one of the “*all men.*” The Jew and he were as much apart in religious sympathy as they well could be.

Yes, but he was a *man*—whether he was a Jew or not, he was a man—a wounded, bleeding, dying man. And the Samaritan was another man and so one man felt for another man and came to his aid. Do not ask whether a sick man believes in the 39 Articles, or the Westminster Assembly’s Catechism. Let us hope that he is sound in the faith, but if he is not, his bleeding needs stopping just as much as if he held a perfect creed. You need not enquire whether he is a sound Calvinist, for an Arminian smarts when he is wounded, too! A Churchman feels as much pain as a Dissenter when his leg is broken and an infidel needs nursing when he is crushed in an accident. It is as bad for a man to die with a heterodox creed as with the orthodox faith. Indeed, in some respects it is far worse and, therefore, we should be doubly anxious for his cure.

We are to relieve real distress irrespective of creed, as the Samaritan did. Moreover, the Jews were great haters of the Samaritans and, no doubt, this Samaritan might have thought, “If I were in that man’s case, he would not help me. He would pass me by and say, ‘It is a Samaritan dog, let him be accursed.’” The Jews were accustomed to curse the Samaritans, but it did not occur to the good man to remember what the Jew would have said. He saw him bleeding and he bound up his wounds. Our Savior has not given us, for a golden rule, “Do you to others as others would do to you,” but “as you would they should do to you.” The Samaritan went by that rule and though he knew of the enmity in the Jewish mind, he felt that he must heap coals of fire upon the wounded man by loving help—therefore he went straight away to his relief.

Perhaps at another time the Jew would have put off the Samaritan and refused even to be touched by him, but the tender-hearted sympathizer does not think of that. The poor man is too sick to hold any crotchets or prejudices and when the Samaritan bends over him and pours in the oil

and wine, he wins a grateful glance from the son of Abraham. That poor wounded man was one who could not repay him. He had been stripped of all that he had, even his garments were taken from him. But charity does not look for payment, otherwise it were not charity! The man was a total stranger, too. The Samaritan had never seen him before. What did that matter? He was a *man* and all men are kin. "God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth."

The Samaritan felt that touch of Nature which makes all men kin and he bent over the stranger and relieved his pains. He might have said, "Why should I help? He has been rejected by his own people—the priest and the Levite have left him—his first claim is upon his own countrymen." So have I known some say, "These persons have no claim! They ought to go to their own people." Well, suppose they have gone and failed? Now comes your turn! And what the Jew would not do for the Jew, let the Samaritan do and he shall be blessed in the deed. He had been neglected by the officials and neglected by the saints—the best, or those who ought to be the best, the priest and the Levite—had deserted him and left him to die. The Samaritan is neither saint nor official, but yet he steps in to do the deed! Oh, Christian Brothers and Sisters, take care that you are not put to shame by this Samaritan!

He is a model to us, next, in the spirit in which he did his work. He did it without asking questions. The man was in need. He was sure of that and he helped him at once. He did so without hesitation and made no compact nor agreement with him, but at once proceeding to pour in the oil and wine. He did it without attempting to shift the labor from himself to others. Charity, nowadays, means that A asks B to help him and B, in his wonderful charity, does him the great favor of sending him on to C. That is to say, the common run of benevolent persons, nowadays, put their hands but seldom into their *own* purses, but send people on to a few individuals who find cash for all. It seems to me to be a very mean way of getting rid of a case by saving your own pocket and passing the applicant on to another who is no better off than yourself, but far more generous.

The Samaritan was personally benevolent and therein he is a mirror and model to us all. He did it without any selfish fear. The thieves might have been upon *him*, but he cared nothing for thieves when a life was in danger. Here is a man in need and the man must be relieved—thieves or no thieves—and so he does it. He does it with self-denial, for he finds oil and wine and money at the inn—and everything, though he was by no means a rich man, for he gave two pence—a larger sum than it looks, but still a small sum. He did not fling his alms about because he was rich. He is not said to have given a handful of pence, but two, for he had to count his pence as he expended them. It was a *poor* Samaritan who did this rich and noble act!

The poorest can help the poor—even those who feel distress, themselves, may manifest a generous Christian spirit and give their services. Let them do so as they have opportunity. This man helped his poor neighbor with great tenderness and care. He was like a mother to him. Everything was done with loving thought and with whatever skill he possessed. He did the best he could. Brothers and Sisters, let what we do for

others always be done in the noblest style! Let us not treat the poor like dogs to whom we fling a bone, nor visit the sick like superior beings who feel that they are stooping down to inferiors when they enter their rooms. But in the sweet tenderness of real love, learned at Jesus' feet, let us imitate this good Samaritan!

And what did he do? Well, first, he came to where the sufferer was and put himself into his position. Then he put forth all his skill for him and bound up his wounds, no doubt tearing his own garments to get the bands with which to bind up the wounds. He poured in oil and wine, the best healing mixture that he knew of, and one which he happened to have with him. He then set the sick man on his mule and, of course, *he* had to walk, but this he did right cheerfully, supporting his poor patient as the mule proceeded. He took him to an inn, but he did not leave him there and say, "Someone else will take care of him now." No, he went to the manager of the establishment, gave him money and said, "Take care of him."

I admire that little sentence, because it is first written, "*He* took care of him," and next he said, "Take care of him." What you do, yourself, you may exhort other people to do. He said, "I leave this poor man with you, pray do not neglect him. There are a great many people in the inn, but take care of him." "Is he a brother of yours?" "No, I never saw him before." "Well, are you at all under obligation to him?" "No!—Yes, yes, I feel under obligation to everybody that is a man. If he needs help, I am obliged to help him." "Is that all?" "Yes, but do take care of him. I feel a great interest in him." The Samaritan did not cease till he had gone through with his kindness. He said, "This money may not be sufficient, for it may be a long time before he is able to move. That leg may not soon heal. That broken rib may need long rest. Do not hurry him away. Let him stay here and if he incurs additional expense, I will be sure to pay it when I come back from Jerusalem."

There is nothing like the charity which endures even to the end! I wish I had time to enlarge on all these things, but I cannot do so. Exhibit them in your lives and you will best know what they mean. Go and do likewise, each one of you, and thus reproduce the good Samaritan.

IV. But now, fourthly, WE HAVE A HIGHER MODEL than even the Samaritan—our Lord Jesus Christ. I do not think that our Divine Lord intended to teach anything about Himself in this parable, except so far as He is the great Exemplar of all goodness. He was answering the question, "Who is my neighbor?" and He was not preaching about Himself at all. There has been a great deal of straining of this parable to bring the Lord Jesus and everything about Him into it, but this I dare not imitate. Yet by analogy we may illustrate our Lord's goodness by it.

This is a picture of a generous-hearted man who cares for the needy. But the most generous-hearted man that ever lived was the Man of Nazareth and none ever cared for sick and suffering souls as He has done. Therefore, if we praise the good Samaritan, we should much more extol the blessed Savior whom His enemies called a Samaritan and who never denied the charge, for what cared He if all the prejudice and scorn of men should vent itself on Him? Now, Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus

Christ has done better than the good Samaritan because our case was worse. As I have already said, the wounded man could not blame himself for his sad estate—it was his misfortune, not his fault.

But you and I are not only half dead, but *altogether* dead in trespasses and sins! And we have brought many of our ills upon ourselves. The thieves that have stripped us are our own iniquities! The wounds which we bear have been inflicted by our own suicidal hands! We are not in opposition to Jesus Christ as the poor Jew was to the Samaritan from the mere force of prejudice, but we have been opposed to the blessed Redeemer by nature—we have, from the first, turned away from Him. Alas, we have resisted and rejected Him! The poor man did not ignore his Samaritan friend, but we have done so to our Lord.

How many times have we refused Almighty Love! How often, by unbelief, have we pulled open the wounds which Christ has bound up! We have rejected the oil and wine which in the Gospel He presents to us. We have spoken evil of Him to His face and have lived, even for years, in utter rejection of Him! And yet in His infinite love He has not given us up, but He has brought some of us into His Church where we rest as in an inn, feeding on what His bounty has provided! It was wondrous love which moved the Savior's heart when He found us in all our misery and bent over us to lift us out of it though He knew that we were His enemies!

The Samaritan was akin to the Jew because he was a man, but our Lord Jesus was not originally akin to us by nature. He is *God*, infinitely above us, and if He were “found in fashion as a man” it was because He chose to be so. If He journeyed this way, via Bethlehem's manger, down to the place of our sin and misery, it was because His infinite compassion brought Him here. The Samaritan came to the wounded one because, in the course of business, he was led there and, being there, he helped the man. But Jesus came to earth on no business but that of saving us and He was found in our flesh that He might have sympathy with us. In the very existence of the Man, Christ Jesus, you see manifested the noblest form of pity!

And being here, where we had fallen among robbers, He did not merely run risks of being attacked by thieves Himself, but He *was* attacked by them—He *was* wounded, He *was* stripped—and He was not half dead, but altogether dead, for He was laid in the *grave*! He was *slain* for our sakes, for it was not possible for Him to deliver us from the mischief which the thieves of sin had worked upon us except by suffering that mischief in His own Person—and He suffered it that He might deliver us. What the Samaritan gave to the poor man was generous, but it is not comparable to what the Lord Jesus has given to us! He gave him wine and oil, but Jesus has given His heart's blood to heal our wounds! “He loved us and gave Himself for us.”

The Samaritan lent himself with all his care and thoughtfulness, but Christ gave Himself even to the death for us. The Samaritan gave two pence, a large amount out of his slender store—and I do not depreciate the gift—but, “He that was rich for our sakes became poor that we, through His poverty might be rich.” Oh, the marvelous gifts which Christ has bestowed upon us! Who is he that can reckon them! Heaven is among

those blessings, but His own self is the chief gift! The Samaritan's compassion did but show itself for a short time. If he had to walk by the side of his mule it would not be for many miles. But Christ walked by the side of us, dismounted from His Glory, all through His life! The Samaritan did not stop long at the inn, for he had his business to attend to and he very rightly went about it.

But our Lord remained with us for a lifetime, even till He rose to Heaven—yes, He is with us even *now*—always blessing the sons of men. When the Samaritan went away, he said, “Whatever you spend more I will repay you.” Jesus has gone up to Heaven and He has left behind Him blessed promises of something to be done when He shall come again. He never forgets us! The good Samaritan, I dare say, thought very little of the Jew in later years. Indeed, it is the mark of a generous spirit not to think much of what it has done. He went back to Samaria and minded his business and never told anybody, “I helped a poor Jew on the road.” Not he.

But of necessity our Lord Jesus acts differently, for because we have a constant need, He continues to care for us and His deed of love is being done, and done, and done again upon multitudes of cases—and will always be repeated so long as there are men to be saved, a Hell from which to escape and a Heaven to win! I have thus set before you the highest example and I shall conclude when I have said two things. Judge yourselves, all of you, my Hearers, if you are hoping for salvation by your own works.

Look to what you must be throughout an entire life if your works are to save you. You must love God with all your heart and soul and strength, and your neighbor, in this Samaritan's fashion, even as yourself. And both of these without a *single* failure! Have you done this? Can you hope to do it *perfectly*? If not, why do you risk your souls in this frail skiff—this leaky, sinking craft of your poor works—for you will never get to Heaven in it. Lastly, you who are Christ's people are saved, already, and you are not going to do these things in order to save yourselves. The greater Samaritan has saved you—Jesus has redeemed you, brought you into His Church, put you under the care of His ministers, bid us take care of you—and promised to reward us if we do so in the day when He comes.

Seek, then, to be true followers of your Lord by practical deeds of kindness and if you have been backward in your gifts to help either the temporal or the spiritual needs of men, begin, from this morning, with generous hearts, and God will bless you. O Divine Spirit, help us all to be like Jesus! Amen.

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GOOD NEWS FOR YOU

NO. 473

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was.”
Luke 10:33.***

THE good Samaritan is a masterly picture of true benevolence. The Samaritan had no kinship with the Jew, he was purely of foreign origin, yet he pities his poor neighbor. The Jews cursed the Cuthites and would have no dealings with them, for they were intruders in their land. There was nothing, therefore, in the object of the Samaritan's pity that could excite his national sympathies, but everything to arouse his prejudices, hence the grandeur of his benevolence.

It is not my intention, this morning, to indicate the delightful points of excellence which Christ brings out in order to illustrate what true charity will perform. I want you only to notice this one fact, that the benevolence which the Samaritan exhibited towards this poor wounded and half-dead man, was *available* benevolence. He did not say to him, “If you will walk to Jericho, then I will bind up your wounds, pouring in the oil and wine.” Or, “If you will journey with me as far as Jerusalem, I will then attend to your wants.”

Oh, no, he came “where he was,” and finding that the man could do nothing whatever for his own assistance, the good Samaritan began with him, then and there, upon the spot, putting no impossible conditions to him, proposing no stipulations which the man could not perform—but doing everything for the man, and doing it for him as he was, and where he was.

Beloved, we are all quite aware that a charity of which a man cannot avail himself, is no charity at all. Go among the operatives of Lancashire and tell them that there is no necessity for any of them to starve, for on the top of Mount St. Bernard, there are hospitable monks who keep a refectory, where they relieve all passers-by. Tell them they have nothing to do but to journey to the top of the Alps and there they will find food enough. Poor souls! They feel that you mock them, for the distance is too great.

Penetrate one of our back streets, climb up three pair of stairs into a wretched room, so dilapidated that the stars look between the tiles. See a poor young girl dying of consumption and poverty. Tell her, if you dare, “If you could get to the seaside, and if you could eat so much beef steak, you would no doubt recover.” You are shamefully laughing at her—she cannot get these things. They are beyond her reach—she cannot journey to the seaside—she would die before she reached it. Like the wicked, your tender mercies are cruel.

I have noticed this unavailing charity in hard winters. People give away bread and soup tickets to poor people who are to give sixpence and then receive soup and bread. And often I have had persons come to me—"Sir, I have a ticket. It would be worth a great deal to me, if I had sixpence to go with it to get the relief. But I have not a farthing in all the world, and I cannot make out the good of giving me this ticket at all." This is hardly charity.

Think you see Jeremiah, down in the low dungeon—if Ebedmelech and Baruch had stood over the top of the dungeon and called out to him, "Jeremiah, if you will get half way up, we will pull you out," when there was not a ladder, nor any means by which he could possibly get so far, how cruel would have been this charity. But, instead thereof, they took old rags from under the king's treasury, and put them on ropes and bade him put the rags under his armholes and sling his arms through the ropes and then they pulled him up all the way. This was available charity. The other would have been hypocritical pretense.

Brethren, if in the description of a good Samaritan, Christ describes him as giving to this poor wounded man a charity of which he could avail himself, does it not seem to be strongly probable—no, even certain—that when Christ comes to deal with sinners, He gives them available mercy—Divine Grace which may be of real service to them?

Therefore, permit me to say I do not believe in the way in which some people pretend to preach the Gospel. They have no Gospel for sinners as sinners, but only for those who are above the dead level of sinnership and are technically styled *sensible* sinners. Like the priest in this parable. They see the poor sinner, and they say, "He is not conscious of his need, we cannot invite him to Christ." "He is dead," they say, "it is of no use preaching to dead souls." So they pass by on the other side, keeping close to the elect and quickened, but having nothing whatever to say to the dead, lest they should make out Christ to be too gracious and His mercy to be too free.

The Levite was not in quite such a hurry as the priest. The priest had to preach, and might be too late for the service, and therefore he could not stop to relieve the man. Besides, he might have soiled his cassock, or made himself unclean. And then he would have been hardly fit for the dainty and respectable congregation over which he officiated.

As for the Levite, he had to read the hymns. He was a clerk in the church, and he was somewhat in a hurry, but still he could get in after the opening prayer, so he indulged himself with the luxury of looking on. Just as I have known ministers say, "Well, you know we ought to describe the sinner's state and warn him, but we must not invite him to Christ." Yes, Gentlemen, you must pass by on the other side, after having looked at him, for on your own confession you have no *good* news for the poor wretch.

I bless my Lord and Master, He has given to me a Gospel which I can take to *dead* sinners, a Gospel which is available for the vilest of the vile. I thank my Master that He does not say to the sinner, "Come half way and meet Me," but He comes "where he is," and finding him ruined, lost, obdu-

rate, He meets him on his own ground and gives him life and peace without asking, or expecting him to prepare himself for Grace. Here is, I think, set forth in my text, the available benevolence of the Samaritan. It is mine this morning, to show the available Grace of Christ.

I. The sinner is WITHOUT MORAL QUALIFICATION FOR SALVATION but Christ comes where he is.

I want, if I can, not to talk about this as a matter having to do with the multitude that are abroad, but with us in these pews. I speak not of *them* and *those*, but of *you* and *me*. I want to say to every sinner, "You are in a state in which there is nothing morally that can qualify you for being saved, but Jesus Christ meets you where you now are."

1. Remember first, that when the Gospel was first sent into the world, *those to whom it was sent were manifestly without any moral qualification.* Did you ever read the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans? It is one of those awful passages in Scripture, not intended to be read in congregations, but to be read and studied in the secrecy of one's chamber. The Apostle gives a portrait of the manners and customs of the heathen world, so awful, that unless our missionaries had informed us that it is exactly the photograph of life in Hindustan at the present moment, infidels might have declared that Paul had exaggerated.

Heathendom in the time of Paul was so desperately wicked that it would be utterly impossible to conceive of a sin into which men had not fallen. And yet, "We turn unto the Gentiles," said the Apostle. And the Lord Himself commanded, "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." What? To Sodomites, whose very smallest sin is adultery and fornication? To thieves and murderers, to murderers of fathers and mothers? Yes, go and preach the Gospel *to them!*

Manifestly, the fact is that the world was steeped up to its very throat in the filth of abominable wickedness, and yet the Gospel was sent to it. This proves that Christ does not seek for any qualification of morality, or righteousness in man, before the Gospel is available to them. He sends the Word to the drunkard, to the swearer, the harlot, the vilest of the vile. For such is the Gospel of Christ intended to save.

2. Remember again, *the Biblical descriptions of those whom Christ cared to save in the world proves to a demonstration that He comes to the sinner where he is.* How does the Bible describe those whom Christ came to save? As men? No, my Brethren—Christ did not come to save men as men, but men as *sinner*s. As sensible sinners?—No, I think not. They are described as, "*dead* in trespasses and sins." But to the Law and to the Testimony, let me read you one or two passages. And, while I read them, I hope you may be able to say, "There is hope for me."

First, those whom Christ came to save are described in 1 Timothy 1:15 and many other places, as "*sinner*s." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "Sinners," without any adjective before the word. Not "awakened" sinners, not "repenting" sinners. But sinners, as sinners. "Surely," says one, "I am not shut out." Another account is found in Romans 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ

died”—for whom? Those who had some desires after God? Some respect to His name?

No, “for *the ungodly*.” Now, an ungodly man means a man without God, who cares not for God. “God not in all his thoughts,” and therefore he is not what men call a “sensible sinner.” The ungodly are like “the chaff which the wind drives away.” Even these are the persons that Christ came to save. In the same chapter, 10th verse, you find them mentioned as “*enemies*.” “When we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”

What do you say to this? They are not described as friends. Christ laid down His life for His friends in one sense—“But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Enemies to God were the objects of Divine Grace, so that in enmity Christ comes and meets man where he is.

In Ephesians 2:1 we read of them as, “*dead* in trespasses and sins.” “And you have He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Christ, then, does not ask the sinner to make himself alive. The Gospel is not only to be preached to those who have some good notions, some good desires, some trembling of the heavenly life within, but to the dead as *dead*. To the dead does Christ come, and meets them in the grave of their sin.

Again, Ephesians 2:3—they are “*children of wrath*.” “We were by nature the children of wrath even as others.” Yet the Gospel came to such. Can you see anything hopeful in a child of wrath? I ask you to look over him from head to foot—if this is his name and character—can you see a spot of goodness as large as a pin’s point in the man? And yet such Christ came to save.

Once again, they are mentioned as “*accursed*.” “Ah,” says one sinner, “I have often cursed myself before God, and asked Him to curse me.” Well, Christ died for the accursed, Galatians 3:13, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us.” That is, for us who were under the curse. And, once more, they are described by the dreadful word “*lost*.” They are lost to all hope, to all consideration for themselves. Even their own friends have given their case up as hopeless.

“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). If I understand those passages which I have read in your hearing, they mean just this—that those whom Christ came to save have no good whatever in them to co-operate towards their salvation. And Christ does not look upon them in order to find anything that is good in them. I am bold to say the only fitness for cleansing is filthiness. The only fitness for a Savior is being lost. And the only character under which we come to Jesus is as sinners, lost, dead and accursed.

3. But, thirdly, it is quite certain from *the work of Divine Grace itself*, that the Lord does not expect the sinner to do anything or to be anything in order to meet him, but that He comes to him where he is. Look, Sinner, Christ *dies* on Calvary, a weight of sin is on His shoulders, and on his heart. In agonies the most awful, He shrieks under the desertion of His God.

For whom did He die? For the innocent? Why for the innocent? What sacrifice did they need? For those who had some good thing in them? Why all these agonies *for such*? Surely a less price might do for them if they could eke it out themselves. But because Christ died on account of sin, I take it that those whom He died for must be viewed as *sinner*s and only as such. Inasmuch as He paid a dreadful price, I gather that they must be dreadfully in debt, and that He died for those who had nothing to pay with.

But Christ *rose again*, rose again for our justification. For whose justification? For the justification of those who were justified in themselves? Why, this were to perform an unnecessary work! No, my Brethren, for those who had no justification of their own, not a shadow of any, who were condemned, utterly condemned on account of their own works. Moreover, I hear Him by the ear of faith *pleading* before the eternal Throne. Who does He plead for? For those who have something to plead on their own account?—that were needless.

Do men give their money to the rich? Do they spend their charity on those who do not need it? If men have something to plead for themselves, then why does Christ plead for them? No, Brethren, He pleads for those who have nothing whatever, that they can bring as an argument with which to enforce their prayers. But Christ ascended and *received gifts*. Who for? For those who merited rewards? No, verily, let them get them for themselves. But He received gifts for men—yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

But he *gives the Holy Spirit*. To whom does He give the Holy Spirit? To those that are strong, and good, and can do all themselves? O, my Brethren, no! He gives the Holy Spirit to those that are powerless, weak, dead. He gives the Holy Worker to those who are all unholy and full of sin. He puts the Omnipotent Influence into those who were slaves to the spirit of evil. Brethren, the work of Christ supposes a lost, ruined, rebellious sinner—and so I say—Christ meets the man where he is.

4. Yet more, for I would clear up this point before I leave it, *the godlike character of the Grace of God* proves that He meets the sinner where he is. If God forgives little sinners only, then He is little in His mercy. If the Lord does not do something more than men can think, then we have made too much noise about the Gospel, and have exalted the Cross above measure. Unless there is something extraordinary in Divine Grace, then I cannot understand such a passage as this, “As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are My ways above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts.”

I venture to say, Brethren, that many of us have thought of forgiving our enemies. It has sometimes been our happy portion to do good to them that hate us. Now, if God would be godlike in His Grace—and I am sure He will—He must do something more than that. He must not only forgive His enemies but they must be enemies of such an atrocious character that no *man* would have forgiven them—

**“Who is a pardoning God like You,
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”**

But where is the meaning of this boast, if the Lord merely pardons sinners who are sensible of their sins and lament them? The marvel is in this—that while they are yet enemies He calls them by His Grace and invites them to mercy. Yes, more, He blots out their sins and makes them friends—thus meeting the sinner where he is.

5. *The spirit and genius of the Gospel utterly forbid the supposition that God requires anything in any man in order to save him.*

If salvation is offered to man upon a *condition*, they who fulfill the condition have a claim to the blessing. This is the old Covenant of Works. The substance of the legal Covenant is, “Do this and I will reward you.” When the man has done it, he deserves what has been promised. Yes, and if you make the condition ever so easy, yet, mark you, so long as it is a condition, God is bound by His own Word, the condition being fulfilled, to give man what he has earned. This is works and not Divine Grace.

It is debt and not free favor. But, inasmuch as the Gospel is free favor from beginning to end, I am absolutely sure that God requires nothing—neither good wishes, good desires, nor good feelings of a sinner—before he may come to Christ. But that he may know that everything is of Grace, the rebel is commanded to come just as he is, bringing nothing, but taking everything from God, who is superabundant in mercy, and therefore meets the sinner just where he is.

I say to the sinner, wherever you may be today, if you are without any virtue, and if you are filled with all vice. If there are no good points in your character. If there is everything that is bad against man and against God in you. If you have committed every crime in the catalog, if you have ruined your body, and damned your soul, yet still Christ has said it—“Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” And if you come to Him, He can no more cast you out than if you had been the most virtuous, the most honorable, and the most devout of all living men.

Only today believe in the mercy of God, in Christ, and cast yourself on Him and you are saved to the praise and glory of that Divine Grace which meets you just where you are, and saves you from sin.

II. In the second place, there are very many of the lost race of Adam who say that they are WITHOUT ANY MENTAL QUALIFICATION. This is their excuse—“But, Sir, I never was a scholar. I was sent out as a boy to earn my own living, so that I never had a week’s schooling. I am so ignorant that I cannot read any book and if anybody were to ask me to make a prayer I could not, I have not sense enough.”

Now, you see the Lord Jesus meets you just where you are. And how does He do this? Why, first, *the saving act is one that requires no mental power. Faith* lays hold on eternal life. Now, a child whose faculties are ever so little developed can believe what it is told. The child cannot reason, cannot argue, cannot dispute, cannot spilt hairs, cannot see a knotty point in theology, but it can believe what it is told. Faith requires so little mental vigor or intellectual clearness, that there have been many who were idiots in other things, who have been made wise unto salvation by the act of faith in Christ.

You remember our Lord's own words, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes." But this never could have happened had not the act which brings us into communion with Christ been the lowest act of the human faculty—that of simply trusting to Christ—as the result of crediting that which is told us upon good testimony.

But then, again, to meet this defect of mental power, remember *the singular simplicity of that which is believed*. Is there anything more simple in the world than the doctrine of the Atonement. We deserve to die, Christ dies for us. We are in debt, Christ pays for us. Is not this plain enough for a Ragged School child? It is so plain, that many of our learned doctors of Divinity try to take it out of the Bible. They think, "If this is the marrow of it all, then any fool can be a theologian." So they kick against it.

What is Unitarianism but a stumbling at the simplicity of the Cross. There were Unitarians who stood at the Cross when Christ died. they said, "Let Him come down from the Cross and we will believe on Him." That has been the Unitarian character ever since. They will receive Jesus anywhere but on His Cross. But up there, dying in man's place, he is so commonplace, that these great gentlemen run to philosophy and vain deceit sooner than lay hold on that which the most common may as fully understand as they.

Yet more. To meet any mental deficiency in man, while the Truth of God itself is simple, it is *taught in the Bible under such simple metaphors*, that none can say they cannot understand it. How simple is the metaphor of the brazen serpent, held up before the snake-bitten Israelites, while they are commanded to look and live? Who does not understand that a look at Christ, who dies in the place of men, will make them live? "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Who does not understand the figure of a fountain flowing in the streets, that every thirsty passerby may put his lips down and drink?

"Behold the Lamb of God." Who does not understand the sacrifice? Here is a lamb killed for the sin of Israel, and so Christ dies for the sin of those who believe in Him. The act of faith is simple, the object of faith is plain. The metaphors make it clear, and he is without excuse who does not understand the Gospel of Christ.

To crown all, to you, my Beloved Hearers, Christ *has given you abundance of teachers*. There sits in your pew with you today a man of your own rank and calling, who will explain to you the Gospel, if you do not understand it. Here are many of us, who are but too glad if we can roll away the stone from the door of your sepulcher. Here are children of God themselves, saved by Sovereign Grace, and if you really do not know the way, do but touch your neighbor and say to him, "Can you explain to me yet more clearly what I must do to be saved?"

Now, this is meeting you, let your brains be the very smallest. This is coming down to you, though you sit on the lowest step of human intellect. Jesus Christ meets you just where you are.

III. But yet again. I think I hear another say, “I am in despair, for I CANNOT FIND ANY REASON IN MYSELF, OR OUT OF MYSELF, WHY GOD SHOULD FORGIVE SUCH A PERSON AS I AM.”

So then, you are in a hopeless state—at least *you* see no hope. The Lord meets you where you are, by putting *the reason of your salvation altogether in Himself*. Shall I remind you of one or two texts which will surely satisfy you? “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” What for? “For My own sake.” He cannot pardon you for *your* sake, you clearly see that. And you feel that He cannot pardon you for other people’s sake. But for “My own sake,” says He, “that I may glorify Myself.” Not in you but in His own mighty breast He finds the motive, that He may make His own mercy illustrious. For His own sake He will do it.

Or take another—“For My name’s sake, even for My name’s sake, will I defer My anger, that I cut you not off.” Here it is again—for His *name’s sake*, as if He knew He could not find any motive, so He puts it all on Himself. He pardons, that He may honor and glorify His own name. Sinner, you can not say that this does not meet your case—for if you are the most hellish good-for-nothing sinner that ever cursed God’s earth, and polluted the air you breathe, yet He can save you, *for His own sake*. There is still room for you to hope. For the bigger the sinner you are, the more glory to Him if He saves you. And if salvation is given for a reason only in Himself, there is, therefore, a reason by which He can save you, even you.

Remember that *He puts His own design* before your eyes to show you that if you have no reason in yourself, that is no hindrance to His saving you. What is God’s design in saving men? When He brings them to Heaven, what will be the result of it? Why, that they may love and praise His name forever and sing, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory.” You are just the man. If you are ever saved and brought to Heaven, oh, will you not praise His Grace?

“Yes,” said one old man who had long lived in sin, “if He ever does bring me to Heaven, He shall never hear the last of it, for I will praise Him throughout eternity.” Why, do you not see that you are the man? You are the very man that will answer God’s design, for who shall love so much as he who has had much forgiven? And who shall praise so loudly as he whose mighty sins have been overcome by the mighty love, and goodness, and Grace of God? You can not say that it does not meet you, for here is a motive and a reason—though you can find none in yourself.

Here is another reason why God should save you—it is *His own Word*, the Word of Him that cannot lie. I will bring up that text again, perhaps there is a heart here that will be able to cast anchor on it—“Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” You say, “But if I come, I can see no reason why He should save me.” I answer, there is a reason in His own promise. God cannot lie. You come. He will not cast you out. He says, “I will in no wise cast out.” “But,” you say, “He may for such-and-such a reason.”

Now, this is a flat contradiction. The two cannot stand. If there is anything that is necessary in order for a soul to come, and you come without it, yet there is the promise—and as it has no limit in it, plead it—and the

Lord will not refuse to honor His own Word. If He can cast you out because you have not some necessary qualification, then His Word is not true. Whoever you may be, whatever you may not be, and whatever you may be, if you believe in Jesus Christ, there is a reason in every attribute of God why you should be saved.

His Truth cries, "Save him, for You have said 'I will.'" His power says, "Save him, lest the enemy deny Your might." God's wisdom pleads, "Save him, lest men doubt Your judgment." His love says, "Save him." His every attribute says, "Save him." And even Justice, with its hoarse voice, cries, "Save him, for God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, if we confess our sins."

I am trying to fish in deep waters after some of you that have long escaped the net. I know when I have given free and full invitations, you have said, "Ah, that cannot mean me." You are without faith in Christ, because you think you are not fit. I will be clear of your blood this morning. I will show you that there is no fitness wanted, that you are *commanded* now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as you are, for Jesus Christ's Gospel is an available Gospel, and comes to you just where you are. Without moral or mental qualification, and without any sort of reason why He should save you, He meets you as such and bids you trust Him.

IV. We proceed to our fourth point. "Oh," says one, "but I am WITHOUT COURAGE. I dare not believe on Christ. I am such a timid, trembling soul, that when I hear that others trust Christ, I think it must be presumption. I wish I could do the same, but I cannot, I am kept under by such a sense of sin, that I dare not. O Sir, I dare not, it would look as if I were flying in the face of Justice if I were to dare to trust Christ and then to rejoice in the pardon of my sin."

Very well, Christ comes to meet you where you are, by very tender *invitations*. "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come you, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that hears say, come." "And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

How sweetly He puts it to you. I do not know where more wooing words could be found, than those the Savior uses. Will you not come when Christ beckons, when with His loving face streaming with tears, He bids you come to Him? What? Is an invitation from Him too little a thing for you? O Sinner, trembling though you are, say in your soul—

***"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives;
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives."***

Knowing that you would neglect the invitation, He has put it to you in the light of a *command*. "This is the *commandment*, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned." He thought you would say, "Ah,

but I am not fit to accept the invitation.” “Well,” says He, “I will *command* the man to do it.”

Like a poor hungry man with bread before him, who says, “Ah, it would be presumption on my part to eat,” but the king says, “Eat, Sir, or I will punish you.” What a generous and liberal command! Even the threat itself has no anger in it. Like the mother, who, when the child is near to die, and nothing will save it but the medicine, and the child will not drink, she threatens the child, but only out of love to it that it may be saved. So the Lord does add *threats* to commands. For sometimes a black word will drive a soul to Christ where a bright word would not draw it. Fears of Hell sometimes make men flee to Jesus. The weary wing made the poor dove fly to the ark—and the thunderbolts of God’s justice are only meant to make you fly to Christ the Lord.

Beloved, once more, my Master has sweetly met your want of courage by bringing many others, so that you may follow their *example*. As fowlers sometimes have their decoys, so my Master has decoys that are to draw others to Him. Other sinners have been saved, others He has cleansed who did but trust Him. There was Lot. Ah, Lot! Guilty of drunkenness and incest, and yet a saint of God. David the adulterer and murderer of Uriah and yet washed “whiter than snow.”

Manasseh the bloody persecutor, who had cut Isaiah in two, sawing him in halves, and yet he was taken among the thorns, and God had mercy on him. What shall I say of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of God’s people? And the robber dying on the Cross for his crimes, and yet saved? Sinner, if these do not induce you to come, what can overcome your sinful diffidence? “But,” says one, “you have not hit my case yet. I am an *outrageous* sinner!”

Well now, I will hit it this time. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, hear the Word of the Lord, “Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And *such were some of you*: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

Why, Brethren, what horrible descriptions there are here! There are some of them so bad that when we have read the description, we wish to forget the sin. And yet—and yet, glory be to Your Almighty Grace, O God!—such have You saved and such You save still. O, timid Sinner, can you not trust in Jesus after this?

Hear the Word of the Lord again in Titus 3:3-5—“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving many lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.”

Now, you hateful sinners, and you that hate others. You that are full of malice and envy, here is the gate open, even for you, for the kindness and love of God towards man appears in the Person of Christ. Listen to an-

other, for God's Words are more than mine, and I do hope they will attract some of you. In Ephesians 2:1-3—"Dead in trespasses and sins. Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by Grace you are saved), and has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." What for? "That in the ages to come"—mark this—"He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus."

One more passage and I will not weary your attention. O that this last passage might comfort some of you! It is Paul who speaks in 1 Timothy 1:13, "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the Grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying." See how he puts it from his own experience, "and worthy of all acceptation." And therefore worthy of yours, poor sinner, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

"Ah" says one "but he would not save any more." Let me go on—"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."

So that if you trust as Paul did, you shall be saved as Paul was, for his conversion and salvation are a pattern to all those who should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, unto life everlasting. So Sinner, timid as you are, here Jesus meets you. O, I wish I could say a word that would lead you poor tearful ones to look to Jesus! O, do not let the devil tempt you to believe that you are too sinful. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him"—

***"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream."***

Fitness is not needed—do but come to Him. You are black in sin, and you do not feel your blackness as you ought—that makes you all the blacker. Come, then, and be clean. You are sinful, and this is your greatest sin, that you do not repent as you ought. But come to Him and ask Him to forgive your impenitence. Come as you are—if He rejects one of you, I will bear the blame forever. If He casts one of you away that shall trust Him, call me a false prophet in the day of the resurrection. But I pawn my life upon it—I stake my own soul's interest on this—that whosoever comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out.

V. I hear one more complaint. "I am WITHOUT STRENGTH," says one, "will Jesus come just where I am?" Yes, Sinner, just where you are. You, you say, cannot believe, that is your difficulty. God meets you, then, in

your inability. First, He meets you with *His promises*. Soul, you can not believe. But when God, that cannot lie, promises, will you not believe, can you not believe, then? I think God's promise—so sure, so steadfast—must overcome this inability of yours, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Cannot you believe now? Why, that promise must be true!

But next, as if He knew that this would not be enough, He has taken an *oath* with it—and a more awful oath was never sworn—"As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live. Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel." Can you not believe *now*? What? Will you doubt God when He swears it? Not only make God a liar but—let me shudder when I say it—will you think that God can perjure His own Self?

God forbid you should so blaspheme! Remember, He that believes not has made God a liar, because He believes not on the Son of God. Do not do this! Surely you can believe when the promise and the oath compel you to faith. But yet more, as if He knew that even *this* were not enough, He has given you of *His Spirit*. "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Surely with *this* you can believe.

"But," says one, "I will try." No, no, do not *try*. That is not what God commands you to do—no *trying* is wanted. Believe Christ now, Sinner. "But," says one, "I will think of it." Do not think of it. Do it now, do it at once for this is God's Gospel. There are some of you standing in these aisles, and sitting in these pews, who I feel in my soul will never have another invitation. And if this is rejected today, I feel a solemn motion in my soul—I think it is of the Holy Spirit—that you will never hear another faithful sermon, but you shall go down to Hell impenitent, unsaved, unless you trust in Jesus *NOW*.

I speak not as a man but I speak as God's ambassador to your souls, and I command you, in God's name, trust Jesus, trust Him *now*. At your peril reject the voice that speaks from Heaven, for "he that believes not shall be damned." How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? When it comes right home to you, when it thrusts itself in your way, oh, if you will neglect it, how can you escape? With tears I would invite you, and, if I could, would compel you to come in. Why will you not?

O Souls, if you will be damned, if you make up your mind that no mercy shall ever woo you, and no warnings shall ever move you, then, Sirs, what chains of vengeance must you feel that slight these bonds of love? You have deserved the deepest Hell, for you slight the joys above. God save you. He will save you, if you trust in Jesus. God help you to trust Him even now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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MARTHA AND MARY

NO. 927

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 24, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His Word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.’ ”
Luke 10:38-42.

IT is not an easy thing to maintain the balance of our spiritual life. No man can be spiritually healthy who does not meditate and commune. No man, on the other hand, is as he should be unless he is active and diligent in holy service. David sweetly sang, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” There was the contemplative. “He leads me beside the still waters.” There was the active and progressive. The difficulty is to maintain the two—and to keep each in its relative proportion to the other. We must not be so active as to neglect communion, nor so contemplative as to become unpractical.

In the chapter from which our text is taken we have several lessons on this subject. The seventy disciples returned from their preaching tour flushed with the joy of success. And our Savior, to refine that joy and prevent its degenerating into pride, bids them rather rejoice that their names were written in Heaven. He conducted their contemplations to the glorious doctrine of election, that grateful thoughts might sober them after successful work. He bids them consider themselves as debtors to Divine Grace, which reveals unto babes the mysteries of God—for He would not allow their new position as workers to make them forget that they were the *chosen* of God—and therefore debtors.

Our wise Master next returns to the subject of service, and instructs them by the memorable parable of the good Samaritan and the wounded man. And then as if they might vainly imagine philanthropy, as it is the service of Christ, to be the only service of Christ, and to be the only thing worth living for, He brings in the two sisters of Bethany. The Holy Spirit meant thereby to teach us that while we ought to abound in service, and to do good abundantly to our fellow men, yet we must not fail in worship, in spiritual reverence, in meek discipleship, and quiet contemplation. While we are practical, like the seventy—practical like the Samaritan—practical like Martha, we are, also, like the Savior, to rejoice in spirit, and

say, "Father, I thank You," and we are also like Mary, to sit down in quietude and nourish our souls with Divine Truth.

This short narrative, I suppose, might be paraphrased something after this fashion. Martha and Mary were two most excellent sisters, both converted, both lovers of Jesus, both loved *by* Jesus, for we are expressly told that He loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus. They were both women of a choice spirit—our savior's selection of their house as a frequent resort proved that they were an unusually gracious family. They are persons representative of different forms of excellence, and I think it altogether wrong to treat Martha as some have done, as if she had no love for good things, and was nothing better than a mere worldling. It was not so.

Martha was a most estimable and earnest woman, a true Believer, and an ardent follower of Jesus whose joy it was to entertain Jesus at the house of which she was the mistress. When our Lord made His appearance on this occasion at Bethany, the first thought of Martha was, "Here is our most noble guest, we must prepare for Him a sumptuous entertainment." Perhaps she marked our Savior's weariness, or saw some traces of that exhaustion which made Him look so much older than He was. And she, therefore, set to work with the utmost diligence to prepare a feast for Him.

She was careful about many things, and as she went on with her preparations, fresh matters occurred to ruffle her mind, and she became worried. And, being somewhat vexed that her sister took matters so coolly, she begged the Master to upbraid her. Now Mary had looked upon the occasion from another point of view. As soon as *she* saw Jesus come into the house she thought, "What a privilege have I now to listen eagerly to such a Teacher, and to treasure up His precious words! He is the Son of God, I will worship, I will adore, and every word He utters shall be stored in my memory."

She forgot the needs both of the Master and His followers, for her faith saw the inner Glory which dwelt within Him. She was so overpowered with reverence, and so wrapt in devout wonder, that she became oblivious of all outward things. She had no faults to find with Martha for being so busy. She did not even think of Martha—she was altogether taken up with her Lord and with those gracious words which He was speaking. She had no will, either, to censure or to praise or to think even of herself. Everything was gone from her but her Lord and the word which He was uttering.

See, then, that Martha was serving Christ, but so was Mary. Martha meant to honor Christ, so did Mary. They both agreed in their design, but they differed in their way of carrying it out. And while Martha's service is not censured (only her being cumbered comes under the censure), yet Mary is expressly commended, as having chosen the good part. And therefore we do Martha no injustice if we show wherein she came short, and wherein Mary exceeded.

Our first observation will be this—the Martha spirit is very prevalent in the Church of God just now. In the second place, the Martha spirit very much injures true service. In the third place, the Mary spirit is the source of the noble form of consecration.

I. THE MARTHA SPIRIT IS VERY PREVALENT IN THE CHURCH at this period—prevalent in some quarters to a mischievous degree—and among us all to a perilous extent. What do we intend by saying that the Martha spirit is prevalent just now? We mean, first, that there is a considerable tendency among Christian people, in serving Christ, to aim at making a fair show in the flesh. Martha wanted to give our Lord right worthy entertainment which should be a credit to her house and to her family—and herein she is commendable far above those careless ones who think *anything* good enough for Christ.

So also, among professing Christians, there is at this present time a desire to give to the cause of Christ buildings notable for their architecture and beauty. We must have no more barns. Our meeting houses must exhibit our improving taste. If possible, our chapels must be correctly Gothic or sternly classical in all their details, both without and within. As to the service, we must cultivate the musical and the tasteful. We are exhorted not to be barely decent, but to aim at the sublime and beautiful. Our public worship, it is thought, should be impressive if not imposing. Care should be taken that the music should be chaste, the singing conformed to the best rules of the arts, and the preaching eloquent and attractive.

So everything in connection with Christian labor should be made to appear generous and noble. By all means the subscription lists must be kept current. Each denomination must excel the other in the amount of its annual funds—surely everything done for Christ ought to be done in the best possible style. Now in all this there is much that is good, much that is really intended to honor the Lord, so we see no room to censure—but yet we will show you a more excellent way. These things you may do, but there are higher things which you *must* do, or suffer loss.

Brethren, there is something better to be studied than the outward, for though this may be aimed at with a single eye to God's Glory—and we judge no man—yet we fear the tendency is to imagine that mere externals are precious in the Master's sight. I know He counts it a very small matter whether your House of Prayer is a cathedral or a barn. To the Savior it is small concern whether you have organs or whether you have none—whether you sing after the choicest rules of psalmody or not. He looks at your hearts, and if these ascend to Him. He accepts the praise. As for those thousands of pounds annually contributed, He estimates them not by the weights of the merchant, but after the balances of the sanctuary.

Your love expressed in your gifts He values, but what are the mere silver and gold to Him? Funds, and encouraging accounts, and well-arranged machineries are well if they exist as the outgrowth of fervent love—but if they are the end-all, and the be-all—you miss the mark. Jesus would be better pleased with a grain of love than a heap of ostentatious service. The Martha spirit shows itself in the *censuring* of those persons who are careful about Christ's Word, who stand up for the doctrines of the Gospel, who desire to maintain the Ordinances as they were delivered unto them, and who are scrupulous and thoughtful, and careful concerning the Truth as it is in Jesus.

In newspapers, on platforms, and in common talk, you frequently hear earnest disciples of Jesus and consistent Believers in His doctrines snubbed and denounced as unpractical. Theological questions are scouted as mere impertinences. Go in for Ragged schools, certainly. Reclaim the Arabs of the street, by all manner of means. Pass a compulsory education bill, certainly. Soup kitchens, free dinners—all excellent. We can all join in these. But never mention creeds and doctrines. Why, Man, you cannot be aware of the enlightenment of our times! What importance can now be attached to mere biblical dogmas and ordinances? Why contend as to whether Baptism shall be performed upon a babe or upon a Believer, whether it shall be by sprinkling or by immersion? What matters the Law of Christ in such a case?

These things would do for the schoolmen of the Dark Ages to fight about, but what can be the importance of such trifles in this highly enlightened nineteenth century? Yes, that is the exaggeration of Martha. Mary, treasuring up every word of Christ, Mary counting each syllable a pearl, is reckoned to be unpractical, if not altogether idle. That spirit, I fear, is growing in these times, and needs to be checked. After all, there is Truth and there is error, and charitable talk cannot alter the fact. To know and to love the Gospel is no mean thing. Obedience to Jesus, and anxiety to learn His will so as to please Him in all things are not secondary matters.

Contemplation, worship, and growth in Grace are not unimportant. I trust we shall not give way to the spirit which despises our Lord's teaching, for if we do—in prizing the fruit and despising the root—we shall lose the fruit and the root, too. In forgetting the great well-spring of holy activity, namely, personal piety, we shall miss the streams, also. From the sincerity of faith and the fervor of love practical Christianity must arise. And if the food that faith and love feed upon is withdrawn. If sitting at the feet of Jesus is regarded as of secondary consequence, then both strength and will to serve the Lord will decline.

I dread much the spirit which would tamper with the Truth of God for the sake of united action, or for any object under Heaven—the latitudinarian spirit, which sneers at creeds and dogmas. Truth is no trifle. Our fathers did not think so, when, at the stake they gave themselves to death, or on the brown heather of Scotland fell beneath the swords of Claverhouse's dragoons for truths which nowadays men count unimportant, but which, being truths, were to them so vital that they would sooner die than suffer them to be dishonored. O for the same uncompromising love of the Truth! Would to God we could be both active and studious, and both learn with Mary and work with Martha!

The Martha spirit crops up in our reckoning so many things necessary. Martha believed that to entertain Christ there must be many things prepared. As to leaving one of those things out—it could not be. Our Lord would have been satisfied enough with the simplest fare—a piece of fish or of a honeycomb would well have contented Him. But no, according to Martha's judgment there must be this, and there must be that. So is it with many good people now. They have their ideas of excellence, and if

these cannot be realized they despair of doing anything acceptable for Christ.

I believe an educated ministry to be desirable, but none the less do I deplore the spirit which considers it to be essential. In the presence of the fishermen of Galilee we dare not subscribe to the necessity which with some is beyond doubt. You must not, according to the talk of some, allow these earnest young people to set about preaching, and your converted coal miners and fiddlers should be stopped at once. The Holy Spirit has in all ages worked by men of His own choosing. But some Churches today would not let Him if they could help it. Their pulpits are closed against the most holy and useful preachers if they have not those many things with which the Church nowadays cumber her ministers and herself.

Then, my Brethren, to carry on a good work it is thought needful to have a Society and large funds. I also approve of the Society and the funds. I only regret that they should be so viewed as prime necessities that few will stir without them. The idea of sending out a missionary with a few pounds in his hands as in the day's of Carey, is set down in many quarters as absurd. How can you save souls without a committee? How can London be evangelized till you have raised at least a million of money? Can you hope to see men converted without an annual meeting in Exeter Hall? You must have a secretary—there is no moving an inch till he is elected.

And know you not that without a committee you can do nothing? All these and a thousand things, which time fails me to mention, are now deemed to be necessary for the service of Jesus. It is such that a true-hearted soul who could do much for his Lord scarcely dares to move till he has put on Paul's armor of human patronage. O for Apostolic simplicity, going everywhere preaching the Word, and consecrating the labor of every Believer to soul-winning. To bring us back to first principles, "one thing is needful," and if by sitting at Jesus' feet we can find that one thing, it will stand us in better place than all the thousand things which custom now demands.

To catch the Spirit of Christ, to be filled with Himself—this will equip us for godly labor as nothing else can. May all Christians yet come to put this one thing first and foremost, and count the power of deep piety to be the one essential qualification for holy work. The censurable quality in the Martha spirit appears in the satisfaction which many feel with more activity. To have done so much preaching, or so much Sunday school teaching. To have distributed so many tracts, to have made so many calls by our missionaries—all this seems to be looked at as end rather than means. If there is so much effort put forth, so much work is done—is it not enough?

Our reply is, it is not enough. It is nothing without the Divine blessing. Brethren, where mere work is prized, and the inner life forgotten, prayer comes to be at a discount. The committee is attended, but the Prayer Meeting forsaken. The gathering together for supplication is counted little compared with the collecting of subscriptions. The opening prayer at public meetings is regarded as a very proper thing. But there are those who regard it as a mere formality, which might be very well laid aside, and, therefore, invariably come in after prayer is over. It will be an evil day for

us when we trust in the willing and the running, and practically attempt to do without the Holy Spirit.

This lofty estimate of mere activity for its own sake throws the acceptance of our work into the shade. The Martha spirit says, if the work is done, is not that all? The Mary spirit asks whether Jesus is well-pleased or not. All must be done in His name and by His Spirit, or nothing is done. Restless service, which sits not at His feet, is but the clattering of a mill which turns without, grinding corn. It is but an elaborate method of doing nothing. I do not want less activity—how earnestly do I press you to it almost every Sunday. But I do pray that we may feel that all our strength lies in God and that we can only be strong as we are accepted of Christ. And we can only be accepted in Christ as we wait upon Him in prayer, trust Him, and live upon Him.

You may compass sea and land to make your proselytes, but if you have not the Spirit of Christ you are none of His. You may rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows, but unless you trust in the Lord your God, you shall not prosper. The joy of the Lord is your strength. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. Without Christ you can do nothing. Has He not told you, “He that abides in Me, and I in Him, the same brings forth much fruit”? Was it not written of old, “I am like a green fir tree: from Me is your fruit found”?

Once more, Martha’s spirit is predominant in the Church of God to a considerable extent, now, in the evident respect which is paid to the manifest—and the small regard which is given to the secret. All regenerated persons ought to be workers for God and with God—but let the working never swamp the believing—never let the servant be more prominent than the Son! Never, because you conduct a class, or are chief man at a village station, forget that you are a sinner saved by Grace and have need, still, to be looking to the Crucified, and finding all your life in Him. You lose your strength as a worker if you forget your dependence as a Believer.

To labor for Christ is a pleasant thing, but beware of doing it mechanically. And this you can only prevent by diligently cultivating personal communion with Christ. My Brother, it may be you will undertake so much service that your time will be occupied and you will have no space for prayer and reading the Word. The half-hour in the morning for prayer will be cut short, and the time allotted for communion with God in the evening will be gradually entrenched upon by this engagement and the other occupation—and when this is the case I tremble for you. You are killing the steed by spurring it and denying it food. You are undermining your house by drawing out the stones from the foundation to pile them at the top.

You are doing your soul serious mischief if you put the whole of your strength into that part of your life which is visible to men, and forget that portion of your life which is secret between you and your God. To gather up all in one, I fear there is a great deal among us of religious activity of a very inferior sort. It concerns itself with the *external* of service. It worries itself with merely human efforts and it attempts, in its own strength, to achieve Divine results. The real working which God will accept is that which goes hand in hand with a patient waiting upon Christ—with heart

searching, with supplication, with communion—with a childlike dependence upon Jesus. With a firm adhesion to His Truth, with an intense love to His Person, and an abiding in Him at all seasons. May we have more of such things! Martha's spirit, though excellent in itself, so far as it goes, must not overshadow Mary's quiet, deep-seated piety, or evil will come of it.

II. Secondly, we observe that THE MARTHA SPIRIT INJURES TRUE SERVICE. Service may be true, and yet somewhat marred upon the wheel. Give your attention not so much to what I say, as to the bearing of it upon yourselves. It may be that you will find, as we speak, that you have been verily guilty touching these things. The Martha spirit brings the least welcome offering to Christ. It is welcome, but it is the least welcome.

Our Lord Jesus, when on earth, was more satisfied by conversing to a poor Samaritan woman than He would have been by the best meat and drink. In carrying on His spiritual work He had meat to eat that His disciples knew not of. Evermore His spiritual Nature was predominant over His physical Nature, and those persons who brought Him spiritual gifts brought Him the gifts which He preferred. Here, then, was Martha's dish of well-cooked meat, but there was Mary's gift of a humble obedient heart. Here was Martha decking the table, but there was Mary submitting her judgment to the Lord, and looking up with wondering eyes as she heard His matchless speech.

Mary was bringing to Jesus the better offering. With Martha, He would, in His condescension, be pleased. But in Mary He found satisfaction. Martha's service He accepted benevolently, but Mary's worship He accepted with complacency. Now, Brothers and Sisters, all that you can give to Christ in any shape or form will not be so dear to Him as the offering of your fervent love, the clinging of your humble faith, the reverence of your adoring souls. Do not, I pray you, neglect the spiritual for the sake of the external, or else you will be throwing away gold to gather iron to yourself. You will be pulling down the palaces of marble that you may build for yourselves hovels of clay.

Martha's spirit has this mischief about it, also, that it brings *self* too much to remembrance. We would not severely judge Martha, but we conceive that in some measure she aimed at making the service a credit to herself as the mistress of the house. At any rate, *self* came up when she began to grow weary, and complained that she was left to serve alone. We also want our work to show well as our work. We like those who see it to commend it, and if none commend it, we feel that we are treated badly, and are left to work alone. Now, to the extent in which I think of myself in my service I spoil it. *Self* must sink, and Christ be All in All. John the Baptist's saying must be our motto, "He must increase, I must decrease." For Jesus' shoelace we are not worthy to unloose. Too much work and too little fellowship will always bring *self* into prominence. *Self* must be prayed down, and fellowship with Jesus must keep it down.

Martha seemed to fancy that what she was doing was necessary for Christ. She was cumbered about much serving because she thought it necessary that there should be a noble entertainment for the Lord. We are still too apt to think that Jesus wants our work, and that He cannot do

without us. The preacher enquires what would become of the Church if he were removed! The deacon is suspicious that if he were taken away there would be a great gap left in the leadership of the Church. The teacher of a class feels that those children would never be converted, Christ would miss of the travail of His soul but for him.

Ah, but a fly on St. Paul's Cathedral might as well imagine that all the traffic at his feet was regulated by his presence, and would cease, should he be removed. I love you to think that Christ will do much work by you, and to attach as much weight as you can to your responsibilities, but as to Jesus *needing* us—the thing is preposterous! Mary is much wiser when she feels, "He desires me to receive His words, and yield Him my love. I would gladly give Him meat, but He will see to that. He is the Master of all things, and can do without me or Martha. I need Him far more than He can need me."

We spoil our service when we overestimate its importance, for this leads us into loftiness and pride. Martha, under the influence of this high temper, came to complain of her sister, and to complain of her Lord, too, as if He were excusing her idleness. "Do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" How it spoils what we do for Christ when we go about it with a haughty spirit! When we feel, "I can do this, and it is grand to do that"—am I not somewhat better than others? "Must not my Master think well of me?" The humble worker wins the day. God accepts the man who feels his *nothingness*, and out of the depths cries to Him.

But the great ones He will put down from their seat, and send the rich ones away empty. Activity, if not balanced by devotion, tends to puff us up and so to prevent acceptance with God. Martha also fell into an unbelieving vexation. Her idea of what was necessary to be done was so great that she found she could not attain to it. There must be this side dish, and there must be that principal meat. There must be this meat and that wine, it must be cooked just so many minutes. This must be done to a turn, and so on, and so on, and so on, and so on.

And now time flies and she fears yonder guest has been slighted. That servant is not back from the market. Many things go wrong when you are most anxious to have them right. You good housewives who may have had large parties to prepare for, know what these cares mean, I dare say. And something of the sort troubled Martha so that she became fretful and unbelieving. She had a work to do beyond her strength, as she thought, and her faith failed her, and her unbelief went petulantly to complain to her Lord. Have we never erred in the same way? We must have that Sunday school excellently conducted, that morning Prayer Meeting must be improved, that Bible class must be revived, our morning sermon must be a telling one, and so on!

The preacher here speaks of himself, for he sometimes feels that there is too much responsibility laid upon his shoulders, and he is very apt in reviewing his great field of labor to grow desponding in spirit. But when the preacher confessed that he spoke of himself, he only did so because he represents his fellow workers, and you also grow faint and doubtful. Alas, in such a case the enjoyment of service evaporates, the fretfulness which pines over details spoils the whole, and the worker becomes a mere

drudge and scullion instead of an angel who does God's commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word.

Instead of glowing and burning like seraphs, our chariot wheels are taken off by our anxiety, and we drag heavily. Faith it is that secures acceptance, but when unbelief comes in, the work falls flat to the ground. At such times when the man or the Church shall become subject to the Martha spirit, the voluntary principle falls a little into disrepute. I believe the voluntary principle is the worst thing in all the world to work where there is no Divine Grace. But where there is Grace it is the one principle that God accepts.

Now, Martha would have Mary made to serve Christ. What right has she to be sitting down there? Whether she likes it or not, she must get up and wait like her sister. Martha's voluntary desire to do much leads her to think that Mary, if she has not quite such a voluntary love for the work, must be driven to it—must have a sharp word from Christ about it. So it is with us. We are so willing to contribute to the Lord's work that we wish we had ten thousand times as much to give. Our heart is warm within us, and we feel we would make no reserve—and then are so grieved with others because they give so very little that we wish we could compel them to give!

And so we would put their cankered money into the same treasury with the bright freewill offerings of the saints, as if the Lord would receive such beggarly pittances squeezed out by force in the same manner as He accepts the voluntary gifts of His people! It were wiser if we left those unwilling contributions to rust in the pockets of their owners. For in the long run I believe they do not help the cause—only that which is given out of a generous spirit, and out of love to Christ—will come up accepted before Him. Too readily do we get away from the free spirit when we get away from the right spirit. The fact is, the Martha spirit spoils all, because it gets us away from the inner *soul* of service, as I have said before, to the mere *husks* of service.

We cease to do work as to the Lord, we labor too much for the service's sake. The main thing in our minds is the service, and not the Master. We are cumbered, and He is forgotten. Thus have I indicated as briefly as I could, some of the weaknesses of the Martha spirit.

III. Now for THE MARY SPIRIT. I have to show you that it is capable of producing the noble form of consecration to Christ. Its noble results will not come just yet. Martha's fruits ripen very quickly, Mary's take time. When Lazarus was dead, you will remember Martha ran to meet Christ, but Mary sat still in the house. Martha wanted her own time, Mary could take Christ's time. So after awhile, just before our Lord's death, we find that Mary did a grand thing—she did what Martha never thought of doing—she brought forth a box of precious ointment and poured it on the Lord's head, and anointed Him with ointment.

While she was sitting at Christ's feet, she was forming and filling the springs of action. You are not losing time while you are feeding the soul. While by contemplation you are getting purpose strengthened and motive purified, you are rightly using time. When the man becomes intense, when he gets within him principles vital, fervent, energetic—then when

the season for work comes he will work with a power and a result which empty people can never attain—however busy they may be. If the stream flows at once, as soon as ever there is a shower, it must be little better than a trickling rivulet. But if the current stream is dammed up, so that for awhile nothing pours down the river bed, you will, in due time, when the waters have gathered strength, witness a torrent before which nothing can stand.

Mary was filling up the fountain head. She was listening and learning, feeding, edifying, loving, and growing strong. The engine of her soul was getting its steam ready, and when all was right, her action was prompt and forcible. Meanwhile, the manner of her action was being refined. Martha's actions were good, but, if I may use the word, they were commonplace. She must make a great feed for the Lord Jesus, just as for any earthly friend. The spiritual nature of Christ she had forgotten, she was providing nothing for it. But Mary's estimate of Christ was of a truer order. She looked at Him as a Priest. She viewed Him as a Prophet. She adored Him as a King.

She had heard Him speak about dying, and had listened to His testimony about suffering, and dimly guessing what it meant, she prepared the precious spikenard that before the dying should come she might anoint Him. The woman's deed was full of meaning and of instruction. It was, indeed, an embodied poem. The odor that filled the house was the perfume of love and elevated thought. She became refined in her actions by the process of musing and learning. Those who think not, who meditate not, who commune not with Christ, will do commonplace things very well. But they will never rise to the majesty of a spiritual conception, or carry out a heart-suggested work for Christ.

That sitting of Mary was also creating originality of art. I tried, two Sundays ago, to enforce upon you the duty of originality of service as the right thing—that as we wandered, everyone in his own way, we should each serve God in his own way, according to our peculiar adaptation and circumstances. Now this blessed woman did so. Martha is in a hurry to be doing *something*—she does what any other admirer of Jesus would do—she prepares meat and a festival. But Mary does what but one or two besides herself would think of—she anoints Him—and is honored in the deed.

She struck out a spark of light from herself as her own thought, and she cherished that spark till it became a flaming act. I would that in the Church of God we had many Sisters at Jesus' feet who at last would start up under an inspiration and say, "I have thought of something that will bring glory to God which the Church has not heard of before. And this will I put in practice, that there may be a fresh gem in my Redeemer's crown." This sitting at the Master's feet guaranteed the real spirituality of what she did. Did you notice when I read what the Master said concerning the pouring of the ointment upon Him, "She has kept this for My burial"?

He praised her for keeping it, as well as for giving it. I suppose that for months she had set apart that particular ointment, and held it in reserve. Much of the sweetest aroma of a holy work lies in its being thought over and brought out with deliberation. There are works to be done at once and

straightway. But there are some other works to be weighed and considered. What shall I do to praise my Savior? There is a cherished scheme, there is a plan, the details of which shall be prayed out, and every single part of it sculptured in the imagination and realized in the heart. And then the soul shall wait, delighting herself in prospect of the deed, until the dear purpose may be translated into fact.

It is well to wait, expectantly saying, "Yes, the set time will come. I shall be able to do the deed. I shall not go down to my grave altogether without having been serviceable. It is not yet the time, it is not yet the appropriate season, and I am not quite ready for it myself. But I will add Grace to Grace and virtue to virtue, and I will add self-denial to self-denial, till I am fit to accomplish the one chosen work." So the Savior praised Mary that she had kept this—kept it till the fit moment came before His burial. And then, but not till then, she had poured out and revealed her love. Yes, it is not your thoughtless service, performed while your souls are half asleep—it is that which you do for Christ with eyes that overflow—with hearts that swell with emotion. It is this that Jesus accepts.

May we have more of such service, as we shall have if we have more of sitting at His feet. Christ accepted her. He said she had chosen the good part which should not be taken from her. And if our work is spiritual, intense, fervent, thoughtful. If it springs out of fellowship. If it is the outgushing of deep principles, of inward beliefs, of solemn gratitude—then our piety shall never be taken from us—it will be an enduring thing. It will not be like the mere activities of Martha—things that come and go.

I have thus worked out my text. I shall utter but two or three words upon the general applications of it. I shall apply it to three or four things very briefly. Brethren, I believe in our Nonconformity. I believe if ever England wanted Nonconformists it is now. But there is a tendency to make Nonconformity become a thing of externals, dealing with State and Church and politics. The political relations of Nonconformists—I believe in their value—I would not have a man less earnest upon them. But I am always fearful lest we should forget that Nonconformity is nothing if it is not spiritual—and that the moment we, as Dissenters, become merely political or formal—it is all over with us.

Our strength is at the Master's feet, and I am afraid for our Nonconformity if it lives elsewhere. I mark so much conformity to the world, so much laxity of rule, so much love of novel opinions, that I tremble. I wish we could go back to Puritanism. We are getting too lax. There is too much worldliness and carnality among us. There is little fear of our being censured, even by the world, for being too Particular. I am afraid we are too much like the world for the world to hate us. As I pray that Nonconformity may always prevail in England, so I earnestly pray that she may stand because she abides near to Christ, holds His Truth, prizes His Word, and lives upon Himself.

Now the like is true of missions. Apply the principle there. God bless missions. Our prayer goes up for them as warmly as for our soul's salvation. But the strength of missions must lie not so much in arrangements, in committees, in money, in men—as in waiting upon the Christ of God. We shall not do any more with a hundred thousand pounds than with a

single thousand, unless we get more Divine Grace. We shall not have more souls won with fifty missionaries than with five, unless we get ten times the amount of power from the right hand of the Most High. The waking up in missions needs to begin in our Prayer Meetings, and in our Churches. In our personal wrestling with God for the conversion of the heathen must lie the main strength of the workers that go out to do the deed. Let us remember this—Mary shall yet pour the box of ointment upon the head of the Anointed—Martha cannot do it.

The same thing is true in revivals. Persons will talk about getting up a revival—of all things I do believe one of the most detestable of transactions. “If you want a revival of religion,” it is said, “you, must get Mr. So-and-So to preach”—with him I suppose is the residue of the Spirit. Oh, but if you want a revival, you must adopt the methods so long in vogue, and so well known as connected with such-and-such a revival! I suppose the Spirit of God is no more a free Spirit, then, as He used to be in the olden times. And whereas of old He breathed where He wished, you fancy your methods and plans can control Him. It is not so. It is not so in any degree.

The way to get the revival is to begin at the Master’s feet! You must go there with Mary and afterwards you may work with Martha. When every Christian’s heart is acting right by feeding on Christ’s Word and drinking in Christ’s Spirit, then will the revival come. When we had the long drought, some farmers watered their grass, but found it did but very little good. An Irish gentleman remarked in my hearing that he had always noticed that when it rained there were clouds about, and so all the air was in right order for the descent of rain.

We have noticed the same, and it so happens that the clouds and general constitution of the atmosphere have much to do with the value of moisture for the herbs. It is no good watering them in the sun, the circumstances do not benefit them. So with revivals. Certain things done under certain circumstances become abundantly useful, but if you have not similar circumstances, you may use the same machinery, but mischief instead of good will follow. Begin yourself with the Master, and then go outward to His service, but plans of action must be secondary.

So too, lastly, if you want to serve God, as I trust you do, I charge you first be careful of your own souls. Do not begin with learning how to preach, or how to teach, or how to do this and that. Dear Friend, get the strength within your own soul, and then even if you do not know how to use it scientifically, yet you will do much. The first thing is to get the heart warmed! Stir up your manhood! Brace up all your faculties! Get the Christ within you—ask the everlasting God to come upon you! Get Him to inspire you—and then if your methods should not be according to the methods of others it will not matter. Or if they should, neither will it be of consequence,

Having the Power of the Holy Spirit, you will accomplish the results. But if you go about to perform the work before you have the strength from on High, you shall utterly fail. Better things we hope of you. God send them. Amen.

LOVE AT LEISURE

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His Word.”
Luke 10:39.

MARY was full of a love to Christ which could be very active and self-sacrificing. I have read to you of her pouring the precious box of spikenard upon our Lord for His anointing. She was, therefore, one who not only waited and listened, but she served the Lord after her sort and fashion. If she had been simply contemplative and nothing more, we might, perhaps, have considered her somewhat of a one-sided character—and while pointing to that which was good in her as an example, we might have had to comment on her deficiencies. But she did more than sit at the Master’s feet. Beloved, if we ever serve the Lord as Mary did, we shall do well.

Now, since she was able thus to serve, she becomes a safe example for us in this other matter of restful faith. The portion of her life occupied in sitting at her Master’s feet may instruct and help us. I feel I can safely hold her up to you as an example in all respects and the more so because of the particular incident just now before us where she received the Master’s express commendation. He also praised her for bringing the box of ointment but, on this occasion, He praised her, too, saying that she had chosen the good part which should not be taken from her. He could not have more conspicuously set His seal of approval on her conduct than He did. I am not going to say much about *her*, but I want to speak to those of you who love the Lord as Mary did, to try if I cannot entice you for your own rest and for your own encouragement into following her example in this particular incident, namely, that of sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have already said you can see that the example is only part of her life—one side of it. At another time I may take the other side and exhort you to also follow her in that, but for this next hour or so, I want you to leave out the other side of her character and stick only to this. Consider it well, for I am persuaded that this is the true preparation for the other—that contemplation and rest at the Savior’s feet will give you strength which will enable you afterwards to anoint His feet according as your heart’s love shall dictate.

On this occasion, then, we have only to do with Mary sitting at our Savior’s feet. There shall be four heads which you will not forget—love at leisure sitting down. Love in lowliness, sitting at Jesus’ feet. Love

listening—she heard His Words. Love learning—she heard His Words to a most blessed purpose. All the while she chose the good part.

I. First, then, LOVE AT LEISURE. That is a point which I want you especially to notice. You that have families to feed and clothe know how, all day long, you are busy—very busy, perhaps. The husband is away from early morning till the evening comes. The children have gone to school and the wife is occupied in a hundred household things. But now the evening meal is over and there is a warm fire burning in the hearth. Is it not one of the most pleasant sights of English interiors to see the family gathered around the fire to just sit still for a little while to talk and to indulge in those domestic loves which are the charm of that sweet English word, “home”? May an Englishman never cease to think of the word, “home,” as the most musical word that ever dropped from mortal lips! Now love is quiet and still and, I was about to say, careless. Outside it has to watch its words, but inside it is playful, it is at ease, it disports itself, fearless of all adversaries. It takes its rest. The armor is put off and the soldier feels the day’s battle is done. He stands not on his guard any longer. He is among those that love him and he feels that he is free. I do not know what life would be if there were not some of those sweet leisure moments when love has nothing else to do except to love—those intervals, these oases in the desert of life wherein to love is to be happy and to be loved is to be doubly blest!

Now, Christian people ought to have such times. *Let us put aside our service for awhile.* I am afraid that even those who are busy in the Master’s work and are not occupied much with lower things, yet overlook the necessity for love to be at leisure. Now tonight, at any rate, you that work longest and toil most and have to think the hardest can ask the Lord to make this a leisure time between you and Jesus. You are not called upon to help Martha to prepare the banquet. Just sit still—sit still and rest at Jesus’ feet and let nothing else occupy the next hour but sitting still and loving and being loved by Him.

Can we not get rid of worldly cares? We have had enough of them during the six days—let us cast the whole burden of them upon our Lord. Let us roll them up and leave them all at the Throne of Grace. They will keep till tomorrow and there is no doubt whatever that they will plague us enough, then, unless we have faith enough to master them. But now put them on the shelf. Say, “I have nothing to do with you now—any one of you. You may just be quiet. My soul has gone away from you up to the Savior’s bosom, there to rest and to delight herself in Him.”

And then *let us try to banish all church cares also.* Holy cares should not always trouble us. As I came here just now, I said to myself, “I will try tonight not to think about how I shall preach, or how this part of the sermon may suit one class of my Hearers or that part another. I will just be like Lazarus was, of whom it is written that, ‘Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him.’” You know that the preacher to such a congregation as this may often find himself like Martha, combined with much serving if he forgets that he is but a servant of the Master and has

only to do His bidding. You may well excuse us. But it must not be so tonight. Whether you are deacon or elder, or preacher, or hearer, you must have nothing to do tonight with anything outside of our blessed Lord and our own hearts! Our love shall claim this time for her own rest. No, Martha, even though you are getting ready to feast Christ, we will not hear the clatter of dishes or the preparation of the festival. We must now just sit there at His feet and look up, and have no eyes except for Him, no ears except for Him, no heart except for Him. It shall be love's leisure night tonight!

And, in truth, Beloved, we have plenty of reason for resting. *Let us sit at Jesus' feet because our salvation is complete.* He said, "it is finished," and He knew that He had worked it all. The ransom price is paid for you, O my Soul! Not one drop has been withheld of the blood that is your purchase. The robe of righteousness is woven from top to bottom—there is not one thread for you to add. It is written, "You are complete in Him" and however frail we are, yet we are "perfect in Christ Jesus," and in spite of all our sin, we are "accepted in the Beloved." If it is so, O Love, have you not room for leisure? Is not this thought a sofa upon which you may stretch yourself and find that there is space enough for you to take your fullest ease? Your rest is not like the peace of the ungodly of whom it is said, "The bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself upon it." Here is perfect rest for you—a couch long enough and broad enough for all your need! And if, perhaps, you should remember, O my Heart, that you have sin yet to overcome and corruption within you yet to combat, remember this night that Christ has put away *all* your sin, for He is "the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes" and that He has overcome the world on your behalf and said to you, "Be of good cheer." You have to fight, but your foe is a routed foe! It is a broken-headed dragon that you have to go to battle with and the victory is sure, for your Savior has pledged Himself to it! You may well take your leisure, for the past is blotted out and the future is secure! You are a member of Christ's body and as such you cannot die! You are a sheep of His pasture and as such He will never lose you! You are a jewel of His crown and as such He will never take His eyes or His heart off of you! Surely, then, you may take your leisure.

Let us also rest because we have received so much from our Master. Be sure to remember, O heart that would have leisure for love, that though you have many mercies to receive, there are not as many to come as you have already had! You have great things yet to learn, but not such great things as you have already been taught. He that has found Christ Jesus to be his Savior has found more than he will ever again find, even though he finds a Heaven, since even Heaven itself is in the loins of Christ and he that gets Jesus has got an eternity of bliss in him! If God gave you Christ, all else is small compared with the gift you already have. Take your leisure, then, and rejoice in your Lord, Himself, and in His Infinite perfections.

As to the Lord's work, we may well take leisure for love, because it is His work. It will go on rightly enough. It is His work, the saving of those souls. It is well that we are so eager—it were better if we were more eager. But just now we may lay even our eagerness aside, for it is not ours to save—it is His—and He will do it. He will soon give you to see of the travail of His soul. Christ will not die in vain. Election's decree shall not be frustrated and Redemption's purpose shall not be turned aside. Therefore rest.

Besides, my Heart, *what can you do, after all?* You are so little and so altogether insignificant. If you worry yourself into your grave what can you accomplish? God did well enough before you were born and He will do well enough when you are gone Home. Therefore fret not yourself. I have sometimes heard of ministers that have been quite exhausted by the preparation of a single Sunday sermon. I am told, indeed, that one sermon on a Sunday is as much as any man can possibly prepare! It is such laborious work to elaborate a sermon! And then I say to myself, "Did my Lord and Master require His servants to preach such sermons as that? Is it not probable that they would do a great deal more good if they never tried to do any such fine things, but just talked out of their hearts of the simplest Truths of His blessed Gospel!"

I turn to the Old Testament and I find that He told His priests to wear white linen, but He also told them never to wear anything that caused sweat, from which I gather that He did not want His priests in the Temple to be puffing and blowing and sweating and boiling like a set of Negro slaves. He meant that His service, although they threw their strength into it, should never be wearisome to them! He is not a taskmaster, like Pharaoh, exacting his tale of bricks and then again a double tale, giving his servants no straw wherewith to make them. No, but He says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Therefore it seems to me that with all the work His people do—and they ought to do it so as to pour their whole life on His head like a box of precious spikenard, yet He did not mean them to go up and down about His service, stewing and worrying and killing their very lives out of them about this and that and the other!

They will do His service a great deal better if they will very often come and sit down at His feet and say, "Now I have nothing to do but to love Him—nothing to do but to receive His love into my soul." Oh, if you will seek after such quiet communion you will be sure to work with a holy might that shall consume you! First take in the strength by having these blessed times of leisure at the Savior's feet. "He that believes shall not make haste." He shall have such peace and restfulness, such quiet and calm, that he shall be in no hurry of fear or fright, but he shall be like the great Eternal who, with all that He does—and He works up to now and guides the whole universe which is full of stupendous wonders—yet never breaks the eternal leisure in which His supreme mind forever dwells!

Well, if we cannot keep up such leisure as that, at least let us have it tonight. I invite you, persuade you and entreat you, Beloved Mary and others like you, to do nothing but just enjoy the leisure of love and sit at Jesus' feet.

II. The second thing is LOVE IN ITS LOWLINESS. Love needs to spend her time with Christ. She picks her place and her place is down at His feet. She does not come to sit at the table with Him, like Lazarus, but she sits down on the ground at His feet.

Observe that *love in this case does not take the position of honor*. She is not a busy housewife, managing affairs, but a lowly worshipper who can only love. Some of us have to be managers for Christ—managing this and managing that—but perhaps love is most at home when she forgets that she has anything to manage. She leaves it to manage itself, or better still, she trusts the Lord to manage it all and just subsides from a manager into a disciple, from a worker into a penitent, from a giver into a receiver, from a somebody, which Grace has made her, to a nobody, glad to be nothing, content to be at His feet, to let Him be everything, while self sinks and sinks away. Do not let me only talk about this, Beloved, but let it be done! Love your Lord now. Let your hearts remember Him. Behold His robes of love, all crimsoned with His heart's blood. You shall take your choice whether you look up to Him on the Cross, or on the Throne. Let it be as suits your mind best tonight, but in any case say unto Him, "Lord, what am I, and what is my father's house, that You have loved me so?"

Sit near your Lord, but sit at His feet. Let such words as these be upon your lips, "Lord, I am not worthy to be called by Your Grace. I am not worthy to be written in Your Book of Life. I am not worthy that You should waste a thought on me, much less that You should shed Your blood for me. I remember now what I was when You did first deal with me. I was cold, careless and hard towards You, but very wanton and eager towards the world, giving my heart away to a thousand lovers and seeking comfort everywhere except in You. And when You did come to me, I did not receive You. When You did knock at my door, I did not open to You, though Your head was wet with dew and Your locks with the drops of the night. And, oh, since through Your Grace I have admitted You and You and I have been joined together in bonds of blessed union, yet how ill have I treated You! O my Lord! How little have I done for You! How little have I loved You! I could faint in Your Presence to think that if You did examine me and question me, I could not answer You one of a thousand questions You might ask me. Your book accuses me of negligence in reading it. Your Throne of Grace accuses me of slackness in prayer. The assemblies of Your people accuse me that I have not been hearty in worshipping. There is nothing, either in Providence or in Nature, or in Grace, but what might bring some accusation against me! The world itself might blame me that my example so little rebukes it and my very family might charge that I do not bless my household as I

should.” That is right, dear Brother, dear Sister. Sink! Go on sinking. Be little. Be less. Be less still. Be still less. Be least of all. Be *nothing!*

Lift up your eyes from your lowly place to Him who merits all your praise. Say to Him, “But what are You, Beloved, that You should have thought of me before the earth was? That You should take me to Yourself to be Yours and then for me, should leave the royalties of Heaven for the poverties of earth and should even go down to the grave, that You might lift me up and make me to sit with You at Your right hand? Oh, what wonders You have worked in me and I am not worthy of the least of Your mercies! And yet You have given me great and unspeakable blessings. If You had only let me be a doorkeeper in Your house, I had been happy, but You have set me among princes! If You had given me the crumbs from Your table, as dogs are fed, I had been satisfied, but You have put me among the children! If You had said that I might just stand outside the gates of Heaven now and then, on gala days, to hear Your voice, it would have been bliss for me! But now You have promised me that I shall be with You where You are, to behold Your Glory and to be a partake of it, world without end.” Do not such thoughts as these make you sink? I do not know how it is with you, but the more I think of the Lord’s mercies, the more I grow downward. I could weep to think that He should lavish so much on one that gives Him no return at all, for so it seems to my heart that it is with me. What do you think of yourself? What is your faith, your love, your liberality, your prayers, your works? Dare you call them anything? Do you imagine that the Lord is pleased with your past? Would He not rather say to you, “You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled me with the fat of your sacrifices; but you have made Me to serve with your sins and wearied Me with your iniquities.” So we sit down again at His feet and from that place we would not wish to rise. Love’s leisure shall be spent in acts of humiliation. We will bow at the feet that were pierced for our redemption!

III. But now, in the third place, here is LOVE LISTENING. She is down there in the place of humility, but she is where she can catch each word as it falls, and she is there with one purpose. She wishes to hear all that Christ has to say and she wishes to hear it close at hand. She wants to hear the very tones in which He speaks and the accents with which He delivers each precept. She loves to look up and see those eyes which have such meaning in them and that blessed Countenance which speaks as much as the lips themselves. And so she sits there and she looks with her eyes toward Him as a handmaid’s eyes are to her mistress. And then, with her ears and her eyes, she drinks in what He has to say.

Now, Beloved, I want you to do that. Say in prayer now, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” And then with your ears open, *hear what He says by His Word.* Perhaps there is some text that has come home to your soul today. Hear it. Hear it well. It would not be much use for anyone to try to preach a sermon in the center of the city in the middle of the day. If you stood near St. Paul’s Cathedral with all that traffic going by and all that rumbling, roaring and shouting, why, the big bell, itself, might speak and you would hardly hear it! But when it is night and all is

still, then you can hear the city clocks strike and you might hear a man's voice even though it was not a very strong one, if he went through the streets and delivered a message with which he had been entrusted. Well, our blessed Lord often takes advantage of those quiet times when the man has a broken leg and cannot get to work, but must be still in the hospital. Or when the woman is unable to get about the house to attend to her ordinary duties, but is so helpless that she cannot do anything else but think. Then comes the Lord and He begins to bring to our remembrance what we have done in days past—and to talk with us as He never has the opportunity of doing at any other time. But it is far more blessed to find time ourselves, so that the Lord will not need to afflict us in order to get us quickly at His feet! Oftentimes the Good Shepherd, in caring for the sheep, “*makes us lie down,*” but He is glad when we come of our own accord that we may rest and listen to His Word.

Listen to what He is saying to you by Providence. Perhaps a dear child is sick at home, or you have losses and crosses in business. It may not seem to you as if these things come from your loving Lord, but they are perhaps the pressure of His hand to draw you to His side that He may tell you His secret. Perhaps it has been mercy that has come to you in another way. You have been prospered, you have been converted, you have had much joy in your family. Well, the Lord has a voice in all that He does to His people, so listen tonight. If you listen you will be obliged to say, “What shall I render to the Lord for His benefits to me?”

Listen also to what the Spirit says in your soul. Listen, for it is not till you get your soul quiet that you can hear what the Spirit of God is saying. I have known such a clatter of worldliness or pride, or some other noise in the soul of man, that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit has been drowned to the serious detriment of the disciple. Now, I hope you have really done with all your cares and left them outside the Tabernacle tonight, that even the cares about your class in the Sunday school and about your preaching engagement tomorrow, and everything else, have been put aside and that now you are just sitting down at Jesus' feet and listening. While you listen in that fashion, in lowly spirit at His feet, you are likely to hear Him say some words to you which, perhaps, may change the whole tenor of your life! I do not know what God the Lord will speak, but, “He will speak peace to His people.” Sometimes He speaks in such a way that a turbid life has become clear. A life of perplexity has become decided and distinctly happy. And a life of weakness has become a career of strengths. And a life that seemed wasted for a while has suddenly sprung up into eminent usefulness! Keep your ears open, Mary! Keep your ears open, Brother, and you will hear what Jesus Christ has to say!

But now let me say, while you are sitting and listening, *you will do well to listen as much to Him as to what He has to say*, for Christ Himself is the Word and His whole life is a voice! Oh, sit down, sit down and listen! I wish I had not to talk tonight and could sit down and do it for myself and just look up at Him, God over all, blessed forever, and yet

Brother to my soul, a partaker of flesh and blood! This very fact, that He is Incarnate, speaks to me! That God is in human flesh speaks comfort to my soul, such as no words could ever convey! God in my nature! God become my Brother, my Helper, my Head, my All! Could not my soul leap out of the body for joy at the Incarnation if there were nothing else but that revealed to us?

Now let me look up again and see my Lord with His wounds, as Mary did not see Him, but as we now may—with hands and feet pierced, with scarred side and marred visage—tokens of the ransom price paid in His pangs and griefs and death. Is it not amazing to see your sin forever blotted out and blotted out so fully, and blotted out by such means as this? Why, if there were not an audible word, those wounds are mouths which speak His love! The most eloquent mouths that ever spoke are the wounds of Christ. Listen! Listen! Every drop of blood says, “Peace.” Every wound says, “Pardon. Life. Eternal life.”

And now see your Beloved once again. He is risen from the dead and His wounds bleed no more! Yes, He has gone into Glory and He sits at the right hand of God, even of the Father! It is well for you, dear Brother or Sister, that you cannot literally sit at His feet in that guise, for if you could only see Him as He is, I know what would happen to you—even that which happened to John when he saw Him with His head and His hair white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes as a flame of fire, and His feet as if they burned in a furnace. You would swoon away! John says, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.”

You cannot sit at those feet of Glory till you have left this mortal clay, or until it has been made like unto His glorious body! But you may in faith do so—and what will His Glory say to you? It will say, “This is what you shall receive. This is what you shall share. This is what you shall see forever and ever.” He will say to you—even to you who mourn your insignificance and in lowliness sit at His feet—“Beloved, you shall partake of the Glory which the Father gave Me, even that which I had with Him before the world was. Soon, when a few more moons have waxed and waned, soon you shall be with Me where I am.”

Oh, what bliss is this! Never mind Martha’s frowns! Forget her for the moment and keep on sitting at Jesus’ feet! She may come in and grumble and say that something is neglected—tell her she should not neglect it then, but now your business is not with plates or pots, but to do as your Master has permitted you to do, namely, to sit at His feet and listen to Him!

IV. So I close by saying, in the fourth place, that here is LOVE LEARNING. While she listened she was being taught, because she sat at Jesus’ feet with her heart all warm—sitting in the posture of lowliness she was, as few could hear them—*hearing words so as to spy out their secret meaning*. You know the difference between a man’s voice at a distance, saying something, and his being very near you. You know how much the face can say, the eyes can say and the lips can say—and there is many a deaf man that has heard another speak though he has never heard a sound—he has known the meaning by the very movement of the

lips and the gleams of the countenance. Ah, and if you get into such near fellowship with Christ as to sit at His feet, you will get His meaning! When the letter kills others, you will see the secret meaning that is hidden within and you will rejoice.

She got at His meaning and then she was *hearing the words so as to drink in the meaning*. “They sit down at Your feet,” says the old Scripture, “everyone shall receive of Your words.” Beloved, that is a great promise—to receive of His Words. Some people hear the words but do not receive them—but there sat Mary where, as the words fell, they dropped upon her as snowflakes drop into the sea and are absorbed! So each word of Jesus dropped into her soul and became part and parcel of her nature—they fired and filled her very being!

What she learned she remembered. *We see love learning what she will treasure up*. Mary never forgot what she heard that day. It remained with her forever. It seasoned her whole life. The words of her Master were with her all the days she was watching. All the days she was waiting, she was waiting after they had been spoken. They kept her watching and waiting till, at last, love’s instinct told her that the time was come and then she went upstairs where she had put away the choice ointment for which she spent her money. She had laid it up and kept it till the time should come—and just before the Savior’s death and burial she fetched it down, the gift which she had hoarded up for Him—and she poured it out in adoration.

As she sat at His feet, she resolved to love Him more and more. *Love was learning to love better*. As she had listened and learned, the learning had crystallized itself into resolves to be, among women, the most devoted to Him. Perhaps, little by little, she had laid aside this great price which she had paid for the spikenard. Be it as it may, it was dear to her, and she brought it down when the time was come and put it all on Him with a joyous liberality and love. Well, now, I want you to learn of Jesus after that fashion and, by-and-by, when the time comes, you, too, may do some deed for Christ that shall fill the house in which you dwell with sweet perfume. Yes, shall fill the *earth* with it, so that if man scents it not, yet God Himself shall be delighted with the fragrance you pour, out of love, upon His Son!

We are going to have Communion. Here are the emblems of His blessed body and blood and I hope they will help us to have nothing to do but to think of Him—nothing to do but to be lowly in His Presence—nothing to do but to listen to His words and to drink in His teaching.

But there are some here that do not love Him. It may be that God will lay you low by affliction in order to bring you to the feet of Jesus. Perhaps He will allow disaster and disappointment to overtake you in the world, to win you to Himself. If any of you have had this experience, or are passing through it just now, do not trifle with it, I pray you, for, while we are in this life, if the Lord comes to us to remind us of our sin, He does it in the greatness of His mercy and in order that He may bring salvation to us! It will be quite another thing, in the next life, if you die

unrepentant and unforgiven. Then you may, indeed, dread the coming of God to bring your sin to remembrance! But while you are here, if the Lord is so speaking to you, incline your ears and listen to His voice, however harshly it may seem to sound in your ears. Even if He should strip you, be glad to be stripped by Him. If He should wound you, and bruise you, willingly give yourself up to be wounded and bruised by Him. Yes, even if He should slay you, rejoice to be slain by Him, for remember that He clothes those whom He strips, He heals those whom He wounds and He makes alive those whom He kills! So it is a blessed thing to undergo all those terrible operations of Law-work at the hands of the Most High, for it is in that way that He comes to those whom He means to bless.

I cannot preach to you, for the time has gone, but do you know, I think one of the most dreadful things that can ever be said of man is that he does not love Christ. I should be sorry to enter on my list of friends the man that did not love his mother—no, I could not call him a man. Dead is that heart to every noble sentiment that loves not her that bore him! And yet there might be some justifiable cause to excuse even that. But not to love the Christ, the God that stooped to bleed for man—this is inexcusable! I dare not tonight utter, as my own, what Paul said, but, very pointedly and solemnly, I would remind you who love not Christ of it. Paul says, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema Maranatha”—cursed at the coming. Sometimes when I think of my Lord and my heart grows hot with admiration of His self-denying love, I think I could almost invoke the imprecation on the head of him that does not, would not, could not love the Christ of God! But better than that I will ask His blessing for you and so I say, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!”

Here our sermon closes. And may God’s blessing rest on it.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 63; LUKE 10:38-42; JOHN 12:1-8.**

I will read the 63rd Psalm first, as somewhat representing the state of heart into which I would we could all come tonight.

Psalm 63:1. *O God, You are my God.* Read that sentence how you will, it is unspeakably precious. If we say, “O God, You are my *God*,” it brings out the possession which the Believer has in God. If we say, “O God, You are *my* God,” it shows the greatness of the possession which we thus have in having this God to be our God forever and ever. And if we say “O God, *You* are my God,” it leads us to think of God and not of His gifts as our chief good.

1, 2. *Early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Your power and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.* Long after the old times over again—for those times of Heaven upon earth—those special seasons when the Lord made the veil between us and Heaven to be very thin, indeed, and allowed us almost to see His face. “To see Your power

and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.” Well, then, let us go to the sanctuary again, or make the place where we are a sanctuary. Even the stony pillar may mark the site of Bethel and every spot may be hallowed ground.

3-5. *Because Your loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus will I bless You while I live: I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.* Satisfaction, absolute satisfaction! Satiety of every desire, full to the brim to the running over only because God is our God! We need nothing beyond that to make our mouth praise with joyful lips.

6, 7. *When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches. Because You had been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.* If I cannot see Your face, the shadow of Your wing shall be enough for me, for they shall shelter me from all harm and I will, yes, I will rejoice. Under the wings we are near the heart of God and he who know God’s heart of love must be glad.

8-10. *My soul follows hard after You: Your right hand upholds me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foes.* All our sins and all other things or beings that are the enemies of our soul! Christ has overcome and He will leave them upon the field.

11. *But the king shall rejoice in God; everyone that swears by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.* Now a short passage in the New Testament about Mary, the sister of Martha.

Luke 10:38-40. *Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.* Agitated, distressed Martha was afraid that something would go wrong with the dinner. She had too much on her hands—too much on her brain. That led her to blame her sister, Mary, and to try to get the Lord to blame her, too. There is a strong tincture of self-righteousness in Martha’s speech.

41, 42. *And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, You are careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is necessary and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.* I shall not tell her to leave My instruction, said our Lord, or to get up from the position which she occupies. No, you may go about your work, she is honoring Me as much as you are, if not more. This did not mean that Mary was perfect, or that Martha was wholly to be condemned. Both needed to learn much from Jesus and Mary was more in the way of it. Still Martha was doing good service. But you will see that Mary could do something for Christ, too, when the time came.

John 12:1, 2. *Then Jesus, six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from*

the dead. There they made Him a supper, and Martha served: and Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Martha served—she had not given that up. She was a wondrous housewife and she did well to keep to her occupation. Lazarus had been dead and had been raised again. But he was not the center of interest—“He that raised him up was there.”

3-7. *Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then said one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which would betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of My burying has she kept this. Somebody or other always seemed to object to Mary! If Martha does not do it, Judas will. To be found guilty of excess of love to Christ is such a blessed criminality that I wish we might be executed for it! It were sweet to be put to death for such a crime! It was that that Christ died of—He was found guilty of excess of love.*

8. *For the poor you always have with you; but Me you have not always. It is not every day that you can do something personally and distinctly for Christ, Himself, and therefore, whenever the occasion serves you, be sure to be there to avail yourself of it! True, you can serve Him indirectly by aiding His poor saints. Still, something for Him—for Him, Himself—should often be devised as Mary devised this service that day.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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CUMBERED WITH MUCH SERVING

NO. 3163

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1866.

“Martha was cumbered about much serving.”
Luke 10:40.

THE preacher will have one hearer tonight to whom his text will be amazingly applicable—himself! Here we have meeting after meeting and engagement after engagement. We are always working as hard as we can, but we have put on much extra canvas just now, serving much and not being exempt from Martha’s sin of *being cumbered* with much serving. I should not wonder but what there may be some others here besides the preacher who may have fallen into the same state of mind and, perhaps, just now while engaged more than ever in God’s work, it may be well for us to pull ourselves up a little and look around us, and see what state we are in, lest, like Martha, we get more and more cumbered, till at last we speak as we ought not to speak and begin to upbraid others who are less wrong than ourselves!

I. We will first say a little on this point—WHAT WAS IT THAT MARTHA WAS PROBABLY CUMBERED ABOUT?

Her fault was not that she served. Oh, that is no fault! The condition of a servant should be the condition of every Christian. “I serve,” should be the motto of all the princes of the royal family of God! It was not her fault that she had “much serving.” We cannot do too much. Let us do all that we possibly can—head, heart and hands—let every single power and passion of our nature be engaged in the Master’s service! “Hereby shall you be My disciples, if you bring forth much fruit.” It was no fault of hers that she was busy preparing a feast for the Master. Happy Martha to have an opportunity of entertaining so blessed a Guest! And happy Martha, too, to have the spirit to throw her whole soul so heartily into the engagement. But her fault was that she grew “*cumbered* with much serving,” so that she forgot *Him* and only remembered the service! She overrode her union with Christ by her service of Christ—and herein was the mischief.

I do not know what particular part of the service it was that cumbered her, but I do know that any part of it cumpers me, sometimes, and that as the minister of this Church, with our large college and with all sorts of

work from morning till night, it is the easiest and most natural thing in the world to get “cumbered with much serving,” and to get into such a state of head and heart that it is almost impossible to sit at the Savior’s feet and at the same time to be serving Him as we ought to do. We ought to be Martha and Mary rolled into one. We should do much service and yet have much communion at the same time.

Martha’s fault, then, was that she grew cumbered. In thinking this matter over, I thought she might, perhaps, have been cumbered in this way. *She was the housewife and there were a great many guests coming—more than she had expected—and she thought there was not enough in the house for them.* “Surely,” she said, “I have provided for only fifty, and here are a hundred! What shall I do? I did not ask that person over there to come, I am sure, but there is no getting rid of him. I wish I had laid in more store, I told Mary so. I told her there would be more, but she said, ‘No, provide for only so many.’ I do not believe there is enough.” So she fretted over that—and any good housewife might be supposed to do the same. How often have you and I, who are serving God, fretted in the same way? We have said, “Oh, what can our poor little Church do? How can such a sum of money be raised? There is much more needed than we shall ever get!” The minister has come before his congregation and has felt—“One, two, three, four, five, yes, five loaves—and these only barley loaves—and a few fishes, and these but small. What are they among so many? I wish I had a narrower sphere of labor and had fewer people dependent upon my exertions!” This is how we have sometimes thought. Then at other seasons we have said—“How shall I keep on? I have so little strength. I have scarcely had power to do good up till now, how shall I be sustained to the end of the journey?” We begin calculating and fear there is not enough meat in the house. With a sincere desire that every child of God should be supplied and that not a single guest at the table should go unfed, we begin to be cumbered because we think there will not be enough!

I do not know what it was that cumbered Martha, but I should not wonder if she got *cumbered about the servants*. She had said to one, “Now, you must prepare the dish and mind it is to be done in a certain way. And you, Mary, are to prepare the other dish, and you the other one.” There is an old proverb which says, “The more servants, the more plagues.” I do not think it is a true proverb, but some people have found it to be so. Perhaps Martha did. Perhaps there was one letting that roast burn, and another spoiling another roast—and so, turning round from one to another, Martha said, “It seems as if I ought to be everywhere. There is nothing done unless I am looking after all these people. They are sure to be getting into some mischief or other! I need a hundred hands to do everything myself, or else a hundred eyes to look after those who are doing it.” How often Christian ministers, especially, and each Christian

in his own position, gets into this same state. You think, "Surely I thought I could trust such-and-such a Believer with such a work, but how he blunders at it! I can never give it to him to do again!" Then you try another with a certain duty that is very important and that goes wrong. If you have a great machine to work, it is not often, but when there is some cog gets off, or some band that gets snapped, or some wheel that gets out of order—and when one has to look after all these things and to see not only to one's own personal work, but to the work of all these different people and to be sure that they are all kept in their proper place, it is no wonder that one sometimes feels—"Dear me! I cannot manage all these people!" And so one gets "cumbered with much serving."

Moreover, very frequently you find that very sad and grave mistakes have been made in things which you thought nobody could make a mistake about. Perhaps you find out that you have been the author of the mistake, yourself, and then you are cumbered again. You say, "How can I set that right? How can I retrace that false step? By what possible means can I undo such-and-such a thing that has been done?" I suppose that if a captain in battle were to leave his position in the center of the camp and go flying about here and there, he would be pretty sure to lose the victory—and some of us do just that. We have not patience enough to sit still in the center and just to look to the work as a whole, and keep ourselves calm and quiet. We get cumbered over every little thing and about every trifle. We get cumbered, in fact, about the much serving. Now, there is a good motive at the bottom of all this—it is a desire to serve Christ well. It is a wish to do His service in the best, most useful, creditable and successful manner. But there is mischief in it, as we shall have to show, by-and-by. Oh, how my soul longs to have this Church a perfect Church! How I long to see everyone of you at work for Christ! How I desire myself, especially, to preach every time with fire, force and energy! And yet I go home to my bed, sometimes, and toss there because I cannot preach up to my own standard, imperfect as that is. And how I mourn sometimes over this or that Brother who does not seem to understand the dignity of his profession, nor live up to the holiness which becomes the anointed of God and the blood-washed in the fountain which Christ has filled. Oh, dear Friends, the being cumbered with much serving is so easy in my case, and I only instance myself because I know that a face answers to face in a glass, so the heart of man answers to man. I suppose you all, sometimes, get into this state—and in proportion as you are serving Christ will be your temptation to get cumbered with much serving!

We have already said that you may be cumbered about a great many things. It is amazing how many things there are to cumber one even

about an ordinary service. If you are responsible for the service, you are cumbered as to whether you have got the right text and as to whether you have selected the right hymns. You pray that God would bless the Word, and that is right enough, but you are cumbered about it. When the hymn is given out, you are cumbered, perhaps, as to whether it will be sung well, or whether the people will break down. Perhaps there is some discord and if you are anxious to have everything right, you get cumbered about that. Then you are cumbered, possibly, about where the people are to sit. Even such things as these will come across the mind and I should not wonder if my Brothers, the deacons and elders, get cumbered about them as well as the minister! They perhaps get to thinking—"Dear me, there is Mr. So-and-So over there. I am glad to see him here and I hope the Word will be blessed." Then you get wrong thoughts about such-and-such persons and wonder how they will like such-and-such expressions—and so on. And so, instead of enjoying the service and entering into the soul of it, you are thinking, "I hope it will all go well. I hope the preacher will not use some of those naughty sayings of his that shock the ladies. I hope he will not say any of his rough things tonight." And so you get cumbered. Instead of enjoying the Word as it is preached, and receiving it as it is delivered, there is a anxiety about this and about that, and about 50 other things! And so we are cumbered with much serving.

I have thus laid the stress upon the ministry, because that is the service of God in an especial manner. But you Sunday school teachers, if you are very anxious about your class—and remember, you ought not to be teachers if you are not anxious—you will, perhaps, get cumbered by the class by looking more to the outward items of your work than to the spirituality of it. You tract-distributors may be doing a great work, but you may get to be more careful about the externals of it than you are about the internals. You City Missionaries—for there are some such here—may also get to think more of the filling up of your journal and about paying a certain quantity of visits, than about living near to God and going in the strength of the Most High to your work. And if so, you will fall into the blunder of poor Martha. With all your zeal for Christ, you will disqualify yourself for any great usefulness and, instead of getting a word of comfort and commendation, you will only get a rebuke from the Lord who will warn you that Mary chose the good part, while Martha, in some degree, despised it! I hope you will not misunderstand me—I would not have you do less than you now do. No, the more the better! I would not for a moment dissuade you from the utmost possible efforts which your zeal can suggest. Far be it for me to say, "Slacken yourselves in your sowing, or stop yourselves in your plowing." No, go to the end of the field and back again—and have no rest until the day's work is over! On, on, on, as the racehorse to the finish line, as the arrow to the target! On,

as the world speeds on evermore in its own predestinated orbit! On, for God calls you to work while it is called today! On, for souls are perishing! On, for He is worthy for whom you would do this and Christ deserves your utmost labor at the utmost power of your whole spirit. But oh, take care that these labors do not take the place of Christ! Take care that you do not forget the Master in thinking about the dinner that you are going to put on the table for Him. Remember that He is still to be first in your thoughts—first in the morning and last at night—and that after all, while it is good to serve, it must always be attended by sitting at the Savior's feet, or else you will not get a reward, but a rebuke.

II. Anyone here can work out that thought if he understands anything of the spiritual life and, therefore, I will now notice, in the second place, WHAT MARTHA LOST WHILE SHE WAS THUS CUMBERED ABOUT WITH MUCH SERVING.

She was losing *what she could not get at any other time*. Jesus Christ was not always at their house. She could at any time prepare a feast, but she could not, at all times hear His voice. His visits are not such everyday things with Believers that they can afford to lose them. Beloved, when we come to God's House and especially when we come to Christ's Table, I think we ought to say to ourselves, "*Now*, at any rate, I will bid my Martha-cares begone. I can attend to them when I have done. There is plenty of time, besides, for my cares, even for my cares for Christ. But now that the Lord is here, now that His people are met and He has promised to be with them, I shall have done with all my care and will give myself up to seek living and personal fellowship with Him. I will forget the dishes on the table, and the servants in the kitchen, and the fires, and everything else in the house—they must go as they may. I will give the best orders I can and then I will leave these things, for I am now going to get a privilege which I cannot always get—I am going to listen to His loving Words as they come welling up fresh from my Savior's heart. I am going to sit down right at His feet and drink in that which He would teach me." I think you will acknowledge that it is easier to serve than it is to commune. You will have observed that Joshua never grew weary when he was fighting with the Amalekites. It was hard work, but he did not get his arms weakened at it. But when Moses was on the top of the mountain in prayer, he had to have two others to hold his hands up! So is it with us. The more spiritual the exercise, the sooner the soul tires of it. We could keep on preaching better than we could keep on praying and it is easier to pray in public than it is to pray in secret. And let me say that even in secret it is easier to pray aloud than it is to sit still in your communion with Christ in the solemn silence of the soul. The choicest fruits are generally the hardest to grow—and the most spiritual engagements are the most difficult for us to manage. Beloved, we ought to have an eye

to this! We ought to take care that we do not neglect these merely external things which are good enough in themselves, these outward attending to ordinances, a sermon, and so on—but we ought also to take care that while we remember these in their proper places, we do not let these things crowd out better things, but see to it that we get to Christ and enjoy living, personal fellowship with Him!

I am afraid, too, that at this time *Martha was losing her reverence for her Savior*. You will ask how she did this. I do not like her expression, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her that she help me.” I do not think she ought to have spoken so to her Savior. The words do not sound gentle. It seems as if she had got to be so familiar with waiting upon Him, that she had lost some of the due respect which she should have paid to the great Prophet of Israel, her Savior and her Lord! This is one of the great dangers of those who serve God in the engagements of the sanctuary. I have had to confess and have mentioned it at ministers’ meetings often, and have heard others confess that familiarity with sacred things is a temptation, very often, to lead us to read our Bibles for our congregations and not for ourselves—and to pray *ex officio* instead of praying with our whole hearts to God, ourselves, as though we ourselves needed the blessing! I am sure, too, that this is true of all the other officials in God’s House. If a man is not saved, and becomes a minister, I do not think there is a chance of his being saved afterwards—he had better be anything than be an unsaved minister! I have noticed the same thing with regard to pew-openers and such like persons who are not converted before they take their offices—and I pray that those of you who have the filling up of such positions, never to appoint unconverted people, for they may not be converted afterwards. They will be so busy putting people into their seats and doing different things, that they will be cumbered with much serving!

I did once say, and gave very great offense, indeed, by it, that the people who take down my sermons ought to have the Grace of God in their hearts, or else they would not get a blessing, for certainly the mechanical act of writing must prevent the mind from entering in all its fullness into the meaning of the utterance! Our dear Brothers here who take such an interest in our services, and to whose kind care and watchfulness we owe so much of the quiet we enjoy on Sabbath days with our great crowds, I am sure will excuse me—indeed I will not asked to be excused—when I say they must mind that these things do not run away with their spirituality, for there is such a fear in serving Christ that familiarity with His service will tend to make us lose our respect for Him! God grant that instead of this, our reverence for Christ may grow more and more—and the more we serve Him, the more humbly may we lie down at His feet.

But I think Martha was losing something more than this, and that was *her humility*. If she had had much humility, she would have known that Mary was quite as good as she was, herself, and even a little better. But instead of that she took it upon herself to call Mary to account and even to complain to Christ about her. Many of our complaints about ministers and other good people show our own lack of humility. When I think that my Brothers have many faults, I may well remember how many I have, myself—and instead of thinking how badly some people do, I ought to suspect that I might have done a great deal worse if I had been in their place! Indeed, it strikes me that the wise man is rather delighted that things are as well as they are, than displeased that they are not any better, for he knows that the best of men are but men at the best. He knows from his own experience that men are very likely to go fast in the way of error and to travel very slowly in the way of right—and so when he does see a cause prosper, or a holy deed done, he is grateful to God for it! Though he does wish that there were more, yet he is grateful to God that there is so much genuine piety, so much brotherly love, so much earnestness, so much prayerfulness as there is in the midst of the world. Let us not be so censorious, always judging this man and that man. If you had been in his place would you have done better? Have you to pay his wages at the last? Is he your servant? Then who are you that judge another's servant? To his own Master shall he stand or fall, and perhaps the very man you judge is more acceptable to God than you are! He does not serve so much as you do. He does not preach so many sermons, nor teach so many people, nor publish so many books and so on—but he sits more at Jesus' feet than you do, lives nearer to Christ and is bringing more honor to the Redeemer's name in his humble, quiet obscurity than you are with all your publicity and with all your work! It seems to me that we are in danger of losing our respect for our fellows if we think so much of ourselves.

Does it not strike you, by the way, that very often when we get cumbered about much serving, there is pride at the bottom of it? Why do we want to serve God in this way or in that way? The preacher wants those who come to say, "What a capital sermon," and, "What a fine fellow he is!" Or, perhaps, the hearers want people to say when they go out, "Now I enjoyed it!" When we do all this and when we want to see our Sunday school class very numerous, and to see many conversions, is it not just possible that at the bottom of it all we think, "it would look so well and we should be able to say that there is so much done"? Brother, if you say you have never felt like this, I can only say that you must be a very superior person. I know I have often felt like it and I here make confession of that wicked vanity which is so very common a complaint among us! We get cumbered, not so much about whether Christ is served, but whether

we shall be thought to have done anything and to have done it in a proper way! Oh, to shake one's self from all these beggarly rags of selfishness and to be content to do God's work to the best of one's ability and to say, "My Master, as to whether this looks well or does not look well in the sight of my fellows, is nothing! I gave it to You as You gave it to me. Accept it, my Master. Accept it because I love You and yet more, because You love me!"

Martha, then, was losing a great deal, but in addition to all this, she was also *losing communion with Christ*. Mrs. Rowe says somewhere—"If all the 12 Apostles were to preach at the time when I ought to be in prayer, I would not leave my closet to hear one of them, or all of them." And another used to say—"I would not be kept out of my closet for all the world." But we are so easily turned away from sitting at Christ's feet to go to work! We so easily cut short the time of prayer for the sake of doing more for Christ! Communion with Christ is the most precious thing! And once lost, I do not care what you did in the time when you ought to have been communing with Christ—you may have won coppers, but you have lost sovereigns, for many have earned pence, but you have lost diamonds! For your own sake, and for the sake of those whom you would bless, you must see to it that sitting at the Savior's feet is not neglected, even though it is under the specious pretext of waiting upon Him. The first thing for our soul's health, the first thing for His Glory and the first thing for our own usefulness is to keep ourselves in perpetual communion with the Lord Jesus—and to see that the vital spirituality of our religion is maintained over and above everything else in the world!

III. Having thus shown you what Martha lost, I would now like to OFFER SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY PREVENT OUR BEING CUMBERED WITH MUCH SERVING.

There is one consideration which has done me a deal of good and it is this—that *the Lord Jesus got on very well before we were born, and it is very likely that He will get on exceedingly well when we are dead*. When one thinks, "Oh, it is so important that such-and-such a point should be attended to. I must throw my whole strength into that." And then the next day there seems to be something else so very necessary to be done! And then something goes amiss there and something else here—because one cannot be everywhere—and one begins to be troubled. It might well be said to us at such a time, "Now, are you really such a very important person after all?" Before we were born, God's cause prospered and when we are dead, if we have been useful in our lives, we may, perhaps, leave a little gap for a little time, but it will soon be filled up and nobody will know it—and God's cause will go on just as well without us! "I hope I do not inconvenience you," said the gnat when he settled on the horn of a bull. "I did not know you were there," said the bull. So, sometimes we seem to think, "I hope my absence will not cause inconvenience to such-

and-such a cause.” And we might very well be answered, “Why, nobody knew you had anything to do with it! What difference will *your* absence make?” I do not want you to be careless about things on this account, but I do want you not to be cumbered about them on this account. That is not a bad philosophy, though it is very often very wickedly applied—“It will be all be the same in a hundred years’ time.” Well, really, it will. Though the waves do go back, each one of them, after they have come up on the shore, yet none of them need regret that they die because every wave comes up beyond its fellow, and though there may be no advance in each one particular wave, but even a receding, yet the great ocean, itself, is going forward! And so, if one little particular part of the work that has been left to me does not go on as I could wish, yet, O God, the great sea of Your Church is going on in the fullness of its glory and it shall yet cover the sands of time and break upon the cliffs in an eternal spray of everlasting song! Let us be consoled in this matter. We are not such big bodies, after all, and if the thing which we devise may not succeed, yet that is not the main thing, for Jehovah still reigns and Christ still prospers!

There is another consideration—namely, that *it is pretty certain that if we have done our best for our Master, our fretting will not improve things.* Farmers have been troubled, sometimes, when the rain has been coming on at harvest time, but I never remember to have observed that the glass went up on that account, nor have I ever heard of a single rain-drop whose little watery heart relented because of the sorrow of the agriculturist—it came down just the same. So, if our fretting over God’s work would improve it, Brothers and Sisters, let us fret! Let us fret together in harmony! But if it really will not, and if after having done all we can in prayer and holy work, the thing does not go on quite as well as we could wish it, then let us say, “My Master, let it be according to Your will, and if it is according to Your mind, it is sure to be according to my mind, or if not, Lord, give me a better mind.” May we be brought down to this—“Your will be done.” If we had more of the spirit of Christian resignation, we should feel that as we cannot add one cubit to our own stature by our own thought, so neither can we add a single drachma of success to the Church of God by all our unbelieving cumbering of ourselves about much serving!

Another consideration may help us—namely, *that, after all, it is not our work, but His work in which we are engaged.* I once heard a very pretty illustration from one of our ministers who said that he was moving his books from his study downstairs to another room which he had taken for his study upstairs, and his little boy said, “Papa, let me help you.” The little boy was not able to do anything, but the father thought he must encourage his desire for industry and he said, “Yes, you can take that little book.” But the boy did not like to take the little book—he wanted to be

a man and carry a big book. So he took a big book and got it to the foot of the stairs—and there he sank down and began to cry, for he could carry it no further. “And what,” said the father, “do you think it came to? Why, I had to carry the book upstairs and the boy, too!” So it is with us—we ask Christ to let us do something for Him and we are not satisfied to do only that—we have a natural and a very proper desire to be doing more. And so we undertake something which we cannot do and we sit down and fret as if the book never would get upstairs till *we* carried it up—and then the good Father comes along and takes the book and the little child, too, and carries both. Oh, instead of sitting down and crying, say, “My Father, I have the will to do this, but I cannot. Come and do it, my Father, for it is not my work, it is Your work.” You remember how Moses put it. I have often put it in that shape, and may the Master forgive me if I have done it unbelievably. Moses said, “Have I begotten all this people?” And often when the enormous weight of this Church has pressed upon my soul, I have said to Christ, “Lord Jesus, I never married this Church. It is no spouse of mine—it is Your wife and I am but as one that unties the laces of her shoes. I am but as one that pours water upon her feet that she may wash them. I am your present servant in the body, but the work is too much for me—You must do it. I have cared for Your flock till I could say that by night it has distressed me, and by day—

***‘My joys and sorrows mingled seem
As if they would consume me.’***

But, Lord, I never bought this flock with blood. I am not to have this flock at the last! It is no flock of Mine. I am only Your hired shepherd. You will give me my wage, but oh, it is Yours to keep off the wolf! It is Yours to preserve each lamb and carry it in Your bosom and gently to lead each troubled one in the whole flock.” I think we must often do this—throw it off upon our God, for it is His burden, not ours. Cast all our care on Him, for He cares for us. And especially leaving the serving of Himself to Him whose service and whose work it really is.

Yet, again. Another thing that may comfort you is *that sometimes when things are going very badly, as we think, they are really going best.* We do not always know, I fancy, when things are prospering. We imagine that the Church is in good health because certain outward signs manifest themselves. Persons sometimes meet those of us who are rather stout, and they say, “How well you look!” I do not know about that. In our flesh there dwells no good thing. I am afraid that with some of us that is no very great sign of health and we might be glad enough to get rid of it. So sometimes when the Church seems to be in a prosperous condition, we congratulate ourselves upon its wonderful healthiness. I do not know that we ought to do that! Sometimes the corn is best when an onlooker who does not understand it thinks it is worst—and sometimes when a little boat is borne on one side till she almost ships a sea through

the tremendous gale that is blowing, the landsman thinks there is mischief ahead, but the old sailor who understands all about it says, "No, they are going at a great rate now." So, at times our ship lurches a bit, and seems as if it shipped whole seas of mischief, but it is then that the mighty breeze of the Divine Spirit is really given to us! Do you not think, Beloved, that some of the worst sermons that are ever preached, in the judgment of critics, are really the best? What a fool I have been dozens of times! I have thought in my conceit—"Well, now, that is a sermon that is likely to be blest"—and yet I have never heard of any blessing from it! I have thought at other times when I am finished, "Please, God, if I ever get that subject again, I will treat it better. What a poor sermon!" And yet two or three Church Meetings later, there will come one, two, three, perhaps half a dozen who were blessed and converted to God by my poor sermon. The Lord help me, then, to preach poor sermons and grant that I may always preach so that He will bless it, no matter whether I like it or whether you like it, as long as God is pleased to bless the sermon! I dare say you Sunday school teachers have often found that when you have done worst, God has done best, and He has permitted you to think it was worst in order that you might bring all the glory to His feet and praise His name!

Should it not be one reason, then, why we should cast off our care, *that we serve a very generous Master?* There are some masters whom you cannot please—when you have done your best, they will still find some fault—for they have a quick eye for a fault. But our Lord Jesus seems as if He could not find fault with His people, and when we have done our best, though it is a poor, poor thing, yet He takes it and so transforms it by one touch of His own gracious and pierced hands, that we do not know it again! It is more His than ours and it is accepted by Him. He does not receive our works because of their intrinsic excellencies, but because He worked them in us and because the motive for which we have performed them is honorable to Himself. Master Brooks says that, "Fond friends will accept crooked sixpences, and a little piece of forget-me-not, and set great store by these love-tokens." Even so does the Savior! He takes our poor worthless works which have no intrinsic value in them and sets great store by them, saying of that cup of cold water which you gave away and which you never thought of again—"Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it unto Me." I do not doubt He will say at the last—"You did want to serve Me. You did long to honor Me and I accept it." John Bunyan says if you send a servant off for the doctor and you tell him to go on horseback as fast as ever he can—and there is but a very sorry nag in the stable, so the man uses the spur and the whip, and tugs at the bridle, but cannot make the horse go—you see that the man would go if he could, and so you do not blame

him. So, he says, our poor flesh is that sorry nag, but the spirit is willing, and Jesus Christ looks on us and says—“Truly the flesh is weak, he would go if he could.” And so He takes the will for the deed and does not blame us, but covers our faults in the mantle of His love.

Now I hope we are beginning to feel better. I hope we are not going to leave off caring about the work, but only leave off being cumbered about it. I hope we shall be anxious to see souls saved and desirous to conduct all our labors for Christ in the best possible manner—but I hope we shall not sit down and worry ourselves as though there were no God to bless, no Christ to perfume our works with the incense of His merits and no Holy Spirit to make our very infirmities yield His Glory! Let us remember that our Father lives, that our God lives, that He who brings good out of evil lives. Let us set up our banners in His name and go forward rejoicing that He is with us and will be with us to the end!

Come, you Marys—if you have been upbraided, mind not the unbraid-ing! Your living near to Christ is “that good part”—always stay there. Serve the Master, but do not break your fellowship. Do all that in you lies for Christ, but also sit down under His shadow and let His fruit be sweet to your taste. If we sometimes did less, we should do more. If we had fewer outward engagement and more private dealings with God, we should be richer. The best commerce is commerce with Heaven. The richest merchants are those who negotiate with a Covenant God. Those who get the largest estates are those who have learned to traffic in Heaven’s markets. If you would be strong, live upon the promises! If you would be happy, live with the Promise-Keeper. If you would be mighty to win souls, be mighty on your knees! And if you would be like your Master with a shining face among the multitude, be much with your Master where He is transfigured upon the Mount.

I preach but poorly to you, but I must not begin to be cumbered about that. Here I would leave the matter, only I would to God that you all had an interest in the things I have been speaking of! Some of you do not care to serve God at all. You serve yourselves—you serve your own passions. May the Lord bring you to serve Him—and the door of service is at the Cross. The way to begin to be a servant is to go to the place where He took upon Himself the form of a Servant and was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Trust Jesus. *This* is the work of God, if you would do it, that you believe on Him whom He has sent. May God enable you now to trust His dear Son with all your hearts! And then after that may you go and serve Him, and serve Him effectively—but God grant that you be not “Cumbered with much serving.”

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MARTHA AND MARY

NO. 3469

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1915.

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

***“And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary; and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.”
Luke 10:41-42.***

I THINK I see the Man of Sorrows as He is traversing the high road, attended by His few friends and disciples. Where will He refresh Himself when the time is come to cease from toil and take food? Where is His house? Surely the Great Prophet has some place wherein to rest? Alas, He has none! “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.” However, what He has not of His own, friends will afford Him. Martha, a disciple—not a full-grown one, but one who had begun to learn something of the Truth of God—meets Him at the door of her house, at the entrance to the village of Bethany, and she invites Him to come in. Jesus Christ, who had often accepted an invitation from an enemy, was glad to accept one from a friend. So He goes into the house, with His friend, Lazarus, and sits down. No sooner is He sat down, with His disciples around Him, than He falls to preaching. A sermon is none the worse for being preached in a private house. Martha and Mary stood listening to Him. Stood, did I say? Mary sits down at His feet and Martha, having listened for a little while, remembers that she has many family cares. The dinner must be made ready, so she betakes herself into her kitchen and is very busy with her necessary cookery. She needs a little extra help, and she comes back into the room and sees Mary sitting at Jesus’ feet. Seeming rather irritable, Martha appeals to Jesus, “Do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?”—hoping that the Master would chide Mary—but He rather defends her, and implies a gentle censure upon Martha, when He says, “Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary; and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.”

This little quick reply must have surprised Martha! She did not expect it would come to herself being reproved and Mary being commended! But so it was—and the incident, we think, may give us some profitable instruction. Let us see if we can find out what it is.

I. WE WILL TAKE THE CASE OF MARTHA FIRST.

There is no reason to find any great fault with her. Martha was a good woman. The Lord “Jesus loved Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus.” Since He appreciated Martha’s character, it is not for us to depreciate it. Martha was an excellent housewife. Perhaps a little too fussy—I know not what better word to use—a little too particular about the little things. Troubling and vexing herself about domestic arrangements in spreading the board and serving the provisions. She was, perhaps, a little too prone to disquiet her mind by the scrupulousness of her tastes—still she was an admirable woman, one who kept her house in good order. No mean prize is it, especially for the working man, to have a Martha for his wife—one who orders her household well. Indeed, so commendable is this in Christian women, that the Apostle might well say, “Let them first learn to show piety at home.” If your children’s stockings are not darned, if their clothes are not mended, if the buttons are not put on their dresses at the proper time, I would not give much for your Christian example! A housewife should see to these details and, before all others, for neatness and industry should be the woman whose heart is right before the Lord. One or two friends, I see, are smiling. Let them smile if they like. I only hope they will mind my homely advice and attend to their home duties—then they will make their husbands smile with satisfaction and their families will look brighter. If they have ungodly husbands, it will tend to paint religion in fairer colors, and to commend it to their esteem.

In what respect, then, was Martha to blame? Well, though she got a little censure, you see Jesus does not upbraid her severely. His words are very kind—“Martha, Martha.” We do not address women thus familiarly by name, you know, unless we are very intimate with them. I would not venture to call you by your Christian name, because I do not know you well enough. We only do that with our friends and kinsfolk. So in the kindest way, making Himself very familiar with her, Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things” ‘Twas little to say. He only indicated the fact, without uttering half as much complaint as she made against her sister, Mary. What was her fault, then? Well, we think it was just this—the Lord Jesus Christ did not often come round those parts preaching. He had a large diocese—He was the travelling Bishop of the whole land. And it did seem to cast a little slight on His ministry for Martha to think more of the beef that was being roasted and the vegetables that were being prepared for the table, than of that rich food, that Bread which came from Heaven, which He was giving them! If a preacher came to us but every now and then, dear Brothers and Sisters, I think the Word of God would become so precious to us that we might be pardoned neglecting some family cares in order to listen to him. But Martha, you see, *put her family cares somewhat before the precious Word of Christ*. And, besides, she seems rather to have looked at her religion as a doing something which Christ needed of her, than as a taking the one thing necessary which she needed from Christ! Of such people there is now no lack. I trust they are in the faith, though they are but babes in

Grace. Their practical piety consists, to a large extent, in what they ought to do for Christ, and what He expects from them, rather than in realizing that delightful sense which some Believers have of what Jesus has done for them!

Now what I can do for Christ is, I am sure, very little, and is a poor subject to engross all my thoughts. What He did for me is so amazing—so matchless, so unspeakable, so glorious, that I ought to give that the major part of my attention! I may sometimes run with Martha to do what Christ needs of me, but I think I ought more frequently to sit with Mary to receive from Christ what I need from Him. Your religion is not of a first-class order if it is altogether looking at your practice, and not at the finished and perfect work of Christ. There will be at least a tendency in you to legality, and that tendency is so dangerous that it deserves to be rebuked. Though I would rebuke it as tenderly as I can, yet it must be somewhat sharply, that you may be sound in the faith. Martha, Martha, Christ does not stand in need of you half as much as you do of Him! It is meet and proper for you to think how you may economize time to attend the House of Prayer, and how you shall bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and how you shall save a little money to give to the poor or to Christ's Church. All these things are right. It is well you should do them, but oh, remember, Christ did *more* for you! Let your thoughts be fixed on His Cross, on His life, on His death, or else you will get to be a Pharisee. Ah, Martha, you will get to think that you are saved by your own doings—and then it is all over with you if you ever come to think that! This was one of Martha's faults. She seemed to be more anxious about what she should do for Christ than she was grateful about what Christ had done for her!

Then, you see, *this led her to fret*, and that is always wrong. She began to be peevish and be vexed. Oh, she wanted to have a fine entertainment for Christ. She had out all the best dishes and she would have all the food served in the daintiest manner. She would have nothing put on the table but what was the best of the best for such a One as her Lord! So far this was right and much to her credit, but as little mishaps are apt to cause great annoyances, so she got her mind troubled and her temper irritated. Thus she fretted and vexed herself till the day that ought to have been all happiness and sunshine, because Christ had come, became all worry and hurry, distracting to her mind and distressing to her nerves. Now that is wrong and lamentable. Remember, Christian, whatever you have to do, you should always cast all your care on Him who cares for you! Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, make known your needs unto God. You are to be thoughtful, diligent, prudent—but anxious, carking, vexatious cares you are to turn out of the house as soon as possible, or else you will hear your Master say, "Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things." You must not be fretful about trifles, provoked with other people, or dis-

quieted with yourself. Your fretting will not make things better—the ruffling of your temper will not smooth the current of affairs. Be calm. Be quiet. Be patient. Then the multitude of your labors will not disturb the serenity of your mind though many things may have to be done! Much care may be greatly lightened, if it is not altogether avoided.

The next thing to blame in Martha was that while she was earnest, herself, in serving the Lord, *she began to upbraid her dear sister, Mary*. Some minds are naturally censorious and prone to fault-finding. There are others who under exciting emotions, begin to criticize, censure and accuse. No, Martha, you have no right to judge Mary. You are doing what you think to be right—she is doing what she thinks to be right—let her alone. There are some earnest young men I know who would have everybody quite as zealous as they—and so would I—but there may happen to be some Christians who cannot, through infirmity, do quite as much. And some of these young men will lose their temper with them and, perhaps, speak disrespectful words of them. This is not right of you. You must not judge another man’s servant—to his own master he shall stand or fall. Martha, Martha, Martha, you have no business to find fault with Mary! And you busy Christians, you good, busy people who do so much for Jesus, and wish you could do more—do not sometimes grow angry because others are not as zealous as you are! Never let a bad temper be mixed with earnestness, for it will be like a dead fly in a pot of ointment—it will spoil the whole. Be not rash, Martha, in your judgment of Mary?

I fear, too, that *Martha censured her Lord a little*—and was not that a harsh thing to do? Let us read the words, for fear I should do her an injustice. “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.” Was not that an unkind thing to say? “Jesus, do You not care?” Of course—He was always caring for every one of them! They never had a care but what He had it before them. All their burdens He was willing to bear! All their sufferings He was willing to relieve! And He came into this world on purpose to redeem them with His blood. It was a harsh thing to say, “Master, do You not care?” And so it is with some Christians—they do not set their eyes enough upon Christ’s work and are all too busy with work for Christ. Hence they will even upbraid the Master, Himself! These elder Brothers—and Martha, you know, was an elder Sister—these elder Brothers say, “Lo, these many years have I served you, and yet you never gave me a kid that I should make merry with my friends. But as soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.” This is a bad spirit, a very bad spirit. I heard of a man, some time ago, calling himself a minister of Christ, who said he did not believe in revivals, nor did he look for any good from preaching in theaters, “For,” he said, “If God designs to bless the Church, it stands to reason that He will first save those people who usually go to a place of worship, and not the riffraff.” Now I did not like that speech! I hope he was a good

man, but I am sure he spoke in a bad spirit—and it was with something like that spirit Martha spoke. She seemed to feel, “I have done all sorts of things. I have been busy and anxious, and I have taken no rest. Nobody knows how hot I have made myself, working with my own hands, and superintending other people’s work. I have hurried up and down stairs, with all the toil and all the responsibility upon me—yet here is Mary, doing nothing, and Christ is just as pleased with her as if she were doing a thousand things.” Now I think Christ said, “Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things,” to rebuke the cropping up of a little of that ill spirit which is always culpable and mischievous whenever it appears.

To close with Martha—I hope we have not been too severe upon her conduct, or reflected too much upon her character—*she may be used as a picture of the self-righteous*. Perhaps there are such here. There is a John or a James among you, perhaps, who says, “I go to my place of worship very punctually. I order my household with propriety. I conduct my business with integrity. I give to the poor. I subscribe to charities. I take my part in works of benevolence,” and so on. Ah, Friends, you are cumbered with much serving, but you will never get to Heaven that way! Only one thing is necessary, and that is the finished righteousness of Christ! Or is it Martha, there, that good woman I think I heard say, “Well, I have brought up my children creditably. I have always behaved in such a manner that the neighbors give me a good character. I have never neglected my religious duties, so I trust I shall go to Heaven.” Ah, Martha, Martha! Those good things of yours will sink you! You cannot swim to Heaven with them! One thing is necessary—and that one thing is the finished righteousness of Jesus! Leave these fine things that cumber you, and come to Jesus just as you are, and you shall have the good part which cannot be taken from you!

But it is treating Martha too badly to make her a picture of the self-righteous. I shall only notice, now, that *she is only like what some of us sometimes are*. When the minister comes into the pulpit he sometimes feels—at least I myself do—a great deal of concern about the friends that have to stand about the lights, about the draughts and numerous other trivial matters. Full often I reproach myself for being thus cumbered about many things. Instead of being like Martha, the minister should be like Mary, sitting at Jesus’ feet, and giving his undivided attention to the Master’s words! This is too often the case with the deacons and the Elders. They may be thinking about how arrangements may be made for the convenience of the congregation, and filled with anxiety that all may go off well, especially at extraordinary services. They are exposed to the same temptation that Martha was. I dare say my dear Brothers who carry round the bread and the cup at the Lord’s Supper sometimes feel that they miss some of Mary’s repose, and get some of Martha’s cares in attending to that service! They would rather, perhaps, sit with you in the

pew, like Mary, to enjoy the feast, rather than be like Martha to serve the tables. Others of you are thinking about your children, your sons and your daughters. As you are anxiously praying the Lord to bless the Word to their souls, you, too, may sometimes get into such an anxious state as to be like Martha. Oh, it will be well for you if you can take the attitude of Mary—sitting at the Savior's feet, profound in reverence, yet familiar in communion with your blessed Lord—awed by His Presence, cheered by His smile, impressed with His Word, delighted with His voice, catching the faintest syllable which shall fall from His Divine lips—finding in Him enough to enthrall your soul with sacred love and leaving Him to care for you, while you only care to sit at His feet and learn of Him—stationed where no grievous looks or hasty words of Martha can tempt you to move away!

II. LET US NOW TURN TO THE CHARACTER OF MARY and see if we can find anything in that for practical use.

Do not think that Mary was lazy, or that she preferred hearing sermons to doing her work. On another occasion she proved that she did not withhold her service or spare her substance, for she anointed the head of our Lord. She showed that she did not mind a sacrifice, for she did for Jesus what only one other person ever did—she anointed Him! But here was the point about Mary's character—may it be found in yours and in mine—*she gave her attention less to the care of the body than to a care for the soul!* In truth, she loved to drink of the Living Water which Christ gives to those who are thirsty. She attended to the one thing necessary. Alas, the world does not think that the care of the soul is the one thing necessary. As a good old writer says, "The world thinks this is the one thing *needless*." They can dispense with religion, because, to their notion, it is an encumbrance. We have heard some people call money the one thing necessary. They despise religion and find their treasure in vanities that perish with the using—and their joy in the things of earth that pass away like the rippling current or the revolving seasons!

Religion is the one thing necessary to us all. It is the one thing necessary to the minister. Without true religion in his heart, he is an impostor! He has taken upon himself an errand upon which the Master never sent him—a responsibility which shall crush his soul lower than the lowest Hell! Lord, have mercy upon those ministers who dare to preach what they have not felt. But religion is also the one thing necessary for the hearers—so necessary, indeed, that if they have it not, all the sermons and prayers in the world will be but as fuel for their condemnation! We must have you, my dear Hearers, brought to lay hold on Christ, or else impress signs and professions, formality and morality, vows and votive offerings will but drug your conscience, threaten your hope and end in black despair! True religion is the one thing necessary for the aged. I see some here whose bald heads and gray hairs admonish them that they are drawing near to the grave. Ah, my aged Friend, what will you do, where will you be a little while hence, unless you have a Savior to rest

upon? In the swellings of Jordan, how will you fare if there is no kind Spirit near you to say, "I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God"? This, too, is the one thing necessary for the middle-aged. Busy with care, toiling from morning till night as some of you are—if you have not the Grace of God in your hearts, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit in your experience, what will you do? You will bring up your children for Satan! You will be the instruments of unrighteousness! All your works shall but earn for you the wages of heavy sorrow and bitter lamentations—your present life an endless regret! And how necessary is true religion for the young! It makes the young man wise. It makes the maiden fair—

***"A flower, when offered in the bud,
Is no vain sacrifice."***

We should not wait until we have grown old and decrepit, and then bring to God the blind and the lame for a sacrifice! Let us give Him the young bullock. Let us offer to Him the lambs of a year old. Since some die while they are young, let us repent while we are young, and believe in Jesus while the charm of springtime enlivens us, for it is the one thing necessary to have faith in Him! There are other things, you will tell me, that are necessary. I answer, Yes, but this is the especially, pre-eminently, and universally necessary thing! Imagine a man in the condemned cell at Newgate. There he sits, busy writing letters. He is going to die a felon's death, knowing it will cruelly grieve his family. He is doing the best thing he can do—writing letters of consolation to them and trying to settle his little affairs. In comes the King's messenger and he says to the man—only the man is too busy to listen to him—"I have his Majesty's free pardon." The condemned man says, "I cannot attend to you. I cannot attend to you. I have got a letter to write to my wife." He goes on with his writing, but he is interrupted again with the news of his Majesty's free pardon. "I cannot attend to it," he says, "I have to write to my children, for I have to die next Monday," and he goes on writing. Now do you not see, if the man will but stop and think, the free pardon will do far more for him than all his letters can? And if he shall but get that, he can attend to all the rest, by-and-by! So is it with faith. A free pardon is offered by God, but you say, "Oh, but I have other things to look to." I tell you, you can look to them afterwards, but while the Angel of Mercy stands by and presents you with a free pardon, I pray you take the one thing necessary and mind the other things in due time!

There is a wreck, yonder, a wreck far out upon the waste salt sea, and on it are men who are starving, till the bones start through their skin. They have hoisted a flag upon a pole. Those poor creatures are almost destitute of clothing—the salt sea washes them, and at night they are all but frozen to death, and they only preserve their lives by huddling one upon another. These people need a thousand things, you tell me. They need some generous diet to restore their flesh. They need their friends. They need their native country. They need their families and households.

They need fresh clothing. Yes, but I tell you one thing is necessary—they need a friendly sail and if they can but see a ship in the distance, and that ship can come to them, they have all they need! And so you that are looking after bread, and after your families, and so on—oh, this is all well, but still, while you are on the raft, and are perishing, what you really need is Christ, who, like a friendly sail in the distance, comes to save you and is willing to take you on board His ship at once—and to give you all you need! One thing is necessary! Oh, Jane, may you hold onto that! And John, and Thomas, and William, and Margaret—any of you, all of you—do the same! Leave other things for a little while. You know you can work and pray. You can go about your business and yet have faith in Christ. This will not interfere with your household cares. But do, I pray you, imitate Mary in getting hold of the all-important, the absolutely necessary one thing—a living faith in a living Savior! This was the first reason why Mary was commended—she got a hold of the one thing necessary.

The next thing she was commended for was this—*it was her own choice*—“Mary has chosen the good part.” Some of our captious friends will be saying, “Ah! Ah! Are you now going to preach free-will and tell us that it is man’s choice?” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you know what I think of man’s will—that it is a slave, bound in iron fetters—but yet God forbid that I should alter Scripture to suit anybody’s Doctrine, or even my own! Mary did choose the better part, and every man that is saved chooses to be saved. I know that at the back of his choice, and as the cause of his choice, there is God’s choice, but still, the Grace of God always imparts Grace to the man’s heart. No one is dragged to Heaven! Nor does anyone ever go to Christ against his will—*the soul must be made willing in the day of God’s power*. This is the triumph of God’s Grace—not that He takes men to Heaven as we might carry machines there, but that He expressly acts upon the human mind, leaves it as free as ever it was, and yet makes it perfectly obedient to His own will! Mary chooses. God had chosen her in old eternity and, therefore, she chooses Him—

**“Chosen of Him ere time began,
I choose Him in return.”**

Now let us ask, for we cannot merit any commendation—have we chosen Christ? Have we chosen His cause, His truth, His Cross? If you have got a religion that is not a matter of choice to you, I am afraid it is not of much use. If you attend any religion because you must—if you follow it of necessity, from a sense of duty, from the goading of fear, or from the dictates of custom—I am afraid, when your religion is put in the scales, it will be found wanting. It must be a matter of solemn and deliberate choice with you! Now which would be your present choice? Could the pleasures of this world be all daintily painted before your eyes—every joy that could regale the senses—music to charm the ears, perfumes for the nostrils, sweets for the mouth and landscapes for the eyes, on the one side. And on the other side, let Christ and His Cross be put before you—

which would you chose? I know which some of you have chosen—may God alter your choice! But I trust there are some here who can say, “Choose? Why, I have once and for all chosen Christ! I have counted the cost and I reckon the reproach of Christ to be greater treasures than all the riches of Egypt.” You are commended. Christ gently speaks to you a word of love when He says, “Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from her.”

Mary was commended, too, because she *had chosen the good part*. It is good to know Christ, good in every sense—it is good for ourselves—it is good toward God, and God toward man. It is good in the sense of comfort. It is good in the sense of morality. Nobody can say anything against true religion who judges fairly. Even the judge upon the bench dares not say that to have a new heart and a right spirit is not good. True religion has in it everything that is lovely and of good repute, honest in the sight of men and devout in the sight of God. Oh, Mary, now you have left your Martha-cares, and are resting wholly and only on Jesus, you have this, for your heart’s content—that you have not merely chosen the good, but that you have chosen the best of all the good—the good part with which no other portion can bear the least comparison!

There is one other commendation, and with that we close. *Mary had chosen that which could never be taken away from her*. Of the many things which some of us take a pride and a pleasure in possessing, we have not many that cannot be easily taken away. Though we may have a fair character, any lying slanderer may take that away for a time. We have a house—the flames may take that away and leave nothing but a heap of ashes. We have a beloved spouse—grim death may stretch her in the coffin. We have dear children, the delight of our eyes, but we know that *mortal* is written on their brows. We have friends with whom we take sweet counsel, but they are dropping off one by one—

“Who has not lost a friend?”

We have many comforts of which adversity might deprive us in a moment. Those that were once highly esteemed among men are soon forgotten, even by their neighbors. Their choice companions do not know them in the day of their poverty. Riches take to themselves wings and flee away. All the creature things we have may be taken away from us. The poor man, perhaps, thinks that he is exempt from the peril because he has no riches to be taken from him, but he has other things than silver and gold which pertain to the life that now is—and they will all be taken away. And at last there will come the greatest thief, Death, the Spoiler. When he finds us weak, stretched upon the bed and utterly helpless, how he will take all our things away! He will clutch the miser’s gold. Though he seeks with eager grasp to retain it, Death will tear it away from his expiring grip. He will take away from the dying one all dear friends, his consort and offspring. Closing his eyes and blinding them, he shall see no more forever. Stopping his ears and sealing them, he shall

hear no more the way of loving consolation. Touching his heart and arresting its beat, his desire will cease. All things shall then be taken away. But there is one thing—oh, that we may choose it—there is one thing that neither life nor death can take away! It is the good part, a good hope in Jesus, a true faith in Jesus, a perfect love to Jesus, a vital union with Jesus! Come, Death, you may clutch, but you cannot take away that which Jesus holds with living hands! Come, you devils of Hell, you may seek to tear away these jewels from me, but—

***“Stronger is He than death or Hell,
His Majesty’s unsearchable.”***

And He defies the sons of darkness and repels all their rage! These things cannot be taken away from you!

I think I see you going through the dark valley. Doubts, like troops of robbers, seek to slay you, but they cannot take away your jewels. The great robber comes, Diabolus, the old accuser of the brethren, and he fumbles for your treasures, and he takes away some of your comforts, but he cannot take away your faith. The great dogs of Hell howl at you as though they would tear you in pieces, but those dogs cannot rob you of your good part! I think I see you in that river, when the water comes even to the chin, and you are ready to say, “I sink in deep mire where there is no standing”—but even that black stream cannot drown your comfort! You have a hope that swims above the biggest billow! You have a song that sounds louder than the wailing of the tempest! No fatal shipwreck shall I fear, for Christ, my Treasure, is with me there, and He preserves Himself and preserves me! Having chosen the good part, which cannot be taken from me, I am safe!

And now, dear Friends, the question comes—question which I hope all who mean to be communicants at the Lord’s Table, especially will ask themselves—“Have I chosen the good part?” Forget religious cares! Forget ecclesiastical troubles! Forget all that you have to do for Christ, and only think of what Christ has done for you! Have you chosen Him? Can you say in the language of that hymn, which makes us so happy when we sing it—

***“On Christ, the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand”?***

If so, come you saints, come and sit down! Be as lowly as Mary was. If there is a low place in the valley, the water is sure to run into it. And if there is a lowly heart, Grace is sure to pour in there, though it should flow nowhere else! Go and take your seat at Jesus’ feet. Come to the Table and sit at Jesus’ feet and have fellowship with Him. And oh, you that have not chosen this good part, remember that in having despised it, you have despised your own mercy! The day will come when you will wish to alter your choice. May God change it now! If there is one here who says, “Oh, I wish I could have the good part!” I tell you, you may have it! If there is one soul here that desires to be saved, you may be saved! Christ desires you more than you can possibly desire Him. Christ died for sin-

ners—you are a sinner—trust Him and you are saved! Then your sins are gone, His righteousness covers you with imperial purple and you stand an heir of Heaven, an adopted child of God—

***“Oh, believe the record true,
God has given His Son to you.”***

Trust in His blood! Trust in His merits and you shall be saved! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 11:45-57.**

Lazarus had been publicly raised from the dead. A great number of persons saw the miracle and there was never any question about its having been worked.

Verses 45, 46. *Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him. But some of them went their way to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done. We could hardly have conceived it possible that men would have been guilty of such conduct as this to go to Christ’s enemies and lay it as an accusation against Him, that He had raised a man from the dead!*

47, 48. *Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What shall we do? For this Man does many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. They pretended that if Jesus Christ gathered to Himself a great party, the Romans would take umbrage at it—pounce upon the whole nation and destroy it, for fear of its revolting from under their sway. A gross lie throughout!*

49, 50. *And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, You know nothing at all. Nor do you consider that it is expedients for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. That was his advice. You are, none of you, up to the mark. You do not handle this thing rightly. Let us kill this Man. Let Him be put to death—not that He deserves it, but that it is expedient that it should be, lest our nation should be destroyed—and this is the way that governors and kings have been accustomed to think! Not, “Is it right?” But, “Is it expedient?” And we may always pray to God that we may have a Government that will do that which is right, and not be guided by the evil direction of that which is expedient! One has well said that if the death of a righteous man would save ten thousand, yet it would be an atrocious thing that he should be put to death unwillingly for the saving of any. The right is, after all, expedient. Yet Caiaphas did not know what he said. He was speaking a great Truth of God.*

51. *And this spoke he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation. He did not understand his own words. He was saying a great deal more than he meant to say—for it was expedient—blessedly expedient—that Jesus should die willingly*

and of His own accord, giving Himself up to death for the sake of His people.

52, 53. *And not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together to put Him to death.* One bold wicked man can often sway the counsels of men who are equally bad, but more cowardly. It had not yet come to this—that they would hurt Him to the death, but now they take counsel to do it!

54. *Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but went unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His disciples.* We do not find that He worked miracles there or preached, but in a holy and devout retirement, it may be, He prepared His mind for the last great week—the week of His Passion and His death. It is generally best for us to imitate Him in this—when we have some great work to do—something that will need all the Grace that we can get, it is well to make a retreat. Get into retirement and school the heart—seek to drink in fresh strength that we may be prepared for that which lies before us.

55, 56. *And the Jews' Passover was near at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spoke among themselves, as they stood in the Temple, What do you think, will He not come to the feast? They had heard much of Him in the country. Country people coming to town want to hear the great minister—to see the Great Prophet. So that is their question, "Will He come to the feast?"*

57. *Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where He was, he should report it, that they might take Him.* They could not deny the miracles—they could arrest and punish the Miracle Worker.

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

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

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL

NO. 1015

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 15, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"But one thing is needful."
Luke 10:42.*

WE have no difficulty whatever in deciding what that one thing is. We are not allowed to say that it is the Savior, for He is not a thing. And we are not permitted to say that it is attention to our own salvation, for, although that would be true, it is not mentioned in the context. The one thing needful, evidently, is that which Mary chose—that good part which should not be taken away from her. Very clearly this was to sit at Jesus' feet, and hear His Word. If anything is plain at all in Holy Scripture, it is most clear that this is the one thing needful—to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His Word.

This and nothing less, this and nothing more. The mere posture of sitting down and listening to the Savior's Word was nothing in itself—it was that which it indicated. It indicated, in Mary's case, a readiness to *believe* what the Savior taught, to accept and to obey—no, to *delight* in the Precepts which fell from His lips. And this is the one thing needful. He that has it has the spirit of Grace and life. To sit at Jesus' feet implies *submission*. Such an one is no longer resisting His power. He has cast down the weapons of his rebellion and has come humbly to acknowledge the Redeemer as Lord and King in his soul.

This is needful—absolutely needful. For no rebel can enter the kingdom of Heaven with the weapons of rebellion in his hands. We cannot know Christ while we resist Christ—we must be reconciled to His gentle sway, and confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. To sit at Jesus' feet implies *faith* as well as submission. Mary believed in what Jesus said, and therefore, sat there to be taught by Him. It is absolutely needful that we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—in His power as God and Man, in His death as being expiatory—in His Crucifixion as being a Sacrifice for our sins.

We must *trust* Him for time and for eternity in all His relationships as Prophet, Priest, and King. We must rely upon Him. He must be our hope, our salvation, our All in All. This one thing is absolutely needful—without it we are undone. A believing submission, and a submissive faith in Jesus we must have, or perish. But sitting at Jesus' feet implies, also, that having submitted and believed, we now desire to be His disciples. *Discipleship* is too often forgotten. It is as needful as faith. We are to go into all the world and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A man cannot be saved unless he becomes a learner in the school of Christ, and a learner, too, in a practical sense, being willing to practice what he learns. Only he who does the Master's will knows His doctrine.

We are, if we have chosen the good part, sitters at the feet of Jesus just as Saul of Tarsus sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Christ is to us our great Instructor, and we take the Law from His lips. The Believer's position is that of a pupil, and the Lord Jesus is his Teacher. Except we are converted and become as little children, we can in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Sitting at the feet of Jesus indicates the child-like spirit of true discipleship. And this is the one thing needful—there is no salvation apart from it. It meant, also, service, for though Mary was not apparently engaged in waiting upon Christ as Martha was, yet she was, in very truth, ministering unto Him in a deeper and truer sense. No one gives greater joy to a public speaker than an attentive listener. No one serves a teacher better than he who is an apt and attentive scholar. The first duty, indeed, of the student to the tutor is that he be cheerful in accepting, and diligent in retaining what is taught—in this sense Mary was really waiting upon Christ in one of His loftiest capacities, namely—that of a Teacher and Prophet in the midst of Israel.

In that same spirit, had the Master only intimated it, she would have risen to wash His feet, or anoint His head, or wait at table, as Martha did—but she would, while she was performing these active duties—have continued spiritually in her first posture. She could not, of course, have continued *literally* sitting at the feet of the Savior, but her heart would have remained in the condition which that posture indicates. She was in the fittest position for service, for she waited to hear what her Lord would have her to do.

We, too, must all be servants. As we have been servants of unrighteousness, we must, by Grace, submit ourselves unto the rules of Jesus and become servants of righteousness, or else we miss the one thing that is indispensable for entrance into Heaven. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, also signifies *love*. She would not have been sitting there at ease and happy in mind if she had not loved Him. There was a charm in the very tone of His Words to her. She knew how He had loved her, and therefore, each syllable was music to her soul! She looked up again and again, I doubt not, into that dear face, and often caught the meaning of the Words more readily as she read His countenance, marked His eyes oftentimes suffused with tears, and ever bright with holy sympathy.

Her love to His Person made her a willing learner, and we must be the same. We must not learn of Christ like unwilling truant boys who go to school and must needs have learning flogged into them. We must be eager to learn. We must open our mouth wide that He may fill it. Like the thirsty earth when it needs the shower, our soul must break for the longing it has towards His Commandments at all times. We must rejoice in His Statutes more than gold, yes, than much fine gold. When we are moved by this spirit, we have found the one thing needful.

Having laid before you the meaning of the text, that to sit at Jesus' feet is the one thing needful, a literal translation of the text would be—"of one thing there is a necessity." Let us take the text as it stands, and notice in it four things. The first is a word of consideration—the disjunctive conjunction, "but." The Savior bids us to make a pause. He says, "*but* one thing is needful." Then there comes a word of *necessity*—"one thing is

needful.” Thirdly, a word of *concentration*—“*one thing is needful.*” And then a word of urgency—“*one thing is needful*”—*needful now, at once.*

I. To begin, then, here is a word of CONSIDERATION, which, as I have already said, is interjected into the middle of our Lord’s brief Word to Martha. Martha is very busy. She is rather quick-tempered, also, and she speaks to the Savior somewhat shortly. And the Master says, “Martha, Martha,”—very tenderly, kindly, gently, with only the slightest tinge of rebuke in His tone—“Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things”—but, but, but, wait awhile, and hear. That wise advice and warning may be very useful to many here. You are engaged today in business—very diligent you are in it. You throw your whole energy into your trading, as you must, if you would succeed.

You rise up early, and you sit up late. Shall I say a word that should discourage your industry? I will not—*but, but* is there nothing else?—is this life all? Is making money everything? Is wealth worth gaining merely for the sake of having it said, “He died worth fifty thousand pounds”? Is it so? Perhaps you are a very hard-working man. You have very little rest during the week, and in order to bring up your family comfortably, you strain every nerve. You live as you should, economically, and you work diligently—from morning to night the thought with you is, “How shall I fill these many little mouths? How shall I bring them up properly? How shall I, as a working man, pay my way?”

Very right. I wish all working men would be equally thoughtful and economical, and that there were fewer of those foolish spendthrifts who waste their substance when they have it, and who, the moment there is a frost, or they are out of employ, become paupers, loafing upon the charity of others. I commend your industry, *but, but, but*, at the same time, is that all? Were you made only to be a machine for digging holes, laying bricks, or cutting out pieces of wood? Were you created only to stand at a counter and measure or weigh out goods? Do you think your God made you for that and that only?

Is this the chief end of man—to earn so many shillings a week, and try to make ends meet? Is that all immortal men were made for? As a man with a soul, capable of thought and judgment, and not a mere animal like a dog, nor a machine like a steam engine, can you stand up and look at yourself and say, “I believe I am perfectly fulfilling my destiny”? I beg this morning to interject that quiet “*but,*” right into the middle of your busy life, and ask from you space for consideration, a pause for the voice of Wisdom, that a hearing may be granted her. Business? Labor? Yes, but there is a higher bread to be earned, and there is a higher life to be considered!

And therefore the Lord puts it, “Labor not for the meat that perishes,” that is to say, not for that first and foremost, “but for that which endures unto life eternal.” God has made man that he may glorify Him. Whatever else man accomplishes, if he attains not to this end, his life is a disastrous failure. But a man will fail to reach that end, and make eternal shipwreck unless he comes to sit at Jesus’ feet. There and there only can he learn how to sanctify his business and to consecrate his labor and so bring forth unto God, through His Grace, that which is due to Him.

Now, I have spoken thus to the busy, but I might speak, and I should have certainly as good a claim to do so, to these who are lovers of pleasure. They are not cumbered with much serving—rather, they laugh at those who cumber themselves about anything. They are merry as the birds. Their life is as the flight of a butterfly which lightly floats from flower to flower, according to its own sweet will—with neither comb to make, nor hive to guard. Now, you gay young men, what does Solomon say to you? “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth. And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, *but*”—there comes in a pause and the cool hand of Wisdom is laid upon the hot brow of folly, and the youth is asked to think awhile—“*but* know you, that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment.”

It cannot be that an immortal spirit was made for frivolities! A soul immortal spending all her fires on the playthings of the world, “resembles ocean into tempest tossed, to waft a feather, or to drown a fly.” So great a thing as an immortal soul could not have been made by God with no higher object than to spend itself upon trifles light as air! Oh, pause a while, you careless, godless one, and hear the voice that says unto you, “*but*.” There is something more than the fool’s laugh, all things are not a comedy! Death is serious, and Heaven and Hell. And should not *life* be?

The charms of music, the merriment of the gay assembly, the beauties of art, and the delights of banqueting—there must be something more for you than these. And something more must be required of you than that you should waste from morn to night your precious time upon nothing but to please yourself. Stop, stop, and let this admonitory “*but*” sound in your ears!

I take liberty, moreover, to address the same word to religious people, who, perhaps, need it as much as others. They will, of course, agree with anything I can say about the mere worldling or the profligate. But will they listen to me when I say to them, “You are very diligent in your religion, you are attentive to all its outward rites and ceremonies, you believe the articles of your Church, you practice the ceremonies ordained by its rulers—*but*, *but*—do you know that all this is nothing unless you sit at Jesus’ feet?”

We may do what the Church tells us, and never do what Christ tells us, for these may be different things. And the Church is not our Savior, but Christ. We may believe what a certain creed tells us, but not believe what Jesus teaches. For our creed and Christ may be two very different things. Yes, and we may believe even what the Bible itself teaches to us, or think we believe it—*but*, if our heart has never made submission to the Teacher Himself, so as to sit at His feet, and receive the Truth obediently from Him—our religion is altogether vain!

Traditional religion is not submission to Christ, but to custom. Obedience to a *denomination* is not obedience to Jesus Himself. How I wish that all professing Christians would bring themselves to an examination, and enquire, “Do I really believe in the Person of my Lord, and accept Him as my Teacher? Do I study the Word of God to learn the Truth from Him, and not accept it blindly and at second hand from my minister, or my parents, or the Church of the nation, or the creed of my family?”

We go to Jesus for teaching, desiring with our hearts to be taught by His Book and His Spirit, cheerfully agreeing in all things to shape our faith to His declaration, and our life to His rule. For us, there must be no spiritual Law-giver, and no infallible Rabbi, but the Blessed One, whom Magdalene called “Rabboni,” and whom Thomas saluted as, “My Lord and my God.” Yes, and let me say even to those of you who can honestly declare that Christ is your sole confidence, it is possible for you to forget the necessity of sitting at His feet.

You, dear Brethren, are looking to His precious blood, alone, for your salvation, and His name is sweet to you, and you desire in all things to be conformed to His will. So far it is well with you, for in this you have a measure of sitting at His feet. But so had Martha. She loved her Lord, and she knew His Word, and she was a saved soul, for “Jesus loved Mary, *and Martha*, and Lazarus.” But you have not, perhaps, so much of this needful thing as Mary had, and as you ought to have. You have been very busy this week, and have drifted from your moorings. You have not lived with your Lord in conscious fellowship. You have been full of care and empty of prayer.

You have not committed your sorrows to your loving Friend. You have blundered on in duty without asking His guidance or assistance. You have not maintained, in your Christian service, the communion of your spirit with the Well-Beloved, and, if such has been the case, let me say “*but*” to you, and ask you, as you sit here this morning, to make a little stop in your Sunday school teaching or your street preaching, or whatever else it is that you are so laudably engaged in, and say to yourself—“To me, as a Worker, the one thing needful is to keep near my Lord, and I must not so suffer the watering of others to occupy me, as to neglect my own heart, lest I should have to say ‘woe is me, they made me keeper in the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.’”

To the saints, as well as to others, the one thing needful is to sit at Jesus’ feet. We are to be always learners and lovers of Jesus. Departure from Him, and independence of Him—let them not once be named among you. It is weakness, sickness, sin, and sorrow for a Believer to leave His Lord and become either His own leader or reliance. We are only safe while we remain humbly and gladly subservient to Him. You see, then, that this word “*but*” suggests a very useful and salutary pause to us all. May God help us to benefit thereby.

II. Secondly, our text speaks of NECESSITY—one thing is a necessity. If this is proven, it overrides all other considerations. We are nearly right when we say proverbially, “Necessity has no law.” If a man steals, and it is found that he was dying of hunger, he is always half forgiven, and charity has been known to excuse him altogether. Necessity has been frequently accepted as a good excuse for what else might not have been tolerated. And when a thing is right, and necessity backs it, then, indeed, the right becomes imperative, and pushes to the front to force its way.

Necessity, like hunger, breaks through stone walls. The text claims for sitting at Jesus’ feet that it is the first and only necessity. Now, I see all around me a crowd of things *alluring* and fascinating. Pleasure calls to me. I hear her siren song—but I reply, “I cannot reward you, for necessity presses upon me to hearken to another voice.” Philosophy and learning

charm me—gladly would I yield my heart to them. But, while I am yet unsaved, the one thing needful demands my first care, and wisdom bids me give it. Not that we love human learning less, but eternal wisdom more.

Pearls? Yes. Emeralds? Yes. But bread, in God's name—bread at once, when I am starving in the desert! What is the use of ingots of gold, or bars of silver, or cases of jewels, when food is wanting! If one thing is needful, it devours, like Aaron's rod, all the matters which are merely pleasurable. All the fascinating things on earth may go, but needful things we must have. If you are wise, you will evermore prefer the needful to the dazzling. About us are a thousand things *entangling*. This world is very much like the pools we have heard of in India, in which grows a long grass of so clinging a character that if a man once falls into the water, it is almost certain to be his death—for only with the utmost difficulty could he be rescued from the meshes of the deadly, weedy net—which immediately wraps itself around him.

This world is even thus entangling. All the efforts of Grace are needed to preserve men from being ensnared with the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this life. The ledger demands you, the day-book wants you, the shop requires you, the warehouse bell rings for you. The theater invites, the ballroom calls—you must live, you say, and you must have a little enjoyment, and, consequently, you give your heart to the world.

These things, I say, are very entangling. But we must be disentangled from them, for we cannot afford to lose our souls. "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" If a ship is going down, and a passenger has his gold in a bag about him and he has upon him a costly coat, see how he acts. Off goes the garment when he knows that he cannot possibly swim with it upon him. No matter though it is lined with miniver and is made of costliest stuff, off he throws it. And, as for his bags of treasure, with many a regret he flings them down upon the deck, for his life is dearer than they. If he may but save his life, he is willing to lose all besides.

Oh, Sirs! For the one thing needful, all entangling things must be given up. You must lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset you, if by any means the one thing needful may be yours. There are many things very *puzzling*, and some people have a strange delight in being bewildered. It is astonishing the many letters I receive and interviews I am asked to give in order to adjust in people's minds the doctrine of predestination and the fact of free agency. And equally remarkable is the way in which young people, and old people, too, will pick out extremely difficult texts, perhaps relating to the Second Advent, or to the battle of Armageddon. They must have these opened up to them before they will believe the Gospel!

I think it utterly useless to begin upon such things with those who are unsaved. One thing is needful, Sir, and that is by no means a puzzling matter. It is plainly this—that you submit yourself to Jesus Christ and sit at His feet. That is needful—as for the doctrines of election and the Second Advent, they are important, but they are neither the most essential nor the most pressing. The one thing needful for a seeking soul is that it receive Jesus and become submissive to Him—sitting as a disciple at His

feet and as a servant doing His will. It is true there is the ninth chapter of Romans in the Bible, and a precious chapter it is—but the seeking sinner should take care to read first the third chapter of John, and till he has mastered that, he had better let Romans alone.

Go first to the business which concerns your salvation! Attend to that, and when all is right with you, then, at Jesus' feet, you will be in the best possible position to learn all that can be learned of the higher mysteries and the deeper Truths of God. Moreover, there is much that is *desirable*, very desirable—desirable in the highest spiritual sense. But it must be second to that which is needful. If I read the experience of men who have known their own hearts and mourned before the Lord, I wish that I had as deep a sense of sin as they had. Or, if I read the story of saints who have lived the angelic life, and even here on earth have dwelt with Christ and walked the golden streets in fellowship with Him, I wish I could rise to all their heights!

But for all that, if my soul is still polluted with sin, for me the one thing needful is cleansing by the Redeemer's blood! I must at once believingly yield to Jesus, for this is needful, and the desirable things will come to me afterwards, if I sit down at Jesus' feet. So near the source of all good things, it will be easy to be enriched with all knowledge and Grace. But our first business is to get there, and by the Holy Spirit's blessing we may come there without either the deep experience or the elevated feelings we have described. We may come just as we are, all guilty and lost, and submit ourselves to the Savior. Having done that, we are in the best position for spiritual attainments—yes, they shall surely be ours!

Let the heart yield itself to Jesus, and all is well. When He becomes our Leader and Commander, our sole reliance and sure confidence, it is well with us—we have all that is needful—and the pledge of all that is desirable. Tell us it is a necessity, and everything else must give way—necessity overrules all else. Now, why is it that sitting at Jesus' feet is a necessity? It is so because it is needful for us to have our sins forgiven. But Jesus will never forgive the unhumiliated rebel. If he will not take Jesus to be a *Master*, the sinner cannot have Him to be a Savior. As long as we rebel against Him, we cannot be saved by Him.

Submission, by repentance and faith, we must have, or our transgressions will remain upon us to our everlasting ruin. It is needful, because we must have our inbred sins overcome. But none can stay corruption in a man but Christ, who has come to destroy the work of the devil, and to save His people from their sins. Jesus, the Seed of the woman, is the only power that can crush the serpent's head. Only at the feet of Jesus can the Divine power be gained which works in us holiness and sanctifies us practically. Therefore, as you must be purified or you cannot enter Heaven, you must come to Jesus' feet.

Moreover, it is at the feet of Jesus that the soul's ignorance is removed. And since ignorance concerning ourselves and our God must be taken from us, we must be taught of Him. God is "our Light and our Salvation." Our Light first, and our Salvation in consequence. We must have the Light. The spiritually blind man cannot enter Heaven. He *must* have his eyes opened, and Jesus, alone, can work that miracle of Grace. Neither can we receive true Light except from Him, for He is "the true Light, that

lights every man that comes into the world.” “None are ever enlightened, except by Him. “In Him is light: all light. And the Light is the light of men.”

As God is the mind of the world, he who has *not* God is demented. And as Christ is the Light of the world, he that believes *not* in Him abides in darkness even now. We must come, then, and yield ourselves unreservedly to Jesus, worshipping Him, trusting Him, and obeying Him—in a word, we must sit at His feet, and hear His Word—otherwise, we shall abide in darkness and in death.

In order to enter Heaven it is needful that our nature should become like the Nature of Christ. This earth is for those who bear the image of the first Adam. But the new Heaven and the new earth are for those who bear the image of the Second Adam. We must, by some means, acquire the Nature of the Second and heavenly Adam, and this must be worked in us by regeneration, and developed by acquaintance with Him. By sitting at His feet, and beholding Him, we become changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. If we reject the Lord Jesus as our Trust, Teacher, and Exemplar, we have no new life—we are not new creatures in Christ, and we can never be admitted within the holy gates where those alone dwell who are fashioned after His likeness. We must, then, sit at His feet.

It is absolutely needful, and, without it, our whole life will be a complete failure. We may make money, but we shall lose our souls. We may gain honor, but shall have come short of the Glory of God. We may enjoy pleasure, but we shall forfeit the pleasures which are at God’s right hand forevermore. We may have done our country some service, but to our God, and the higher country, we shall have rendered no service, for we cannot serve God if we will not obey Christ. “He that honors not the Son, honors not the Father which has sent Him.”

This life is a blank, a long rebellion, to the man who submits not to Jesus, and the life forever hereafter will be darkness and confusion. As darkness itself, a land of sorrow and of weeping and of wailing, and of gnashing of teeth—a land of despair, upon which no star shall ever shine, or son shall ever rise. Woe, woe, woe, woe to the Godless, Christless spirit that passes across the river of death without a hope. Woe, woe, woe, woe eternally to the soul that will not sit at the feet of Jesus! He shall be trod beneath His feet in His anger, and crushed in His hot displeasure. God grant that may never be our portion.

To sit at Jesus’ feet is the one thing needful, then. And, Brethren, let me just say, and leave this point, it is needful to every one of you. It is not some of us who must be there, but all. The wisest must become fools to learn of Him, or fools they are. The most educated and cultured mind must submit to this further culture, or else it is nothing but a barren waste in his sight. One thing is a necessity to you all, high or low, rich or poor, queen or beggar—you must sit at Jesus’ feet. And all alike must accept His teaching, or you know nothing that can save you. Some things in this world are needful, after a measure, but this is needful without measure—ininitely needful is it that you sit at Jesus’ feet. Needful now, needful in life—needful in life for peace, in death for rest—and in eternity for bliss. This is needful always.

Many things have their use for youth. Others come not into value till old age. But one thing, *the* one thing that is needful for childhood, and needful for palsied age—needful for the ruddy cheek, and the active limb—and needful upon the sick bed. The one thing needful in the world, and in the Church—needful everywhere, and always—in the highest and most emphatic sense—the “one thing is needful” is to sit at Jesus’ feet!

III. Thus much about the necessity. The next word is CONCENTRATION—“*One* thing is needful.” I am glad it says “one thing,” because a division of ends and objects is always weakening. A man cannot follow two things well. Our life-flood suffices not to fill two streams or three. There is only enough water, as it were, in our life’s brooklet, to turn one wheel. It is a great pity when a man fritters away his energies by being “everything by turns, and nothing long,” trying all things, and mastering nothing.

Oh Soul, it is well for you that there is only one thing in this world that is absolutely needful! Give your whole soul to that. If other things are needful in a secondary place, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these shall be added unto you.” One thing is needful, and this is well arranged, for we *cannot* follow two things. If Christ is one of them, we cannot follow another. Is it not written, “No man can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other, or cleave to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon”?

Not only would it be very weakening to you to attempt to serve both, but it is absolutely impossible that you should do so. Jesus Christ is a monopolizer of human hearts. He will never accept a portion of our manhood. He bought us altogether, and He will have the whole of our personality. Christ must be everything or He will be nothing. He does not love Christ who loves anything as well as Christ. Neither does he trust Him who trusts in anything besides. Christ must reign alone. “Jesus only,” must be the motto of our spirits.

It is well for us, therefore, that only one thing is needful, for only one thing is possible. It is an unspeakable mercy that the one thing needful is a very simple one. Little child, you could not climb the mountain, but you can sit down at Jesus’ feet. You cannot understand hard doctrine, but you can love Him who said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.” Unlearned man, you who has no time to acquire earthly lore, if the one thing needful were something that belonged only to the learned, alas for you! But if you cannot teach, it is not needful that you should—it is only needful that you should learn.

Take the Incarnate Wisdom to be your Master, and sit as a little child at His feet to learn with all your heart. That is all He asks of you. Men will have it that they must *do* something to be saved—they must fret and worry like Martha, but after all the right way is to end your doing and fretting by sitting down content with Jesus’ doing—satisfied with His righteousness and with the merit of His precious blood. The one thing needful is very easy except to proud hearts, which cannot stoop to accept everything gratis, and to be beholden to sovereign mercy.

To the poor in spirit it is not only simple but sweet to sit at Jesus’ feet. I would be nothing but what He makes me. I would have nothing but what He gives me. I would ask nothing but what He promises me. I would trust

in nothing but what He has done for me, and I would desire nothing but what He has prepared for me. To sit at Jesus' feet in humble submission and quiet rest, He the Master and I the little child, I the vessel waiting to be filled, and He my Fullness—I the mown grass, and He the falling Few—I the raindrop, and He the Sun that makes me glisten in life with diamond brilliance, and then exhales me in death to be absorbed in Him! This is All in All to me!

Let us remark that though this is only one thing, and so concentrated, yet it is also comprehensive and contains many things. Imagine not that to sit at Jesus' feet is a very small, unmeaning thing. It means peace, for they who submit to Jesus find peace through His precious blood. It means holiness, for those who learn of Jesus learn no sin, but are instructed in things lovely and of good repute. It means strength, for they that sit with Jesus and feed upon Him are girded with His strength. The joy of the Lord is their strength. It means wisdom, for they that learn of the Son of God understands more than the ancients because they keep His statutes. It means zeal, for the love of Christ fires hearts that live upon it, and they that are much with Jesus become like Jesus, so that the zeal of the Lord's house eats them up.

If we say that in an army the one thing needful is loyalty to the sovereign, we know what that means. For the loyal soldier will be sure to be obedient to his officers, and if attached to his queen, he will be brave in the day of battle, and do his duty well. If we said that the one thing needful in a family was love, we should not have required a small thing, for love will place husband and wife in their true position. Love will produce obedience in children, and diligence in servants. Let love permeate everything, and other virtues will grow out of it, as flowers spring from the soil.

So when we say that sitting at Jesus' feet is the one thing needful, we have not uttered a mere truism—it comprehends a world of blessings. And here would I address a word to the Church of God in this country at this present time. She, too, is as Martha, cumbered with much serving. It were her wisdom, and her strength if she would become more like Mary, and sit at Jesus' feet. Just now we need revival. Oh that God would send it! Oh for a mighty flood of spiritual influences that would bear the stranded Churches right out into a sea of usefulness.

But how can we get revival? We shall have it, Brethren, when we commune with Christ. When the saints habitually sit at Jesus' feet they will be revived, and of necessity the revival will spread from them and the hearts of sinners will be touched. There is great talk nowadays of union. The walls of the various churches are to be broken down, and the denominations are to be blended. Think not of it in such a fashion! The only union possible, or desirable, is that we all unite to sit at Jesus' feet. It is not allowable that we concede one Truth of God and you another. That is not natural charity, but common *treason* to Christ.

We have no right to yield an atom of the Truth of God under the pretence of charity. Truth is no property of ours. We are only God's stewards, and it behooves us to be faithful to our trust. Neither one Church nor another has any right to bate its testimony one jot, if it is true. To alter the statute book of Christ is blasphemy. True union will come when all the Churches learn of Christ, for Christ does not teach two things opposed to

each other. There are *not* two Baptisms in the Bible. We shall not find two sets of dogmas diametrically opposite to each other. If we give up the various things that are of man, and hold fast each of us only that which is of God, we shall be united in principle and in doctrine.

And “One Lord, one faith, one Baptism” will once again be emblazoned upon the banners of the Church of God. Sit at Jesus’ feet, O Church of Christ, and true unity will come to you! We hear a great deal about the necessity of controversy. We ought to be ready to answer all that infidels object, so wise men say. Every absurdity of every fool we are to sit down and reply to, and when this labor of Hercules is accomplished, we are to begin again, for by that time new whimsies will be in men’s brains, and new lies will have been begotten. Is this so? Am I to do nothing in winning souls and glorifying God, but to spend all my time in finding wind for the nostrils of the wild asses of the desert?

Well, let those who please, do it—we believe that the settlement of all controversy in the Church and for the Church would come from the Lord Himself—if we believe more fully in Him, and wait more upon Him for guidance. And if we preach the Gospel more in His own strength, and in His own Spirit. And, as for missions—we appoint our committees, we amend our plans, and suggest schemes. All very well and good. But missions will never flourish till the Church, with regard to missions, sits at Jesus’ feet.

She will never convert the heathen in her own way. God will give success only when we work in His way. It may be very useful to make translations, and exceedingly beneficial to keep schools. But if I read my Bible right, it is not Christ’s way. “Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,” is the Law of Jesus Christ. And when the Church everywhere, at home and abroad, takes more earnestly to *preaching*—when the testimony of the Truth is perpetual and incessant, in simple language, and popular speech—then Christ the Lord will look upon the Church that, like Mary, sits at His feet, and say, “You have done your part,” and the blessing shall follow. “Your work is done, and I will give you your reward.” For us all, Beloved, saints and sinners, one thing is needful—that we always sit, like Mary, at the Master’s feet.

IV. The last word is urgency, and there is no need that we say much upon it. One thing is a necessity, a necessity not of the future only, but of today. It is *not* written, “it *shall be* needful,” on certain coming days, to sit at Jesus’ feet. But it is so *now*. Young man, one thing is needful to you while yet young—do not postpone it till advanced years. Christian, it is needful for you today to have communion with Christ—do not think of it as indispensable tomorrow or tonight at the communion table. It is needful now. There are dangers you can not see which can only be warded off by present and immediate fellowship with Christ. “One thing is needful.”

It is not that it *was* needful in the past, indeed it *was* so. But it is needful now. It was needful for me in the days of my sinfulness to submit to Christ. It is equally needful for me now. However much you advance, O Believer, you never advance beyond this—whatever your experience, or your information, or your ripeness for glory—it is needful, still, to sit at Jesus’ feet. You shall never get into a higher class in the school of wisdom than is the class which Christ teaches. His is the infant class in the

school, but it is the highest class, also. It is always needful, every moment needful, that we sit at Jesus' feet.

It is needful, I have already said, to the sinner. Life, health and peace will come to him when he becomes a disciple of the Crucified. Would God that he might be made so this very morning! There is life in a look at the Crucified One. To depend entirely upon the sinner's Savior is the sinner's salvation. God bring you to His feet, dear Hearers. But, it is equally needful for the saint. Covered with the fruits of righteousness, his root must still cling to the riven rock. You must never imagine, whatever you have done or whatever you have attained, that you are to leave Mary's seat—still must you abide there.

It is the one thing needful for the backslider. If you have fallen ever so much, you will rise again if you come to the Master submissively and abide with Him. It was the mark of the man who had the devil cast out of him, that he was clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. It shall show that you, too, are restored when you learn of your Lord. A seat at Jesus' feet is the place for all Christians to die—they shall sleep sweetly with their heads in Jesus' bosom—it is the place for them to live, for joy and bliss are there. Beloved, I desire for myself never again to be worried with the cares of this Church, but to take them all to my Master, and wait at His feet.

I desire not to be troubled about my preaching, nor to be cumbered about anything beneath the sun, but to leave all these, as He would have me leave them, in His hands. You who are working in the classes, in the school or anywhere else, I pray you look well to your fellowship with Jesus. You cannot slay the enemy by throwing away your sword, and nearness to Christ is your battle-ax and weapon of war. You have lost your power when you have left your Lord. One thing is needful—let the rest go.

What if we have not learning? What if we have not eloquence? If we live near to Christ we have something better than these. If we abide in Him, and He abides in us, we shall ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us. If His Word abides in us, we shall go and bring forth fruit, and our fruit shall remain. If He abides in us, we shall enjoy Heaven on earth, and be daily preparing for that eternal Heaven which is to be our portion. "One thing is needful." God grant it to every one of us!—Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 10.

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A THREEFOLD SLOGAN

NO. 3536

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1916.

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

“One thing is necessary.”
Luke 10:44.

“One thing I know.”
John 9:25.

“One thing I do.”
Philippians 3:13.

[The original title of this sermon was A THREEFOLD MOTTO.]

I HAVE “one thing” in view—“one thing” on which I want to rivet your attention. Forbear with me if I detain you a few minutes before announcing a text. It has been said that a man of one book is terrible in the force of his convictions. He has studied it so well, digested it so thoroughly and understands it so profoundly, that it is perilous to encounter him in controversy. No man becomes eminent in any pursuit unless he gives himself up to it with all the powers and passions of his nature—body and soul. Michelangelo had never been so great a painter if his love of art had not become so enthusiastic that he frequently did not take off his garments to sleep by the week together—nor had Handel ever been such a great musician if his ardor for celestial sounds had not led him to use the keys of his harpsichord till, by constant fingering, they became the shape of spoons. A man must have one pursuit and consecrate all his powers to one purpose if he would excel or rise to eminence among his fellows.

When streams of water divide themselves into innumerable streams, they usually create a swamp which proves dangerous to the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Could all those streams be dammed up into one channel, and made to flow in one direction, they might resolve themselves into a navigable river, bearing commerce to the ocean and enriching the people who dwelt upon its banks. To obtain one thing, one comprehensive blessing from Heaven, has been the objective of many a saintly prayer, like that of David, “Unite my heart to fear Your name.” The advice of Paul was, “Set not your affection upon things on earth,” not, “your affections,” as it is often misquoted. The Apostle would have all the affections tied up into one affection—and that one concentrated affection not set upon earthly things—but upon things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God! The concurrence of all our powers and capacities with one single impulse, to obtain one objective and to produce one result, is one great aim of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

The “one thing” concerning which I am now about to talk very seriously to you will require three texts to elucidate it. There are three pithy passages of Holy Scripture which I shall endeavor to press home on your heart and conscience.

I. ONE THING NECESSARY.

Our first text is to be found in the Gospel according to Luke 10:44, “One thing is necessary.” This one thing, according to this passage, is *faith in Christ Jesus*, the sitting down at the Master’s feet, the drinking in of His Word. If I may expand for a minute the “one thing,” without seeming to make 20 things of that which is but one, I will refer it to the possession of a new life. This life is given to us when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are created anew in Christ Jesus. And it develops itself in a simple confidence in Jesus, in a hearty obedience to Jesus, in a desire to be like Jesus and in a constant yearning to be near to Jesus. “One thing is necessary”—that one thing is *salvation*—worked in us by the Holy Spirit, through faith which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. The new heart, the right spirit, a filial fear of God, love to Jesus—this is the “one thing necessary.” How I trust you all know how to distinguish things essential from things convenient, and that you are more concerned about necessary things than about things merely attractive, or, at most, but an accessory to your welfare! The little child may admire the field which is covered with red and blue flowers. The farmer cares nothing for these flowers—he delights in the wheat that is ripening for the sickle. So our childish minds are often fascinated with the flaunting flowers of fortune and fashion—craving after wealth, fame and worldly distinction—but our better reason, if it is allowed to speak, will prefer the necessary things, the things which we must have, or else must perish. We may do without earthly goods, for thousands have been happy in life and triumphant in death without any of the luxury which riches can purchase. The heart’s love of his fellow creatures has been fairly won by many a humble man who never courted popular applause. The patience of the poor has often counted for fine gold, while the pride of the affluent has passed for nothing but foul dross. Even lack of health, Heaven’s priceless blessing to mortals here below, has not hindered some precious sufferers from serving their generation, glorifying God in a martyrdom of pain and bequeathing treasures of piety to a grateful posterity. Ten thousand things are convenient. Thousands of things are desirable. Hundreds of things are to be sought for, but there is one thing, only *one thing*, the one thing we have described to you, of which our Savior speaks as the “one thing necessary.”

And, oh, how necessary it is! Necessary for your children—they are growing up about you and much joy they give you—for you can see in them many budding excellences. To your partial eyes they give promise of goodness, if not of greatness! They will be the comfort of your declining

years. You have carefully watched their education. Not a whit of their moral habits have you failed to overlook. To give them a fair start in the world has been your fond desire till their portion is the fruit of your providence. From perils you would protect them. Lest they should have to rough it, perhaps, as much as their father before them, you would pilot them through the straits. Good! But, dear parents, do remember that “one thing is necessary” for your children, that they may commence life, continue in life and close life honorably. It is well that they should be educated. It is well that morality should be instilled into them, but this is not enough! Alas, we have seen many leave the purest parental influences to plunge into the foulest sins! Their education has become but a tool for iniquity, and the money with which they might have helped themselves to competence has been squandered away in vice. “One thing is necessary” for that bright-eyed boy! Oh, if you can take him to the Savior, and if the blessing of the Good Shepherd shall alight upon him and renew him while yet a child, the best will have been done for him—yes, his one chief need supplied! And if that dear girl, before she comes to womanhood, shall have been led to that blessed Savior who rejects none that come to Him, she will have received all she shall need for time and for eternity! Quicken your prayers, then, dear parents. Think of your children, to seek their welfare more intelligently. Be more importunate in intercession on their behalf! Truly, this is the one thing necessary for them.

One thing, too, is necessary for that young man just leaving home to go out as an apprentice and learn his trade. That is a trying time for an untried hand. The heart may well flutter as one, young and inexperienced, reflects that he is now about to sail, not on a coasting voyage, but to put fairly out to sea. Before long it will be seen whether those fair professions had the Truths of God as a foundation. He will get to London—many of you have passed through this ordeal! The Metropolis, what a maze it seemed to you at first, and with what amazement you surveyed it! What with propensities within your breast, and profuse attractions outside—temptation held you spell-bound! What could not be done in the village—what you dared not *think* of in the little market town, seems easy to be done unobserved in the great city! Hundreds of fingers point you to the haunts of pleasure, the home of vice, the path to Hell! Ah, mother and father, you present the Bible as your parting gift. You write the youth’s name on the flyleaf. You offer your prayers and you shed your tears for him. Steals there not over you the conviction that the one thing he needs you cannot pack in his trunk, nor can you send it up to him by a post office order? The one thing necessary is that Christ should be formed in his heart the hope of glory! With that he would begin life well. A sword of the true Jerusalem metal, that will not break in the heat of the conflict, will be serviceable all his journey through. Do I address

some young man who has not forgotten his mother's kind remarks when he left home? Let me just echo them, and say to him, One thing you lack! Oh, seek it, seek it now! Before going out of this house, seek till, through Grace, you obtain this one thing necessary which shall bear you safely to the skies!

But "one thing is necessary," not merely for those youngsters at home, or for those about to go abroad in the world. One thing is necessary *for the business man*. "Ah," he says, "I need a great many things." But what, I ask, is the one thing? You speak of "the necessary." You call ready cash "*the indispensable*." "Give me this," says the man of the world, "and I don't care about anything else! Recommend your religion to whom you please, but let me have solid gold and silver, and I will be well content." Ah, Sirs, you delude yourselves with phantoms! You fondly dream that wealth in your hands would count for more than it has ever done for your fellows. You must have seen some men make large fortunes whom you knew to be very miserable. They have retired from business to get a little rest, and yet they could find no rest in their retirement! You must have known others who, the more they got, the more they have wanted, for they have swallowed a horseleech, and it has cried, "Give, give!" Of course, you never suspected that the money did the mischief, or that the precious metal poisoned the heart. But are you in quest of happiness? It lies not in investments, whether in government bonds or mortgages, or stocks or debentures, or gold or silver. These properties are profitable. They can be used to promote happiness. As accessories to our welfare, they may often prove to be blessings, but if accredited with intrinsic worth they will eat as does a canker! Money circulated is a medium of public benefit, while money hoarded is a means of private discomfort! A man is but a muckraker who is forever seeking to scrape everything to himself. A miser is bound to be miserable. Before high Heaven, he is an object to make the angels weep! One thing is necessary for you merchants, brokers and warehousemen to keep you from sinking under your anxieties and losses, or to preserve you from becoming sordid and selfish through your successes and lest your greed should increase with your gains! One thing is necessary that your life may be a true life, or else, when it comes to its end, all that can be said of you will amount to this, "He died worth so much." Must that be your only memorial? When you depart from this world, the poor and needy will not miss you. Widow and orphans will not grieve for you! The Church militant will not mourn! The bright spirits above will not be waiting to greet you. The grand climax of your career—a will! A testament sworn under a very large sum! What shall it profit any man what fortune he may have amassed, if he loses his soul?

Do you think that riches possessed in this world will procure any respect in the nether regions? I have heard that in the old Fleet Prison, the

thief who was put into jail for stealing ten thousand pounds thought himself a gentleman in comparison with those common fellows who were put in for some paltry debt of 20 or 25 pounds! There are no such distinctions in Hell! You who can boast your talents of gold and talents of silver, if cast away, shall be as complete wrecks as those who never had copper or silver, but lived and died in privation and poverty! You need one thing, and if you get this one thing, your wealth shall prove a blessing—otherwise it will be a curse! With this one thing your sufficiency for the day guaranteed to you by promise shall make you as one of Heaven's favorites, fed by the hand of God, always needy, but never neglected. You aged folk—there are some such here—shall I have to remind any of you that one thing is necessary—yes, most necessary to you? Death has already put his bony palm upon your head and frozen your hair to the whiteness of that winter in which all your strength must fail, and all your beauty fade. Oh, if *you* have no Savior! You will soon have to quit these transitory scenes. The young may die, but the old *must*. To die without a Savior will be dreary and dreadful! Then, after death, the judgment! Brave old man, how will your courage stand that outlook, if you have none to plead your cause? Oh, aged woman, you will soon be in the scales—very soon must your character be weighed. If it is said of you, "Tekel, she is weighed in the balances and found wanting," there will be no opportunity to get right or adjust your relations to God or to your fellow creatures. Your lamp will have gone out. There will be no chance of rekindling it! If lost, forever lost—forever in the dark—forever cast away! Little enough will it avail you, then, that you have nourished and brought up children. It will not suffice you, then, that you paid your debts honestly. Vain the plea that you attended a place of worship and were always respected in the neighborhood! ONE THING is necessary! Lacking that, you will turn out to have been a fool! Notwithstanding many opportunities and repeated invitations, you have rejected the one thing—the one only thing—what an irreparable mistake! Oh, how you will weep as one disappointed! How you will gnash your teeth as do those who upbraid themselves! You will mourn forever, and your self-reproach shall know no end!

I wish I could move you, as I desire, to feel as I feel, myself—that this one thing is necessary to every unconverted person here present. Some of you have already got this one choice thing that is so necessary. Hold it fast! Never let it go! Grace gave it to you—Divine Grace will keep it for you—Grace will hold you true to it. Never be ashamed of it. Prize it beyond all cost! But as for you who have it not—I think I hear your funeral knell pealing in my ears, and as you speed away, your spirits made to fly for very fear, right into the arms of Justice, I think I hear your bitter cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved!" I would gladly pluck you by the skirts, if I could, and say to you, "Why

not seek the one thing necessary without more ado? Get it now! It will not in any way hurt you. It will make you happy, here, and blessed hereafter." It is as necessary for this life as for the next, as necessary for the exchange as for the sick chamber, as necessary for the street and for the shop as for the dying bed and for the Day of Judgment. One thing—one thing is necessary! And now allow me to stop before taking you a stage further. Allow me, as it were, to change horses. I must take another text—

II. ONE THING KNOWN.

It is in the Gospel according to John, the 9th Chapter, and the 25th verse, and these are the words, "One thing I know."

The man who was born blind, whose eyes were opened at the pool of Siloam, said, "One thing I know." This simple statement I want to turn into a pointed question. Among the many things, dear Friends, that you are acquainted with, do you know the one thing that this poor man knew, "Whereas I was blind, now I see"? Here is a wealth of self-knowledge in this single avowal. Little enough, I daresay, he knew about other people, but he knew a great deal about himself! He was well aware that he once was blind—and he was quite positive that he now could see. Oh, can you say it with sincerity, "I know that I was once blind—I could see no beauty in Christ, though I thought I saw great beauties in the world. Then I could not love God. I did not hate sin. I had no repentance, nor had I any faith. I was blind, but now—oh, blessed change—now I see my sin and weep over it! Now I see a Savior, and I trust Him! Now I see His beauties and I admire Him! Now I see His service and I delight to spend my strength in it! One thing I know." What a marvelous experience of a marvelous change this implies! Nor can its importance be overrated. There is no going to Heaven unless you undergo a change which shall make you entirely new and make all things entirely new to you. A young convert once said, "I do not know what is happening—either the world is changed, or else I am, for nothing seems to me to be the same as once it was." Ah, this old Bible, what a dry Book it used to be, but, oh, how it abounds in marrow and fatness now! Prayer—what a tedious duty, once, but what a delightful exercise now! The going up to God's House on the Sabbath—used it not to be a weariness of the flesh? How much better to be in the fields! Yet now, how delightful we feel, to assemble with the Lord's saints! With what pleasure we hail the festal morn! All things are altered. Behold, all things are become new! What we once hated, we love, and what we loved, we hate! Is it so, dear Hearer—is it so with you?

Do not, I pray you, be content with mere reformation. Were you before a drunk, and are you now a teetotaler? Good—very good! Yet, good as it is, it will not save your soul! Dishonest and knavish you once were, but truthful and trustworthy you may now be—yet rely not upon it for salvation! In former days, unchaste—by stern resolve you may have given up

the favorite lust—but even that will not save you! Those who never fell into your foul sloughs need the change, too. “You must be born-again.” You must have an entire renewal—a radical change! It is not cutting off the limbs of a tree, nor shifting it to another place, that will convert a bramble into a vine. The sap must be changed. The heart must be renewed. The inner man must be made completely new. Is it so with you? Why, I think if some of us were to meet our old selves walking down the street, we would hardly know ourselves! ‘Tis true, old self has taken good care to knock at our door pretty often since. Of all the knocks we hear, not even excepting that of the devil, there is none we dread so much! The knock of the old man when he says, “Let me in with my corruptions and lusts, and let me reign and have my own way.” No, old man, you were once ourselves, but go your way, for we have put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man—we cannot know you, for one thing we know now that we knew not before—whereas we were blind, now we see!

Need I linger any longer upon this point? Let it suffice if I leave it as a kind of awakening question upon the heart and conscience. There are not 20 things, but there is ONE THING you have to enquire about. Do you know for sure this one thing—that you are not now what you used to be? Do you know that Jesus has made the difference? That Jesus has opened the eyes that were once without sight? That you now see Jesus, and seeing, you love Him? Our third subject is—

III. ONE THING DONE.

The text is in the 3rd Chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, at the 13th verse. There the Apostle Paul says, “One thing I do.”

Pray observe that I did not introduce “*doing*” first. That would not be appropriate. We do not begin with *doing*. The one thing necessary is not doing. Coming to Christ and trusting Him, must take the lead. Not until after you have got the one thing necessary, and know that you have got it, and are conscious that, whereas you were blind, now you see, can you be fit to take the next step—“one thing I do.” And what is that one thing? “Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” It seems, then, that the Apostle gave his whole mind up to the glorifying of God by his spiritual life. He was never content with what he was. If he had a little faith, he sought for more. If he had a little hope, he aimed to obtain more. If he had some degree of virtue, he coveted more. Oh, Christians, never be satisfied with being merely saved! Up with you! Away! Off! Go onward to the high mountains, to the clearer light, to the brighter joy! If saved and brought, like the shipwrecked mariner, to shore—is that enough? Yes, for the moment it is enough to guarantee the purest satisfaction and the warmest congratulations. But the mariner must seek a livelihood as long as he lives. He must put forth his energies. Whatever avocations open up before him, he

must vigorously seek such favors of fortune as may possibly be within his reach. Just so, let it be with you. Saved from the deep which threatened to swallow you up, rejoice that you are preserved from death, but resolve that the life vouchsafed to you shall be active, earnest, vigorous, fruitful in every good deed and work! Be diligent as your traders are! See how they wake their servants up in the morning, how they scold them if they are not diligent. This man must be hurried to one place, and that man to another. How sharp they speak! How quickly they move about! They will do their business and they spare no pains to increase it. Oh, that we were half as diligent in the service of God! Here we are driveling away our time. We do not put out all our talents, augment our faith, or enlarge our coast. Why are we so indolent in going to that great giver of every good and perfect gift for fresh supplies? Why do we not wait upon Him to be enriched? Would to God that we were as diligent in spiritual as we are in temporal things! Oh, that we were burning with a holy covetousness for the best gifts God can bestow and the choicest blessings saints can receive!

Paul was anxious to do more good, to get more good, to be more good. He sought to win souls. He needed to make Christ's name known. An ardent passion inflamed him! A high enthusiasm inspired him. Tent-making, it is true, was his trade, but tent-making did not monopolize quite all his heart, and soul, and strength! Does your secular vocation absorb all your thoughts? Though Paul was proud of his industry, and could say conscientiously, "My own hands have ministered to my necessities," yet preaching was the one thing he pursued as his life-work. He was a workman, just as many of you are—but where were his tools? They were ready to hand when he needed them. And did they, do you think, ever creep up into his heart? I believe never. "For us to live," said he, "is Christ." That was as true, I will guarantee you, when he was tent-making, or picking up sticks on the island of Malta, as when he was talking heavenly wisdom to the worldly-wise, addressing the Athenians on Mars' Hill or when he discoursed touching the resurrection of the dead to the Jews, or when he expounded the way of justification to the Gentiles! He was a man of one idea, and that one idea had entirely possessed him! In the old pictures they put a halo around the head of the saints. But, in fact, that halo encircles their hearts and penetrates every member of their bodies. The halo of disinterested consecration to Christ should not be about their brows, alone, to adorn their portraits, for it encompassed their entire being, their spirit, soul and body! It environed them, their whole being. "This one thing I do," was the slogan of early saints. Let it be your slogan!

Beloved, I address you as the saints of this generation. My earnest desire is that you should not come behind in Grace or in gifts. When the Believers of all ages muster, and are marshaled, may you be found

among the faithful and true. If not among the first or second class of worthies in the army of the Son of David, yet good soldiers of Jesus Christ! Our God is a loving Father. He likes to praise His people. To this end do be clear about the one thing you need, the one thing you know, and the one thing you do! So will you stand well in that day. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 9.**

Verses 1-3. *And as Jesus passed by He saw a man who was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* We are not to look upon such afflictions as any indication of special sin on the part either of the person or the parent. Of course, sin lies at the root of all our suffering as a great generic fact, but not so that we may attribute such an affliction to any one sin. The disciples, you see, dear Friends, are thinking about difficult problems. Their Master is thinking about how, practically, to meet the difficulty, and to this day there are a large number of Christians, professors and even ministers who occupy their time about questions which really are to no profit. If they could be answered, nobody would be the holier or the better! What does it matter to us what is the origin of evil? Far more important to turn the evil out than it is to find out how it came in! Very frequently, you know, after there is a terrible calamity or accident, we have an inquiry as to how it was done, and then we think the thing is all attended to. It would have been better, perhaps, to have an inquiry, before it was done, as to how it could be prevented. Our Lord has that wisdom—that practicalness. He begins to deal with the evil rather than to raise questions about it. Yes, and He sees in that evil a good coming out of it! He says that this man was blind, that the works of God might be made manifest in him.

4-7. *I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.* Our Lord used instrumentality. It did not appear, however, to be very likely to achieve His purpose. The clay seemed more likely to blind than to give sight, yet if the Lord chooses to use the poor and weak instruments that seem nothing better than dust and spittle, He has the glory of the grand result! If He takes the humble ministry of His servants and uses it in the pulpit, or in the Sunday school, or anywhere else, He

has all the more Glory and is the less likely to be robbed of it because He uses such unlikely means.

8, 9. *The neighbors therefore, and they who before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he—We are sure of it.*

9. *Others said, He is like he—They were cautious bodies.*

9. *But he said, I am he. He knew there was no mistaking his witness!*

10, 11. *Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.* Very straightforward, very concise, very accurate—and when we make answer about our conversion, it is always well to take this for a copy—not too many flourishes, no coloring. He even leaves out about the spittle, but he gives it all as he can recollect it. So when you are talking about the Lord's love to you and His way of converting you, it is quite sufficiently remarkable, without any touch of rouge. Let it be given just as it is.

12. *Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said I do not know.* Enough for him to know what he did know—that his eyes were opened and how it was done! So sometimes I have known persons come upon the new convert with a question which has rather baffled him, and he has been troubled because he could not answer it. Do not let it trouble you! You are not expected to know everything. The very best and most honest thing is to say, "I do not know"

13-14. *They brought to the Pharisees him that before was blind. And it was the Sabbath Day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.* So you may be sure that the Pharisees would be down upon Him for that, because, according to the Rabbis, the making of the clay to put upon this man's eyes would be a kind of brick-making—and they would bring Him in guilty of brick-making directly! So did these men pervert things and make men guilty where no offense had been committed whatever.

15. *Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see.* He is shorter with them. Some tales grow in telling. His gets shorter. Besides, he has to deal with captious people—and then the least said, the sooner mended—and this shrewd man thought so.

16, 17. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This Man is not of God, because He keeps not the Sabbath. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They said unto the blind man, again, What say you of Him, that He has opened your eyes? He said, He is a Prophet.* He could see that.

18-24. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you*

say was born blind? How, then, does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind. But by what means he now sees, we know not; he is of age; ask him. He shall speak for himself. These words spoke his parents because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that he was the Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner. How piously these Pharisees can talk—and generally in the name of God, all sorts of mischief begins. When men are persecuting the Son of God, yet still they take the name of God upon their lips. Did they not burn the martyrs to the glory of God? Oh, yes, and so did these men thus slander Christ by saying, “We know that this Man is a sinner,” and yet they spoke about giving God praise!

25. *He—Our shrewd friend of the opened eyes.*

25-27. *Answered and said, Whether He is a sinner or not, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: therefore would you hear it again? Will you also be His disciples? The man is sharp, acute, cutting.*

28, 29. *Then they reviled him and said, You are His disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses: as for this Fellow, we know not from where He comes. The word, “fellow,” is supplied by the translators. There is no such word there because they did not know a word bad enough with which to express their scorn.*

30-33. *The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He comes and yet He has opened my eyes. Now we know that God hears not sinners: but if any man is a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing. He proves! He administrates! The thing is as clear as possible, and yet they refuse to see it.*

34. *They answered and said unto him, You were altogether born in sins. It is the old rule, “Abuse the plaintiff.” Nothing could be said. Now abuse the man! He has answered you and his arguments are too difficult for you. Now throw hard words at him. “You were altogether born in sins.”*

34. *And do you teach us? Wonderful, that, “us.” “Do you teach us?” Folly, ignorance and pride go together. This man, in the simplest and most unaffected manner, had told his tale and urged his argument—and now they abuse him and exalt themselves. “Do you teach us?” No, great Pharisees, he does not teach you, for you will not learn!*

34. *And they cast him out.* That is the last argument. Out with him! Now we have defeated him.

35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out: and when He had found him.* What a blessed thing to be cast out, if Christ finds us! Many and many have been put out of the synagogue and treated with contempt, but then outside Jerusalem they found their Lord, for there He died outside the camp, and His people need not be ashamed to go after Him bearing His reproach. “When He had found him.”

35-38. *He said unto him, Do you believe in the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe in Him? And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen Him, and it is He who is talking with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.* He does not appear to have been a Unitarian, therefore, and if those persons had their eyes opened, they would do the same. “He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.”

39. *And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.* Christ is the turner of the tables. Did not the virgin mother sing, “He has put down the mighty from their seats, and He has exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty”? So He always does.

40. *Jesus said unto them, If you were blind—*Really could not see.

41. *You would have no sin.* If you really did not know better, were totally and altogether without knowledge—then you would have no sin compared with what you now have.

41. *But now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains.* You acknowledge that you have sinned with your eyes open and, therefore, your sin is all the greater.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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PRAYER CERTIFIED OF SUCCESS

NO. 1091

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 19, 1873,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find;
knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
For everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds;
and to him that knocks it shall be opened.”
Luke 11:9-10.***

To seek aid in time of distress from a supernatural being is an instinct of human nature. We say not that human nature unrenewed ever offers truly spiritual prayer, or ever exercises saving faith in the living God. But still, like a child crying in the dark with painful longing for help from somewhere or other, it scarcely knows where, the soul in deep sorrow almost invariably cries to some supernatural being for succor. None have been more ready to pray in time of trouble than those who have ridiculed prayer in their prosperity—and probably no prayers have been more true to the feelings of the hour than those which atheists have offered under the pressure of the fear of death.

In one of his papers in the Tattler, Addison describes a man, who, on board ship, loudly boasted of his atheism. A brisk gale springing up, he fell upon his knees and confessed to the chaplain that he had been an atheist. The common seamen who had never heard the word before, thought it had been some strange fish, but were more surprised when they saw it was a man and learned out of his own mouth, “that he never believed till that day that there was a God.” One of the old sailors whispered to the boatswain that it would be a good deed to heave him overboard, but this was a cruel suggestion, for the poor creature was already in misery enough—his atheism had evaporated and he, in mortal terror, cried to God to have mercy upon him!

Similar incidents have occurred, not once nor twice. Indeed, so frequently does boastful skepticism come down with a run at the last that we always expect it to do so. Take away unnatural restraint from the mind and it may be said of *all* men that, like the comrades of Jonah, they cry, every man, unto his God in their trouble. As birds to their nests, hinds to their coverts, so men in agony fly to a superior being for succor in the hour of need. God has given to all the creatures He has made some peculiar form of strength—one has such swiftness of foot that at the baying of a hound it escapes from danger by outstripping the wind. Another, with outspread wings, is lifted beyond the fowler. A third, with horns, pushes down its enemy and a fourth, with tooth and claw, tears in pieces its adversary.

To man He gave but little strength compared with the animals among which He placed in Eden and yet man was king over all because the *Lord* was His strength. So long as he knew where to look for the source of his power, man remained the unresisted monarch of all around him. That image of God in which he shone resplendent sustained his sovereignty over the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field and the fish of the sea. By instinct man turned to his God in Paradise and now, though he is, to a sad degree, an uncrowned monarch, there lingers in his memory shadows of what he was and remembrances of where his strength must still be found. Therefore, no matter where you find a man, you meet one who, in his distress, will ask for supernatural help.

I believe in the truthfulness of this instinct and that man prays because there is something in prayer. And when the Creator gives His creature the power of thirst, it is because water exists to meet its thirst—and as when He creates hunger there is food to correspond to the appetite. So when He inclines men to pray it is because prayer has a corresponding blessing connected with it. We find a powerful reason for expecting prayer to be effectual in the fact that it is an institution of God. In God's Word we are over and over again commanded to pray. God's institutions are not folly. Can I believe that the infinitely wise God has ordained for me an exercise which is ineffectual and is no more than child's play?

Does He bid me pray and yet has prayer no more result than if I whistled to the wind, or sang to a grove of trees? If there is no answer to prayer, prayer is a monstrous absurdity and God is the Author of it—which it is *blasphemy* to assert! No man who is not a fool will continue to pray when you have once proved to him that prayer has no effect with God and never receives an answer. Prayer is a work for idiots and madmen, and not for sane persons, if it is, indeed, true, that its effects end with the man who prays! I shall not, this morning, enter into any arguments upon the matter—rather, I am coming to my text, which to me, at least, and to you who are followers of Christ, is the end of all controversy.

Our Savior knew right well that many difficulties would arise in connection with prayer which might tend to stagger His disciples and therefore He has balanced every opposition by an overwhelming assurance. Read those words, "I say unto you," I—your Teacher, your Master, your Lord, your Savior, your God—"I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." In the text our Lord meets all difficulties— first by giving us the weight of His own authority, "*I say unto you.*" Next by presenting us with a promise, "Ask, and it shall be given you," and so on. And then by reminding us of an indisputable fact—"everyone that asks receives." Here are three mortal wounds for a Christian's doubts as to prayer.

I. First, then, OUR SAVIOR GIVES TO US THE WEIGHT OF HIS OWN AUTHORITY, "I say unto you." The first mark of a follower of Christ is that he believes his Lord. We do not follow the Lord at all if we raise any questions upon points whereupon He speaks positively. Though a doctrine

should be surrounded with 10,000 difficulties, the *ipse dixit* of the Lord Jesus sweeps them all away, so far as true Christians are concerned. Our Master's declaration is all the argument we need. "I say unto you," is our logic. Reason? We see you at your best in Jesus, for He is made of God unto us Wisdom. He cannot err, He cannot lie and if He says, "I say unto you," that is the end of all debate.

But, Brothers and Sisters, there are certain reasons which should lead us the more confidently to rest in our Master's Word upon this point. There is power in every Word of the Lord Jesus, but there is special force in the utterance before us. It has been objected to prayer that it is not possible that it should be answered because the laws of Nature are unalterable and they must and will go on whether men pray or not. Not a drop of water will change its position in a single wave, or a particle of infectious matter be turned from its course though all the saints in the universe should plead against tempest and plague.

Now, concerning that matter, we are in no hurry to make an answer—our adversaries have more to prove than we have—and among the rest they have to prove a negative. To us it does not seem necessary to prove that the laws of Nature are disturbed. God can work miracles and He may work them yet again as He has done in days of yore, but it is no part of the Christian faith that God *must* work miracles in order to answer the prayers of His servants. When a man, in order to fulfill a promise, has to disarrange all his affairs and, so to speak, to stop all his machinery, it proves that he is but a man and that his wisdom and power are limited. But He is God, indeed, who, without reversing the engine or removing a single cog from a wheel, fulfils the desires of His people as they come up before Him!

The Lord is so Omnipotent that He can work results tantamount to miracles without, in the slightest degree, suspending any of His laws. He did, as it were, in the olden times, stop the machinery of the universe to answer prayer, but now, with equally godlike glory, He orders events so as to answer believing prayers and yet suspends no natural law. But this is far from being our only or our main comfort—that lies in the fact that we hear the voice of One who is competent to speak upon the matter and He says, "I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you." Whether the laws of nature are reversible or irreversible, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find."

Now, who is He that speaks thus? It is he that *made* all things, without whom was not anything made that was made! Cannot He speak to this point? O You eternal Word, You who were in the beginning with God, balancing the clouds and fastening the foundations of the earth, You know what the laws and the unalterable constitutions of Nature may be and if you say, "Ask and it shall be given you," then assuredly it will be so, be the laws of Nature what they may! Besides, our Lord is by us adored as the Sustainer of all things and, seeing that all the laws of Nature are only operative through His power and are sustained in their motion by His

might, He must be cognizant of the motion of all the forces in the world—and if He says, “Ask and it shall be given you”—He does not speak in ignorance, but knows what He affirms. We may be assured that there are no forces which can prevent the of the Lord’s own Word. From the Creator and the Sustainer the Words, “I say unto you,” settles all controversy forever.

But another objection has been raised which is very ancient, indeed, and has a great appearance of force. It is raised not so much by skeptics, as by those who hold a part of the Truth. It is this—that prayer can certainly produce no result because the decrees of God have settled everything and those decrees are Immutable. Now we have no desire to deny the assertion that the decrees of God have settled all events. It is our full belief that God has foreknown and predestinated everything that happens in Heaven above or in the earth beneath—and that the foreknown station of a reed by the river is as fixed as the station of a king—and “the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses.” Predestination embraces the great and the little, and reaches unto *all* things—the question is, why do we pray?

Might it not as logically be asked why we breathe, eat, move, or do anything? We have an answer which satisfies us, namely, that our *prayers* are *in the predestination* and that God has as much ordained His people’s prayers as anything else. And when we pray we are producing links in the chain of ordained facts! Destiny decrees that I should pray—I pray. Destiny decrees that I shall be answered and the answer comes to me. Moreover, in other matters we never regulate our actions by the unknown decrees of God, as, for instance, a man never questions whether he shall eat or drink because it may or may not be decreed that he shall eat or drink—a man never enquires whether he shall work or not on the ground that it is decreed how much he shall do or how little. As it is inconsistent with common sense to make the secret decrees of God a guide to us in our general conduct, so we feel it should be in reference to prayer and therefore we still pray.

But we have a better answer than all this. Our Lord Jesus Christ comes forward and He says to us this morning, “My dear Children, the decrees of God need not trouble you. There is nothing in them inconsistent with your prayers being heard. ‘I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.’” Now, who is He that says this? Why it is He that has been with the Father from the beginning—“the same was in the beginning with God”—and He knows what the purposes of the Father are and what the heart of God is, for He has told us in another place, “the Father Himself loves you.” Now, since He knows the decrees of the Father and the heart of the Father, He can tell us with the absolute certainty of an eyewitness that there is nothing in the eternal purposes in conflict with this Truth of God, that he that asks, receives, and he that seeks finds. He has read the decrees from beginning to end—has He not taken the Book and loosed the seven seals thereof and declared the ordinances of Heaven?

He tells you there is nothing there inconsistent with your bended knee and streaming eyes and with the Father's opening the windows of Heaven to shower upon you the blessings which you seek. Moreover, He is Himself God—the purposes of Heaven are His own purposes and He who ordained the purpose here gives the assurance that there is nothing in it to prevent the efficacy of prayer. "I say unto you." O you that believe in Him, your doubts are scattered to the winds—you *know* that He hears prayer!

But sometimes there arises in our mind a third difficulty which is associated with our own judgment of ourselves and our estimate of God. We feel that God is very great and we tremble in the Presence of His majesty. We feel that we are very little and that, in addition, we are also vile—and it seems an incredible thing that such guilty nothings should have power to move the arm which moves the world! I wonder not if that fear should often hamper us in prayer. But Jesus answers it so sweetly. He says—"I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you." And I ask again, who is it that says, "I say unto you"? Why, it is He who knows both the greatness of God and the weakness of man! He *is* God and out of the excellent Majesty I think I hear Him say, "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you."

But He is also Man, like ourselves, and He says, "Dread not your littleness, for I, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, assure you that God hears man's prayer." The words come to us with the harmony of blended notes! The God, the Man, both speak to us—"Dread not My majesty, your prayer is heard. Fear not your own weakness. I as a Man have been heard of God." And yet, again, if the dread of sin should haunt us and our own sorrow should depress us, I would remind you that Jesus Christ, when He says, "I say unto you," gives us the authority, not only of His Person, but of His *experience*. Jesus was known to pray. Never any prayed as He did! Nights were spent in prayer by Him, and whole days in earnest intercession—and He says to us, "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you."

I think I see Him coming fresh from the heather of the hills, among which He had knelt all night to pray, and He says, "My disciples, Ask, and it shall be given you, for I have prayed and it has been given unto Me." I think I hear Him say it with His face all bloody red and His garments as if He had trod the wine vat, as He rises from Gethsemane with His soul exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. He was heard in that He feared and therefore He says to us, "I say unto you, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Yes, and I think I hear Him speak thus from the Cross, with His face bright with the first beam of sunlight after He had borne our sins in His own body on the tree—and had suffered all our griefs to the last pang. He had cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me," and now, having received an answer, He cries in triumph, "It is finished," and in so doing, bids us, also, "ask, and it shall be given you." Jesus has proven the power of prayer!

"Oh but," says one, "He has not proven what it is to pray in trouble like mine." How grossly you attest the Savior's trouble was worse than yours! There are no depths so deep that He has not dived to the bottom of them!

Christ has prayed out of the lowest dungeon and out of the most horrible pit. "Yes, but He has not cried under the burden of sin." How can you speak so thoughtlessly!? "Was ever such a burden of sin borne by any man as was laid on Him?" True, the sins were not His own, but they were sins and sins with all their crushing weight in them, too! Yet was He heard and He was helped unto the end. Christ gives you, in His own experience, the Divine proof that the asking shall be followed by the receiving, even when sin lies at the door.

Thus much is certain, if you, who are Believers, cannot believe in the efficacy of prayer on the very Word of Christ, it has come to a strange pass, for, O Beloved, you are leaning all your soul's weight on Jesus! If He is not true, then you are trusting a false Savior! If He speaks not Truths of God, then you are deceived! If you can trust Him with your soul, you must of necessity trust Him with your prayers! Remember, too, that if Jesus our Lord could speak so positively here, there is a yet greater reason for believing Him now, for He has gone within the veil—He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, and the voice does not come to us from the Man of poverty, wearing a garment without seam, but from the enthroned Priest with the golden girdle about His loins, for it is He who now says, from the right hand of God—"I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you."

Do you believe in His name? How, then, can a prayer that is sincerely offered in that name fall to the ground? When you present your petition in Jesus' name, a part of His authority clothes your prayers. If your prayer are rejected, Christ is dishonored—surely, you cannot believe that? You have trusted Him, then believe that prayer offered through Him must and shall win the day. We cannot talk longer on this point, but we trust the Holy Spirit will impress it upon all our hearts.

II. We will now remember that OUR LORD PRESENTS US WITH A PROMISE. Note that the promise is given to several varieties of prayer. "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." The text clearly asserts that all forms of true prayer shall be heard, provided they are presented through Jesus Christ and are for promised blessings. Some are vocal prayers men ask—never should we fail to offer up every day and continually the prayer which is uttered by the tongue, for the promise is that the asker shall be heard.

But there are others who, not neglecting vocal prayer, are far more abundant in active prayer, for by humble and diligent use of the means they seek the blessings which they need. Their heart speaks to God by its longings, strivings, emotions and labors. Let them not cease seeking, for they shall surely find. There are others who, in their earnestness, combine the most eager forms, both acting and speaking, for knocking is a loud kind of asking and a vehement form of seeking. If our prayers are vocal speech with God, or if they are the practical use of means ordained, which is real prayer—or if they should, best of all, be the continued use of both—

or if they are expressed only by a tear or a sigh, or even if they remain quite unexpressed in a trembling desire, they shall be heard. All varieties of true prayer shall meet with responses from Heaven.

Now observe that these varieties of prayer are put on an ascending scale. It is said first that we *ask*—I suppose that refers to the prayer which is a mere statement of our needs in which we tell the Lord that we need this and that and ask Him to grant it to us. But as we learn the art of prayer we go on further to *seek*—which signifies that we marshal our arguments and plead reasons for the granting of our desires—and we begin to wrestle with God for the mercies needed. And if the blessings come not, we then rise to the third degree which is *knocking*—we become importunate—we are not content with asking and giving reasons, but we throw the whole earnestness of our being into our requests and practice the text which says, “the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.”

So the prayers grow from asking—which is the statement, to seeking—which is the pleading, and to knocking—which is the importuning. To each of these stages of prayer there is a distinct promise. He that asks shall have—what did he ask for? But he that seeks, going further, shall find, shall enjoy, shall grasp, shall know that he has obtained. And he who knocks shall go further still, for he shall understand—and to him shall the precious thing be opened—he shall not merely have the blessing and enjoy it, but he will comprehend it! He shall “understand with all saints, what are the heights and depths.”

I want, however, you to notice this fact, which covers all—whatever form your prayer may assume it shall succeed. If you only ask you shall receive. If you seek you shall find. If you knock it shall be opened. In each case, according to your faith, shall it be unto you. The clauses of the promise before us are not put, as we say, in law, jointly—he that asks *and* seeks *and* knocks shall receive—but they are put severally—he that asks shall have, he that seeks shall find, he that knocks shall have it opened. It is not when we combine the whole three that we get the blessing, though doubtless if we *did* combine them we should get the combined reply. But if we exercise only *one* of these three forms of prayer, we shall still get that which our souls seek after.

These three methods of prayer exercise a variety of our Graces. It is a gloss of the fathers upon this passage that faith asks, hope seeks and love knocks—and the gloss is worth repeating. Faith asks because she believes God will give. Hope, having asked, expects, and therefore seeks for the blessing. Love comes nearer, still, and will not take a denial from God, but desires to enter into His house and to sup with Him and, therefore, knocks at His door till He opens. But, again, let us come back to the old point—it matters not which Grace is exercised—a blessing comes to each one. If Faith asks it shall receive. If Hope seeks it shall find. And if Love knocks it shall be opened to her.

These three modes of prayer suit us in different stages of distress. There am I, a poor mendicant at Mercy's door. I *ask* and I shall receive—but I lose my way so that I cannot find Him of whom I once asked so successfully. Well, then, I may *seek* with the certainty that I shall find. I am told if I am in the last stage of all, not merely poor and bewildered, but so defiled as to feel shut out from God like a leper shut out of the camp, then I may *knock* and the door will open to me. Each of these different descriptions of prayer is exceedingly simple. If anybody said, "I cannot ask," our reply would be, you do not understand the word. Surely everybody can ask! A little child can ask. Long before an infant can speak it can ask—it need not use *words* in order to ask for what it wants—and there is not one among us who is incapacitated from asking.

Prayers need not be fine. I believe God abhors fine prayers. If a person asks charity of you in elegant sentences he is not likely to get it. Finery in dress or language is out of place in boggles. I heard a man in the street, one day, begging aloud by means of a magnificent oration. He used grand language in very pompous style and I dare say he thought he was sure of getting piles of coppers by his borrowed speech. But I, for one, gave him nothing. I felt more inclined to laugh at his bombast. Is it not likely that many great prayers are about as useless? Many Prayer Meetings' prayers are a great deal too fine. Keep your figures and metaphors and parabolic expressions for your fellow creatures! Use them for those who want to be instructed, but do not parade them before God! When we pray, the simpler our prayers are the better—the most plain, most humble language which expresses our meaning is the best.

The next word is *seek* and surely there is no difficulty about seeking? In *finding* there might be, but in seeking there is none. When the woman in the parable lost her money she lit a candle and sought for it. I do not suppose she had ever been to the university, or qualified as a lady physician, or that she could have sat on the School Board as a woman of superior sense—but she could seek. Anybody who desires to do so can seek—be they man, woman, or child—and for their encouragement the promise is not given to some particular philosophical form of seeking, but simply, "he that seeks finds."

Then there is *knocking*—well, that is a thing of no great difficulty. We used to do it when we were boys—sometimes too much for the neighbors' comfort! And at home, if the knocker was a little too high, we had ways and means of knocking at the door even then—a stone would do it, or the heel of a boot—anything would make a knocking! It was not beyond our capacity by any means! Therefore, it is put in this fashion by Christ Himself, as much as to tell us, "You need have no scholarship, no training, no talent and no wit for prayer—ask, seek, knock—that is all, and the promise is to everyone of these ways of praying. Will you believe the promise? It is Christ who gives it! No lie ever fell from His lips. O doubt Him not! Pray on if you have prayed, but if you have never prayed before, God help you to begin today!

III. Our third point is that JESUS TESTIFIES TO THE FACT THAT PRAYER IS HEARD. Having given a promise He then adds, in effect—"You may be quite sure that this promise will be fulfilled, not only because I say it, but because it is and always has been so." When a man says the sun will rise tomorrow morning, we believe it because it has always risen. Our Lord tells us that, as a matter of indisputable fact, all along the ages true asking has been followed by receiving! Remember that He who stated this fact knew it. If you state a fact you may reply, "Yes, as far as your observation goes, it is true." But the observation of Christ was unbounded. There was never a true prayer offered unknown to Him! Prayers acceptable with the Most High come up to Him by the way of the wounds of Christ. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ can speak by personal knowledge and His declaration is that prayer has succeeded—"Everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds."

Now here we must, of course, suppose the limitations which would be made by ordinary common sense and which are made by Scripture. It is not everyone that frivolously or wickedly asks or pretends to ask of God that gets what he asks for. It is not every silly, idle, unconsidered request of unregenerate hearts that God will answer. By no manner of means—common sense limits the statement so far. Besides, Scripture limits it again, "You have not because you ask not, or because you ask amiss"—there is an asking amiss which will never obtain. If we ask that we may consume the good things upon our lust we shall not have them. If we ask for that which would not be to our good we shall be heard by receiving no such answer as we desired. But those things being remembered, the statement of our Lord has no other qualification—"everyone that asks receives."

Let it be remembered that frequently, even when the ungodly and the wicked have asked of God, they have received. Full often in the time of their distress they have called upon God and He has answered them. "How can you say that" asks one. No, *I* say not so, but so says *Scripture*. Ahab's prayer was answered and the Lord said, "see you how Ahab humbles himself before Me? Because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house." So, also, the Lord heard the prayer of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, who did evil in the sight of the Lord. (2 Kings 13:1-4). The Israelites, also, when for their sins were given over to their foes, cried to God for deliverance and they were answered—yet the Lord Himself testified concerning them that they did but flatter with their mouth.

Does this stagger you? Does He not hear the young ravens when they cry? Do you think He will not hear *man*, that is formed in His own image? Do you doubt it? Remember Nineveh! The prayers offered at Nineveh—were they *spiritual* prayers? Did you ever hear of a Church of God in Nineveh? I have not, neither do I believe the Ninevites were ever visited by converting Grace—but they were, by the preaching of Jonah, convicted that they were in danger from the great Jehovah—and they proclaimed a fast

and humbled themselves! And God heard their prayer and Nineveh, for a while, was preserved. Many a time in the hour of sickness and in the time of woe, God has heard the prayers of the unthankful and the evil. Do you think God gives nothing except to the good? Have you dwelt at the foot of Sinai and learned to judge according to the Law of merit? What were *you* when you did begin to pray? Were you good and righteous? Has not God commanded you to do good to the evil? Will He command you to do what He will not do Himself?

Has He not said that He “sends rain upon the just and upon the unjust” and is it not so? Is He not daily blessing those who curse Him and doing good to those who spitefully use Him? This is one of the glories of God’s Grace and when there is nothing else good in the man, yet if there is a cry lifted up from his heart, the Lord deigns full often to send relief from trouble. Now, if God has heard the prayers even of men who have not sought Him in the highest manner and has given them temporary deliverances in answer to their cries, will He not much more hear you when you are humbling yourself in His sight and desiring to be reconciled to Him? Surely there is an argument here!

But to come more fully to the point with regard to real and spiritual prayers, everyone that asks receives without any limit whatever. There has never been an instance, yet, of a man really seeking spiritual blessings of God without his receiving them. The publican stood afar off and so broken was his heart that he dared not look up to Heaven—yet God looked down on him. Manasseh lay in the low dungeon. He had been a cruel persecutor of the saints. There was nothing in him that could commend him to God, but God heard him out of the dungeon and brought him forth to liberty of soul. Jonah had, by his own sin, brought himself into the whale’s belly and he was a petulant servant of God at the best—but out of the belly of Hell he cried and God heard him. “Everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” Everyone!

If I needed evidence I should be able to find it in this Tabernacle. I would ask anyone here who has found Christ to bear witness that God heard his prayer. I do not believe that among the damned in Hell there is one who dares say, “I sought the Lord and He rejected me.” There shall not be found, at the last day of account, one single soul that can say, “I knocked at Mercy’s door, but God refused to open it.” There shall not stand before the Great White Throne a single soul that can plead, “O Christ, I would have been saved by You, but You would not save me! I gave myself up into Your hands, but You did reject me. I penitently asked for mercy of You, but I had it not.” Everyone that asks receives. It has been so until this day—it will be so till Christ Himself shall come. If you doubt it try it and if you have tried it try it again.

Are you in rags?—that matters not—everyone that asks receives. Are you foul with sin?—that matters not—“everyone that seeks finds.” Do you feel yourself as if you were shut out from God altogether?—that matters

not, either—"knock, and it shall be opened unto you, for everyone that asks receives." "Is there no election there?" Yes, yes, doubtless there is! But that does not alter this Truth of God which has no limit to it whatever—"everyone." What a rich text it is! "Everyone that asks receives." When our Lord spoke thus, He could have pointed to His own life as evidence—at any rate we can refer to it now and show that no one asked of Christ who did not receive. The Syro-Phoenician woman was at first repulsed when the Lord called her a dog. But when she had the courage to say, "Yet the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table," she soon discovered that everyone that asks receives.

She, also, who came behind Him in the crowd and touched the hem of His garment—she was no asker, but she was a seeker—and she found. I think I hear, in answer to all this, the lamentable wail of one who says, "I have been crying to God a long while for salvation. I have asked, I have sought and I have knocked, but it has not come yet." Well, dear Friend, if I am asked which is true, God or you, I know which I shall stand by and I would advise you to believe God before you believe yourself! God will hear prayer, but do you know there is one thing before prayer? What is it? Why, the Gospel is not—"he that *prays* shall be saved"—that is not the Gospel! I believe he *will* be saved, but that is not the Gospel. I am told to preach to you. "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he"—what?—"he that *believes* and is baptized shall be saved."

Now, you have been asking God to save you—do you expect Him to save you without your believing and being baptized? Surely you have not had the impudence to ask God to make void His own Word! Might He not say to you, "Do as I bid you. Believe My Son. He that believes on Him has everlasting life." Let me ask you, do you believe Jesus Christ? Will you trust Him? "Oh, I trust Him," says one. "I trust Him wholly." Soul, do not ask for salvation any more—you have it already—you are saved! If you trust Jesus with all your soul, your sins are forgiven you and you are saved. And the next time you approach the Lord, go with praise as well as with prayer and sing and bless His name.

"But how am I to know that I am saved?" asks one. God says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Have you believed? Have you been baptized? If so, you are saved. How do I know that? On the best evidence in all the world—*God* says you are—do you need any evidence but that? "I want to feel this." Feel! Are your feelings better than God's witness? Will you make God a liar by asking more signs and tokens than His sure Word of Testimony? I have no evidence this day that I dare trust in concerning my salvation but this—that I rest on Christ alone with all my heart, soul and strength. "Other refuge have I none," and if you have that evidence, it is all the evidence that you need seek for this day. Other witnesses of Divine Grace in your heart shall come, by-and-by, and cluster about you and adorn the doctrines you do profess—but now your first business is to believe in Jesus.

“I have asked for faith,” says one. Well, what do you mean by that? To believe in Jesus Christ is the gift of God, but it must be your own act as well. Do you think God will believe *for* you, or that the Holy Spirit believes instead of us? What has the Holy Spirit to believe? You must believe for yourself or be lost! He cannot lie—will you not believe in Him? He deserves to be believed! Trust in Him and you are saved, and your prayer is answered! I think I hear another say, “I trust I am already saved, but I have been looking for the salvation of others in answer to my prayers.” Dear Friend, you will get it. “He that asks receives and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” “But I have sought the conversion of such an one for years with many prayers.”

You shall have it, or you shall know one day why you have it not and shall be made content not to have it! Pray on in hope. Many a one has had his prayer for others answered after he has been dead. I think I have reminded you before of the father who had prayed for many years for his sons and daughters and yet they were not converted. In fact, all of them became exceedingly worldly. His time came to die. He gathered his children about his bed, hoping to bear such a witness for Christ at the last that it might be blessed to their conversion—but unhappily for him he was in deep distress of soul. He had doubts about his *own* interest in Christ. He was one of God’s children who are put to bed in the dark—this being, above all, the worst fear of his mind, that he feared his dear children would see his distress and be prejudiced against religion.

The good man was buried and his sons came to the funeral—and God heard the man’s prayer that very day—for as they went away from the grave one of them said to the other, “Brother, our father died a most unhappy death.” “He did, Brother. I was very much astonished at it, for I never knew a better man than our father.” “Ah,” said the first brother, “if a holy man such as our father found it a hard thing to die, it will be a dreadful thing for us who have no faith when our time comes.” That same thought had struck them all and drove them to the Cross—and so the good man’s prayer was heard in a mysterious manner.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but while God lives, prayer must be heard. While God remains true to His Word, supplication is not in vain! The Lord give you Divine Grace to exercise it continually. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Luke 11:1-13; Psalm 107:1-31.**

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DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 6, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“If a son shall ask for bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”
Luke 11:11-13.*

IN this chapter there is an evident progress. It opens by the disciples asking the Lord to teach them to pray. To that He gave a full and sufficient reply. He prepared them an outline of what complete prayer should be. Brethren, we have need, some of us, to begin with asking to be taught to pray. It will be a blessed sign when it can be said of us, “Behold, he prays.” And just in proportion as we are instructed how to pray shall we give evidence of a more advanced Christian life. He has most grown in Grace who prays best. Depend upon it, the most acceptable prayer with God is the evidence of a most accepted state of heart within.

Our growth in prayer may be to us the test of our growth in all other respects. “Lord, teach us to pray,” is a prayer for the young beginner and for the more advanced disciple. It is a suitable petition for as all, for we have none of us yet learned to the full the sacred art of supplication. Then the chapter proceeds a little further to answer a question—we are shown how to pray, but will God really answer us? Is prayer only meant to do good to the suppliant? Does it end with the benefit which it works in us, or does it really affect the heart of God? Do replies actually come from Heaven in answer to the entreaties of God’s children?

The answer is given by our Lord with great clearness. We have a parable to show that as importunity does evidently affect men, so importunity will also gain an answer from God—that He will be pleased to give us what we need if we do but know how, with incessant earnestness, to come again and again to Him in prayer. We are assured that asking is attended with receiving, that seeking is attended with finding, that knocking will lead to opening. That it is not a vain thing to pray, that our prayers are not lost on the wind, or expended merely on ourselves—but that there is a connection established by Divine decree between the prayer that is raised on earth and the mercy that is given forth from Heaven.

But since we are such sinful creatures, the chapter proceeds to deal with a grave doubt which may arise in the troubled mind. “It may be God will hear, and as a general rule will make replies in mercy. But I am an undeserving one. If the Lord should be incensed at my prayers and answer me in wrath instead of love, I should deserve it. If after having made

my confession, He should deal with me, judging me out of my own mouth, and then and there condemn me, what should I say?"

The Savior very explicitly answers the question as to whether God will give answers of peace, and will always grant us good things. And He puts it thus to us—when your children ask for good things you grant their requests. You do not mock them by giving them something that may look like what they asked for, but is only a deception. You never play upon their ignorance and mock their childish confidence by giving them the injurious semblance of what would have been a useful reality. When their prayers are right, you answer them.

If you, then, being evil, fallen creatures, yet answer your children's right and proper prayers, how much more will your heavenly Father answer your fitting prayers, and give to you good things? He will not put you off with evil things when you ask for good, but He will grant you in Truth the good gifts which you are seeking after.

You will observe that the fear, lest God should give us something evil when we are seeking something good, is very naturally raised in the heart by a sense of sinfulness. And is increased by the conviction that we should not always be able to judge whether the thing received is good or not good. We tremble lest we should receive from the Divine hands what appears to be gracious, and yet may be sent in judgment. But he says, "No, your children trust in their father, and their father never deceives them—you may safely trust your heavenly Father that when you ask a good thing from Him, He will most assuredly give you a good thing, and not an evil thing in lieu of it."

You are true and kind to your children—much more shall God be good towards you. In saying, "How much more?" we ask an unanswerable question. As high as God is above us, so high is the certainty that He will give us good above the certainty that we will give good things to our children. Yet since we feel in our hearts quite certain that we could not mock our children, let us be quite convinced that it is still further beyond all question that God will ever mock us and give to us an evil thing when we are seeking a good thing at His hands.

By the way, it has been remarked that the expression of our Savior here is, "you being evil." That expression evidently teaching the doctrine of our fallen condition, the doctrine of human depravity. You, My disciples, you are evil. You who have children, whether you are upright or otherwise in others' estimation, you are all evil, and yet, being evil, you still have such affection and judgment that you give your children good gifts. Much more shall He who is infinitely good give good things to you when you seek them.

I have met with many expositions of this passage in which there is an attempt made to show that the child asked a wrong thing, and wished for a stone which appeared to be bread. Nothing of the kind is here. The child is not represented as asking for a stone, but as seeking, as he should, a most proper gift, namely, bread. No mistake was made at all by the child—his prayer was what it should be. The point of the parable touches the *father's answer*. The Truth here taught is not that God will refuse us evil things if in our mistake we ask for them. That is a Truth, but it is not

alluded to here. The one statement of this verse is that prayers for good things will be answered—and that they will not be answered with gifts wearing the mere appearance of good—but with the actual good things desired. That simple thought I shall endeavor to enlarge upon in this morning's discourse.

Our first head will be—right prayers, right answers. The second point will be the best prayer, the surest answer. And the last head will be this—the prayer of the text is the best, for it contains all blessings in it.

1. First, then, RIGHT PRAYERS, RIGHT ANSWERS. The child asks for bread, his father does not give him a stone. He asks for a fish—there are certain kinds of fish that are very like snakes—but the father does not give him a serpent. The child asks for an egg—we are told by some that certain scorpions, when they fold themselves up, look like eggs—the father never makes a fool of the child, or injures him by giving him a scorpion for an egg.

If we may be allowed to put some interpretation upon this, I should say if we begin our prayers by asking God for necessities, that is bread, bread temporal, or the Bread of Life, He will not give us useless, tooth-breaking, unsatisfying stones. We shall have, when we pray for necessary things, the really necessary things themselves, not the imitation of them, but the actual blessings. And if our faith grows a little stronger, and having obtained bread, we may ask for fish—not absolutely a necessity—but a comfort and a relish. If we make bold to ask for spiritual comforts, consoling gifts and ennobling Graces, something over and above what is absolutely necessary to save us, our heavenly Father will not mock us by giving us superficial comforts which might be injurious as a serpent.

He will give us so much of comfort as we can bear. And it shall be pure, holy, healthy comfort. And if, gathering more confidence still, we ask for an egg, which I take it was in Christ's day a rarer luxury, we shall not be deluded by its counterfeit. Only once, except in this place, and that in the book of Job, and Job was a rich man, do we ever read of eating eggs at all in Scripture. And all through the Bible we find not even the mention of poultry till our Savior's day. And then chickens were so valuable that eggs were considered a high luxury, for which a child, at least, might not be expected to make a request.

But if the child is bold enough at last to ask for this larger favor, his father will not punish his impertinence by putting into his hand a deadly scorpion. Even thus, if I can summon faith enough to ask for the highest enjoyments and enrichments of Divine Grace, the highest blessings of Christian manhood, the most rapt and intense fellowship with Christ, I shall not receive, instead of that an intoxicating excitement, a delirious fanaticism, or some other deadly or injurious thing.

Now, this at first sight may not seem to be a very useful Truth of God, but I think I can show you that it is. To begin with, the common blessings of Providence. You have been laying your case before the Throne with much earnestness of late, and you have prayed God to guide and lead you in all the steps of life. At this moment you are overwhelmed with trouble—distress has followed distress. Now, do not judge God harshly, above all do not judge Him so harshly as to think Him less kind and tender than

you would be yourself. Your child asking for bread receives bread. You have asked guidance and shall have it. You have asked Providential care and you have obtained it. These present circumstances, which God has appointed for you are what you have asked for.

Your present lot is from the Lord. He has not given you a stone. It seems hard, perhaps. May it not be the crust of true bread for all that? Believe it to be so, but never suspect that you are treated ungenerously by your Lord. Were you as able to judge as He is, you would perceive that He has given you that which is for your lasting good, and has appointed the best thing possible for you. Do not look upon your present distress as a stone, a serpent, or a scorpion. If so you will be afraid of your mercies and tremble at your consolations. Providential love you have sought, and Providential love is yours beyond all question, even though trials surround you.

For by all these things men live, and in all these is the life of our spirit. God will bring good out of the apparent evil. Indeed, if Faith will but open her eyes, it is not apparent evil, but it is even now evidently good. Blind Unbelief misrepresents the work of God. Faith's clearer eye discerns the Truth. Do not suspect your God of giving you the scorpion instead of the egg. You have asked that here on earth Providence may deal wisely with you, and that God may be glorified by you. Infinite Wisdom is even now fulfilling your hallowed wish. Amid fiery trials your faith is honoring God, and every circumstance of your affliction is made subservient to your soul's perfection.

In spiritual matters how often in our earnest anxiety to be right have we questioned whether the spiritual gifts which we have received are what we hope they are, or whether after having sought of God Divine Grace, we may not, after all have missed it. For instance, many of us, I hope most of us, are possessors this day of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We look to His Cross and we are lightened. We see Him as our suffering Substitute, and our soul feels joy and peace as the result of faith. Our faith does lay her hand upon His head as the scapegoat, and we see sin carried away by Him into the wilderness of forgetfulness.

But the question will come and sometimes very bitterly, "Is this true faith? Is this the faith of God's elect? Is it not, after all, presumption for me to say and believe that in Jesus Christ I am pardoned and saved? There is, evidently, a notional faith, may not mine be that? There is, it seems, a faith of devils, for they 'believe and tremble.' May not mine be of that sort? Is this which I have sought of God in prayer, and which I accepted as my answer, the real Grace of faith, or am I, after all, deluding myself?" Look, my Brother, where did you seek this faith? Did you not ask your heavenly Father to give it to you? Have you not devoutly sought, and do you not still seek today, even with tears, that He would work in you the faith which is of His own Spirit's creation?

Now do you think that He would have given you a stone instead of bread, that He would have put into your heart a carnal presumption, or have suffered it to come there while you were waiting for the humble, simple faith of God's own people? My Lord, I sought it at Your feet, and there I found it! And it cannot be otherwise than a good and real faith which I

found when I looked up to You. Be assured, O anxious Heart, that in the vital matter of faith true seekers shall not be put off with false faith. The same question may arise as to every spiritual Grace. We will take repentance. I am not for a moment about to depreciate the value of a discriminating theology, which clearly shows the difference between legal bondage, and the evangelical repentance of a child of God.

But I suppose few of us can sit under sermons of that order, especially if the preachers make a great many nice distinctions, without feeling, "I am afraid I come short on several points. I fear that my repentance does not come up to the mark, and I hardly know whether I can quite say that I have so renounced sin, so abhorred it, so detested it, so loathed it from the very bottom of my soul, as this good man describes." Well, then, it will be a sweet thing to fall back upon this—I seek repentance of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. I come to my Father and I say, "Create in me a new heart, O God. If my heart is not broken and contrite, break it. And heal it if it is."

I earnestly desire that the Lord would give me a tender spirit. My longing is towards the repentance which is of His own working. I lay myself down like a field, and ask Him to plow me. I put myself before Him as the patient places his limb under the surgeon's knife—and I beseech Him to deal with me in the most cutting and severe manner, so that He may but rid me of the disease of sin. Now, if you sincerely act thus, I am sure you will not be deceived in your repentance. You shall receive the repentance that needs not to be repented of. You would not give your child the serpent instead of the fish—neither will God suffer you to be deluded with a suppositious repentance instead of the Gospel repentance which is the peculiar watermark of His own chosen.

Now, as I have said, all our Divine Graces may be subjected to the same questioning, and our confidence in them may be reestablished by the same method. If you have sought them of the Lord, and have waited upon Him in prayer anxiously desiring to have such as He gives—and only such as He gives—you shall not be deceived or disappointed. He of whom you seek these gifts is Truth itself and gives no mockeries to His sons. If you went to pretended mediators and priests, you would be deceived, but never by the one Mediator, Jesus Christ.

If you dream that the spiritual benefit is to pass through mortal hands—there are priests nowadays, like the priests of Egypt, Jannes and Jambres—who during the passage of the fish through their hands would have transformed it into a serpent, and craftily exchanged the egg for a scorpion by a little manipulation. If, then, I have got my religion at second hand I may have been deceived. But if I have gone to God Himself, my Father, in earnest and importunate prayer, and have desired to receive these blessings direct from His Son and His Spirit, no mistake can have occurred. I must have received the good thing which I sought.

We will take one more instance, and that shall comprehend the whole. My dear Brothers and Sisters, in looking back upon all our experience, the doubt will occur to us whether, after all, it may not have been a fallacy and a delusion. I *thought* that I was brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. I *thought* that I rejoiced in the Lord. I have *thought* that

my prayers have been answered. I have believed that I have been led from Grace to Grace by His Spirit. I have thought, and if not awfully deceived it is true, that I have had fellowship with the Father and with His Son. I have had but few ecstasies, but I have had much peace. I have had both the mournful and the cheerful experiences of God's people—I *think* I have.

But in dark times we say, "Is it so? Am I, after all, a true child of God? May I not, after all, have persuaded myself that I was converted during a revival or under a certain earnest minister? May I not, since then, have propped up that deceptive supposition by the respect and esteem of Christian people, and may I not, up till now, have been a deceiver, or self-deceived? May not the whole thing turn out to be one awful sham?" In such a case we come back to this—where did I seek this, and what did I seek? Did I go to God and desire to be a mere professor? Was it my wish to gain a worldly position, or to win the respect of my friends by professing to be a Christian?

Or did I go sincerely to the Lord, and for love of salvation desire to be converted? Did I desire the Savior that I might be reconciled to God, that I might be made holy? And since then have I still desired truly and earnestly to possess the Grace which God gives, and not the mere imitations of man? Do I pant to have God's own Spirit in my soul, and is that my sincere and earnest prayer now?

Well, then, I have no right to suspect that I am deceived. Like a child, I believe that my heavenly Father has given me what I asked for. I have done right in so believing. My child would do me a gross injustice if he suspected that the fish I gave him was not a fish, but a serpent. And I do my God a great injustice if, sincerely knowing that I have sought the one thing necessary at His hands through Jesus Christ, I suspected that He has permitted me to be deluded with something else. No, if I sought it from Him, and sought it sincerely, I have now the good thing which I longed for.

Now, this simple Truth may yet be very, very helpful to you—for nowadays men assail our faith. Some of us have waited upon the Lord for teaching, and we have been established in the old faith which men now sneer and rail at as a worn-out creed. We have been taught as we believe, by the Spirit of God, and by God's Word. And now, because this advanced age and this enlightened century have discovered that these old-fashioned truths are not philosophical, are we to believe that when we went to God for teaching we did not receive bread, but a stone?

I do not believe it, nor will I give up the bread I have long lived on because these *men* choose to call it a stone. I will hold it still, it is my food, and on it I shall live forever. If a man has sought of God to be filled with zeal till he becomes like a burning seraph, some will tell him this is all wildfire—the man is excited beyond bounds—he ought to be more reserved. My dear Brother, if you have sought from God the zeal of His House that eats you up, do not believe that the spirit that God has given you is wildfire. Do not believe that your ardor for the conversion of sinners is fanaticism. Hold on to it and get more of it, and do not let the devil delude you out of the treasure you have gained.

The fish is a fish, not a serpent, and the egg is an egg, and not a scorpion. And so, too, when the Believer has stood fast in the faith and would not leave it, then he has been told, "It is only your natural obstinacy. You are pig-headed. You have got hold of a thing and there is no making you give it up." Many a man of God has been ridiculed for his determination—"it is not that he has any real martyr's spirit in him, it is only his animal obstinacy." Ah, my Friend, but you know where you got this firmness! And if you wait upon the Lord, and say, "Establish me in Your fear, my God. Help me to bear contradiction of sinners against myself, as my Redeemer did," then God will not give you any evil thing. Having done all, still stand, endure to the end, and you shall gain the Crown of Life that fades not away. That is our first point—prayer for good things meets a good answer.

II. Then, dear Friends, the question will arise in every heart—"It seems, then, that I have only to ascertain that my prayer is for a really good thing, and I shall have it." Just so, and therefore, secondly, **THE PRAYER FOR THE BEST THING IS SUREST OF AN ANSWER**, for, says the text, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" There is no doubt about the Holy Spirit being a good thing. When we, therefore, ask for Him, for His Divine Presence and influence, we may rest assured that God will give it. Make that our first point under this head—God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask for Him.

Beloved, the Holy Spirit sometimes is represented as the wind, the life-giving breath. He blows upon the valleys thickly strewn with slain, and they are quickened to life. You and I, though we are made to live, often feel that life to be flagging, and almost dying. The Spirit of God can quicken us, revive in us the spark of Divine life, and strengthen in our hearts the life of God. Pray for this quickening breath, and, my Brothers and Sisters, God will give it to you. As surely as you sincerely pray, you shall have and feel the revival of the life within.

The Spirit of God is sometimes compared to water. It is He who applies the blood of Jesus and sanctifies us. He cleanses us, fertilizes us. Well, He will come to us in that capacity. Do we feel that our sin has much power over us? O Spirit of God, destroy sin within us and work in us purity! You have already given us the new birth by water and the Spirit, go on and complete Your work till our whole nature shall be fashioned in the image of the Great First-born. You shall have it if you seek it—God will give you this Spirit if this you seek for.

The Holy Spirit is revealed to us under the image of light. He illuminates the mind, He makes our natural darkness flee. Wait upon Him, O child of God, that you may be led into all Truth. He can make that which now perplexes you to become plain. He can uplift you into Truths of God which are now too high for your attainment. Wait upon Him! As a child of God, long to be taught of God. I do not know how to express to you the sense I feel just now of the deep condescension of God in promising to give us the Holy Spirit. He has given us His Son, and now He promises his Spirit!

Here are two gifts, unspeakable in preciousness! Will God, in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Will God dwell in man? Can it be that the infinite Spirit, God over all, blessed forever, will dwell in my poor heart,

and make my body to be His temple? It is certainly so. For as sure as it is that God will give good things to those that ask for good things, He will surely of all give the Holy Spirit to them that ask for the Holy Spirit. Sit not in the dark, then, when the light of God will break upon you if you seek it!

The Holy Spirit is set forth to us under the emblem of fire, and in this capacity He kindles enthusiasm of spirit, and burning zeal in the hearts of God's people. The tongue of fire speaks with a matchless might. The heart of flame conquers the sons of men. O that we had this fire! It is to be had. The Spirit of God will come in answer to our cries. He will come and fire the Church, and each individual member of it. Oftentimes the Spirit of God is set forth as oil. By Him we have the Divine anointing. The prayer that the pastor may be anointed with fresh oil is a very welcome one, but it is equally needed that you, yourselves, have your lamps supplied that your light may not go out. This desire will be fulfilled. He will give the Holy Spirit in this way to them that ask Him for it.

And so, too, as the gentle dropping dew that cheers and refreshes the grass, so will the Spirit come to console our spirits, care-worn, tried with the heat of this world's busy day. The Holy Spirit will come and bedew us if we seek Him. As the blessed Dove, bearing peace upon His wings, He will come to us. In fact, there is no operation of the Spirit which will not be brought in us if we seek it. There is no attribute of the Spirit of God which shall not be put forth for us if we ask it. He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

From the connection in which the text stands, I gather the following remark, namely, that it will truly be the Holy Spirit. Go back again to that first thought. The child asks for bread, and does not get a stone. You ask for the Holy Spirit, and you shall receive the Holy Spirit. Some persons have been misled by an evil spirit. I believe that very much of the rant that came out years ago about the date of the second coming of Christ, the unknown tongues, and I do not know what beside of blatant nonsense, was of an evil spirit. And I query whether there was a humble laying down of minds before God's Throne to seek the Holy Spirit. Whether there was not much self-sufficiency, and much desire for something that would make important its possessor which led certain eminent preachers into vain imaginings and fanatical rant.

You shall not receive an evil spirit instead of the good Spirit, if you humbly and patiently wait upon the Most High. Neither shall you be misled by fancy. Men will tell you that you are deluded when you experience high joys and deep experiences. But if you have sought the Spirit sincerely and intensely, it shall be the Spirit that God will give you. You need not be afraid when you bow before Jehovah's Throne in Jesus' name and ask for the Holy Spirit, that you will be sent away with anything short of that Holy Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son.

But it appears plainly enough from the text that this Holy Spirit is to be given in answer to *prayer*. Did not we hear some time ago from certain wise Brethren that we were never to pray for the Spirit? I think I heard it said often, "We have the Holy Spirit, and therefore we are not to pray for Him." Like that other certain declaration of the same brotherhood, that we

have pardon of sin, and are not to pray for it, just as if we were never to pray for what we have! If we have life we are to pray that we have it more abundantly. If we have pardon in one respect we are to ask for a fuller sense of it. And if we have the Holy Spirit so that we are quickened, and saved, we do not ask for Him in *that* capacity, but we ask for His power in other directions, and for His Grace in other forms.

I do not go before God now and say, "Lord, I am a dead sinner, quicken me by Your Spirit," for I trust I am quickened of His Spirit. But being quickened, I now cry, "Lord, let not the life You have given me ebb down till it becomes very feeble, but give me of Your Spirit that the life within me may become strong and mighty, and may subdue all the power of death within my members, that I may put forth the vigor and energy which come from Yourself through the Spirit."

O you that have the Spirit, you are the very men and women to pray that you may experience more of His matchless operations and gracious influences. And in all the benign sanctity of His indwelling may you seek that yet more and more you may know Him. You have this as your encouragement—that God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Ever since certain Brethren gave up asking for the Holy Spirit they have not had it, and they have gone aside into many inventions. If they will not ask, they shall not have, but be it yours and mine to wait humbly and patiently upon the Lord that He may *daily* give us of His Spirit.

I desire earnestly to call your attention to one thing which our Savior says—"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children," how ought it to run to make it parallel?—"How much more shall your heavenly Father know how to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Would not that be the parallel? Of course it would, but He does not say so. He very kindly puts it, in the first place, that we, "know how to give good gifts," for sometimes we know how to give them, but we cannot do it. It is a bitter thing, and yet it has sometimes happened that the child has said, "Father, give me bread," and with a breaking heart the father has had to reply, "My child, there is none."

It must be one of the hardest trials of human life, and yet it is the trial of tens of thousands in this city at this time, to have to say, "No, there is not even a crust of bread for my child." You see the father *knows how*, but he cannot do it. But the text does not say that God knows how to give the Holy Spirit, it says a great deal more than that. It declares that He *does* give, because with Him to know how is the same thing as to do it. He gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. He does not only *know how*, but He *does* it. Never does He have to say to His child, "My child, I cannot." The poor sinner says, "Lord, help me to repent," and the Lord never says, "I have not enough of the Holy Spirit to make you repent."

When one of His children cries, "Lord, give me the anointing of the Holy One that I may understand Your Gospel more fully," the heavenly Father never answers, "I cannot give you so much of the Holy Spirit as that." Boundlessly will He give if Faith dares but open her mouth wide. You are not straitened in Him. You are straitened in yourselves. Brothers and Sisters, I am telling you nothing new, but a very simple Truth. And yet, for all that, a Truth which we do not put in practice. We may have the Spirit of

God resting upon us. As Stephen was a man filled with the Holy Spirit, even so may we. No miracles do we seek, but all the spiritual uplifting which the Holy Spirit gave to men of old we need, and He can give it to us still.

Though He will not reveal new Truths—we do not want Him to, for we have already the complete Gospel revealed—He will bring home the old Truths to our souls and make them potent upon our consciences—and upon our lives—*this* is what we want! Oh, if any of you are but just Christians, and are not glorifying God, nor living near Him, nor mighty in prayer, nor well taught in Scripture, nor useful in your lives—I beseech you remember—if you have not the Spirit it is because you do not seek Him importunately!

You do not seek Him with a deep sense of your need of Him. If you, being evil, give your children bread, how much more will God give you the Spirit? And as you, being evil, do not mock your child by putting him off without the bread, and giving him something else, neither will your heavenly Father. He will give you the *real* Spirit—not enthusiasm that might mislead you! Not fanaticism that might injure you! Not self-conceit that might become like a deadly scorpion to you—but He promises to give His own gentle, truthful, infallible Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

III. Now for our last point. THE BEST OF PRAYERS, WHICH IS SURE TO BE HEARD, IS ALSO A MOST COMPREHENSIVE ONE. Turn to the parallel passage in the Gospel of Matthew (7:11). Note that Matthew says nothing about the egg. And then read the eleventh verse, “If you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?”

Now what does our text say, “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” Is it not clear then that the Holy Spirit is the equivalent for “good things,” and that, in fact, when the Lord gives us the Holy Spirit He gives us all “good things”? What a comprehensive prayer, then, is the prayer for the Spirit of God!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, sit down with pencil in hand and a sheet of blank paper before you, and write down all your spiritual wants. I will judge of your wisdom by the length of the list—for if you know yourself you will find you have not done yet—you are a great mass of wants. To pray for all these things separately might seem a very long exercise. My dear Brethren, just take the pencil, and do as the school boys do when they add up the total of their sums. You will find it all adds to this—the Holy Spirit.

“My God, give me Your Holy Spirit, and I have all.” “But do we not need the Savior?” says one. Truly, but the Holy Spirit, when He comes, “takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us.” That is the great value of the Holy Spirit. “He shall glorify Me.” Wherever the Spirit of God comes there comes the blood of the Atonement, we are brought near by it, and every spiritual blessing bought with blood is brought by the Holy Spirit home to the soul. If you have the Spirit He does not come empty-handed. He comes loaded with all the treasures of the Everlasting Covenant—the blessings ordained for you from before the foundation of the world. And He brings the blessings secured to you in the Covenant of Grace, and the

blessings bought for you by Jesus' precious blood. Do, then, let this be your prayer; "Give me, O God, Your Holy Spirit."

Then, my dear Friends, your prayer is intercessory as well as for yourselves. You pray for your children, for your wife, for your neighbors, for your friends. I hope your intercessory roll is a long one. If God gives you power to bless men by your prayers, do not stay the blessing. What is it that you want for others? In one word, it is the Holy Spirit! Let the Holy Spirit be given to that dear boy of yours, and he will have a tender conscience—you have often wished he had. He will have a desire after Christ, and he will find Christ. He will be a Christian. Let the Holy Spirit be given to that girl of yours. She will have a desire for the Word of God, a love for the means of Grace. She will find the Savior, she will become a useful Christian woman.

Your neighbors, you prayed that they might go with you to hear the Gospel, and a very excellent prayer it was. Still it would be a fuller prayer, still, that the Spirit would visit them. Some have been visited by the Holy Spirit who have not been in the House of God. Even at their work, Divine impulses they could not account for, have followed them. The fact is, the hearing of the Word is but the vehicle, the *power* lies in the Spirit of God. I put it to you, therefore, whether it is not a most fitting prayer for you to offer for your neighbors and kinsfolk.

And, now, the last point is one I wish to impress upon your hearts, my dear Friends. Tomorrow is the Day of Prayer. As I have said, I hope you may be all, with one accord, in one place in prayer. But I humbly suggest to you that we should all pray throughout that day and onward, that God will give to His Churches more and more of the Holy Spirit. Just now, I do not know how you feel, but I am ill at ease. The Church of England is eaten through and through with Sacramentarianism, but Nonconformity appears to me to be almost as badly riddled with philosophical infidelity. Those of whom we thought better things are turning aside one by one from the fundamentals of the faith.

At first they gave up the doctrine of the eternity of future punishment, now it must be the doctrine of the Fall—first one thing then another. If some men have their way all the doctrines of the Word must go. They treat the doctrines of Scripture as though they were all disproved, and only held by a few ignorant bigots. Through and through, I believe, the heart of England is honeycombed with a detestable infidelity which dares, still, to go into the pulpit, and call itself Christian. I pray that God may preserve our denomination from it.

But my prayer shall go up that He will give us the Holy Spirit—for men never go wrong with the Holy Spirit—He will keep them right, and lead them into all Truth. Soundness of doctrine is only worth having when it is the result of the living indwelling of God in the Church. And because too much of the Holy Spirit has departed, we see the signs that the orthodox faith is given up, and the inventions of man preached instead.

Sometimes I breathe, as I walk along, this prayer, that God would raise up more ministers to preach the Gospel with power. There is so much feeble preaching, mere twaddling, and so little declaration of the Gospel with power. But I do not know that I will pray that prayer again. I will put up

this, “Lord, send Your Spirit upon the Churches!” Then will come the ministers! Then will come the earnest workers. The Spirit of God will touch their tongues with fire, and they will say, “Here am I, send me.” And once again we shall have back the Puritan age of preaching and ministries like those of Whitfield, Edwards, and McCheyne.

The Spirit of God is the power of the Church and speaks with might in her. My longing is that the Churches may be more holy. I grieve to see so much of worldly conformity! How often wealth leads men astray. How many Christians follow the fashions of this wicked world? But shall I pray that the Churches may be holy? I will, but I will put my prayer in this form—I will ask that God will give the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of holiness. He leads to obedience, purges from sin and creates the image of God in His people.

I desire to see, and I think you all do, more unity among the Churches. It is a pity when Churches fall out, and chide, and fight. Ecclesiastical quarrels are generally more bitter than any other. Do not so much pray for unity as put it all into this, “Lord, give the Holy Spirit. For if the Holy Spirit is in us and abounds, we shall not be divided—the Church of God will feel the unity of life.” Life it is that creates true unity among the people of God. If there is anything else that we long to see in the Churches, and I confess there are a thousand things—for I would desire to see them increased with men as with a flock—I would desire to see them built up in an intelligent understanding of the Doctrines of Grace.

I desire to see them looking for the coming of Christ and ready for His advent. If we desire all these, let us ask that the Holy Spirit may be more plenteously given—and when this prayer is answered, as answered it must be—then shall we see all that our soul desires. I do, therefore, very earnestly, over and over again, ask you to make tomorrow a day of real prayer. And if you cannot be here in body, yet all day long cry mightily unto the God of Sabaoth, our Father, who has spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all—who will also with Him freely give us all things, if we know how to ask aright.

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THE PEACE OF THE DEVIL AND THE PEACE OF GOD

NO. 2157

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace.”
Luke 11:21.***

***“The Lord will give strength unto His people, the Lord
will bless His people with peace.”
Psalm 29:11.***

PEACE is a condition of things greatly to be desired. To dread no outward disturbance and to feel no inward storm—who does not desire such a state? Peace has been called a pearl and rightly, for it is precious and smiles with soft, mild radiance bedecking the heart that wears it. It is, indeed, a pearl of great price—he that has it has more than riches. If his peace is, in very deed, the true pearl, he who wears it in his breast is one of the favored sons of God. There may be some few people in the world who do not love peace, but we love not their spirit. Certain stormy natures delight in tempest and, like sea birds, ride on the crests of raging billows. Men of the Byron type are restless and an atmosphere of peace suits them not. Their spirits, like thunderbolts, rush onward, finding pleasure in the crash with which they force their willful way.

I need not go out of my way for such, for in vain we speak to those who will not hear. The most of us were cast in another mold. We are not ravens and cannot remain forever on the wing. But, like the dove of Noah, we seek rest for the soles of our feet and we fly here and there until we find the olive leaf of peace. How often, amid the disturbances of this troubled world, have we cried, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest!” We were not reared like eaglets on stern crags among the callow lightning—we listen to the turtle’s voice and love the brooks that warble music as they flow. I know that many of you sigh for rest—you labor that you may enter into it. If you have found the rest which Jesus gives, your heart is sure to sing—

***“Forever here my rest shall be
Close to Your bleeding side:
This all my hope, and all my plea—
For me the Savior died.”***

Peace and rest are two names for a flower which buds on earth, but only found full-blown in Heaven! Yet even the faint perfume of the unopened blossom excites our strong desire. Gently does the Savior attract us to Himself by that sweet call—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Every precious thing in this

world is sure to be counterfeited. If the government mint issues gold and silver money, rogues will be found to make spurious coin. The more a thing is cried up, the more is there need of caution that you are not taken in with base imitations of it. Satan is the cunning ape of God and whatever God does, he tries to do the same with his enchantments. Therefore, while there is a peace more precious than the gold of Ophir, there is another peace which is worse than worthless! When a soul is borne up upon the waters of false peace, its case is hopeless till that peace is dried up and the soul is stranded in self-despair.

I thought this morning I might do you some service if I tried to set forth the two peaces, the peace of the devil and the peace of God. May God the Holy Spirit give discerning hearts to all of you, that you may not be deceived by the poisonous imitation of the waters of peace! May you discern the counterfeit and reject it with indignation! And may you find the true peace at the feet of the Prince of Peace! Oh, for “the peace of God, which passes all understanding”! For my part, I should dread to give peace to anyone, upon any subject at the expense of the Truth of God. A temporary hope is ill purchased at the cost of cruel disappointment.

A poor woman was the loving mother of an only son. He was very dear to her. He fell sick, indeed, he was sick unto death but the mother could not bear to think so. She scraped together the necessary fee for a physician and, oh, the peace of heart she had when the trusted man came downstairs and said to her, “Your son will recover. There is no grave cause to fear. Nurse him carefully and very soon he will be at his post again.” The mother was restful of heart, for she believed the doctor. Within a single day her son died and those hours of false peace were the wormwood and the gall of her affliction. It was a sad, sad pity to have raised her hopes for she cried, “Oh, if I had known that he was going to die, I should not then so bitterly have felt his loss! But I am grievously disappointed. How could the doctor tell me he would live?”

The physician was either greatly mistaken, or else wished to soothe the mother’s manifest anguish. If the latter was the case, his untruthfulness was not wise. I cannot follow the same course. It is a pity to create a peace which is baseless. It is lamentable to me that anyone of you should be slumbering in peace when a great danger is near which will cause that peace to vanish as a dream when one awakes. Avoid that peace which will prove deceptive in the present and ruinous in the future—long for that which will keep your heart and mind today and forever. Follow me, I pray you, while I speak of the two forms of peace set forth in my two texts.

I. First, there is THE DEVIL’S PEACE. The foul spirit keeps things quiet in the heart over which he rules—“When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace.” The heart of man is not lawfully Satan’s palace, but he has made it so by capture. In his pride he loves to dwell in the midst of this captured stronghold so that he may vaunt himself over the Most High from whom he has taken the heart of His creature. Satan values a conquered human heart as a palace—he takes pleasure in domineering over the soul which he has forcibly torn away from God. That he

may dwell securely, he covers himself with armor and he keeps constant watch and ward. Hence the house is quiet, for his watchful power puts down every token of mutiny against his tyranny.

The Psalmist describes the dreadful peace of the wicked in Psalm seventy-three—"There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." Everything goes smoothly with the man who is left in this fatal condition—"Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish." Though it would seem that they are really prospering, it is not so—they are set in slippery places and they will be cast down unto destruction. There is really nothing enviable in the condition of the godless, but everything pitiable. They cry, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. What peace can there be to those whose rebellions are so many? Satan makes conscience lie still that his power may be confirmed over the heart of the ungodly.

I may be speaking to some here who are in good health, have a fair trade and enjoy credit with their neighbors and therefore they have an *earthly* peace and care nothing about being at peace with God. My design shall be to disturb that peace, for if it is the peace of the devil. The sooner it is broken the better for the soul. *This peace is often merely outward.* Men put on the air of peace when they do not feel it in their hearts. You will often meet with irreligious men who tell you that they are perfectly happy and then ask—What do they want with Christ? They feel themselves all right—what need have they of a new birth? They are getting on so well without God's blessing that they do not care to seek it. Their laughter is loud, their jests are endless, their cares sit lightly upon them.

They appear to have no anxiety for the faults of the past, the temptations of the present, or the recompenses of the future—and yet this peace is all external. The crust of ice is hardly strong enough to bear a fly. Follow them to their beds and see their fear! Listen to them in a thunder-storm—see them at sea in a tempest and you will find that they are the victims of an awful dread. Some display a peace of sheer bravado. They want to *seem* happy and therefore they put on the mask of the merry Andrew. The plowboy, when he goes through the churchyard, is afraid of ghosts and therefore whistles to keep his courage up—and many who are loaded with apprehension try to conceal it by those flippant songs in which they boast of "driving dull care away." In the secret of their soul that same dull care sits on the throne of their hearts and is not to be driven away by the ballad, the fiddle or the dance.

Those are often the slaves of misery who figure as the children of mirth. Is it not so with many? When they speak of pleasure, it is from the teeth outward, for there is no Artesian well of joy springing from the depths of their soul. They hold themselves up as the mirror of pleasure while their heart is breaking with unutterable pain. In all who have not come to Christ and found peace through His precious blood, *their peace is false.* Let them say what they will of it, it has no foundation or justification. They have no peace with God for it is written, "There is no peace, says my

God, to the wicked.” The great God is the high contracting party with whom peace must be made and if He disowns it, in vain will a man pretend to possess it!

A sinner may say, “I am at peace as to God” but if this comes of forgetting or ignoring Him, it is a sorry sham. If a man has to forget God before he has peace, that fact betrays a fatal secret. If the man, on remembering God, is troubled, then his peace is a mere writing on the sand. Such peace is false peace and what true man will solace himself with that which is false? Better know that we are at war, if it is so, than dote upon a peace which is a fool’s paradise and only exists in fancy. I had rather be wounded in a thousand spiritual conflicts than be soothed into eternal destruction by a false peace! Let my hopes be slain by the sword of the Truth of God rather than nourished on the bread of lies. God forgive that we should prophesy smooth things for ourselves while the pen of justice is signing our death warrant!

One prayer I often pray—“Lord, let me know the worst of my case.” And though there is no great pleasure in such a petition, I would suggest that all of you should offer it. It can do you no harm. Pray with the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there are any wicked ways in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” See to it that you are not liars unto your own souls. To many *this peace comes through ignorance*. They do not know those terrible Truths which would make peace impossible. They know not that sin is a deadly viper and therefore they toy with it as with a bird.

They are scarcely conscious that they have committed any sin worth mentioning, but if the light of God’s Law were turned upon them they would see that they are guilty before God and exceedingly vile. They are not innocent, as they suppose, but guilty before the living God! Let the Holy Spirit work in a man a sense of sin and an expectation of judgment to come and I guarantee you he will have no more peace till he has fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel! If any of you are wrapped up in a peace woven in the loom of ignorance, I pray God it may be torn to shreds! “But,” cries one, “Where ignorance is peace, ‘tis folly to be wise.” No, no! But where peace is founded on ignorance, it is folly begetting folly!

Oh, be wise, and drink not the fool’s cordial! Know your true condition even though that knowledge may cost you present loss of rest. To keep men ignorant is one of Satan’s devices because they are then easier to govern—he dreads that you should go where the Gospel is preached! If any of you are under Satan’s dominion, you are here this morning against your tyrant’s wishes. If he could have his way you would never come within earshot of God’s Word! Even now he will try to make you feel drowsy and inattentive lest the arousing Gospel should awaken you. O my Hearers, shun the ignorance which fosters false peace and the false peace which would make you content without the knowledge of God!

The devil greatly rejoices because in these days so many ministers do not preach the Gospel—Satan is glad if he can poison the stream at the fountainhead! He rejoices if he can make the preacher of the Gospel a

mere moral essayist, or a talker of his own inventions, for then those who go to hear him will be in no danger of being driven by trouble of mind to fly to Christ. I pray you, if you are wrapped in a peace that will not bear the light of day, bestir yourselves and escape from your perilous condition!

With many, however, it is not so much ignorance as *thoughtlessness*. Multitudes of persons know, if they would know, but they make no use of their knowledge for they never *think*. What a pity to perish forever from lack of consideration! A man has a letter given to him. He puts it in his pocket and does not open it. He goes out tomorrow for his day's pleasure and he promises himself that he will open the letter on Tuesday, when the Bank Holiday is over. Suppose in that letter there should be a warning of some plot against his life, or information of his mother being at the point of death, or of the sudden illness of a favorite child? What will he say to himself if he opens that letter too late? The Bible is to many a man God's unopened letter. Alas, how little do men search the Scriptures! If they do read them, they do it mechanically and do not think over their warnings.

Why will not men think? Thoughtlessness is one of Satan's great nets in which he entangles many. If the devil can keep you from thinking, he will keep you from believing! If he can keep you in the giddy whirl of vicious pleasure, or even of idle levity, he can make sure of you. Possibly he can effect his purpose by getting you absorbed in politics, or parish matters, or science, or business. Little does he care which, so long as he can draw you off from thinking of *God* and of your soul and of eternal things. Oh, that I could draw a mighty bow and shoot some piercing shaft which would go over the wall and carry death to that traitor, False-Peace! How gladly would I blow a blast most loud and break the spell of the Father of Lies and bring you from under his fatal fascination!

This peace, in many cases, is also *the result of carnal security*. Men say, "Well, well. We have not been much troubled yet and why should we care? We have lived in sin and we have not suffered for it. In fact, we have prospered through our contempt of scruples." Of old, men said, "Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were." And today they cry, "No deluge of fire has broken out upon us. These Christians say that the earth and all the works of men will be burned up and the very elements will melt with fervent heat! But we see no likelihood of it! In the heavens there is no sign of the Son of Man—no cloud, no Great White Throne—no token of the Judgment! Everything goes on calmly enough—why need we disturb ourselves?"

Thus, like the sluggard in the Proverbs, they ask for a little more slumber. They are willingly ignorant that once upon a time, in the olden days, it was so upon this earth and men married and were given in marriage. And they ate and drank and were drunken—and as it was told them, so it happened—for the Flood came and swept them all away! "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them." Beware, O men of this generation, lest this happen unto you, also, and the deluge of fire be upon you before you have escaped to Christ who alone is

the Ark of souls! Will things always be as they have been? Can you be sure of it? Are you not warned that it will not be so? Your eyes are not so clear as once they were! Your limbs are not so vigorous as once they were. If there is no change in the world, there is a great change in *you* during the last few years!

Before tomorrow's sun has risen you may lie upon the bed of death! Therefore, I pray you, set it not to your seal that you have much goods laid up for many years—for this night your soul may be required of you. In a moment shall you be troubled—the Avenger shall leap through the window, though you think you have made fast the door—and you shall not escape. O Sirs, shall not my voice disturb your wicked slumbers, or must you sleep on till the trumpet shall awaken you, not to hope, but to condemnation? Soon shall He come who now would save you, but then must condemn you to the place of everlasting banishment! O Lord, have mercy upon those who are bewitched by carnal security! Break the enchantments of the deceiver.

Some, again, have *a peace that comes of superstition*. “Well,” they say, “we know that this is true which has been spoken, but it does not bear upon *us*. We are all right—we were made members of Christ, children of God and heirs of the kingdom of Heaven in our infant baptism! We have been confirmed and we have partaken of the holy communion. We have attended our church, or we have gone to our meeting-house with much regularity. Therefore we feel that for us there is a sure hope.” O Souls, beware of saying, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.” Joab, in the day when Solomon executed the vengeance of God against him, instead of confessing his fault and seeking mercy, hoped for safety in the sanctuary and therefore stood with his hands upon the horns of the altar.

The tidings came to the king, “He is by the altar.” But the stern sentence was given, “Fall upon him, and bury him.” And so he perished in the Holy Place where God's sacrifice was known to be offered. So will you die if you do not trust in the Lord Jesus—even though your hands should lie upon your Baptism and your Lord's Supper. No outward performance can enable you to dispense with inward repentance and faith. If your heart is not right with God you shall perish with the sacramental bread in your mouth and go from the baptismal waters to the fires of Hell! Beware of the peace which is drawn from the stagnant pool of superstition—it will carry death into your soul.

Alas, there is a peace which does not lie in believing too much, but in believing too little! *Unbelief brings false peace to thousands*. If Satan can persuade you that, after all, these things are not so. If he can lead you to disbelieve your Bible. If he can lead you to think that there is no God, or that, if there is a God, He takes no account of men and will never call them to judgment—then the arch-deceiver will make sure of you and keep his goods in peace! I charge you, beware of that peace which is founded upon the denial of those Truths of God which your own conscience teaches you. Sin must be punished and if your peace is built upon the

supposition that it will not be so, your foundation is even less to be depended upon than the sand. Hazard not your soul upon a lie!

I fear that many are kept in peace through *companionship*. Hand joins in hand—the man would be troubled, but he meets his old friend who is a skeptic—and he laughs his fears out of him. The woman gets home and talks with what she calls, “her friends,” who are as godless as herself—and she is by their tattle confirmed in her carelessness. O Sirs, your friends cannot deliver you if you lose your souls through their means! Choose rather as friends those who roughly tell you solemn truths than those who with excess of sweetness would flatter you to your everlasting undoing.

Once more, dear Friends, I say this—and may God make it come with power to some—*peace caused by the devil is often the awful prelude of the last tremendous storm*. One who described to me the earthquake in the south of France said, “That morning when we rose, I never saw more lovely weather. Everything smiled deliciously across the blue Mediterranean and the azure sky was without a cloud. Suddenly, without a moment’s warning, a tremor seized the earth and there was a great cry of men and women in their fright.” It usually happens, before tremendous convulsions of Nature, that there is an ominous calm. You must have noticed, a few minutes before a storm, how awfully still everything becomes. The air is motionless, the birds sit mute upon the bough—not a leaf is stirring, all is silent expectation.

Deceive not yourself—with wings of flame the tempest is hurrying on and while you speak it bursts upon you—casting all things into confusion and amazement. Before the last dread hurricane of doom a soul may be asleep and all around it there may be a deep calm. Beware of the treacherous peace! Beware of insensibility! Your unfeeling state should warn you that you are given over to destruction. In the higher and colder latitudes, when men feel a sleepiness stealing over them, their companions stir them up and rub them and will not let them slumber—for to sleep is to wake no more. The man pleads, “Let me sleep a half-an-hour and I shall be so refreshed.” Alas, if he sleeps he shall do ill, for he will grow rigid in the death which frost brings to one! Go on, wise friends, and compassionately shake him! Hurry him to and fro, or rub him vigorously till he grows sore!

I cannot get hold of you at this present hour with my hands, nor would I wish to give you a bodily shaking, but oh, that I could do this *spiritually* and wake you up! I cannot leave you to sleep your soul into perdition! Come, Woman, you must bestir yourself, you must quit this fatal stupor, this deadly peace or else you will pass away from the world of hope, and wake up in the dungeon of despair! I have now spoken as much as I think wise upon this terrible subject—may the Holy Spirit bless it to you all! It is not my *speaking*—it is your *thinking* which is now needed. The Lord move you to holy thought!

II. Now we come to the second part of our discourse upon which we hope to speak with far greater pleasure. The Psalmist says, “The Lord will

bless His people with peace.” Here we have THE LORD’S PEACE. I trust numbers of you are now enjoying it! A man of God lay dying, but he was very calm—more—he was supremely happy! He filled the house with cheerfulness. All who came to see him, knowing that he was about to die, as he well knew himself, went away edified and comforted by the interview with this thrice-happy man.

One said to him, “Friend, how is it that you have such peace?” He answered, “I can see no ground or cause for it save this—it is written, ‘You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.’” Was not that a satisfactory reply? There is a weight of argument in it. If your mind is stayed on God He will keep you in perfect peace. You could not keep yourself in perfect peace in the hour of tribulation, or faintness, or decay—but the Lord can keep you. When heart and flesh fail, God will be your joy! Then shall you receive Christ’s legacy—“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.” I love that text because of the double view it gives of the Peacemaker. Here is a dying Savior making His will and saying, “Peace I leave with you.” Here is the living Savior stretching out His hands and saying, “My peace I give unto you.” He has not only left it in His will, but He has given it with His hands.

Now, Beloved, the peace that we should desire to possess is, first of all, *a peace which is a blessing*—“The Lord will bless His people with peace.” False peace is a curse, but to be soundly at peace with God is an unalloyed blessing and it brings no sorrow with it. To fall back upon the Father’s bosom and say, “I know that He Himself loves me and I know that I love Him”—to look up to Jesus and to say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me”—to feel the moving of the Holy Spirit and to yield ourselves up to His influences—this is peace unspeakable! To have no quarrel with God. No, to have no difference between His will and your own—this is a delightful experience!

Men may hate me, but if my God loves me, what does it matter? I may feel the cut of sharp, ungenerous words, but if my God speaks peace unto me, who can make trouble? “He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints.” This is joy, indeed! Do you know it? It is not only a blessing in itself, but it is a blessing in its consequences. There is no man so humble as the man that is at perfect peace with God—he marvels at the blessing he enjoys! There is no man so grateful. There is no man so courageous. There is no man so little affected by the world. There is no man who bears suffering so patiently. There is no man who is so ready for Heaven as the man who is at perfect peace with God and knows it! The peace of God, which passes all understanding, is a sacred guard to the soul—it shall keep our hearts and minds by Jesus Christ.

The value of peace as keeping the heart and mind is exceedingly great. It wards off all sorts of evils and preserves us unto the day of the Lord’s appearing. The more you enjoy peace with God the better. False peace is as stupefying and deadly as opium. Even the smallest drop of this sleeping mixture may be mischievous to the spirit and you may soon imbibe so much of this false confidence that it may deaden the conscience and cre-

ate a fatal hardness of heart. But of God's own peace you may drink to the full and no harm will come of it! You may be as happy in the Lord as possible and be all the better for it. Get strong faith and even full assurance and it will never make you idle—it will be a blessing and only a blessing to you all your days. "The Lord will bless His people with peace."

Note, next, that *this peace only comes from God*. "The lord will bless His people with peace." You cannot get that peace apart from the Lord himself—it is of no use to try to work it out yourself. You say, "I will get better. I will keep the Law, I will do this and do that"—you will never dig peace out of the soil of your own works. You cannot spin peace out of your own heart, as a spider spins her web. You must go to the Lord for peace and there is only one way in which you can go to Him—Jesus says, "I am the way." Go to the Father through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit! Trust the Father, rest in Christ, yield to the Holy Spirit and you shall have the peace that God gives!

O dear Hearers, if you could come and talk with me and I could comfort you, it might be of no use to you. If you could go to some full-fledged priest and he could absolve you, it might only be one of the darkest of delusions. But if you go to God and get His peace, that peace is solid and abiding—it is founded on eternal Truth! It is guaranteed by the God of holiness! It is judged to be sound by the Judge of all the earth! Here we have peace from lips that cannot lie, peace from a heart which cannot change, peace through the blood which has made a full atonement! I pray you, seek this peace and make sure of it. You see how spiritual it is, for you must come to God for it and you can only come to Him in spirit and in truth. You see how little it depends upon externals, upon chapel-going, or church-going—it is only by a *spiritual* approach to God that this blessing can be obtained. Come to the Lord and Giver of peace. Come to Jesus who is our peace! Oh, may the Divine Spirit lead you to come to Jesus now, at this moment, for in coming to Him you shall receive rest! Plead now this promise—"The Lord will bless His people with peace."

This peace comes only to His own people—"The Lord will bless His people with peace." He will never bless those with peace who remain in rebellion against Him. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Say, are you one of His people? Are you loyal to the Prince Emmanuel? If so, the Lord has bought you with His precious blood and you are His. The Lord will bless His blood-bought people and cause them to be His by power as well as by price. Do you rest in Christ alone? Is the atoning Sacrifice your soul's great hope? If so, you have been begotten again unto that lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the Lord will bless with peace His people who have risen with His own dear Son.

If you have the faith of God's elect, you are one of His elect! If you have done with self, the world and sin as the main desire of your heart, you are among His people. If you yield yourself to God to live unto Him, then you are one of His people and the Lord will bless you with peace. The more closely you cling to the Lord Jesus, the more clear and full will your peace

be. Do you belong to Him so that He can call you one of His people? "Well," says one, "I belong to the Church." That is a secondary matter. Many are in the visible Church who do not belong to God. "Oh, but I belong to such-and-such a place of worship well known for spiritual life." So you may, and yet not be one of the Lord's people, for tares grow among the best of the wheat.

Say, O Heart, do you trust alone to Jesus the Savior? Have you given yourself over to the Lord, to be your own no longer? Are you affianced unto Christ, your all to be His and yourself to be His bride? Then the Lord will bless you with abundance of peace. Here is a practical statement, see if it is not true. Notice, again, that this is *peace in the time of tempest* and peace after storm. Read over again this 29th Psalm—it is the Psalm of the thunderstorm. Hear how the voice of God thunders through it from end to end. The great cedars of Lebanon are split, the mountains are moved, the wilderness of Kadesh is shaken and the trembling hinds drop their young in their fright! The whole earth rocks beneath the tremendous Voice and is lit up with flames of the lightning of the Lord. Yet the Psalm ends with those gracious words—"The Lord will bless His people with peace."

Some of us enjoy our greatest peace when the Lord is abroad and the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. We feel a rapture as we perceive that our Father is very near and is speaking so that we hear His voice. In spiritual storms that voice is our comfort and after the tempests are over the Lord speaks a sweet hush to the hearts of His children. He allays our fears while He whispers, "It is I, be not afraid." Brothers and Sisters, you will have many a tempest between here and Heaven, but before the tempest, through the tempest and after the tempest, "The Lord will bless His people with peace."

As I turned my text over last night, it seemed to me to be a very wonderful passage. It is a sort of revolving text, like a gun which is always loaded and may be perpetually discharged. It is a flowing fountain, ever beginning with fresh streams. "The Lord will bless His people with peace." We have had peace with God those 40 years, yes, but we have a promise of peace for *today*. Suppose we should live another 40 years? We shall still have the same promise—"The Lord will bless His people with peace." I should like an everlasting check from some millionaire running thus—"So often as this check is presented at the bank, pay the bearer what he asks." Few persons possessed of such a document would fail to put in an appearance at the bank! We should be regular visitors!

O you children of God, you have such a promissory note in the text before you! The Lord has endless, boundless peace within Himself and when you have long enjoyed peace with Him you may go to Him again and say, "Lord, renew my peace. I am troubled, but You are unmoved—bless me with Your peace." When you are rich and find that riches bring cares, bring these to your God who will bless His people with peace. When you are poor, do the same. When children are born to you and with them come family cares, take the new burden to the Lord, for He gives peace. And if the children die and you weep as your young shoots are cut off, still

turn to the Lord and believe that He will bless you with peace. If you grow sick, yourself, and the tokens of a deadly disease appear upon you, still be calm, for He will bless you with peace. When you must go upstairs and lie down upon your last bed to rise no more, then, even then, the Lord will bless you with His ever-living peace! And when you wake up at the sound of the last trump the Lord will still keep you in perfect peace.

“There remained a rest for the people of God.” This is always the heritage of His believing ones—“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Whatever shall befall our race according to the dark page of prophecy. Whatever of terror shall break forth throughout the endless ages of the yet-to-be, the Lord will bless His people with peace! Take this Truth of God home to your heart and live upon it and you may dwell perpetually in the Presence of the King. I have done when I have said the following words. First, let us enquire whether we are resting on a false or a true foundation. Am I addressing a stranger to this Tabernacle, here today for the first time? I would not wish to do you anything but real good and yet I should like to search you to the foundation.

Is your hope built on a false peace? Then I would like to overthrow it and leave no stone upon another. Refuges of lies must be swept away before refuges of Divine Grace will be sought. If you take shelter behind “a bowing wall and a tottering fence,” I would desire to find a hand towards sending it over, for it will go before long, and it had better go while you can seek another shelter. You will never be on a right foundation until you are off the wrong one. As long as your happiness and peace are false and yet are fair to look upon, you will not seek true peace! Therefore, I would break the idols to shivers! Will you look to this? Will you give over being too secure? May I ask you to accept nothing as a ground of comfort which is not true?

Do not believe in a security which is only of temporary value. Believe eternal Truth and seek eternal life. Do not wrap yourself about with a comfort which you dare not prove and test. If you dare not examine it to the very bottom, away with it! If it will not bear the closest search, leave it to those who can afford to run great risks, for you cannot. If you dare not think about your state, you can be sure that there is something wrong with it. Walk in the light of God and have no fellowship with unfruitful hopes which are works of darkness. May I entreat you, when you have laid these things to heart, to seek at once to have close dealings with God? Do not say, “I will begin searching the Scriptures.” That is a good thing in itself, but if you rest in Scripture reading and do not go to *God Himself*, your Bible may be made a stumbling stone for your soul!

Do not say, “I shall attend more religious services.” This, also, may be well, but religious services will ruin you if you put them in the place of personal dealings with God! Your living soul has personally to do with the living God. Come to HIM this morning if you have never been before. Come at once. Delay no more! Do you shrink? Do you want an introduction? Do you need a friend to go with you to Heaven’s high court? Behold, the Son of God waits to be your Mediator and Intercessor! Come to the Fa-

ther through the Son and you will in no wise be cast out! Get a hope, O my Hearer, which will last you to the last! Get a hope which you can die with! I charge you by the living God and by Christ Jesus, who will surely come to judge the quick and dead, get a confidence which will endure the test of death, judgment, and eternity!

Seek to have “boldness in the day of judgment.” No small matter *this*. Make sure work for the day of trial. How can you be sure unless your trust is built upon the Foundation which God Himself has laid? Behold the All-Sufficient Sacrifice! Rest in the Divine Expiation, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. “But can we be sure?” cries one. There are thousands of us who possess the assurance of a child-like faith. We could not rest a minute if we were not sure in such a matter! I could not be content with a salvation which did not give me certainty in my soul, for sin is real and I must have real pardon—my trouble of heart is real and I must have real confidence in a Savior! My inward sinfulness is real and I must have a real new birth unto holiness.

In the day when I took hold of Christ Jesus my Lord, I found in Him such real peace that I knew and was persuaded that He is able to save. If any call me a dogmatist, I plead guilty to the charge. I must dogmatize when I am sure! I cannot live without being certain! Doubt in this matter is death! I accept my Lord’s Atonement! I rest on it and I find peace to my soul. “If,” “but,” “perhaps”—those are daggers in my heart! Where is the comfort to any soul in what he does not know to be true? The sap and substance of consolation lie in the certainty of the truth believed. If you are not sure, never rest till you are! Once know assuredly that God is good to Israel and that He will bless His people with peace and then go on to enjoy as much of that peace as your soul can hold!

Sing both by day and by night. “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice.” As for me, I know whom I have believed and the resolve of my soul is to magnify my Lord, world without end—

***“Down from above the blessed Dove
Is come into my breast
To witness Your eternal love,
And give my spirit rest.
My God, I’ll praise You while I live,
And praise You when I die,
And praise You when I rise again,
And to eternity.”***

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 73, 29.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—734, 715, 726.**

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“THE STRONG ONE DRIVEN OUT BY A STRONGER ONE” NO. 613

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 5, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils. He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathers not with Me scatters. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest. And finding none, he says, I will return unto my house from where I came out. And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished. Then goes he and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”
Luke 11:21-26.*

THE Lord Jesus is ever in direct and open antagonism to Satan. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed,” has been most emphatically fulfilled. Christ has never tolerated any truce or parley with the Evil One and never will. Whenever Christ strikes a blow at Satan, it is a *real* blow and not a feint and is meant to destroy, not to amend. He never asks Satan’s help to subdue Satan—never fights evil by evil—He uses the weapons which are not carnal, but mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. And He uses them ever with this intention—not to dally with Satan, but to cut up his empire, root and branch. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

There is a deadly, implacable, infinite, eternal hatred between Christ and that sin of which Satan is the representative. No compromise can ever be thought of, no quarter will ever be allowed. The Lord will never turn from His purpose to bruise Satan under His feet and to cast him into the lake of fire. Therefore there was nothing more libelous than the assertion of certain Pharisees in Christ’s day that He cast out devils through Beelzebub, the Prince of devils! O base suggestion that the Lord of Glory was in league with the dunghill deity, the Prince of devils! He never fights the Lord’s battles with the devil’s weapons! He has not the most distant affiance with evil! It is not possible that He should be the friend and patron of that spirit of unhallowed charity which for the sake of peace would give tolerance to error.

No, Christ never allies Himself with Satan to advance the kingdom of God. He comes against him as a strong man armed, determined to fight

until He wins a decisive victory. We shall observe this more clearly as we open up the passage now before us. Our text presents us with a picture of man in his sinful state. Then it gives us a representation of man for a time reformed, but eventually subjected to the worst forms of evil. And it also shows us a graphic portrait of man, entirely conquered by the power of the great Redeemer.

I. First, WE SHALL ATTENTIVELY LOOK AT THE PICTURE OF MAN AS HE IS IN A STATE OF NATURE. “When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace.” Observe that although man’s heart was intended to be the Throne of God, it has now become the palace of Satan—whereas Adam was the obedient servant of the Most High and his body was a temple for God’s love, now, through the Fall, we have become the servants of sin and our bodies have become the workshops of Satan.

“The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.” This spirit is called a strong man and truly so he is—who can stand against him? Like the monster in the book of Job, we may say of him, “Lay your hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. Behold, the hope of him is in vain! Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?” Though a thousand Philistines are smitten hip and thigh with a great slaughter by Samson, the avenger of Israel, yet the strong man falls a victim to the stronger fiend.

That mighty hero, though he could rend a lion, was no match for the lion of the pit who overcame him to his shame and hurt. Solomon, the wisest of men, was outwitted by Satan, for his heart was led astray by the arch-tempter. Even he who was the sire of men was overthrown by this dread enemy in the early days of innocence and happiness. He is so strong that if all of us should combine against him, Satan would laugh at us as Leviathan laughs at the shaking of the spear. Strong he is, not simply as possessing force, but in the sense of cunning. He knows how to adapt his temptations to our besetting sins. He discovers fitting times in which to assail us. He understands that there is a time when kings go forth to battle and he is ever ready for the fight.

He is a good swordsman. He knows every cut and guard and thrust and parry and he knows our weak places and the joints in our harness. Christians who have ever stood foot to foot with him will give him credit for this—that he is strong, indeed. And unbelievers who have at any time sought to resist his power in their own strength have soon been made to feel that their strength was perfect weakness. He is a strong man with a vengeance! Oh, Christian, well is it for you that there is a stronger than he—the might of Satan would crush you to your ruin if it were not that the almightiness of Christ comes in to the rescue!

It is said of this strong man, moreover, that he is *armed*. Truly the Prince of the power of the air is never without weapons. His principal weapon is the lie. The sword of God’s Spirit is the Truth, but the sword of the evil spirit is the lie. It was by falsehood that he overthrew our race at first and despoiled us of perfection. And it is with continued falsehoods, of which the lie is both the forger and the user, that he continues to destroy the souls of men. He will tell the sinner sometimes that he is too young to

think of death and of eternal things. And when this weapon fails he will assure him that it is too late, for the day of Grace is over—

***“He feeds our hopes with airy dreams.
Or kills with slavish fear.
And holds us still in wide extremes,
Presumption, or despair.
Now he persuades,
‘How easy ‘tis
To walk the road to Heaven!’
Then he swells our sins and cries,
‘They cannot be forgiven!’
Thus he supports his cruel throne
By mischief and deceit,
And drags the sons of Adam down
To darkness and the pit.”***

He has a way of making the worse appear the better reason. He can put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—make men believe that it is to their own advantage to do that which is causing their everlasting ruin. He can make men carry coals of fire in their bosoms and dream that they shall not be burned. He can make them dance upon the brink of Hell as though they were on the verge of Heaven. Alas, fools that we are, how readily do his lies prevail against us! Then he has the well-feathered arrows of pleasure. The strong man is armed with the lusts of the flesh. Dainty dalliances he offers to some—overflowing cups that sparkle to the eye he presents for others! Glittering wealth he gives to the avaricious and the trump of fame and all the smoke of applause he promises to others.

Weapons? Why, I cannot attempt to mention all the war-like implements of the Prince of the power of the air. He can hurl fiery darts as thick as hail. His breath kindles coals and a flame goes out of his mouth. When he raises himself up the mighty are afraid. Bunyan’s half-inspired imagination pictured him thus—“Now the monster was hideous to behold. He was clothed with scales like a fish (and they are his pride). He had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion.”

He is well armed at every point and he knows how to arm his slave—the sinner, too. He will plate him from head to foot with mail and put weapons into his hands against which the puny might of Gospel ministers and of human conscience can never prevail. Then we are told that he wears armor—for we read that the stronger warrior, “takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted.” Certain it is the evil spirit is well informed in that which is proof against all terrestrial steel. Prejudice, ignorance, evil education—all these are chain-armor with which Satan girds himself.

A hard heart is the impenetrable breastplate which this evil spirit wears! A seared conscience becomes to him like leaves of brass. Living in sin is a helmet of iron. We know some who, through a long period of years, have harbored within them an evil spirit which seems to have no joints in its harness at all. It were as easy to draw blood from granite as to reach some men’s hearts—the demon who possesses them is not to be wounded by our artillery. “His scales are his pride, shut up together as

with a closed seal. His heart is as firm as a stone—yes, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone.”

We have preached at such men, prayed for them, spoken sharply, spoken tenderly, assaulted them from every quarter, wooed them with love Divine, thundered at them with the judgments of God and with the terrors of His Law. But the strong man is so completely mailed that as yet we have made no impression upon him whatever. When we have struck him with such a blow that he seemed to reel, yet the armor has been thick enough to save him from a deadly wound. “The sword of him that strikes at him cannot hold, nor the spear, the dart, nor the coat of mail. He thinks of iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee—stones from slingshots are turned by him into stubble. The flakes of his flesh are joined together—they are firm in themselves. They cannot be moved.”

Notice, again, this strong man—besides being armed and plated with armor—is very watchful. It is said, “he keeps his palace.” He keeps it like the faithful warden who with ceaseless tramp and sleepless eye holds watch upon the castle wall. He does not put on the armor to sleep in it. You may find sleeping saints, but never sleeping devils. The restless activity of fallen angels is something awful to contemplate—“they rest not day nor night”—but like ravenous lions go about seeking their prey. When Satan enters a man’s heart, he takes care to watch whenever there is the slightest chance of the Truth of God coming in and driving him from his throne.

He puts a double guard on the person when he is under the sound of the Word. He will let you go to those places where the minister never attacks the conscience and never cries aloud against sin—for he feels that there his kingdom is not assailed. But wherever the true Gospel is preached and preached with Divine power, hosts of devils are sure to gather, “Because,” says Satan, “there is danger to my dominions now. I will set a double garrison to protect my citadel against the attack of God’s Truth.”

Beware, O saints, when the Lord, the Holy Spirit, is working, for the great enemy is certain to be doubly active at such seasons! He keeps his goods. How would I delight to catch him unawares, but this leviathan is not to be taken with a hook, nor is his jaw to be bored through with a thorn. We may drop a warning to the sinner here, we may speak the passing word of exhortation there, we may stand in the corner of yonder street and declare salvation, or we may occupy the pulpit in Jesus’ name—we may use all the means which ingenuity can devise—but Satan is always as prompt as we are, having his unclean birds always ready to carry away any seeds that may be scattered upon the soil.

While men sleeps he sows tares, but he never slumbers himself. As Hugh Latimer used to say, he is the most industrious bishop in England. Other bishops may neglect their dioceses, but Satan, never! He is always making visitations and going from place to place upon his evil business to watch after his black sheep. The sinner’s heart must be carried away by storm if it is ever taken, for there is no hope of taking the Evil One by sur-

prise. We have in the text a good reason given why Satan thus watches over the man whose heart he inhabits—because he considers the man to be his property—“he keeps his goods.”

They are not his in justice. Whatever goods there are in the house of manhood must belong to God who built the house and who intended to tenant it. But Satan makes up a claim and calls everything in the man *his* property. The man’s memory he makes a storehouse for ill words and bad songs. The man’s judgment he perverts so that the scales and weights are false. The man’s love he sets on fire with coals of Hell and his imagination he dazzles with foul delusions. All the powers of the man, Satan claims—“I will have his mouth—he shall swear for me! I will have his eyes—they shall wander after vanity! I will have his feet—they shall take him to the place of sinful amusement! I will have his hands—he shall work for me and be my slave!”

The heart is hard and the conscience stupefied and therefore—

***“Sin like a raging tyrant sits
Upon his flinty throne,
And all that’s good is crushed to death,
Beneath this heart of stone.”***

He claims the *whole* man to be his own. And it is amazing how readily his claim is allowed! Men fancy music in the chains with which Satan binds them and hug the fetters which he hangs upon them! Men cheerfully obey the Prince of Darkness and yet it is hard, ah, hard indeed, to bring the followers of Jesus to yield up their members in full obedience to the sweet Prince of Peace.

Nor is this all! Satan not only claims possession, but he claims sovereignty! You perceive it is said, “his palace.” A palace is usually the abode of a *king*—so Satan considers himself a great king when he dwells in the human heart. Divine Sovereignty has ever been the great target of Satan’s attacks, because he aspires to set up his own infernal sovereignty. His sway over men is imperial and his government despotic. When he takes possession of the human heart he says to his servant, “Go,” and he goes. And to his captive, “Do this,” and he does it. He will not be regulated and ruled by reason, but he will have his own will obeyed in all its madness of rebellion. His declaration is made in apish imitation of the great God. “Cannot I do as I will with my own.” “I am, and there is none beside me.”

To what extravagances of sovereignty will not Satan go with men! He will allure them to drunkenness—nor is that enough—he will hurry them into delirium tremens. He will drive them out of their senses and urge them to lay violent hands upon themselves—no, he often covers his victims with their own blood shed by themselves! An old preacher took for his text, “When the devils entered into the swine the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea and perished in the waters.” One of his points was, “The devil drives his hogs to a bad market.” And there is much truth in the rough assertion—when he gets into men there is no telling where they will go.

Another point was, “They run hard whom the devil drives.” Unto what extremities of sottish folly, cruelty and self-injury will not men go when once Satan gains possession of them? Like Baal’s priests they are cutting

themselves with knives! Like the Gadarene demoniac dwelling in tombs and wearing no clothes! Like the child in the Gospel sometimes cast into the fire and then into the water—such are men when the devil rules them. No king could ever walk in his palace and say, “All this is mine,” with such pride as Satan when he walks through the heart of man! He can boastingly cry, “This man will fall down and worship me! He will sacrifice his comfort, his very life to me! He will drain my cups and not refuse the poison in the dregs! He will go upon my service and not ask me whether death is to be the everlasting wages!”

Oh, that God had such willing servants, such joyful martyrs as those who obey the devil! You may see the devil’s martyrs in every gin palace—ragged, haggard and diseased. You may see them in the early morning shivering till the time shall come when they shall drink another dram of Hell-draught. You may see them in every moonlit street, waiting in the cold, damp mists of night to be offered up upon his altar to prostitute both body and soul to his unhallowed worship. You may see them in every hospital rotting into their graves—their bones full of disease and their very blood polluted with a filthy taint of loathsomeness. You may see them, I say, all eager to sacrifice soul and body as a whole burnt offering to be wholly consumed by the infernal fire—that they may serve Satan with their whole heart! Oh, that we were half as faithful to God as the devil’s servants are to him. The heart is well called Apollyon’s palace, for he reigns with absolute dominion there. O eternal God, drive him out!

I must not leave this picture until you have observed that it is said, “while he keeps his palace, his goods are in peace.” This is the most fearful sign in the whole affair. The man is quite undisturbed—conscience does not prick him—why should it? God does not alarm him—who is God, that he should obey His voice? Thoughts of Hell never disturb him. “Peace, peace,” says Satan, “it is well with you now—leave these bugbears to those who believe in them.” The wrath of God, which abides on him, never frets him! When men are mortifying, they feel no pain in the mortified member. Men who are stupefied with opium may be naked but they are not cold. They may have empty stomachs, but they are not hungry. They may be diseased in body but they do not feel the torment—they are drunk and know not their misery!

And so it is with the most of carnal men—nothing awakens them. The sermon is listened to with a remark upon the style of the speaker, but the Truth of God is neglected. A judgment comes—the funeral bell tolls—a tear or two may be shed but they are soon wiped away and the man goes his way, like “the dog to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” “I know nothing of what it is to be troubled in conscience,” says one. “I am quite easy—I am as jolly as the days are long.” I dare say you are—I wish you were not! If you were dissatisfied with your old master, there would be some hope that you would leave him and return to your Father’s house—but so long as you are content with the world and with the Prince who governs it, you will go on, on, on, to your own destruction!

Satan does with men as the sirens are fabled to have done with mariners. They sat upon the rocks and chanted songs so harmonious that no mariner, who once heard the sound, could ever resist the impulse to steer his ship towards them. So each vessel voyaging that way was wrecked upon the rocks through their disastrous, but enchanting strain. Such is Satan’s voice—he lures to eternal ruin with the sweetest strains of infernal minstrelsy. He can play sonatas so inimitably enchanting in their harmony that it is not in poor mortal flesh and blood, unaided by the Spirit of God, to stand against their thrilling witchery.

This is the melodious note—“Peace, peace, peace, peace.” O Sinner, if you were not a fool you would stop up your ears to this treacherous lie! Forever blessed is that Sovereign Grace which has saved us from the enchantments of this destroyer! The tenant of the heart is called “an unclean spirit.” He is unclean, notwithstanding all the peace he gives you. I pray you not flatter yourself to the contrary. He is ever the same, unchanged, unchangeable. Perhaps you tell me that you are not subject to any uncleanness. You say you do not drink nor swear, nor lie. But remember, it is unclean to be unreconciled to God! It is unclean to be a stranger to Christ! It is unclean to disobey God who created you. And above all it is unclean not to love the Redeemer whose most precious blood has delivered His people from their sins. At his best the devil is no better than a devil and the heart in which he dwells is no better than a den for a traitor to hide in.

Thus I have given you an outline interpretation of the text—it would need much time to fill up and bring out the whole of its meaning.

II. Now let us notice THE PARTIAL REFORMATION HERE DESCRIBED. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest. And finding none, he says, I will return unto my house from where I came out. And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished. Then goes he and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

Observe, then, that in the case before us the unclean spirit goes out of his own free will. He is not *turned* out—there is no conflict—the house still remains his own property for it is written at the end of the twenty-fourth verse, “I will return unto *my* house from where I came out.” He retires from his palace of his own free will, intending to return at his leisure or pleasure. There are some persons who appear to be converted who think they are so and therefore make a profession and are cheerfully received into the Christian Church because their outward life gives evidence of a very great and remarkable change.

I could now picture some who, to my great grief, come under my tearful observation. Some who were once with us, but have long since arrived at the last end which was “worse than the first.” When the unclean spirit goes out of a man he becomes quite different from what he used to be. Very likely the shop that was open on the Sunday is now shut up. He turns his footsteps to the place where God’s people meet for worship. He begins to pray, even sets up family prayer. He attends Prayer Meetings,

feels some sort of enjoyment in the excitement of religion. He goes where the saints go and to a great extent in life he acts as they act. The unclean spirit is fairly gone out of the man and he is another man—though not a *new creature* in Christ Jesus.

But I have said there was no struggle about it. It was suddenly that the spirit went out and the man jumped into religion. There was no repentance, no conviction, no struggling against depravity, no weeping before the Lord in prayer and no looking up to the Crucified Savior and reading pardon in His wounds. There was no agonizing struggle after holiness, no wrestling with evil—joy came suddenly and the man thought himself saved. The man was a sinner yesterday and he appears to be a saint today—nobody knows how. You talk to him about the work of the Spirit in his soul, convincing him of sin, breaking him with the hammer of the Law or by the power of the Cross, pounding him in pieces, compelling him to feel that his righteousness is filthy rags.

He does not understand you. The unclean spirit is gone out of the man and that is all. Why does the evil spirit leave a man for a time? Has he not some hellish purpose in view? Certainly he has! I think it is often because he feels if he does not go out he will be *driven* out, and he thinks that by giving way for a time he will satisfy the conscience till he gets it lulled to sleep faster than ever. Thus he will stoop to conquer, retreat to draw his opponent into an ill position. He will allow his throne to shake so that he may reestablish his dominion permanently. Moreover, he thinks that by letting the man indulge in a little religion for a time, and then turn aside from it he will make him permanently skeptical so that he will hold him fast by the iron chain of infidelity and drag him down to Hell with that hook in his jaws.

Now, after a time it appears that the evil spirit returned. He could find no rest for himself except in the hearts of the wicked and therefore he came back. There is no opposition to his entrance, the door is not locked—or if it is he has the key. He comes in—there is no tenant, no man in possession—no other proprietor. He looks round and cries, “Here is my house. I left it when I took my walks abroad and I have come back and here it is ready for me.” In due time the devil comes back to those persons who are reformed but not renewed—who are changed but not made new creatures in Christ Jesus.

But what does the devil see? First of all he sees the place to be empty. If it had been full he could not have entered again. If Jesus Christ had been at the door there would have been a very terrible struggle for a little time, but it would have ended in Satan being driven away in disgrace. But it is empty and therefore he quietly resumes his sway. The devil shouts his, “Halloa!” and there is an echo through every room, but no intruder starts up. “Is Christ here?” No answer. He goes outside and he looks at the lintel, for Christ’s mark is sure to be there if Jesus is within. “No mark of blood on the post. Christ is not here,” he says. “It is empty, I will make myself at home.” If Jesus had been there, though He had been hidden in a closet, yet when He came out He would claim possession and drive out the

traitor and say, "Be gone! This is no place for you. I have bought it with My blood and I mean to possess it forever."

But it is empty and so Satan fills it with stores of evil. The next thing the fiend notices is that it is swept—as one says, "Swept, but never washed." Sweeping takes away the loose dirt—washing takes away all the filth. O to be washed in Jesus' blood! Here is a man whose house is swept—the loose sins are gone. He is not a drunkard, there is a pledge over the mantelpiece. He is no longer lustful—he hates that sin—or says he does, which is as much as the devil wants him to do. The place is swept so tidy, so neat, you would not know him to be the same man as he used to be. And he himself is so proud to think he has got his house so clean and he stands up at the threshold as he meets the devil with a, "Good morning!"

And he says "I am not as other men are, I am neither an extortioner, nor a drunkard! Nor even as that Christian over yonder who is not half what he ought to be—nor a fraction as consistent as I am." And as the devil looks round and finds the place swept, he finds it garnished, too. The man has bought some pictures—he has not real faith, but he has a fine picture of it over the fireplace. He has no love to the Cross of Christ, but he has a very handsome crucifix hanging on the wall. He has no Divine Grace of the Spirit, but he has a fine vase of flowers on the table—of other people's experiences and other people's graces—and they smell tolerably sweet. There is a fireplace without fire, but there is one of the most handsome ornaments for the fireplace that was ever bought for money.

It is swept and garnished. Oh, the garnished people I have met!—garnished, sometimes, with almsgiving—at other times with long-winded prayers! Garnished with the profession of zeal and the pretense of reverence! You will find a zealous Protestant—oh, so zealous—who would go into fits at the sign of a cross and yet will commit fornication! Do you think such a case impossible? I know such a case. You find persons shocked because another boiled a teakettle on a Sunday, or insured his life, or assisted at a bazaar, who will cheat and draw the eye teeth out of an orphan child, if they could get a sixpence by it! They are swept and garnished.

Walk in, Ladies and Gentlemen! Did you ever see a house so delightfully furnished as this? How elegant—how tasteful! Just so—but men may be damned tastefully and go to Hell respectably just as well as they can in a vulgar and debauched fashion! You see the whole, how it ends. Satan is very pleased to find the place as it is, and thinking that this is too good for one, he goes abroad and asks in seven of his friends worse than himself—for some devils are worse than others. And they come in and hold high holiday in the man's soul. What do we mean by that? Why, we mean that such persons do really become more wicked, more hardened, more ungodly than they were before they professed to be Christians!

It is really a shocking thing that if you want to find a thoroughbred, out-and-out transgressor, you must find one who once made a profession of religion! When Satan wants a servant who will do anything and ask no questions—who will swallow camels as well as gnats—he finds one that

once stood high in the Christian Church. If he can find one who used to sing Christ’s song, that is the throat to sing the devil’s song! If he can find one who once sat at the sacramental table, he will say, “This is the man to sit at the head of my banquets and conduct my feasts for me.” These renegades, these traitors, these Ahithophels, these Judases, these men who have known the Truth of God and have been once, in a manner, enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gifts and the powers of the world to come in a certain sense—and yet fall away—these become like salt that is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill—even men cast them out!

They are trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots—wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Have I any such in this place, any who were once swept and garnished, into whom Satan has returned? My Friend, from my soul I pity you! What will be your portion? No common Hell will be yours! Remember, there are reserved places in the pit and those are reserved for such as you are. Read the letter of Jude and you will there find that there are some for whom are reserved, “the blackness of darkness forever.”

That is your case and this will be the aggravation of it—you sat at the Master’s Table and you must now drink the cup of fire! You preached in Christ’s courts but you must now give forth a dolorous sermon concerning your own apostasy! You sang God’s praises once—you must now howl out the Miserere of the damned! You had a glimpse of Heaven—you shall now have a dread insight into Hell! You talked about eternal life, you shall now feel eternal death—plunged in waves of flame, never to rise again, never to hope, never even to die, for to die were bliss. How dreadful shall your case be! In this world seven times worse than before, but in the world to come, damned, damned with an awful emphasis which common sinners cannot know. I pray God that these truths may make us watchful, make us careful lest we be found hypocrites or self-deceived professors.

III. I turn to a much more pleasing duty, which is TO TAKE UP THE SAVIOR’S DESCRIPTION OF TRUE CONVERSION. “When a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted and divides his spoils.” Now, observe here is a “stronger than he.” This is not the man, himself. The man is the house—the man is not so strong as the devil—who is this? This is Jesus Christ who comes by His Spirit into the heart of man! The Spirit of God is vastly superior to Satanic power, as much as the infinite Creator Himself must ever be superior to the finite creature.

He who made Satan knows how to lay at him with His sword so as to cut Rahab and wound the dragon. It is not, you see, the result of the man’s free will—it is not the result of the devil’s free will, either. It is the result of a stronger than he coming into the soul. As soon as the stronger than he comes in there is a conflict. “He comes upon him,” that is to say, He attacks him!

And ah, how vehemently does Christ lay to at the great enemy of souls! One sword-cut cuts away the plume of pride! Another blow takes away the comfort of sin and another destroys the reigning power of sin. What a

struggle there often is when man is worked upon by the Holy Spirit! With all the power of prayer, with all the might of faith the poor soul struggles against Satan! Christ struggles with all the power of His blood and the blessings of His Spirit and yet we know in some cases the arch fiend has been allowed to hold out for days, for weeks, even for months because of the unbelief of the poor soul. “He could not do many mighty works there,” it is written, “because of their unbelief.”

This fight will sometimes grow so hot that the soul will choose strangling rather than life and yet the result of it is never doubtful! For notice in the text that the stronger than he overcomes at the last. Oh, well do I remember when the stronger than Satan overcame in my soul! Five years, more or less, was there a conflict. Sometimes my proud heart would not yield to Sovereign Grace. At another time a willful spirit would go astray after vanity. But at last, when Jesus showed His wounds and said to me, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” I could hold out no longer and the evil spirit could resist no more!

The wounds of Christ had wounded the old dragon and the death of the Savior became the death of sin. Oh, there are many of us who know what it is to be conquered, to be subdued by a power other than our own! And in every case there must be this experience, or there is no real life. Dear Hearer, if your religion grew in your own garden it is a weed and good for nothing! If your grace springs up as the result of your own willing, your own acting, and your own seeking, it is good for nothing! Christ must seek you! It must be a power far above you—mightier than you, far stronger than you and the devil put together—which must deliver you from your sins.

As soon as ever the stronger man has conquered the enemy, what does He do? He takes the sword of rebellion, snaps it across His knee and pulls the armor from the back of the unclean spirit. Prejudice, ignorance, hard-heartedness—all these are pulled off the old enemy. I think I see him—I think I see the Savior stripping him to his shame and ejecting him from the heart with abhorrence. There, let him go among the dry places and again seek rest and find none. Happy day! Happy day for the palace which he once defiled when he is cast out and cast out forever!

Christ Jesus then proceeds to divide the spoil. “There is the man’s heart, I will take that,” says He. “That shall be a jewel in My crown. The man’s love I will set as a jewel upon My arm forever. His memory, his judgment, his power of thought, utterance and working—these are all Mine,” says Christ. He begins to divide the spoil. He puts the broad arrow of the King upon every room in the house, upon every piece of furniture. The garnishing He pulls out, “I will adorn it far better than this,” He says. “There shall be no *pictures* of faith, but faith. There shall be no ornament in yonder grate except the ornament of the glowing fire of fervid zeal. There shall be no borrowed flowers, but I will train round this window the sweet roses and jasmine of love and peace of mind.

“I will wash what was only swept, with My blood. I will make it white and sweet and clean. And I will strike the lintel and the two side posts with the hyssop and with the blood mark—and then the destroying angel,

when he sweeps by, shall sheathe his sword—and the black fiend, when he would enter, shall see the mark there and go back trembling to his accursed den.”

This is conversion, the other was only conviction! This is change of heart, the other was only change of life. I do trust, if you have been content with the former, you will now bestir yourselves and never be satisfied without the latter—

**“O Sovereign Grace, my heart subdue,
I would be led in triumph, too.
Drive the old dragon from his seat,
With all his hellish crew.”**

Sinner, cry to the stronger than you are to come and help you. You groan under your slavery—I am thankful for it! Cry to the Great Deliverer! He will come! He will come! Is there a conflict going on in you? Remember *faith* gets the victory. Look to Jesus—look to Jesus and the battle is won! Cast your poor spirit upon Jesus. Now burn that broom—it is of no use to go on sweeping! You need *washing*—washing with *blood*! Come, now, spare that money of yours with which you are going to buy garnishing—they are all rubbish! Buy no more. I counsel you buy of Him gold tried in the fire.

Come to His precious blood and be made really clean. Your Church-goings, your Chapel-goings, your prayers, your almsgivings, your fasting, your feelings, your good works are all nothing—so much dross and dung—if you try to sweep and garnish your house with them. Cast them all away! Fly from your good works as you would from your bad ones! Do not expect to be saved by anything that you can feel that is good any more than you would expect to be saved by anything that you feel that is bad—

**“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.”**

My Lord Jesus, if You are passing by, traveling in the greatness of Your strength, come and show Your prowess! Turn aside, You heavenly Samson and rend the lion in this vineyard! If You have dipped Your robes in the blood of Your foes, come dye them all again with the blood of my cruel sins! If You have trod the wine press of Jehovah’s wrath and crushed Your enemies, here is another of the accursed crew! Come and drag him out and crush him! Here is an Agag in my heart, come and hew him in pieces! Here is a dragon in my spirit, break, O break, his head and set me free from my old state of sin! Deliver me from my fierce enemy and unto You shall be the praise, forever and ever. Amen.

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BELIEVERS AS BLESSED AS THE BLESSED VIRGIN NO. 1920

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And it came to pass, as He spoke those things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said to Him, Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts which nursed You. But He said, More than that, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!”
Luke 11:27, 28.*

You do not wonder that this enthusiastic woman lifted up her voice in admiration of our Lord. I sometimes wonder when the Gospel is preached—whose message is so sweet, so charming, so enchanting—that we do not more often observe earnest persons breaking the cold rules of propriety and uttering exclamations of delight. Few are the hosannas of the multitude today. Is the blood of the world growing colder as the ages tell upon it? Perhaps our western constitution is too cool and self-contained to allow us to copy the demonstrative manners of the East. Assuredly this woman is not to be blamed, but to be commended for pouring out her heart's love in honor of the Lord! The wonder is not that she spoke as she did, but that men who hear the teaching of Jesus do not more often speak in His praise! Of our blessed Lord, His enemies said, “Never man spoke like this Man.” His very tone was melody and His language was the Truth of God set to music! The doctrines which He taught were more than golden—they were light to the head and joy to the heart. He revealed the inmost heart of God and taught as never Prophet or sage had taught before. Oh, “certain woman of the company,” though we do not know your name and cannot guess at your history, we are in harmony with your outburst of affection! We thank you for giving utterance to that feeling of delight and admiration with which we are filled. We also cry unto the Lord with you—“Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts which nursed You.”

This earnest woman did not mean, in the first place, to praise Christ's *mother*. I do not know that she had even seen Mary, or that she would have entered into her mind, apart from her matchless Son. It is often the way in the East—if they want to insult a man, they speak vilely of his mother and, on the other hand—if they wish to honor him, they laud his mother to the skies! Yet they may have neither dislike nor esteem for the mother—they only reach the son through her. It was while Jesus was

preaching that this cry was raised—"It came to pass, as He spoke these things." It was because He spoke so well that this woman could not withhold her words of praise. After her fashion as a woman and, as an Eastern woman, she praised the Lord Jesus by extolling His mother.

But lest such an expression, commendable enough in itself, should in later years lend any kind of countenance to that Mariolatry which our Savior foresaw, Jesus said, "Yes, she is doubtless blessed, but still more blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!" Our Divine Savior, with all the love of His Manhood towards His mother, acted towards her in such a way as forever to forbid any degree of religious worship being rendered to her. He gave no countenance to the superstitious titles of, "Our Lady," "Mother of God," and so forth, but, on the contrary, He taught that the nearest fleshly relationship to Himself was as nothing compared with *spiritual union to Him*. Remember how it is written—"Then one said to Him, Behold, your mother and your brethren stand outside, desiring to speak with you. But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother? And who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand towards His disciples and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whoever shall do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."

Worship is due *only* to the Lord and, if rendered to the most blessed among women, it is idolatrous! This superstition robs God of His Glory and ensnares the souls of men! I come back to what I said before—the woman's speech, though it needed to be guarded against erroneous use, was a true speech and a holy speech.

Moreover, to do this woman further justice, it was a brave speech for her to make, for the Savior had been confronted by the Pharisees and scribes, those teachers of the period, those persons of authority. They had spoken ill words of Him—they had even dared to say that He cast out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils! When He had answered them discreetly, this woman did, as it were, proclaim His victory. She lifted up her voice, so shrill, so loud, so passionate in its eagerness that it seemed to cut through all other sounds and reached the ears of the Preacher, the ears of all the multitude and, of course, the ears of the proud revengeful priests! She cared not—she felt that she must declare her feelings and she did so right boldly. Oh, if there is a time when not only enthusiasm suggests, but when affection *compels* us to speak for Christ, it is when others are opposing His name and cause! If they dare to say evil things against our glorious Lord, let us lift our voices, feeble though they are, and bless His sacred name! Though we may, as a rule, be silent and shun all public observation, yet when occasion requires, let us be loud and vehement in the defense of His righteous cause!

"A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice." Let us determine to be heard on our Lord's behalf, for surely if we should hold our speech, the very stones would cry out! Do they curse Him? He is blessed, yes, and He shall be blessed! Do they dare to deny the eternal Truth of God which He proclaimed? He is the same yesterday, today and forever—let Him be forever blessed. We cannot be silent when He is decried. We must and will

declare, in the teeth of His adversaries, that, "He has done all things well." O woman, your courage deserves our praise and our imitation! We will go to school to you to learn your bravery. Oh that we had a fire in our hearts burning as it did in yours—then would it consume the bonds which hold our stammering tongues! Let us believe that when the current of thought around us runs in a wrong direction, such is the power of enthusiasm that one earnest, impassioned voice may turn it and our Lord may yet win Glory where now He is despised!

Our Lord, when He was thus interrupted by this woman's hearty testimony, did not reprove her speech, but He improved it. Thus possibly He did gently rebuke her, but it was done so delicately that I scarcely dare concede that it was a rebuke at all. Our Lord averted the wrong interpretation which might be put upon it and then made an addition to it, but He did not at all deny that she had spoken the truth, for He said, "Yes," before He added, "rather, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!" He did as good as say, "What you have said is certain, but yet there is a higher truth—she was blessed who bore Me—but more surely blessed, still, are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!" Notice the humility which hides in this language. He says not, "Blessed are those who hear My Word and keep it," though that would have been quite true. At the moment, our Lord was being praised and He, therefore, shrank out of sight. "As the fining pot for silver and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise." Many a man is taken off his balance when he is loudly extolled, but not so our humble Savior—then it was that He peculiarly shone forth as "meek and lowly in heart." The Word which He had preached He speaks of as His Father's Word and thus casts a veil over that very beauty which had caused the woman's rapture.

This morning I shall invite your attention, first, for a little time, to a *blessedness which is not to be denied*—blessed was that holy woman who bore the Savior. Secondly, in the text there is mention made of a *blessedness which is to be preferred*. When we have spoken upon this theme, we shall have something to say of *that blessedness as one which is now to be enjoyed*. My prayer shall be—and I hope yours will be the same—that we may enjoy that blessedness this very morning and throughout all the rest of our lives. I see the Redeemer's outstretched hands as He pronounces this benediction upon you at this hour—"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!" Divine Beatitude, be you fulfilled in each of us!

I. First, then, here is A BLESSEDNESS NOT TO BE DENIED. The Virgin Mother was blessed among women. I have sometimes thought that in our great eagerness to keep clear of anything like superstitious reverence of Mary, we have scarcely given to her, her due. We cannot blame the Reformers that when they forbid her spoken of as the, "Queen of Heaven," and worshipped with Ave Marias and so forth, they recoiled from such idolatry. Every enlightened mind ought to revolt from such superstition! "You shall have no other gods before Me" is a precept which puts only *God* into the place of worship and forbids us to worship any other person or thing. To God alone be worship! "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." But when we have borne this protest, it does not follow that Mary,

herself, suffers in our esteem—on the contrary, we revere the memory of this saintly woman! The angel made no mistake when he said, “Hail, you that are highly favored: blessed are you among women.” Nor was she in error when she said, “From this day on all generations shall call me blessed.” We call her blessed most heartily, for so she was!

The blessing which she received had been the desire of ages. The promise given at the Garden of Eden—“the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head”—had awakened the desires of all the godly women of Israel. They longed to behold this promised One, the great Messiah, the restorer of the race—and they desired children in the hope that among those children might appear the promised Seed. It is probable that mother Eve, herself, thought that her first-born was the promised Deliverer, for, according to some readings, she said, “I have gotten a man, the Lord.” Though she was greatly mistaken, yet still it showed her faith and her hope. All the families of Israel watched for the appearing of the Desire of all nations, the Glory of His people.

When at last the Gift was bestowed upon the humble virgin of Nazareth, who was of the house of David, *it came as a great favor.* Since angels rejoiced over that birth; since shepherds hastened to do homage at the manger and since wise men from the further East came with their gold, frankincense and myrrh to adore the new-born King, Mary cannot be thought of as being less than the most blessed among women. All the circumstances of the annunciation and all the homage paid to the Infant Savior show that her visitation from on high had made her greatly blessed. The angel, when he addressed her, said, “Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women.” We cannot suppose that since, in God’s eyes and in the eyes of His angelic messenger this was a great favor, we are to treat it as a light thing. The Savior’s, “yes,” was emphatic when the woman spoke of His mother as highly blessed.

She, herself, received this honor as a great blessing. She bowed herself humbly and said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to Your Word.” She believed the Word of the Lord—her spirit rejoiced in God, her Savior. She treasured up all the holy Words in her heart. It was no vain thing to her to have charge of the Infancy of our Lord. She felt it to be great blessedness to be placed in such a relation to the Holy Child Jesus. We can scarcely imagine the holy ecstasy, or the profound joy which filled her spirit. She was an eminently gracious woman and, therefore, she never boasted of her relationship, nor misused it for her own purpose. But what a pleasure it must have been to have nursed Jesus in His Childhood; to have cared for Him in His Youth! She treasured up His little speeches and pondered in her heart what they could all mean.

Happy were her fingers that made His garments and that tended to His infant and boyish needs. In His adult life she must have been among those who heard Him with delight. Was she not one of the most charmed of His hearers? What joy that her Son should speak in that way and bring such a salvation to the sons of men! Awe mingled with the mother’s de-

light, deepening it, but not forbidding it. When He had risen from the dead, I think her heart must have been filled with a holy exultation, that He whom she had mourned, now lived again! When she knew that He was ascended, though it left a blank in her heart, yet she rose above the sorrow natural to her motherhood and learned, though she had known Him after the flesh, now after the flesh to know Him no more. She could not but rejoice in all the Glory with which the Man who was born of her was now surrounded!

She was, she must have been, blessed among women and this woman who spoke of her as such made no mistake. For think, my dear Friends, *what blessings have come to all the world through the Virgin's wondrous Child*. In Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed! If all generations call Mary, blessed, it is only because she brought into the world One who is a blessing to us all! Have you not tasted of the blessedness which is scattered by both the hands of Jesus? Do you not know that life and healing stream from His garments? If you have not enjoyed the blessedness which He bestows, it is because you have denied it to yourselves—cruelly denied it to yourselves! His blessedness is free to you if your hearts desire it. Oh, what a Christ is He! His Words unlock prison doors! The glance of His eyes is the light of men! The tread of His feet turns deserts into Gardens of Eden. Our faith is in His First Advent—our hope is in His Second Advent. In Him we live and if in Him we sleep, we shall in Him awake from the dead to live forever in His Glory. He has made us kings and priests unto God and we shall reign with Him forever and ever! And it was, it *must* have been, a great blessedness to Mary's heart to think that, "that Holy Thing" which was born of her was the channel of such blessedness to all mankind!

I must, however, remind you that whatever the blessedness which this holy woman derived from being the mother of our Savior's humanity, *she needed it all*, for she was called to a great fight of affliction because of it. Usually all special blessings involve special trials. The thorn in the flesh attends the abundance of Revelations. Weight of Glory is balanced with a weight of tribulation. Lest the favored one should be exalted above measure, there is given a measure of down-casting with the lifting up. When you ask to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism, you know not what you are asking—for in that cup there is bitterness as well as sweetness—and His baptism is a baptism of suffering as well as a baptism of honor!

Mary had her supreme sorrows. At the very first this woman, so pure and holy, had to bear the darkest suspicion. She could hardly confront her espoused one—he could hardly be expected to believe her extraordinary story. Faith, alone, helped her to see the bright light which lined the cloud. The Lord delivered her! Her trials in escaping from Herod by flight into Egypt were not small. Oh what sorrow often hovered over her when she saw how her Son was "despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief!" Once, at least, her faith well-nigh failed her, as I read it, and she trembled for Him, for we find that His mother and His brethren (and of this I will speak another day), somewhere about

this very time, stood outside, desiring to speak with Him. Mark tells us that His friends sought to lay hands on Him, for they said, "He is beside Himself."

He dared such peril—He so boldly opposed established authorities—He spoke such mysterious Truths and He was altogether so unearthly that His relatives began to think that His mind had failed Him! And it would seem that His mother was almost agreed with them! Her heart must have sunk very low with all her blessedness when she could not understand her Son and could not save Him from reproach and ill will. In fact, she never had fully understood Him—did He not, Himself, say to her in His early days, "Know you not"—do you not understand—"that I must be about My Father's business?" She could not comprehend Him and could not protect Him—and, therefore, she must have been often sorrowful.

When Jesus came to die, of all that wept for Him, surely none could have been more full of lamentations than the sorrowful mother. *Mater dolorosa*. Do you not see her fainting at the foot of the Cross? Then was fulfilled the text, "Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul, also." John, with gentle tenderness, took her to his own home, in obedience to those Words of the dying Lord, "Son, behold your mother," and, "Woman, behold your son." But never a more sorrowful woman was ever housed under Heaven than she who was "highly favored." She needed to have the blessedness abundantly ministered to her to sustain her heart and mind. She might have well said, "Call me not Mary, but call me Marah," so bitter was her grief.

Call her "Blessed among women," but do not sigh because this unattainable blessedness is not yours. Her tribulations abounded in full proportion to her joys. Only one, from the necessity of the case, could partake of such peculiar blessedness. This gate of honor is shut to all but that virgin of David's lineage. With full and honest emphasis we pronounce her blessed this day—but no trace of envy rests in our heart. We hear the enthusiastic voice which said, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the paps which You have sucked," but it is overpowered by the Divine utterance—"Yes rather, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!" We do not take away the first, but we establish the second!

II. That brings us to our second head—to hear the Word of God and keep it is A BLESSING PREFERABLE to having been the mother of our Lord.

We are sure of this because, in the weighing of the blessings, the blessed Master of Beatitudes holds the balances. *Jesus Himself adjusts the scales of blessedness*. He who began His ministry with the word, "Blessed," so often repeated, knows best which blessing is the best. We accept without a question and even without an argument this statement of our Lord and we firmly believe, upon His authority, that though Mary is greatly blessed, yet even more emphatically are those blessed who hear the Word of God and keep it! We yield our ready assent to what Jesus says, for His Word is Truth.

Happily this preference so truly given by the Master *puts the highest blessedness within the reach of all of us who are here this morning*. We are,

at this moment, in a position to “hear the Word of God and keep it!” If Grace is given, there are only these two steps to blessedness. I feel most happy to be addressing a congregation to whom I may say that the highest blessedness conceivable is to be attained by all who “hear the Word of God,” for if they further receive and keep that Word they are already blessed and the lips of the Lord Jesus have declared them to be so! Remember that this made up the soul of Mary’s blessedness, for she was more blessed as a Believer than as the mother of Jesus. Elizabeth said to her, “Blessed is she that believes.” So, dear Friend, Mary’s blessedness lay mainly in the fact that she *believed* and, therefore, quietly acquiesced in the Divine will. She was blessed because her *faith* enabled her to rejoice in God her Savior! It was not an easy thing to believe that He, whom she nursed in her arms and nourished from her breast, was also the Son of the Highest. He must have seemed to her more truly an Infant than, perhaps, He may ever appear to us. Nevertheless she worshipped Him as in union with the Infinite One and magnified the name of the Lord. Oh yes, it was her *faith* that made her blessed and the same faith may be in us!

When the Savior uttered this text, He meant to say to the woman who had pronounced His mother blessed—“You, too, are blessed if you hear the Word of God and keep it! You, good woman, have said, Blessed is My mother; but to you I reply, No, blessed are you, also, if, hearing the Word that has been spoken to you this day, you place it in your heart and keep it in your soul as a hidden treasure.” This blessing is open to all of us who, by Divine Grace, hear the Gospel with our hearts. Dear Friends, let me congratulate you on your position. Blessed are your ears, for they hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Blessed are you that you may sing today, “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Blessed are you if you lay up the witness of God in your hearts, remembering it, treasuring it and living upon it! You are truly favored if the Word of God dwells in you richly. Christ in you, the Hope of Glory, is your heart’s delight!

I now ask you to notice that this preferable blessing is *found in a very simple manner*. “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!” The process is stripped of all ambiguity or mystery—there is nothing about it that is hard or difficult—“*Hear the Word of God and keep it*”—that is all.

By the Grace of God the most uneducated, the most sinful, the most despairing may still hear the Word of God and keep it! “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”—and by faith comes salvation. To hear God’s Word is the privilege of the poor. Yes, of all to whom the Word is spoken. As it is written, “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.” Beloved, if you would attain to blessedness, hear God’s Word *as God’s Word*. Receive it, not as the word of man, for in that way it cannot bless you. But accept it as being the Word of God to your own souls. Hear it, therefore, with a reverent credence which does not quibble at it, nor question it, but which sweetly yields to it. You shall be blessed if you hear it as

the Word of God ought to be heard. Be silent while God speaks! Let judgment, imagination and desire all bow before Jehovah's voice!

Let the Word of God fully operate upon you, while your soul sits meekly at Jesus' feet. Be receptive. Receive the Truth of God with no wish but to understand it and retain it. Hear it with your understanding. Endeavor to know what it means, that you may be nourished by it. Do not let it come in one ear and go out the other, otherwise it may leave condemnation behind it. But hear it as a man would hear who was listening to a father whom he loved and revered. Listen as a man listens who is eagerly catching at news—news which concerns himself and his highest interests. Hear, in fact, as though God spoke! Israel stood trembling at the foot of Sinai because the Lord spoke in tones of thunder—you should hear with the same reverence, though not with the same alarm. As much reverence is due to God's Word out of His Inspired Book as to that same Word thundered out of the thick darkness and the flames of fire! God, in these last days, has spoken to us by His Son, Jesus, who is the express Image of His Person and the brightness of His Glory. Hear this incomparable Word with all your powers and faculties! Let heart and mind and thought and memory and reason attend to that which the Lord says to us! So listening, you shall live. "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God."

But we must *keep* it, too. Now, to keep a thing you must first get it. Blessed are they that grasp at what they hear, saying, "That means *me*." Blessed are they who take home to themselves the Truths revealed, who, when they hear that Jesus died, say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." Hug the Truth of God to your souls! Grapple it to your hearts with hooks of steel! When you have laid hold upon it, keep it against all comers. "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life"—and let the Word of God be life to you. Hold the Word of God as more dear than this mortal life and sooner part with all things upon earth than yield a syllable of this priceless Word! So hold it as to remember it, to meditate upon it, to feed upon it.

So hold it as to assimilate it—as when a man gets bread into himself and it builds up his frame, becoming one with himself, so that there is no getting him away from it, nor it from him. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Word of God! Hold it, also, by *obeying* it. Yield yourself up to its sway—obey the precept, catch its spirit, follow out the will of God. If we thus hear and keep the Word of God, our Master declares that however blessed may be the virgin of whom He was born, still more are we blessed because we are hearing the Word of God and keeping it! I again cannot help saying, happy are the lips that have to speak this morning and to tell you of a blessing not shut up to a few, nor long ago spent upon one favored person, but open to all such as joyfully hear and willingly retain the Word of God!

But why is this blessing so very remarkable? It is, my dear Friends, because *it is spiritual*. Everything that is of the flesh must die. All relationships to Christ that were carnal passed away. Those who had known Him after the flesh, before long, after the flesh knew Him no more. When He had risen from the dead, He said to the holy woman, "Touch Me not." He

was not, now, to be known in an outward fashion. Today no one is rated high in the Kingdom of God because, like James, he was, “the Lord’s brother,” or like the Apostles, the Lord’s attendants, or like Mary, the Lord’s mother. In the *spiritual* Kingdom, relationship is not of blood or of birth. All external distinctions of place, race and descent are abolished. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” The Father seeks such to worship Him and such He finds—nothing else is precious in His sight. To hear the Word of God aright is a *spiritual* act. To *keep* that Word is a spiritual operation, affecting the heart, the conscience and the whole man and, therefore, it is lasting, yes, *everlasting*, and for this reason it stands high above everything else in the estimation of the Savior as a ground of blessedness.

Now listen to me for a moment while I set forth the excellence of this blessedness. If those who hear God’s Word and keep it are more blessed than even was Mary who was the mother of our Lord, then any other form of blessedness must be very secondary to the hearing of the Word of God and keeping it! For instance, do you happen to be rich? Say not that the rich are blessed—“blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!” Are you endowed with talent? Do not wrap yourselves up in conceit! Do not say, “Blessed are we because we have great gifts.” “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!” Are you a person held in high esteem and justly beloved? Yet do not make an idol of man’s regard, for, “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!” Have you attained to considerable influence? Then thank God for it and use it rightly, but remember that this is not blessedness—but, “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!” Are you enjoying good health? That is one of the greatest of earthly blessings—whatever else you miss, you certainly have a great favor in being free from pain and disease—but health is not blessedness. “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!” If you were on a sickbed in the most poverty stricken attic in this city and if you had no gifts and had even lost your sight, yet if inwardly you heard the Word of God and kept it, you would be blessed amid all your poverty!

I am going a step further—if any of you possess high religious privileges, do not pride yourselves on them as though these, alone, were blessedness. Equally blessed are any who hear God’s Word and keep it! Somebody might have said the Apostles were blessed, for they cast out devils and healed the sick. Did they not go back to the Master and say, “even the devils are subject unto us through Your name”? “Yes,” Jesus said, “notwithstanding in this rejoice not; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven.” Perhaps you will say, “Blessed is the man who can preach to a multitude. Blessed is the man who can lead thousands to Christ.” It is so, but yet, “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!” Blessed is the Sunday school teacher who sees her children saved. Yes, the successful worker is blessed, but even more certainly is he blessed who hears and keeps the sacred Word of God! This blessing rises above all others and shines with a more heavenly radiance! Again I add, what a mercy that it is within our reach!

This should warn you against priding yourselves upon your relationship to good or great men. Do not say, "My father was a minister." Or, "My mother is a saint in Heaven." Yes, there is an honor about such a pedigree, but true blessedness comes not in that way or else Ishmael, Esau and Absalom had been blessed. Not he that is born after the flesh, but he that is according to *promise*, is truly blessed. There is no form of blessedness which exceeds this of hearing the Word of God and keeping it. This seems a commonplace business, but it is not common in the sight of God. This which appertains to the whole family of Hearers and Believers is, after all, the gem of the casket, the Kohinoor among the jewels! Since to hear the Word of God and keep it is a higher blessing than to bring forth the Babe of Bethlehem, it is superior to all other imaginable blessings which can be found beneath the skies!

III. So now we close by considering this as A BLESSEDNESS TO BE AT ONCE ENJOYED. I breathe to Heaven this earnest prayer that we may now enter into this blessedness. Let us see if we cannot sit still in our seats, for a while, and drink in this wine on the lees well refined.

This blessedness belongs to the present. Blessed are they that are hearing the Word of God and keeping it! It is not a remote, but an *immediate* blessedness. While you are hearing and keeping God's Word, you are then blessed. The blessedness is for this world and for you. "But I am so cast down." Yes, but you are blessed! "Alas! I bear such a burden of afflictions." Yes, but you are blessed! "Alas! I have not known a good time of late." No, but you are blessed! Your blessedness does not depend upon your fancies and feelings. If you hear the Word of God and keep it, you are, at this moment, blessed. But says one, "If an angel appeared to me and said, 'Blessed are you among women,' I would be very happy." Behold, the angels' Lord and King appears to you this morning in this blessed Book and speaks out of it with living loving tones, saying, "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God, and keep it!" You are blessed! Does not that assurance make you happy? It ought to. It ought to fill you with a calm, serene delight. Jesus says I am blessed and though, just for the moment, sense does not confirm the declaration, yet faith believes it! "Blessed is she that believes: for there shall be a performance of the things that are spoken." Faith finds a present blessedness in the Word of God which she hears and keeps.

That blessedness lies, in a great measure, in the very act of hearing and keeping God's Word. I can speak experimentally in this instance. I bear my witness that whenever God speaks to me, I feel, in listening to His voice, a blessedness. The act of bowing the mind to receive communications from God is most pleasurable and the actual sense of those communications is supremely so. When I sit down with my opened Bible and let the Divine Truth enter my mind and permeate my thoughts and my affections, I would not change places with the angel Gabriel! To hear the voice of God as Truth spoken home to my heart by the Holy Spirit is better music to my soul than could be yielded by harps of angels or songs of shining ones! I hope that sometimes in this House of Prayer, when the Gospel has been preached and God has spoken through me, you have felt an exceed-

ing joy in hearing His Word. You have felt “Oh, that these services could last forever!” and you have sighed for the place—

***“Where congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”***

Hearing the Word of God is, in itself, an intense delight. I do not mean the bare hearing of sermons, nor the reading of good books, nor even the reading of the Bible in the letter—but when the *inner* ear is really affected by God’s own Word, oh, then we know life and light and Heaven! The primeval darkness passed away when God sent forth His Word. He said, “Light be,” and light was. The entrance of His Word gives light. All other lights seem dim candles compared with this Divine sun. If the Lord’s Word has ever said, “Peace be unto you,” then the Lord has breathed His own calm into your heart and you have felt that you are truly blessed.

This blessedness lies also in the retaining of God’s Word in the soul, in the laying it up and storing it and especially in the obeying of it. When I feel I am doing God’s will, I am supremely happy. Active obedience is present enjoyment to the spiritual mind—in keeping His Commandments there is great reward. Whenever you have a question about a course of conduct, you are unhappy in it. But when you feel, “This which I am about to do is according to God’s mind, I have Scriptural warrant for it and I am called to it”—why then, you are perfectly at ease! If everybody were to quibble, you would not mind and if you, yourself, suffered in consequence of doing it, you would take joyfully the spoiling of your goods. Assured obedience to the Word of God is the most sure road to a present happiness.

When a man has once broken the shell of carnality and has burst forth into the new world where God can be heard, he has entered the Kingdom of Heaven! God cannot be heard in this carnal nature of ours, which is like the adder which cannot be charmed. While we are ruled by the flesh, we are in a silent land as to God. But when we break loose of the flesh and enter into the new world of spiritual life and peace, then we are conscious that God has communications with us, for that is what is meant by His “Word,” and this fact blesses us. When the Lord manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world—this is Heaven! Whether we are in the body or out of it, the reception of communications from God to our hearts and the storing up of those communications is a blessedness which excels all that Mary could have known merely as being, after the flesh, the mother of Jesus! Beloved, I do not need to expatiate here, for this is a matter for experimental test rather than for verbal description. Blessed are they, yes, *infinitely* blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it! The hearing of it and the keeping of the Word are, in themselves, blessedness!

This blessing is not dependent upon outward circumstances. If you hear God’s Word and keep it, you may be very ill and, yet, in spirit you will be well. You may be very feeble and, yet, in spirit you will be strong. You may be dying and, yet, you shall not die, for he that hears the Word of God shall never see death. In listening to the Lord, you have reached a region from which you look down upon the dust and smoke of time and sense!

The things which are visible are transient dreams which have small power over you, now that the word of the Lord has brought you out of the grave of the visible into the living world of the invisible! "We walk by faith, not by sight," and though, now, we see not our God, yet in our hearts we hear him and this hearing fills us with joy unspeakable and full of joy! It is a matter of experience and, therefore, though I should speak 10,000 words, I could not set it forth. I exhort you to try it for yourselves.

Behold, my Hearer, there lies at your feet the most precious jewel that ever sparkled before a monarch's eyes! Neither earth nor Heaven can produce its superior! You are a hearer, be a hearer, a real hearer! But be you not a hearer, only, but a *doer* of the word, for that man is blessed in his deed. The blessedness of hearing and keeping the Word of God—will you prize it, or will you scorn it? What do you say, will you trample this pearl under your feet? I pray you, do not! Oh take this peerless, priceless blessedness! It lies so near you, do not miss it! If you are wise, you will listen to the voice of ancient prophecy which says, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live." Every man desires happiness and here it is. Blessedness is the aspiration of us all—lo, it lies before you! Wise men strive for blessedness and even fools wish for it. My Hearer, will you have it? You have not to climb to Heaven to win it, nor dive to Hell to earn it. You need not wait for ecstasies, nor stop till you have acquired great learning, or suffered severe trials—the Word of God is near you, in your mouth and in your heart!

If with your heart you will believe on the Lord Jesus and with your mouth make confession of Him, you shall be saved! Or, to put it in the words of the text, "Hear the Word of God and keep it!" As soon as you have done this, while you are doing it and as long as you do it, in hearing and in keeping God's Word, there shall come to you a double blessing. God has blessed you and you shall be blessed! Did you come in here, this morning, under a conscious curse? Come, then, hear the Word of the Lord and the curse is turned into a blessing! Has the blessing of former days seemed to fade of late? Then, again, hear and keep the good Word of God! All other doctrine will cause your blessedness to dwindle.

If you are faint and weary, plunge into the Word of God as a man does into a bath when he desires to be refreshed. You shall rise out of the waves of the Truths of God revived, refreshed, happy, blessed! O my Hearers, the blessedness of my own soul lies, at this moment, in listening to the Word of the living God! How I wish you all knew this sweetness! Then shall you young women be blessed virgins and you mothers, blessed matrons and all of us blessed men and blessed women. "You are the seed of the blessed of the Lord and your offspring with you." God says, "Surely blessing I will bless you." May you never lose a sense of that blessing! Amen.

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THE TRUE LINEAGE

NO. 3018

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1864.**

***“And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You. But He said, More than that, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.”
Luke 11:27, 28.***

Was this a loving-hearted woman who had been moved by the dear Savior's discourse? Many, doubtless, had listened to the same gracious words—some of them with wrath and others with stern complacency—but it may be that her soul began to swell with holy wonder at the marvelous things which proceeded out of His mouth and her soul felt such an affection for the Man from whom so much of Grace proceeded that she cried, “Blessed is the womb that bore You!” Was it so? Perhaps it was an ignorant but passionate love breaking through all restraint. Sometimes, among our Primitive Methodist friends, we hear the same kind of thing—they get so carried away by the power of the Truth of God which has just been stated that they cannot refrain from crying out, “Glory!” or, “Hallelujah!” Throughout all Wales, this custom, which I am far from condemning, prevails through the whole sermon, often very much to the comfort of the speaker, enlivening him and cheering him on—and making him rise to greater flights than otherwise he might have taken. Perhaps we may look at this interruption of the affectionate woman in that light.

Possibly, however, there was bold, blank ignorance rather than intense affection. Hers may have been a sort of vacant wonder at what she had heard and, involuntarily, she betrayed it with her tongue. So have I noticed, sometimes, when I have been preaching the Word among our Primitive Methodist friends that they have not always put the “Glory!” in at the right place, or the observation with which they have favored us has been as inappropriate as it well could be! Though I have been glad, at times, to hear some emotional response when it seemed to come from true sensibility and was compatible with common sense, I have not been quite so gratified when ignorance has been the prompter. Perhaps it was so with this woman. Such, at least, is the opinion of many sound expositors—and Jesus does not appear to commend her at all. She was a poor ignorant soul who, perhaps, had never listened to any preaching before—and certainly had never listened to such preaching as that of Jesus Christ—and so she cried out, in a sort of stupid wonder, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You.”

Anyhow, whichever it might be, this woman was but a specimen of very many in her own age and a representative of many millions in successive ages. She turned her admiration, you perceive, from the Person of Christ to the person of His mother. There was some sort of tendency of this kind on other occasions in Christ's life—and he rebuked it as He did here—for, you will observe, though He says nothing disrespectful of His mother, yet He at once puts the extinguisher upon everything like blessing her as though she were so highly favored above all other Believers in Himself. On the occasion of the marriage in Cana of Galilee, Jesus answered His mother—I will not say roughly—that was not possible for Him—but somewhat sternly when He said, “Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come.” He purposely discouraged what He must have perceived was the natural tendency of people's minds to reverence His mother unduly. And it does seem marvelous to any thinking man that after such words as these of my text, Mariolatry should have prevailed in the Church of Rome to so frightful an extent as it has done and as it still does! Why, for every prayer offered to Jesus Christ, I believe there are fifty, at the present moment, offered to the Virgin Mary. At all events, in the Romanist's rosary, there are nine beads for the “Hail Mary” to every one for, “Our Father.”

Observe that she is to be held in profound respect, she is “blessed among women.” There should never come from the lips of any Christian a single word of disrespect to her—she was highly favored, she was a sort of second Eve, as Eve brought forth sin, this woman, this second Eve, brought forth the Lord who is our Salvation. She does stand in a very high position, but still, in no respect is she to be an object of worship! By no means is she to be lifted up and extolled as though she were immaculately conceived and afterwards lived without sin and was taken up, as the Papists declare, by a marvelous assumption into Heaven—an assumption, indeed, on *their* part, and nothing better than an assumption, without any foundation whatever in fact! No, Brothers and Sisters, the Virgin Mary was a sinner, saved by Grace, as you and I are! That Savior whom she brought forth, was a Savior to her as much as to us. She had to be washed from sin, both original and contracted, in the precious blood of her own Child, “the Son of the Highest.” Neither could she have entered Heaven unless He had pronounced her absolution and she had been, as we are, “accepted in the Beloved.” Yet I do not wonder that there was a tendency to exalt her unduly—however, I do marvel much that, after Christ has spoken so plainly and so expressly, men should have had the impudence, and the devil should have had the audacity to delude millions of professing Christians into a worship of her, who is to be revered, *but never to be adored*.

If you look at the text, you will see that there is something very beautiful about it. This woman pronounced a benediction upon the Virgin Mary—Christ lifts that off and puts it on all His people. She said, “Blessed is the woman who brought You forth.” “Yes,” said Jesus, “she is blessed, but (in the very same sense) they are blessed who hear the Word of God, and keep it.” Thus, my Brothers and Sisters, whatever blessings pertain to Mary, pertain to you and pertain to me if we hear the Word of

God and keep it! Whatever we may suppose to have been the mercies comprehended in Mary being so highly favored a person, those very same mercies are yours and mine if, hearing the Word of God, we truly keep it.

I. It is supposed by many and very naturally, that it would have been a delightful thing to have been the mother of our Lord, BECAUSE THEN WE WOULD HAVE HAD THE HONOR OF THE CLOSEST ASSOCIATION WITH HIM.

To have seen that Infant in His cradle and nursed Him upon one's knees. To have marked the ripening years of the Holy Child, to have observed His gracious words, His holy piety, His complete obedience to His parents. To have remained with Him the 30 years which, doubtless, Joseph and Mary spent with their honored, glorious Son, must have been no small blessing! The same spirit, you know, comes out in Mrs. Luke's pretty hymn, such a favorite with our dear children, which we all of us love to sing—

***“I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men—
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with them then.
I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me—
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
‘Let the little ones come unto Me.’”***

Yes, many a mother might feel that to be kissed with those little lips, to have had her neck surrounded by those blessed arms, to have had her eyes looked into with the love-flashing eyes of such a Child as that would have been a gift to be craved for every day! Well, so it looks, Beloved, and yet, if we come to think rightly of it, the illusion is quickly dispelled. It was a high privilege to be associated with Christ, but, unless spiritually sanctified, it was a solemn responsibility sinking the soul deeper in guilt, rather than raising it higher in sanctification! Let me venture to remind you of one who had the very closest intimacy with Christ in the days of His public ministry. He was so trusted by the Savior that he kept the little treasury in which Christ put, when there were any, the excessive gifts of charity. He was the treasurer of the little company—you know him—Judas. He had been with Jesus almost everywhere. He had been His familiar friend and acquaintance and when He dipped the bread with Him in the bowl, it was but an indication of the close association which had been preserved between the Divine Master and a vile creature who was utterly unworthy of such a privilege! There was never such another “son of perdition” as Judas, the friend and acquaintance of Jesus Christ. Never has any other man sunk so low in the depths of Divine Wrath, with so huge a millstone about his neck, as this man with whom Christ took such sweet counsel and went to the House of God in company! The same sun ripens the corn and the poppies. This man was ripened in guilt by the same external process that ripened others in holiness.

It is not, then, after all, so great a gift, looked at as a natural blessing. But, whatever the blessing may be, it is open to every Christian spiritually. Beloved you may have an acquaintance with Christ if you are His people! Quite as near and far more enduring than any acquaintance

which His mother could have gained by merely dandling Him on her knees, or supplying His needs from her breasts! Today you may talk with Jesus, you heirs of Heaven! Your Divine Elder Brother's company is free to you—you have but to go to Him and He will bring you into His banqueting house and His banner over you shall be love. Still is His left hand under the head of His saints, and His right hand does embrace them. There are dearer things than ever the Infant Christ could give to His mother! There are kisses of His lips more sweet, more spiritual than any which Mary received. You have but to long for them and to pine after them and, when you get them, you have but to prize them and you shall have them every day! I trust, Beloved, some of us need not cry with the spouse in the Song, "O that you were as my brother that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find you without, I would kiss you," for we can say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His...Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." I say, then, that all the honor of associating with Christ may be had, at the present moment, by His people! The sweetest of fellowship can be enjoyed by us in the highest and purest sense, so that the blessing which Mary had is ours and we may say, with Christ, "Yes, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it."

II. Again, it is naturally supposed, by some, that it must have been a sweet thing to be the mother of our Lord BECAUSE THEN WE WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH HIM AND HAVE KNOWN MORE OF HIS HEART.

If He had any secrets, surely He would confide them to His mother! There must have oozed out, in His private life, some things which men did not see in public. Perhaps there may have been something which He could not very well unveil to the gaze of the millions which would be perceived by Joseph and by His admiring mother. She was behind the scenes. She had the benefit of looking into His very heart in a way in which we cannot do. Well, there may be something in that, but I do not think there is much. I do not know that Mary knew more than others—what she did know, she did well to lay up in her heart—but she does not appear, from anything you read in the Gospels, to have been a better instructed Believer than any other of Christ's disciples. And we have no indication of her having made any extraordinary advances in the spiritual instruction which her Son had given.

But certain is it that, whatever Mary may have found out, you and I may find out now—not naturally, but spiritually. Do you wonder that I should say so? Here is a text to prove it—"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." I remember also the Master's words where He said, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you." No, so blessedly does this Divine Revealer of secrets tell us what is in His heart that He keeps back nothing which is profitable to us—and can say to us as He said to His disciples—"If it were not so, I would have told you." Christ keeps nothing back from His chosen. Between the heart of a true saint and Christ there are no secrets!

We pour our hearts into His heart and He pours back His heart into ours. Does He not, this day, manifest Himself unto us as He does not unto the world? You know that He does! And therefore you will not ignorantly cry out, as this woman did, “Blessed is the womb that bore You,” but you will intelligently bless God that, having heard the Word, and kept it, you have, first of all, as true a communion with the Savior as the Virgin had, and you have, in the second place, as true an acquaintance with the secrets of His heart as she can be supposed to have obtained!

III. Further, perhaps a more common remark is this, “I wish that I had been Christ’s mother, so that I MIGHT HAVE NURSED HIM AND SUPPORTED HIS NEEDS, watched Him in His weakness, put Him to His rest and heard the first lisps when He began to speak. Oh, it would have been something to have said, when I was in Heaven, that I had nursed the One who is now exalted far above all principalities and powers, that I listened to the cry of His Infancy and relieved His needs.”

Well, that would be something, but let me say to you that you may have it, Beloved—every child of God may have it! Christ is still on earth—not as to His bodily Person, but as to His mystical Person—and you may still nurse that mystical Person. We, ministers of God, are we not nursing fathers unto the Church of God? And you, each of you, in your sphere, as you teach the ignorant, guide the wandering and comfort those that are bowed down, are hearing the plaintive cry of a suffering Savior! And you are, with the breast of your consolation, supplying the needs of His yet infant Church. Perhaps it is better, and far nobler, to have the honor of nursing Christ’s mystical body than it was to care for His corporeal frame because there is a much wider range here. It was but a little cup He needed. If was but a morsel and a drop the Savior sometimes needed. But now His great body, stretched as it is from Japan to America—His great body, found as it is in every part of this world—His great body, found in yonder sick one, in yonder poverty-stricken ones, requires vastly more and, therefore, of your substance you may give more, yes, your whole strength you may offer up, that you may feed Him and supply His spiritual needs! Whatever honor, then, the Virgin had in this respect, Christ’s pure virgins may still have if they will wait upon His Church and minister to it of their heart’s substance—

***“Jesus, poorest of the poor
Man of Sorrows! Child of grief!
Happy they whose bounteous store
Ministered to Your relief.
Jesus, though Your head is crowned,
Crowned with loftiest majesty,
In Your members You are found,
Plunged in deepest poverty.
They who feed Your sick and faint
For YOURSELF a banquet find!
They who clothe the naked saint
Round YOUR loins the raiment bind.”***

IV. It may be very possible that some others have looked at it in another way. They have said, “Blessed is the womb that bore Him, and

the paps that gave Him suck, for had it been our lot to be His mother, then we believe HE WOULD HAVE BEEN READY TO HEAR OUR CRY, for a son cannot surely resist the prayer of His own mother. And when a mother says, 'My Son, help me, I am sinful. I believe in You, help me. When she cries out to Him whom she had conceived, 'Help me, blot out my sins,' why surely Jesus would heed, with ready ear, and say, 'Mother, your sins are forgiven you.'

But, Beloved, this is only our fancy, for Christ is just as ready to save *any* sinner in this place as He was to save His mother, for it is His greatest delight to see a sinner, with tears in his eyes, crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." If I had power to pardon you, I think you know how cheerfully I would do it. Oh, could I break your hearts and bind them up again, God knows that I would not let this night pass without doing it! And do you think that my Lord and Master is less loving than I am? You feel, if He were here tonight, and you were His mother, that He would be sure to hear your cry and answer you. But Jesus Christ said, on one occasion, as He looked upon the crowd gathered together, when someone said to Him, "Your mother and Your brethren stand outside, desiring to speak with You"—what did He say? "Who is My mother? And who are My brethren?" And then He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." And you, if you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall not stand second to His mother! No, shall I not say it? You shall even have the preference! Christ was preaching and they said, "Here is your mother." Did He stop to attend to His mother? No, but first He would feed His disciples! First He would teach them! And so, Sinner, you shall not be second to the mother of the Savior! Do but cry to Him now! Oh, that the Holy Spirit might show you your lost state, reveal to you your need, and put a penitent cry into your mouth for, when you can cry, "Jesus, pity me and save me," you may cry to Him with the greatest confidence, for—

***"He is able, He is willing,
Doubt no more!"***

You need not seek to move His heart with many cries, for His heart is moved already! He loves the sons of men. His delights are with them. You cannot do Him a greater service than by letting Him save you. Submit yourself, with all your emptiness, to the fullness of His unspeakable compassion! Is there not a thought here that might woo some—I am holding it now like a loadstone—is there no metal here that will be attracted by it? The love of Christ to His people, to poor sinners who seek Him, is as great as any love He ever had to His mother—and even greater! You may come with boldness to Him, though you never sought His face before!

V. Again, I think some have thought that if they had been His mother, **THEY COULD HAVE COME TO HIM WITH GREATER EASE.**

"It is so easy to speak to one whom we know. We are not at all afraid to tell our needs to one who has been so near to us as Christ was to His mother." Yet I would have you remember that Christ, as the Son of God,

was not the Son of Mary. Christ, the Divine Savior, was no nearer to Mary than He is to us. Christ was merely the Man Christ that was conceived in her womb, or that sucked at her breasts and, therefore, in His Divine Person, He towers as much above her as He does above us! And then, though He was born of the substance of His mother, yet was He of our substance, too, for He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—a Man, such as we are. If He were an angel, being of a different kind, we might be afraid to come to Him, but He is a Man, He has a man's emotions, a man's heart, a man's compassion, a man's love and we need not be afraid to come to Him! What though He was not born of us, yet is He of us. Though we are not His mother, yet, we are His brothers and sisters. So let us come boldly to Him. Sinner, you have as much right to come as Mary had. She had none except what Divine Grace gave her—you have the same. Did Christ ever cast away one sinner who came to Him? No. Did He ever reject one that was ever brought to Him? There was a woman taken in adultery and she did not come willingly, but they brought her to Him, thinking, "Surely, Christ will condemn her." What was the result? After driving all her adversaries away, He said to her, "Go, and sin no more," And so will He say to you if your doubts and trembling and fears should bring you to Him. When He casts one soul away, then let other souls be afraid to come to Him, but while my blessed Master stands with open arms and takes the foulest, and vilest, and poorest to minister unto His love, I pray you stand not back through shame or fear! As much as if you were His mother and He your Child, come to Him, for He invites you to come, saying, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." With tearful eyes He entreats you to come to Him— and if you will not, He does but relieve His heart by crying, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not!"

VI. Perhaps, if you will think this over, you will see much more that is beautiful. I am sure there is no topic more consolatory than that which my text contains. THE VERY BLESSING WHICH BELONGED TO THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF JESUS BELONGS TO EVERY SOUL THAT HEARS GOD'S WORD AND KEEPS IT.

Now you hear it. Do you hear it with your inside ears—with the ears of your heart? And when you hear it, do you keep it in your memory? Do you keep it in your faith? Do you try to keep it in your obedience? And are you daily testifying to its truth? If so, all these blessings are yours and let me say to any trembling, awakened, convicted sinner—all these blessings may be yours if you hear the Word of God and keep it tonight! Here are one or two words of God that I want you to keep—"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Will you not come and reason with God and talk this matter over? You have heard the Word, I pray you to keep it, that is, to *obey* it. Here is another message from the Word of God—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came

into the world to save sinners.” You have heard that—keep it! Believe that although you are a sinner, He came to save you. Rest in it, trust in it. Here is one more, and I pray you, as you hear it, keep it—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” You have heard it—now keep it. To believe is to trust. Trust Christ now! I pray God to constrain you to do it before you pass those doors. Fall flat on your face upon Christ’s promise! As for your own righteousness, away with it to the dogs! No prayer, no tears, no vows, no sighs of yours can do anything in the matter! Trust Jesus Christ wholly, now! And then if you have heard that Word and shall thus keep it, go your way, and let Satan say what he will and let the flesh make what noise it pleases—Christ has blessed you and you are blessed! He has said to you, sinners as you are, “Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.” When you and I get to Heaven, may we find it to be so! May we glory there and sing as loud a song as even Mary did when she said, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden”—for all generations may call that one blessed who has sought and found the Savior! O Beloved, even in Heaven, that song of Mary shall make a sweet song for us all! May we begin to sing it here and Christ shall have the praise! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Luke 11:14-54.**

Verses 14, 15. *And He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spoke and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casts out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.* One would hardly have thought that they could have gone to such a length as that—but when men hate Christ, there is nothing they will not say against Him. It is no subject of surprise when great heresies arise, for they are the natural outcome of human enmity against Christ and His Truth. People in such a state of heart will say anything. They will give utterance to thoughts that you could not have imagined would have entered any human brain—it is the enmity of the heart to Christ that produces this blasphemy of the tongue!

16. *And others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from Heaven.* “You are working this work from beneath,” they said, “now do something that is really from above.” They must have known that the casting out of the devil was from Heaven, for Satan would never cast out Satan!

17, 18. *But He, knowing their thought, said unto them, Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because you say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.* That was a very good and sufficient answer to these cavilers. It is a comfort to us to know that any error is very vulnerable—there is always a weak point about it. In this case, Christ permitted it to turn its sting upon itself.

19. *And if I, by Beelzebub, cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges.* For some of these men had

sons who either did really cast out devils, being disciples of Christ, or else professed to do so, being exorcists, pretending to a power they did not possess. In either case, the argument was good as against the objectors.

20-22. *But if I, with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils.* This is how Christ drives out the devil by sheer force of arms—He overcomes him and drives him out. He does not cajole him, invite him, or persuade him to go, but He fights with him, puts forth His Omnipotent Power against him, overthrows him, takes away his armor and divides the spoil. Were you ever conscious of such a fight as that? If not, be afraid of your so-called reformation, for there is no true reformation and no true conversion in which there is no conflict between Christ and Satan!

23, 24. *He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathers not with Me scatters. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man.* This is the kind of “conversion” which is not genuine—“when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man”—“gone out” on his own accord—and he may do that. He may leave a man, for a while, with the evil purpose of getting him more completely into his power afterwards. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man.”

24. *He walks through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, I will return unto my house from where I came out.* It was his house all the while! He left it voluntarily—he was not driven out by force—he simply left it for a time in order that he might return to it and retain it the more completely. Now he goes back to it.

25. *And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished.* There has been a reformation of a sort—the man has given up drunkenness, left off swearing and become, in certain respects, a better man. The house is swept and garnished, but there is no new tenant of Mansoul—there is no Christ come to take possession of Heart Castle.

26. *Then he goes, and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.* It often happens that when men make a profession of reformation and then relapse into their former state, they become far worse than they were before. The so-called “reformation” is all of their own doing—or rather, the greater part of it is the devil’s doing. The demon within the man voluntarily went away and now that he is back, he brings with him “seven other spirits more wicked than himself.” And so the man is more than eight times worse than he was before the demon left him for a while!

27, 28. *And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You. But He said, more than that, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.* The enthusiastic woman was so carried away with admiration for Christ

that she thought His mother was a highly-favored woman and she called her, “blessed.” “Yes,” said Christ, “she is blessed, but still more blessed are they who have the Word of God in their hearts, who regard it as their own, and keep it as a great prize.”

29. *And when the people were gathered thick together, He began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign. Look back to the 16th verse—“Others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from Heaven.” Christ had answered those who imputed His miraculous works to Satanic agency—now He answers these others.*

29, 30. *And there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the Prophet. For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation. Jonah rose, as it were, from the dead, for he was buried in the deep, in the belly of the whale! And Christ was buried in Joseph’s tomb, yet He came back from the grave on the third day.*

31, 32. *The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here. The Resurrection would make Christ the most conspicuous sign of God’s Presence among the people! It would be the testimony of God to His Son that He was, indeed, the Messiah.*

33-35. *No man, when he has lighted a candle, puts it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they that come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light, but when your eye is bad, your body is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in you is not darkness. If your religion is irreligion, if your hope is a false one, if your highest aspirations are untrue, what is your position in the sight of God? Where are you?*

36, 37. *May your whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle does give you light. And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee besought Him to dine with him: and He went in, and sat down to meat. It was often a matter of marvel to the onlookers that Christ went among publicans and sinners—but is it not a greater wonder that He went among Pharisees? If they asked Him to their houses, it was usually because they hoped to entangle Him in His talk, yet the condescension of our Master is so great that again and again, “He went in, and sat down to meat.”*

38. *And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that He had not just washed before dinner. Not because Christ’s hands needed washing, but because it was the custom of the Pharisees to wash before eating, and our Lord broke through the customs as He was known to do, for He cared nothing for their inventions!*

39, 40. *And the Lord said unto Him, Now do you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. You fool, did not He who made the outside make the inside, also? “One needs washing as much as the other. You*

are so careful of your hands—will you not be more careful of your hearts?”

41. *But rather give alms of such things as you have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.* “When you are full of love to your fellow men, and make a practice of helping them, you have cleansed your heart from selfishness and have really washed yourself.”

42. *But woe unto you, Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God; these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* How many, in these days, are very particular about very little things, but very careless about great things? They would not violate the law of their sect or party for the world, but the Law of God is of small account to them.

43. *Woe unto you, Pharisees! For you love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.* They loved to be called Rabbi, Learned Doctors of the Law. Any title that made them appear great was very sweet to them.

44. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.* Nobody but Christ knew how base they were. They were fair to look upon, but He knew that they were villainously hypocritical and He, therefore, denounced them. Ah, dear Friends, the great matter is to have Grace in the heart—to have the Divine Light within in the soul—but if we have not this, vain is a fair profession, vain is everything that comes from man! If we are to be saved, we must have the Grace that comes from God alone.

45. *Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto Him, Master, thus saying you reproach us also.* There was no great difference between the scribes and Pharisees and the lawyers, as this man evidently perceived, and as our Lord also soon confirmed by pronouncing upon them the same kind of, “Woe,” that He had pronounced upon the other false teachers!

46. *And He said, Woe unto you also, you lawyers! For you load men with burdens grievous to be borne, and you yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.* Their regulations as to moral and ceremonial observances were like huge bundles of firewood or crushing burdens bound together and made into a weight intolerable for any man to carry! Many of these rules, by themselves, were grievous enough—but all together they formed a yoke that neither the people nor their fathers could bear. The scribes, Pharisees and lawyers piled the great load upon them—but none helped them to sustain it, nor offered to relieve them of any portion of it. “You load men with burdens grievous to be borne, and you yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.”

47, 48. *Woe unto you! For you build the sepulchers of the Prophets and your fathers killed them. Truly you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and you build their sepulchers.* They pretended to have such regard for the holy men of the past that, being unable to honor them in person, they would set up

monuments to their memory and adorn their resting places with tokens of respect.

Out of their own mouths our Lord condemned these hypocrites—“Truly you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers.” In effect, Jesus said to them, “You confess that you are the sons of the murderers of the Prophets. That admission carries with it far more than you imagine. You are their sons, not only by birth, but also by resemblance—you are veritable children of those who killed the Prophets. If you had lived in their day, you would have committed the crimes you pretend to condemn.”

49-51. *Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them Prophets and Apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute, that the blood of all the Prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, which perished between the altar and the Temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.* The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. Even Titus seemed to see in his cruel work the hand of an avenging God. Truly, the blood of the martyrs was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Aceldama, or field of blood. It was before that generation had passed away that Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed. There was a sufficient interval for the full proclamation of the Gospel by the Apostles and evangelists of the early Christian Church—and for the gathering out of those who recognized the Crucified Christ as their true Messiah. Then came the awful ending which the Savior foresaw and foretold.

51. *Woe unto you, lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge: you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in, you hindered.* This “Woe” is similar to that pronounced upon the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, and it was a terrible charge to be brought against them by Him who could read their hearts and who could truthfully say to them, “You have taken away the key of knowledge: you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in, you hindered.” They ought to have helped men into the Kingdom. Instead of doing so, they hindered those who were entering. Are there not false teachers, nowadays, who put stumbling stones instead of steppingstones in the way of those who are entering the Kingdom of Heaven?

53, 54. *And as He said these things unto them, the scribes and Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things: laying wait for Him and seeking to catch something out of His mouth that they might accuse Him.* Thus they proved the truth of the accusations that He had brought against them! But all their plots and traps were in vain until the hour appointed for His great Sacrifice to be offered on Calvary.

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

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

A WORD WITH THOSE WHO WAIT FOR SIGNS AND WONDERS NO. 898

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 31, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,

*"This is an evil generation: they seek a sign."
Luke 11:29.*

READING the Old Testament we observe that the Lord, in the olden times, condescendingly gave signs to His servants when He saw that it would be for their good. Moses, when he was called to undertake the great work of bringing the chosen people up out of Egypt and conducting them into the promised land, had a sign given him by which to assure him that he was truly called of God. He put his hand into his bosom and when he took it out it was leprous, white as snow. He thrust it into his bosom again and again removed it and, lo, it was whole as the other! He cast his rod upon the earth and the rod became a serpent, and when he took it by the tail, it stiffened into a rod again.

So also in the case of Gideon, when he was commanded to go against the Midianite oppressors of Israel, you remember how his fleece was wet when all around was dry. And how the sign was reversed and when all around was saturated with moisture, the fleece was dry. In the cases of holy men favored with signs, there was faith. There was a real desire for more faith and a willing obedience to God. But the work to which the men were called was peculiar, difficult and even superhuman! And the flesh being but weak, God in infinite tenderness to the weakness of His servants, gave them signs and wonders that they might be strengthened.

Doubtless, if again there should come a necessity for signs to any of God's servants, such tokens would be given them. If there should ever be a time when it was not possible for Christians to walk by faith alone, or when it would be more to the honor of God that their confidence should be somewhat assisted by marvels and tokens, then would God go out of the ordinary way once again and His people should receive miraculous seals. If it were utterly impossible for the anxious and truly penitent spirit to find rest without a sign, I believe the sign would be given. I also believe that in no case is such a thing at all *necessary* under the present Gospel dispensation which is so enriched with the most plain evidence, and that to add more would be to hold a candle to the sun, or pour water into the ocean.

In addition to this first remark, let us add that signs have been given and yet have not worked faith in those who have seen them, and there is no necessary connection between seeing signs and believing that which

the signs attest. Israel in the wilderness saw great marvels worked by the Lord their God and yet perished in unbelief. Pharaoh is a still more notable instance—what signs and wonders God worked in the fields of Zoan! How was the Nile crimsoned into blood and all Egypt filled with lamentation! The Lord turned the dust of the land into lice and the ashes into plagues! He brought up frogs into their chambers and locusts devoured their fields. He darkened the heavens at midday and deluged them with hail and rain such as the land had never seen before!

A grievous disease fell upon their cattle and death upon their first-born—yet all the wonders which God worked did not soften Pharaoh's heart and, though, for awhile he trembled, yet again he steeled himself against the God of Israel and said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" My Hearers, if you do not believe Moses and the Prophets. If you do not believe in Jesus Christ with the testimonies which are already before you, neither would you believe though one rose from the dead, or though all the plagues of Egypt should be repeated upon you with tenfold fury! There is no necessary connection between the seeing of wonders and the believing in God! We learn clearly from Pharaoh's case and from many others that all the displays of wonderful power, either of judgment or of mercy, do not beget faith in unbelieving hearts.

I come, this morning, to deal with a class of persons very commonly still among us—exceedingly common in all congregations where the Gospel its faithfully preached—whom I shall attempt to describe, in the first place, and then go on to deal with them as God shall help me.

I. First, then, I shall ask your attention while I DESCRIBE THE PERSONS who are an evil generation that seek after a sign. We have among us many individuals who are aware that they are sinners and are conscious of their guilt to such an extent as to be very uneasy as to their condition. They dearly perceive that sin will be punished by the Great Judge and they are much afraid of the wrath to come. They anxiously desire, moreover, to find salvation, and, having long listened to the Gospel, they are not ignorant of the way in which salvation is obtained. They understand the Gospel in the letter of it to the highest degree.

They are not unbelievers in any of the doctrines of the Gospel. They accept the Deity of Christ. They believe Him to be verily the Son of God. They believe that He died upon the Cross and offered Atonement for iniquity. They, moreover, know that this *atone-merit* is effectual for the putting away of transgressions and they are persuaded that if they had an interest in it, it would wash away their sins and would give them peace of mind. You will say to me, "Knowing all this, of course they are Believers in Christ." No, they are not. We are very hopeful of them but we are, at the same time, much alarmed about them.

They are not Believers, for they willfully persist in demanding some sign or wonder within themselves, or around themselves, before they will personally put their trust in the Lord Jesus. Having been taught all they have

been taught and accepting for the Truth of God all that they do accept, the logical inference would be that they trust in Christ and are saved—but illogical as their state is they still remain unbelievers, with all this belief about them—and they justify their remaining in unbelief by telling you that if they *felt* this, or if they *saw* that, or if this *happened*, or if the other thing *occurred*, then they would believe in Jesus, but not until then! They make different demands. There are some, and these are generally the most uneducated, who expect to experience remarkable dreams or to behold singular visions.

I am sometimes astonished that there should linger among our population, still, a notion that a certain kind of dream, especially if it is repeated a number of times and if it is so vivid as to remain upon the imagination for a long period, is an index of the Divine favor. Nothing can be more grossly untrue! Nothing can be more baseless and without the shadow of evidence to back it up! And yet many imagine that if they, I was about to say, suffered so grievously from indigestion that their sleep was spoiled by vivid dreams, then they could put their trust in Jesus Christ! The notion is so absurd, that if it is but mentioned to rational men they must ridicule it and yet I have known many who have been, and still are, slaves to this delusion!

Not very long ago, after preaching in a remote country village, I was earnestly sought for as a spiritual adviser by an importunate letter from a woman who ascribed to me much greater wisdom than I ever claimed to possess. I wondered what her spiritual difficulty was, and when I went to her house and found her very sick, I was saddened to find her the victim of a superstition in which, I fear, her minister had comforted and so confirmed her. She solemnly informed me that she had seen something standing at night at the foot of her bed. She was in hopes that it was our blessed Lord, but she could not see his head. As I knew so much of spiritual things, could I tell her who it was? I said I thought she must have hung up her dress on a peg on the wall at the foot of her bed and in the dark had mistaken it for an apparition.

Of course, that did not satisfy her. I fell at once in her estimation to the dead level of a very carnal-minded man, if not a scoffer, but I could not help it—I could not dally with such ridiculous superstition—I was obliged to tell her it was all nonsense for her to hope for salvation because she was silly enough to fancy that she saw Jesus with her bodily eyes, for the saving sight was a *spiritual* one. As to the question of the supposed apparition having a head or not, I told her if she would but use her own head and heart in meditating upon the Word of God, she would be in a far more hopeful condition.

There may have been, I will not deny it—for stranger things have happened—there may have been dreams and even apparitions which have aroused the conscience and so led to the commencement of spiritual life in some rare cases where God has chosen specially to interfere. But that

these are to be *looked for* and to be *expected* is a thing as far from the Truth of God as the east is from the west! What if you did see anything—or dream anything—what would that prove? Why, prove nothing whatever except that you were in an ill state of health and that your imagination was morbidly active. Put such things away—they are superstitions fit for Bushmen and Hottentots—but they are not fit for Christians of the 19th Century! I do but mention them, not because I think any of you may have fallen into them, but that you may deal with them always very rigidly wherever you meet with them.

They are superstitions not to be tolerated by Christian men, yet there are some who actually will not believe Christ's simple Gospel unless some such absurdity as this can be joined into it. God deliver you from such unbelief! Others we have met with who suppose that in order to be saved they must feel some very peculiar physical sensation. Now, that joy and peace of mind and the discovery of the Gospel when it for the first time flashes on the mind may produce extraordinary sensations in the body through the force of mental emotion, I do not doubt. But do, I pray you, remember that the Divine Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ has nothing to do with nerves and muscles and sinew and things to be seen and to be felt in the flesh. The operations of Grace are a mental, spiritual, work!

My dear Hearers, you must never imagine, when we talk about the *heart*, that we mean that central organ within us from which the blood circulates. We mean nothing which has to do with this fleshly organization—the work of the Holy Spirit concerns itself with the mind, the affections, the soul, the spirit, and His work is altogether *spiritual*. God forbid that you should look for any physical work, or strange affection of nerve and sinew, as some have talked of and others have looked for. You must not put physical contortions or sensations as a test before the Lord and say you will not believe in Him otherwise. These, I hope, are rare cases, but in very frequent instances I have met with people who will not believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of their souls because they have not *felt* wretched enough.

They have read in certain books of holy men who, when they were seeking a Savior, were broken in pieces under the ponderous hammer of the Law. They turn to such biographies and they find the subjects of them uttering language similar to the book of Job, or to the words of Jeremy in the Lamentations. Now these were good and holy men and the way by which they were led to Christ was a way trod by many feet, but these persons say, "Unless I can feel just this. Unless I can be led into despair. Unless I can be tempted to destroy myself. Unless I become so desponding that I am more fit for a lunatic asylum than to be in my own family, I *cannot* believe in Jesus Christ."

Ah, poor demented one, to *desire* misery and to make your own wretchedness and even your own unbelieving and wicked thoughts of God to be a kind of preparation for faith in Jesus Christ! It is a most insanelly

wicked thing and yet many, many, many persist in unbelief because they think they are not yet wretched enough! Running to the other extreme, I have met with others who would not simply trust Christ because they were not *happy* enough. They have heard of the Christian's joys and the peace, like a river, that evermore abides, and they have said, "If I could get this peace. If this deep calm ruled in my spirit, then I could believe." As much as to say, "If I saw the wheat full grown in the fields of my soul, then I would begin to sow"—whereas the sowing must *precede* the reaping! "If I had within me the flower in all its beauty and bloom, then I would begin to plant the root"—whereas the root must always *precede* the flower!

Peace of mind is the result of faith, but it demands that it shall be the *result* of faith before you can exercise faith. In truth, they come to God and ask for the wages *before* the work is begun! They demand peace before they will believe! Believe me, if any of you thus act willfully and strangely, you must not suppose that God will turn aside from His wise proceedings to gratify your whims. Ah, no! You may tempt the Lord, but He is not tempted of any man. What folly it is and yet folly as it is, how common is it on all sides! I have met with some who would not believe in Christ because they could not pray eloquently. "Oh," they have said, "if I could pray like So-and-So, to whom we have listened with the greatest pleasure at the Prayer Meetings, then I could put my trust in Christ and there would be some hope for me!"

Now, praying fluently is sometimes only the result of oratorical gifts and if you will never believe in Christ till you get oratorical gifts, then how foolish you are to shut yourself out from Heaven because you cannot play the orator! Because you cannot be a preacher, do you refuse to be a child of God? True, fluency in prayer may also be the result of great depth of piety, but do you expect to have a great depth of piety before you even have the beginning of Divine Grace in your soul? Before you will put your trust in Christ and become a babe in His family, you claim you must be a man six feet tall? Before you will learn the "A B C" of the language of Canaan, you declare that you must be able to sound its very hardest syllables and pronounce its most difficult sentences? That which is frequently the result of years of training and long habit of deep, solitary contemplation, you expect to leap into at once, or else you refuse to be saved?

O Madness, to what height will you not mount?! I have known others who must feel precisely like certain eminent saints have felt many years after their conversion, or else they cannot believe that they are saved. They will reach down the life of some holy man who had mastered his passions by long years of mortification—who had come to live near to God and whose life was the heavenly life on earth, and they will mentally vow—"I must be just like this *man*, or else I cannot believe in Jesus." They say, in fact, to the Heavenly Physician, "I am sick and ready to die, but, Good Physician, You must make me as strong as Samson at once, and on

the spot, or else I will not receive Your medicine”—just as if the perfect spiritual cure of the soul were not a lifelong work of Grace!

They expect to be made perfect in an instant, or they will not trust the ever faithful Savior. They look for the mature fruits of autumn in the early spring and even if they bear even so much as a bud or blossom, they must have the full ripe fruit or else they will not believe. Well, this is marvelous and truly, if there is anything amazing on earth beside the mercy of God it is the perversity of man, and the strange way in which unbelief will dare impudently to set up one demand after another as an excuse for rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have met this mischief at other times in a somewhat indescribable shape. “Sir,” says the young convert, “you tell me that if I simply put my trust in Jesus I shall be saved. But is not salvation a great mystery?” Our reply must honestly be, “No doubt it is.” Well, then, they determine to wait until they are the subjects of some singular *feeling*, some mysterious phenomenon within themselves. It is not to be denied that the work of Divine Grace by the Holy Spirit in the soul is the greatest of all mysteries, but it is never, also, to be forgotten that it is one of the grandest of all *simplicities*! The mysteries of the church of Rome are mock mysteries rendered dark by the veil which she casts over the Truth of God. By her incantations, her paraphernalia, her performances and her use of a strange tongue, that which is simple is darkened into a mimic mystery—for what is really in it is a plain *lie* for thoughtful men to laugh at!

This is a kind of mystery of which the Gospel knows nothing. The mysteries of regeneration are not artificial, but natural. Now all natural mysteries in the world are, from another point of view, clear simplicities. Light, we know what it is, we see it every day. It is the greatest of all mysteries, yet practically it is the most common of all simplicities. When the sun scatters the darkness, there is no mystery about it. Or when we light a candle, there is no need of wonder. Light is a wondrous mystery, yet to obtain it, the least educated need not go to school. The electric telegraph is practically, as a matter of every day use, so simplified that a lad may officiate at the instrument and yet it remains and ever will remain a mystery.

Understand that such is the mystery of regeneration. It is so mysterious that no one can explain it, but it is so simple that everyone that believes in Christ has experienced it already! It is so mysterious that if the most learned authors were composed to define it, all the writers in the world might fail in the definition. But it is such a simplicity that whoever believes in Jesus Christ is born of God. There is nothing mysterious about it, I was about to say, in the artificial meaning of that word “mystery.” The only mystery lies in the operation of the Holy Spirit whose coming and going we cannot comprehend. If you believe, you have felt the mystery! If you trust Jesus, you possess the mystery! All that is meant in regenera-

tion, all that is wrapped up in the work of the Holy Spirit actually belongs to every soul that has believed in Jesus Christ and in Him only!

But I know what it is, you will go to Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, but you will not come to the blood of Christ and wash and be clean! You will say, "I thought he would surely come and strike his hand over the place and call upon the name of the Lord his God and recover the leper," but you cannot accept the simple word, "Believe and live," so grand in its simplicity. The most of men reject the Gospel for that very reason of its simplicity. Signs and wonders they will still demand—something artificially mysterious their soul still craves after—but the naked grandeur of the sublime mystery of faith they cannot perceive. Their folly is clear enough to all men that have eyes.

I have just described the character and if any have felt themselves portrayed this morning, I hope they will prepare their hearts for what will follow and be willing to receive my Master's Word.

II. I shall now, secondly, show THE FOLLY OF SUCH CONDUCT. My dear Friend, I get you by the hand and look you in the face, anxiously desiring, as I do, that you may be saved this very morning. You are seeking a sign, one of these which I have described, or some other. You seek what is quite *unnecessary*. What do you need a sign for? You need, you say, a token of God's love. What token of God's love to you can ever be needed, now that He has given His only-begotten Son—first to live on earth and then to die in extreme pains, the Just for the unjust—"that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"?

I blush for you, that you should ask any token of God's love while Jesus Christ is before you—for herein is such love as nothing else can ever equal! What do you need a sign for? Why, to show, you say, that there is mercy for you. How do you need that? The very fact that you are alive shows how merciful God is! Had He been *unmerciful*, He would long ago have cut you down, for what are you but a cumberer of the ground, with your heart full of evil devices at this very moment, at enmity against Him? I know you are so, or otherwise you would not be so hard to lead to faith, yet are you spared by His mercy! Is not that proof enough?

And, moreover, the Gospel is preached to *you*. You are told that, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He must be a good God who lets you hear such a Gospel and who bids me plead with you, as though Christ pleaded with you, that you would lay hold of Him. Why, the Gospel itself is the greatest of signs and wonders! Why do you need more than that? "Oh," you say, "can the Gospel save me?" My dear Friend, you do not need any sign to prove that! You have your own relatives, your own sons and daughters who have been saved. You are a witness to what Divine Grace has done for them—what more evidence can you require? Remember the dying bed of your sainted mother! Remember the joyous departure of your brother, or your converted child! Evidently Grace did wonders for them. What more do you need to convince you?

Mark you, if you did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. If you did not believe that His blood could cleanse from sin, I might talk somewhat differently to you. But you *do* believe all this and I say, in the name of all that is reasonable, what makes you ask for any greater sign than the signs which God has already given you? You are seeking for altogether unnecessary things! You are also asking for *useless* signs. What evidence could there be now, for instance, in mere dejection of spirit? You want to feel miserable, you say—what evidence would that be of your salvation? It seems to me that you are like a man who should say that he would catch hold of a rope if he could sink so many fathoms deeper in the ocean, or that he would avail himself of a hospital if his disease were so much worse. How strange that a rational man should talk like this!

Despair is no help to faith. Sinful doubts cannot assist you to Christ—they may most effectually keep you from Him—

***“Why those fears, poor trembling Sinner?
Why those anxious, gloomy fears?
Doubts and fears can never save you,
Life is never won by tears!
'Tis believing,
Which the soul to Christ endears.
Tears, though flowing like a river,
Never can one sin efface.
Jesus' tears would not avail you—
Blood alone can meet your case.
Fly to Jesus!
Life is found in His embrace.”***

“Oh,” but you say, “I have desired to feel ecstatic joy!” But if you did, how could that help you to believe in Christ? Your joy might be no more than worldlings feel when their wealth increases. It might spring of mere excitement. It might all be based upon a lie and your joy might be your damnation! O Man, Christ is worthy of confidence, but your joys and your sorrows are not! They may be good or they may be bad, they may be hopeful or they may be delusive. Why do you look at *them*, or seek another foundation than God has laid? Your feelings are fickle things. Believe and live!

Are you not also seeking most *unreasonable* things? To ask a sign from God when He pledges His Word seems to me to be out of all reason. You are a beggar, remember, and we have an old proverb that beggars must not be choosers. Above all, how dare a beggar demand a sign before he will receive an alms? I am walking in the street and am accosted by a hungry man and if I offer him a loaf of bread, is he to refuse to take it unless I will fly in the air or help him to turn a stone into bread? “Let the man starve, Sir,” you will say, “if he is so unreasonable as to demand a sign.” And yet that is just like *you*! You will not take the mercy which the Gospel freely offers you, which God even commands you to accept—you will not take it unless some astonishing sign or wonder shall be worked in you!

Let your folly appear still further when I remind you that you are asking for *unpromised* signs. God has promised that everyone that believes in Jesus Christ shall live. He has promised to hear prayer. But He has *never* promised to give any one of you a sign or a wonder! And yet you will ask Him to give you a sign which He has never promised and dare not ask Him to give you eternal life which He *has* promised? Folly indeed! Some of you are seeking for *injurious* signs. That depression of spirit which some think would be such an encouragement to them, why it is even sinful! And how should I ask a sinful thing of God? To be distracted in my mind. To be so depressed and melancholy as to make myself and all my household miserable—is that a good thing? It is a great sin against God! And am I to ask God to give me this sign in order to help me to believe?

Thoughts of suicide! Why, my Brothers and Sisters, they are awful—they are not to be allowed! There is murder in them! He that even *thinks* of them has committed murder already in his heart! And are these terrible, these devilish things, to be helps to you to *believe*? Why, they would just drive you into Hell! How can they help you to Heaven? You are asking for that which would be your ruin. You ask for a scorpion. You ask for a stone. You ask for a serpent and then you think that after having all these evil things you would be more fit to receive the bread of the Divine blessing? God will deny you, I trust, what you so foolishly ask for. Oh, be content to be led in a gentler way! Be willing to be blown to Christ by the soft south wind—ask not for tempests! Be satisfied to be drawn by the cords of love! Demand not by the bands of a man—demand not whips and chains! Enquire not for the thunder and lightning of Sinai—be satisfied with the turtle-notes of Calvary—

***“Hark! the voice of Jesus calling,
‘Come, you laden, come to Me,
I have rest and peace to offer
Rest, poor laboring one, for you.
Take salvation,
Take it now and happy be.’
Life is found alone in Jesus,
Only there ‘tis offered you—
Offered without price or money,
‘Tis the gift of God sent free!
Take salvation,
Take it now and happy be.”***

Remember, my dear Hearers, that some of you who are not believing are seeking signs *which others have never had*. To give you an instance or two. There stood the prodigal son feeding the swine, so hungry that he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks. The thought crossed his mind, “I will arise and go unto my father.” What sign had he? He sets off to seek his father’s face. What sign had he, I say? There does not appear to have been even an *invitation* sent, but he sought his father and he found forgiveness. Take another case. Christ has likened seeking souls to the widow who sought help of the unjust judge. She cried to him. She

continued to cry to him until she gained her suit! But what sign had she? If any sign, it was all negative—all from the opposite quarter—yet on she went.

Look at the Canaanite woman. She desired that her daughter might be healed. What sign had she? Christ said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs.” Instead of a sign to help her it was a hard word to discourage her, but yet she won her suit! And why not you, my Hearers, why not you? The poor woman who touched the hem of Christ’s garment in the press of the crowd, what sign had she of His willingness to help her? It was her own earnest, intense desire and her faith in Jesus that made her touch the hem out of which the virtue came. Wait not, then, for signs to be given to you when they have not been given to others, but do as others have done and obtain the like blessing.

III. I shall now need a few minutes more and your very serious attention, while I now LAY BARE YOUR SINS, your grievous sins. My dear Hearers, in the first place, *you make God a liar*. Is not this the testimony of the Holy Spirit, “he that believes not has made God a liar”? How do we treat liars? If they tell us a thing, we say, “I am doubtful of it.” We need more evidence. Now, I feel persuaded that many of you respect even me so well that if I made a statement you would accept it without any further evidence.

But here is the Everlasting *God* who declares that whoever trusts His Son shall be saved and you practically give Him the lie—for if you believed what He testifies, since you want to be saved—you would surely trust His Son! But you practically say, “We do not believe it. We do not believe it! We need more evidence. We need a sign and a wonder.” You make God a liar. In the next place, *you insult God’s Sovereignty*. He has a right to give signs or not, as He wills, but you, as it were, say, “You shall give *me* a sign or else I will be damned. I will not have Your mercy if I cannot have it in *my own way*. Great God, I will not be saved unless I can feel as I want to feel. I have a whim in my mind as to how the work of Grace shall be worked, and if it begins not as I think best, I will sooner make my bed in Hell than accept Your Son.”

Is the preacher too hard on you? Ah, it is *love* that makes me hard! In truth, it is *you* who are hard with GOD! And hard with your own souls. O fling away this accursed pride of yours and kiss His silver scepter and say, “Lord, save me as You will. I believe, help You my unbelief.” I must tell you what is more—you are acting the part of an *idolater*. What does an idolater do? He says, “I cannot believe in an unseen God. I must have a golden calf or an image that I can see with my eyes and touch with my hands.” You say just the same. You cannot believe God’s naked Word—you demand something you can *feel*, something you can *see*. Sheer idolatry!

Do you not see it? You make your own feelings and emotions, or strange impressions, to be more worthy of trust than even God Himself!

You make them idols and put them into God's place. You, so far as you can, undiefy the Deity. O tremble at such a crime as this! Do you not see, moreover, that you *crucify the Savior*? Those who nailed His hands to the tree were not greater sinners, even if they were so great, as *you are* who say to Him, "Bleeding Savior, I believe that You have died on the Cross. I believe that Your blood could cleanse my sin, but I cannot trust You to do it. I have no confidence in You. I cannot, will not trust You. I trust my husband, but I cannot trust my Savior. I trust my child, but I cannot trust my God. I trust my minister, but I cannot trust the Son of God exalted in the highest heavens."

Why, this is crucifying Him—this is treating Him as a dog should be treated! I know not what can be worse than this! Nails in His hands are not more cruel than this mistrust of His deep love and His Divine power. "Ah," says one, "I do not mean *that*, but I need to *see* the work of the Holy Spirit in my soul." Ah, then, I have another charge to bring against *you*—you are wanting to trust in the *work of the Holy Spirit* instead of trusting in the work of Jesus Christ! There is no text in all the Bible which tells you to make the work of the Holy Spirit the foundation of your confidence! Nowhere is it set forth as the ground for a sinner's reliance! It occupies quite another place. If you try to put the work of the Spirit where the work of Christ should be, you grieve the Holy Spirit, for the very last thing that ever the Holy Spirit would do would be to supplant the Lamb of God!

It is His office and mission to *glorify* Christ! How, then, shall He supplant Him? When you say, "I cannot trust the blood, I cannot trust the righteousness of Christ. I must have something from the Holy Spirit to trust to," you do, as it were, try to make a clash between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ—and this grieves the Spirit to the last degree.

IV. Ah, I have thought over this subject carefully and I have tried to speak upon it earnestly, but I am conscious when I have done my best that you will go on in this folly and continue still in this sin. Yet I do pray the Holy Spirit that it may not be so, for now during the last few minutes I desire to show YOU YOUR DANGER as I have shown you your folly and sin. My dear Friends, you are in danger of death! You admit that, and now, suppose you die in the state you are in? Why, you are almost saved! You are awakened, you are aroused, you have many good desires, but a man who is only almost saved will be altogether damned!

There was a householder who almost bolted his door at night, but the thief came in. A prisoner was condemned to be hanged and was almost pardoned, but he hung on the gallows. A ship was almost saved from shipwreck, but she went to the bottom with all hands on board. A fire was almost extinguished, but it consumed a city. A man almost decided remains to perish in the flames of Hell! So is it with you unless you believe! All these things which you possess of good desire and emotion shall be of no service to you at all, for, "he that believes not shall be damned." Re-

member, Friend, you may be damned before the sun goes down today—the flames of Hell may enclose you before the sun shall gild another morning with his light.

O seek the Savior now while the Gospel message comes with fresh power on this Lord's-Day! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," for, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved."—

***"Soon that voice will cease its calling,
Now it speaks and speaks to you—
Sinner, heed the gracious message,
To the blood for refuge flee!
Take salvation,
Take it now and happy be."***

There is one other thing of which you are in danger, namely, that if you are spared for years to come, yet, through long procrastination your conscience may become seared as with a hot iron. If you believe this day, whatever you may have been, your sins are all forgiven you in a moment. If you do now look to Christ upon Calvary and trust your soul with Him, you shall now live, for—

***"There is life in a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for you."***

But if you will look to your good works, to your preparations, to your fears, to your joys—if, indeed—you look to *anything* but Christ, it may be the Holy Spirit will never strive with you again—your conscience will become hardened and you, being given up to your idols, will perish, utterly perish, under the sound of the Gospel—perish with the light of the Gospel shining on your eyeballs! Perish of the serpent bite while the bronze serpent is lifted high! Perish of thirst when the Water of Life runs rippling at your feet because you are not content to stoop down and take it as God presents it to you! O that you would this very day end these follies and these sins, believing in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit!—

***"Jesus, the eternal Son of God,
Whom seraphim obey,
The bosom of the Father leaves
And enters human clay."***

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 11:14-44.

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A GREATER THAN SOLOMON

NO. 1600

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 6, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"Behold, a greater than Solomon is here."
Luke 11:31.*

OUR first thought is that no mere man would have said this concerning himself unless he had been altogether eaten up with vanity, for Solomon was, among the Jews, the very ideal of greatness and wisdom. It would be an instance of the utmost self-conceit if any mere man were to say of himself—"A greater than Solomon is here." Any person who was really greater and wiser than Solomon would be the last man to claim such pre-eminence. A wise man would never think it; a prudent man would never say it! The Lord Jesus Christ, if we regard Him as a mere *man*, would never have uttered such an expression, for a more modest, self-forgetting man was never found in all our race.

View it on the supposition that the Christ of Nazareth was a mere man and I say that His whole conduct was totally different from the spirit which would have suggested an utterance like this—"A greater than Solomon is here." For men to compare themselves with one another is not wise and Christ was wise—it is not humble—and Christ was humble. He would not have spoken thus if there had not been cause and reason in His infinitely glorious Nature. It was because the Divinity within Him must speak out. For God to say that He is greater than all His creatures is no boast, for what are they in His sight? All worlds are but sparks from the anvil of His Omnipotence! Space, time, eternity—all these are as *nothing* before Him and for Him to compare or even to contrast Himself with one of His own creatures is supreme *condescension*, let Him word the comparison how He may!

It was the Divine within our Lord which made Him say and not even then with a view to exalt Himself, but with a view to point the moral that He was trying to bring before the people—"A greater than Solomon is here." He did as good as say, "The queen of the south came from a distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but *you* refuse to hear Me. She gave attention to a *man*, but you will not regard your *God*. You will not listen to the Incarnate Deity who tells you words of infinite, Infallible Wisdom." Our Lord Jesus is aiming at His hearers' good and where the motive is so disinterested there remains no room for criticism. He tells them that He is greater than Solomon to convince them of the greatness of their crime in refusing to listen to the messages of love with which His lips were loaded.

Foreigners came from afar to Solomon but, I, says Jesus, have come to your door and brought infinite wisdom into your very gates and yet you refuse Me. Therefore the queen of the south shall rise up in judgment against you, for, in rejecting Me, you reject a greater than Solomon.

The second thought that comes to one's mind is this—notice the self-consciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows *who* He is and *what* He is and He is not lowly in spirit because He is ignorant of His own greatness. He was meek and lowly in heart—"Servus servorum," as the Latins were known to call Him, "Servant of servants," but all the while He knew that He was Rex Regum, or King of Kings. He takes a towel and He washes His disciples' feet and all the while He knows that He is their Master and their Lord. He associates with publicans and harlots and dwells with the common people—and all the while He knows that He is the Only-Begotten of the Father.

He sits as a Child in the Temple listening to and asking questions of the rabbis. He stands among His disciples as though He were one of them, conversing with the ignorant and foolish of the day, seeking their good—and He knows that He is not one of them—He knows that He has nothing to learn from them. He knows that He is able to teach senates and to instruct kings and philosophers, for He is greater than Solomon. He wears a peasant's garb and has nowhere to lay His head and He knows that whatever the lowliness of His condition, He is greater than Solomon! He lets us perceive that He knows it, that all may understand the love which brought Him down so low. It is grand humility on Christ's part that He condescends to be our Servant, our Savior—when He is so great that the greatest of men are as nothing before Him!

"He counted it not robbery to be equal with God." Mark that. And yet "He made Himself of no reputation." Some people do not know their own worth and so, when they stoop to a lowly office it is no stoop to their minds, for they do not know their own abilities. They do not know to what they are equal. But Christ *did* know—He knew all about His own Deity, His own wisdom and greatness as Man. I admire, therefore, the clear understanding which sparkles in His deep humiliation like a gem in a dark mine. He is not one who stoops down according to the old rhyme—

"As needs be must who cannot sit upright,"

but He is one who comes down wittingly from His Throne of Glory, marking each step and fully estimating the descent which He is making. The cost of our Redemption was known to Him and He endured the Cross, despising the shame. Watts well sings—

***"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity never withdrew."***

Brethren, if our Savior, Himself, said that He was greater than Solomon, you and I must fully *believe* it, enthusiastically *admit* it and prepare to *proclaim* it! If others will not acknowledge it, let us be the more prompt to confess it. If He Himself had to say, before they would acknowledge it, "A greater than Solomon is here," let it not be necessary that the saying should be repeated, but let us all confess that He is, indeed, greater than Solomon! Let us go home with this resolve in our minds, that we will speak greater things of Christ than we have done! That we will try to love Him more, serve Him better and make Him in our own estimation and in the world's, greater than He has ever been. Oh for a glorious high throne

to set Him on and a crown of stars to place upon His head! Oh to bring nations to His feet!

I know my words cannot honor Him according to His merits—I wish they could. I am quite sure to fail in my own judgment when telling out His excellence. Indeed, I grow less and less satisfied with my thoughts and language concerning Him. He is too glorious for my feeble language to describe Him. If I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, I could not speak worthily of Him. If I could borrow all the harmonies of Heaven and enlist every harp and song of the glorified, yet were not the music sweet enough for His praises! Our glorious Redeemer is ever-blessed—let us bless Him! He is to be extolled above the highest heavens—let us sound forth His praises! Oh for a well-tuned harp! May the Spirit of God help both heart and lips to extol Him at this hour!

First, then, we shall try to draw a parallel between Jesus and Solomon. Secondly, we will break away from all comparisons and show where there cannot be any parallel between Christ and Solomon at all.

I. First, then, BETWEEN CHRIST AND SOLOMON there are some points of likeness. When the Savior Himself gives us a comparison, it is a clear proof that a likeness was originally intended by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, we may say without hesitation that Solomon was meant to be a *type* of Christ. I am not going into detail, nor am I about to refine upon small matters, but I shall give you five points in which Solomon was conspicuously like Christ and in which our Lord was greater than Solomon. O for help in the great task before me!

And, first, in wisdom. Whenever you talked about Solomon to a Jew, his eyes began to flash with exultation. His blood leaped in his veins with national pride. Solomon—that name brought to mind the proudest time of David's dynasty, the age of gold! Solomon, the magnificent, why, surely, his name crowns Jewish history with glory and the brightest beam of that glory is his wisdom! In the east, and I think I may say in the west, it still remains a proverb, "To be as wise as Solomon." No modern philosopher or learned monarch has ever divided the fame of the Son of David, whose name abides as the synonym of wisdom. Of no man since could it be said as of him, "And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart."

He intermeddled with all knowledge and was a master in all sciences. He was a naturalist—"And he spoke of trees, from the cedar trees that are in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall. He spoke, also, of beasts and of fowl and of creeping things and of fishes." He was an engineer and architect, for he wrote, "I made great works. I built houses. I planted vineyards—I made gardens and orchards and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits. I made pools of water, to water the wood that brings forth trees." He was one who understood the science of government—politician of the highest order. He was everything, in fact.

God gave Him wisdom and largeness of heart, says the Scripture, like the sand of the sea. "And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol,

and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame was in all nations round about." Yes, but our Savior knows infinitely more than Solomon! I want you, tonight, to come to Him just as the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon, only for weightier reasons. You do not need to learn anything concerning architecture or navigation, agriculture or anatomy. You only need to know how you shall be built up a spiritual house and how you shall cross those dangerous seas which lie between this land and the Celestial City!

Well, you may come to Jesus and He will teach you all that you need to know, for all wisdom is in Christ! Our Divine Savior knows things past and present and future—the secrets of God are with Him. He knows the inmost heart of God, for no one knows the Father except the Son and He to whom the Son shall reveal Him. To Him it is given to take the book of prophetic decree and loose the seven seals! Come, then, to Christ Jesus if you want to know the mind of God, for it is written that He, "is made unto us Wisdom." Solomon might have wisdom, but he could not *be* wisdom to others. Christ Jesus is that to the fullest! In the multifarious knowledge which He possesses—the universal knowledge which is stored up in Him—there is enough for your guidance and instruction even to the end of life, however intricate and overshadowed your path may be.

Solomon proved his wisdom, in part, by his remarkable inventions. We cannot tell what Solomon did *not* know. At any rate, no man knows, at this present moment, how those huge stones which have lately been discovered—which were the basis of the ascent by which Solomon went up to the house of the Lord—were ever put into their places. Many of the stones of Solomon's masonry are so enormous that scarcely could any modern machinery move them! And without the slightest cement they are put together so exactly that the blade of a knife could not be inserted between them! It is marvelous how the thing was done. How such great stones were brought from their original bed in the quarry—how the whole building of the temple was executed—nobody knows.

The castings in brass and silver are scarcely less remarkable. No doubt many inventions have passed away from the knowledge of modern times, inventions as remarkable as those of our own age. We are a set of savages that are beginning to learn something, but Solomon knew and invented things which we shall, perhaps, rediscover in 500 years time. By vehement exertion this boastful 19th Century, wretched century as it is, will crawl towards the wisdom which Solomon possessed ages ago! Yet is Jesus greater than Solomon! As for inventions, Solomon is no inventor at all compared with Him who said, "Deliver him from going down into the Pit, for I have found a ransom." O Savior, did You find out the way of our salvation? Did You bring into the world and carry out and execute the way by which Hell should be closed, and Heaven, once barred, should be set wide open? Then, indeed, are You wiser than Solomon!

You are the Deviser of salvation, the Architect of the Church, the Author and Finisher of our faith! Solomon has left us some very valuable books—the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the matchless Song. But, oh, the words of Solomon fall far short of the Words of Jesus Christ, for *they* are

spirit and life! The power of the Words of Jesus is infinitely greater than all the deep sayings of the Sage. Proverbial wisdom cannot match His sayings, nor can "The Preacher" rival His sermons! Even the Divine Song, itself, would remain without a meaning—an allegory never to be explained—if it were not that Christ, Himself, is the Sum and Substance of it! Solomon may sing of Christ, but Christ is the Substance of the song! He is greater than Solomon in His teachings, for His wisdom is from above and leads men up to Heaven! Blessed are they that sit at His feet!

Again, Solomon showed his wisdom in difficult judgments. You know how he settled the question between the two women concerning the child—many other puzzles Solomon solved and many other knots Solomon was able to untie. He was a great ruler and governor—a man wise in politics, in social economy and in commerce—wise in all human respects. But a greater than Solomon is present where Christ is! There is no difficulty which Christ cannot remove, no knot which He cannot untie, no question which He cannot answer. You may bring your hard questions to Him and He will answer them! And if you have any difficulty on your heart tonight, do but resort to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer and search His Word and you shall hear a voice as from the sacred oracle which shall lead you in the path of safety.

My point at this time, especially as we are coming to the Communion Table, is this—I want you that love the Lord Jesus Christ to believe in His infinite Wisdom and come to Him for direction. I fear that when you are in trouble, you half suppose that the great Keeper of Israel must have made a mistake. You get into such an intricate path that you say, "Surely my Shepherd has not guided me right." Never think so! When you are poor and needy, still say, "This, my poverty, was ordained by a greater than Solomon." What if you seem to be deprived of every comfort and you are brought into a strange and solitary way where you find no city to dwell in? Yet a Guide is near, and that Guide is not foolish—a greater than Solomon is here!

I think I look, tonight, into a great furnace. It is so fierce that I cannot bear to gaze into its terrible blaze for fear my eyes should utterly fail me and lose the power of sight through the glare of that tremendous flame. I turn aside, for the fury of its flame overpowers me. But when I am strengthened to look again, I see ingots of silver refining in the white heat and I note that the heat is tempered to the last degree of nicety. I watch the process to the end and I say, as I behold those ingots brought out all clear and pure, refined from all dross and ready for the heavenly treasury, "Behold, a greater than Solomon was in that furnace work!" So you will find it, O Sufferer! Infinite Wisdom is in your lot. Come, poor Child, do not begin to interfere with your Savior's better judgment, but let Him order all things. Do not let your little, "Know," ever rise up against the great knowledge of your dear Redeemer! Think of this when you wade in deep waters and comfortably whisper to yourself—"A greater than Solomon is here."

I have not time to enlarge and, therefore, I would have you notice, next, that our Lord Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon in wealth. This was one of the things for which Solomon was noted. He had great treasures—

he “made gold to be as stones, and as for silver it was little accounted of,” so rich did he become! He had multitudes of servants. I think He had 60,000 hewers in the mountains hewing out stones and wood, so numerous were the workmen he employed. His court was magnificent to the last degree. When you read of the food that was prepared to feed the court and of the stately way in which everything was arranged from the stables of the horses upwards to the ivory throne, you feel, like the queen of Sheba, utterly astonished, and say, “The half was not told me!”

But, oh, when you consider all the wealth of Solomon, what poor stuff it is compared with the riches that are treasured up in Christ Jesus! Beloved, He who died upon the Cross and was indebted to a friend for a grave—He who was stripped, even, to the last rag before He died—He who possessed no wealth but that of sorrow and sympathy, yet had about Him the power to make many rich and He has made multitudes rich—rich to all the intents of everlasting bliss! And, therefore, He must be rich Himself! Is He not rich who enriches millions? Why, our Lord Jesus Christ, even by a word, comforted those that were bowed down. When He stretched out His hand He healed the sick with a touch! There was a wealth about His every movement!

He was a full man, full of all that man could desire to be full of! And now, seeing that He has died and risen again, there is in Him a wealth of *pardoning* love, a wealth of *saving* power, a wealth of *intercessory* might before the Father’s Throne—a wealth of all things by which He enriches the sons of men and shall enrich them to all eternity! I want this Truth of God to come home to you! I want you to recognize the riches of Christ, you that are His people and, in addition, to remember the truth of our hymn—

**“Since Christ is rich can I be poor?
What can I need besides?”**

I wish we could learn to reckon what we are by what Christ is. An old man said, “I am very old. I have lost my only son. I am penniless and, worst of all, I am blind. But,” he added, “this does not matter, for *Christ* is not infirm! Christ is not aged! Christ has all riches and He is not blind! And Christ is *mine* and I have all things in Him.”

Could you not get hold of that, somehow, Brothers and Sisters? Will not the Holy Spirit teach you the art of appropriating the Lord Jesus and all that He is and has? If Christ is your Representative, why then, you are rich in Him! Go to Him to be enriched! Suppose I were to meet a woman and I knew her husband to be a very wealthy man and that he loved her very much? And suppose she were to say to me, “I am dreadfully poor. I do not know where to get raiment and food”? “Oh,” I would think, “this woman is out of her mind! If she has such a husband, surely she has only to go to him for all that she needs! And what if nothing is invested in her name? It is in *his* name and they are *one* and he will deny her nothing.” I would say to her, “My good woman, you must not talk in that fashion, or I will tell your husband on you.”

Well, I think that I shall have to say the same to you who are so very poor and cast down and yet are married to Jesus Christ! I shall have to tell your Husband on you, that you bring such complaints against Him,

for all things are yours, for you are Christ's and Christ is God's! I say to you, "lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees"—use the knees of prayer and the hands of faith and your estate will well content you. Do not think that you are married to Rehoboam who will beat you with scorpions, for you are joined to a greater than Solomon! Do not fancy that your heavenly Bridegroom is a beggar—all the wealth of eternity and infinity is His—how can you say that you are poor while all that He has is yours?

Now, thirdly, and very briefly, indeed. There was one point about Solomon in which every Israelite rejoiced, namely, that he was the prince of peace. His name signifies peace. His father, David, was a great warrior, but Solomon had not to carry on war. His power was such that no one dared to venture upon a conflict with so great and potent a monarch. Every man throughout Israel sat under his vine and fig tree and no man was afraid. No trumpet of invader was heard in the land. Those were halcyon days for Israel when Solomon reigned! Ah, but in that matter, too, a greater than Solomon is here—for Solomon could not give his subjects peace of *mind*. He could not bestow upon them rest of *heart*. He could not ease them of their burden of *guilt*, or draw the arrow of conviction from their breast and heal its smart.

But I preach to you tonight that blessed Man of Sorrows who has worked out our Redemption and who is greater than Solomon in His peace-giving power! Oh, come and trust Him! Then shall your "peace be as a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea." Am I addressing one of God's people who is sorely troubled, tumbled up and down in his thoughts? Brother or Sister, do not think that you must wait a week or two before you can recover your peace! You can become restful in a *moment*, for, "He is our peace"—even Jesus, Himself, and He alone! And, oh, if you will but take Him at once, laying hold upon Him by the hands of faith as your Savior, this Man shall be your peace even when the Assyrian shall come into the land!

There is no peace like the peace which Jesus gives—it is like a river—deep, profound, renewed, always flowing, overflowing, increasing and widening into an ocean of bliss. "The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind, through Jesus Christ." Oh, come to Him! Come to Him at this moment! Do not remain an hour away from your Noah, or rest, for with Him in the ark, your weary wings shall be tired no longer! You shall be safe and restful the moment you return to Him! The fruit of the Spirit is JOY. I want you to get that joy and to enter into this peace! Blessed combination, joy and peace! Peace, peace—there is music in the very word! Get it from Him who is the Word and whose voice can still a storm into a calm! A greater than Solomon is here to give you that peace! Beat the sword of your inward warfare into the plow-share of holy service. No longer sound an alarm, but blow the trumpet of peace in this the day of peace.

A fourth thing for which Solomon was noted was his great works. Solomon built the Temple which was one of the seven wonders of the world in its time. A very marvelous building it must have been, but I will

not stop to describe it, for time fails us. In addition to this he erected for himself palaces, constructed fortifications and made aqueducts and great pools to bring streams from the mountains to the various towns. He also founded Palmyra and Baalbec—those cities of the desert—to facilitate his commerce with India, Arabia and other remote regions. He was a marvelous man! Earth has not seen his like. And yet a greater than Solomon is here, for Christ has brought the Living Water from the Throne of God right down to thirsty men, being Himself the eternal Aqueduct through which the heavenly current streams!

Christ has built fortresses and munitions of defense behind which His children stand secure against the wrath of Hell! And He has founded and is daily finishing a wondrous Temple, His Church, of which His people are the living stones, fashioned, polished, rendered beautiful—a Temple which God, Himself, shall inhabit, for He “dwells not in temples made with hands, that is to say, of this building”—but He dwells in a Temple which He, Himself, does build, of which Christ is Architect and Builder, Foundation, and chief Cornerstone! And Jesus builds for eternity, an *everlasting* Temple and, when all visible things pass away and the very ruins of Solomon’s temple and Solomon’s aqueduct are scarcely to be discerned, what a sight will be seen in that New Jerusalem!

The 12 courses of its foundations are of precious stones! Its walls dressed with rare diamonds! Its streets are paved with gold and its glory surpasses that of the sun! I am but talking figures, poor figures, too, for the Glory of the City of God is *spiritual* and where shall I find words with which to depict it? There, where the Lamb, Himself, is the Light and the Lord God, Himself, does dwell there—the whole edifice, the entire New Jerusalem—shall be to the praise and the glory of His Grace who gave Jesus Christ to be the Builder of the house of His Glory, of which I hope we shall form a part forever and ever!

Now, if Christ does such great works, I want you to come to Him, that He may work in you the work of God! That is the point. Come and trust Him at once! Trust Him to build you up. Come and trust Him to bring the Living Water to your lips. Come and trust Him to make you a Temple of the living God! Come, dear child of God, if you have great works to do, come and ask for the power of Christ with which to perform them! Come, you that would leave some memorial to the honor of the Divine name—come to Him to teach and strengthen you! He is the wise Master Builder—come and be workers together with Christ. Baptize your weakness into His infinite strength and you shall be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. God help you to do it!

Once more I draw the parallel upon the fifth point and I have done with it. Solomon was great as to dominion. The kingdom of the Jews was never anything like the size before or after that Solomon made it. It appears to have extended from the river of Egypt right across the wilderness far up to the Persian Gulf. We can scarcely tell how far Solomon’s dominions reached. They are said to have been “from sea to sea and from the river even unto the ends of the earth.” By one mode or another, he managed to bring various kings into subjection to him and he was the greatest mon-

arch that ever swayed the scepter of Judah. But it is now all gone. Poor, feeble Rehoboam, dropped from his foolish hands the reins his father held. The kingdom was torn in pieces, the tributary princes found their liberty and the palmy days of Israel were over.

On the contrary, our Lord Jesus Christ, at this moment has dominion over all things! God has set Him over all the works of His hands. Yes, shout it out among the heathen that the Lord reigns! The feet that were nailed to the tree are set upon the necks of His enemies! The hands that bore the nails sway, at this moment, the scepter of all worlds—Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords! Hallelujah! Let universal Sovereignty be ascribed to the Son of Man—to Him who was “despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Tell all, you saints, for your own comfort! The Lord reigns! Let the earth rejoice! Let the multitude of the isles be glad! Everything that happens in Providence is still under His sway and the time is coming when a moral and spiritual kingdom will be set up by Him which shall encompass the whole world!

It does not look like it, does it? All these centuries have passed away and little progress has been made. Ah, but He comes—and when He comes, or *before* He comes He shall overturn, overturn, overturn—for it is His right and God will give it to Him. And, as surely as God lives, unto Him shall every man bow the knee, “and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Do not be afraid! Do not measure difficulties, much less tremble at them! What is faith made for but to believe that which seems impossible? To expect universal dominion for Christ when everything goes well is but the expectation of reason! But to expect it when everything goes ill is the triumph of Abrahamic confidence! Look upon the great mountain and say, “Who are you, O great mountain? Before the true Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.”

In the blackest midnight, when the ebony darkness stands thick and hard as granite before you, believe that at the mystic touch of Christ, the whole of it shall pass away—and at the brightness of His rising the eternal light shall dawn, never to be quenched! This is to act the part of a Believer and I ask you to act that part and believe to the fullest in Christ the Omnipotent! Why this stunted faith in an almighty arm? What a fidget we are in and what a worry seizes us if a little delay arises! Everything has to be done in the next 10 minutes or we count our Lord to be late! Is this part of wisdom? The Eternal has infinite leisure—who are we that we should hasten Him?—

***“His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour.”***

A day is long to us, but a thousand years to Him are but as the twinkling of a star! Oh, rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, for the time shall come when the God of Israel shall put to rout His adversaries and the Christ of the Cross shall be the Christ of the Crown! We shall one day hear it said—The great Shepherd reigns and His unsuffering kingdom now has come. Then rocks and hills and vales and islands of the sea shall all be vocal with the one song, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor and glory and power and dominion and might forever and ever!”

Thus I have tried to draw the parallel, but I pray you to see the Lord Jesus for yourself and know whether I have spoken the truth about Him. You have heard the report. Now, like the queen of Sheba, go and see for yourself! Get to Christ! As to His dominion—come under His sway and acknowledge His scepter! Go and trust your King! Love your King! Praise your King! Delight in your King! How courtiers delight to be summoned to court! How glad they are to see the queen's face. How pleased they are if she gives them but a kindly word! Surely, their fortune is made, or at least their hopes are raised and their spirits lifted up. Shall we not sun ourselves in the Presence of the blessed and only Potentate? Let us come into the Presence of our King tonight, or else let us sit here and weep! Let us come to His table to feed upon Him. Let us live on His Word. Let us delight in His love and we shall surely say, "A greater than Solomon is here."

II. I shall not detain you longer than a minute or two while I remark that we must rise beyond all parallels if we would reach the height of this great argument, for BETWEEN CHRIST AND SOLOMON THERE IS MUCH MORE CONTRAST THAN COMPARISON—much more difference than likeness. In His Nature, the Lord Jesus is greater than Solomon. Alas, poor Solomon! The strongest man that ever lived, namely Samson, was the weakest of men—and the wisest man that ever lived was, perhaps, the greatest—certainly the most conspicuous—fool! How different is our Lord! There is no infirmity in Christ, no folly in the Incarnate God. The backsliding of Solomon finds no parallel in Jesus, in whom the prince of this world found nothing, though he searched Him through and through.

Our Lord is greater than Solomon because He is not mere man. He is Man, *perfect* Man, Man to the utmost of manhood, sin excepted! But still, He is more and infinitely more, than man. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is God, Himself. "The Word was God." God dwells in Him and He, Himself, is God! As in Nature He was infinitely superior to Solomon and not to be compared with him for a moment, so was He in Character. Look at Christ and Solomon for a minute as to real greatness of character and you can hardly see Solomon with a microscope—while Christ rises grandly before you, growing every moment till He fills the whole horizon of your admiration!

Principally let me note the point of self-sacrifice. Jesus lived entirely for other people. He had never a *thought* about Himself. Solomon was, to a great extent, wise unto himself, rich unto himself, strong unto himself and you see in those great palaces and in all their arrangements that he seeks his own pleasure, honor and emolument. And, alas, that seeking of pleasure leads him into *sin* and that sin into a still greater one! Solomon, wonderful as he is, only compels you to admire him for his greatness, but you cannot admire him for his *goodness*. You see nothing that makes you *love* him—you rather tremble before him than feel gladdened by him.

Oh, but look at Christ! He does not have a thought for Himself. He lives for others! How grandly magnificent He is in disinterested love. "He loved His Church and gave Himself for it." He pours out His heart's blood for the good of men and, therefore, dear Friends, at this moment our blessed Lord is infinitely superior to Solomon in His influence. Solomon has little or no

influence today. Even in his own time he never commanded the influence that Christ had in His deepest humiliation! I do not hear of any that were willing to die for Solomon—certainly nobody would do so now. But how perpetually is enthusiasm kindled in ten thousand breasts for Christ! They say that if there were stakes again in Smithfield we should not find men to burn on them for Christ. I tell you, it is not so! The Lord Jesus Christ has, at this moment, a remnant according to the election of His Grace who would fling themselves into a pit of fire for Him—and rejoice to do it!

“Who shall separate us”—even us poor pigmies—“from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” “Oh,” says one, “I do not think I could suffer martyrdom!” You are not yet called to do so, my Brother, and God does not give you strength to do it before the need arises. But you will have strength enough if ever it comes your lot to die for Jesus. Did you hear of the martyr who, the night before he was to be burnt, sat opposite the fire and, taking his shoes off, he held his feet close to the flame till he began to feel the burning of them? He drew them back and said, “I see God does not give me power to bear such suffering as I put upon myself, but I have, none the less, no doubt,” he said, “that I shall very well stand the stake tomorrow morning and burn quick to the death for Christ without starting back.” And so he did, for he was noticed never to stir at all while the flames were consuming him.

There is a great deal of difference between your strength, today, and what your strength would be if you were called to some tremendous work or suffering. My Lord and Master, let me tell you, wakes more enthusiasm in human breasts at this moment than any other name in the universe! Napoleon once said, “I founded a kingdom upon force and it will pass away. But Christ founded a kingdom upon love and it will last forever and ever.” And so it will. Blot out the name of Christ from the hearts of His people? Strike the sun from the firmament and quench the stars! And when you have achieved that *easy* task, yet have you not *begun* to remove the Glory of the indwelling Christ from the hearts of His people!

Some of us delight to think that we bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. “Where?” asks one. I answer, it is all over us. We have been buried into His name and we belong to Him in spirit, soul and body. That watermark which denotes that we are His can never be taken out of us! We are dead with Him, wherein we were buried with Him and are risen again with Him! And there is nothing at this moment that stirs our soul like the name of Jesus. Speak for yourselves! Is it not so? Have you never heard of one who lay dying, his mind wandering and his wife said to him, “My Dear, do you not know me?” He shook his head and they brought near his favorite child. “Do you not know me?” He shook his head. One whispered, “Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?” and he said, “He is all my salvation and all my desire.”

Oh, blessed name! Blessed name! Some years ago I was away from this place for a little rest and I was thinking to myself, “Now I wonder whether I really respond to the power of the Gospel as I should like to do? I will go and hear a sermon and see.” I would like to sit down with you in the pews,

sometimes, and hear somebody else preach—not everybody, mark you—for when I hear a good many, I want to be doing it myself. I get tired of them if they do not glow and burn. But that morning I thought I would drop into a place of worship such as there might be in the little town. A poor, plain man, a countryman, began preaching about Jesus Christ.

He praised my Master in very humble language, but he praised Him most sincerely. Oh, and the tears began to flow. I soon laid the dust all round me where I sat and I thought, “Bless the Lord! I do love Him!” It only needs somebody else to play the harp instead of me and my soul is ready to dance to the heavenly tune! Only let the music be Christ’s sweet, dear, precious name and my heart leaps at the sound! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, sound out the praises of Jesus Christ! Sound out that precious name! There is none like it under Heaven to stir my heart! I hope you can all say the same. I know you can if you love Him, for all renewed hearts are enamored of the sweet Lord Jesus. “A greater than Solomon is here.” Solomon has no power over your hearts, but Jesus has. His influence is infinitely greater. His power to bless is infinitely greater and so let us magnify and adore Him with all our hearts.

Oh, that all loved Him! Alas that so many do not! What strange monsters! Why, if you do not love Christ, what are you? You hearts of stone, will you not break? If His dying love does not break them, what will? If you cannot see the beauties of Jesus, what *can* you see? You blind bats! O you that know not the music of His name, you are deaf! O you that do not rejoice in Him, you are dead! What are you, that you are spared through the pleading of His love and yet do not love Him? God have mercy upon you and bring you to delight yourselves in Christ and trust Him!

As for us who *do* trust Him, we mean to love Him and delight in Him more and more, world without end. Amen.

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THE EYE AND THE LIGHT

NO. 2109

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 13, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"No man, when he has lighted a candle, puts it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

The light of the body is the eye: therefore when your eye is single, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is evil, your body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in you is not darkness. If your whole body therefore is full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle does give you light."

Luke 11:33-36.

IN this parable, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Light. Some saw His brightness, and were even dazzled by it, as was that woman who cried, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the paps which You have sucked." The malicious saw not His light but even dared to impute His miracles to the Prince of Darkness. Others professed to see so little light in Him that they demanded a sign from Heaven. Our Lord's constant answer was to go shining on.

He was meant to be observed, even as a lamp is intended to be seen. A lamp is not lighted to be placed in a cellar, nor to be hidden under a bushel—the lamp is lighted on purpose, that all who come into the house may see the light. Even so, our Lord Jesus Christ could not be hid. In the narrow circle of the Holy Land, He shone so clearly that Gentiles came to the brightness of His rising. Yet, to make Him seen to the ends of the earth, He must be set on the lamp stand.

He was lifted up by crucifixion. And soon after He was raised by resurrection—He was lifted up from earth to Heaven at His ascension and in another sense He was set on high by the descent of the Holy Spirit and the widespread ministry of His servants. Our Lord was thus taken from under the bushel of the obscurity which attached to His humble origin, brought away from the dark cellar of the despised Jewish nation, and set out in the open, where Greek and Roman, Barbarian and Scythian, might rejoice in His light. It is our duty to keep His name and His Truth ever before the world, waiting for the time when every eye shall see Him on the throne of His Glory.

Our Lord would have all men behold the light of His Gospel. For the text says, "that they which come in may see the light." Whosoever comes into the Church, or even into the world, should be met with this lamp. For this Gospel is to be preached to every creature under Heaven. The mighty deeds of His salvation were not done in a corner—they are for world-wide observation. He that has eyes to see let him see. If you do not see Jesus, it is not because He has hidden Himself in darkness but because your eyes are blinded.

The light which streams from the face of Jesus is meant for human eyes—the tempered brightness of the Mediator’s Glory suits those eyes, which are bid to look to Him and live. Light is not for the rich, the wise, the strong—but for men as men. The doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ are not meant to be the monopoly of a few learned doctors. They are the common inheritance of those who labor and are heavy laden. As the morning breaks for all weary, watching eyes, so shines the light of the glorious Gospel for all who sit in darkness and long for the light of God.

Beloved, the great thing to be desired is that the light which is so freely given forth by the Lord Jesus may become light within our souls. There He stands, as the lamp placed upon the lamp stand, conspicuous to all. But we need that the light outside in the room may become light inside, within the soul. Nothing more truly needs light than our inner man. We are, by nature, as a lantern with the candle blown out. Whether we will believe it or not, by nature we are in thick Egyptian night. Well says the Apostle, “You were sometimes darkness.”

Much is said about the light of conscience but in many this is but a glimmering taper whose beams are “not light but darkness visible.” The light of nature is dimmed by so many surroundings, and has so little oil to sustain it, that it leads no man to eternal life, unless there is added to it light from Above—the light of Divine Grace, the clear shining of the Holy Spirit.

Light is absolutely essential to spiritual life. Ignorance is not the mother of devotion but of superstition. Knowledge, Divine Grace, the Truths of God, are the nurses of true faith. The light of God is needful to the life of God. We must know Christ, we must be illuminated by His Holy Spirit, we must have fellowship with the Father’s Truth—or else we are dead—as well as dark. Light within we must have, or the light outside will not benefit us.

Upon that subject we will speak at this time. May God grant us the light of His Spirit, for it would be idle for us to try to explain the action of light while ourselves in darkness. Shine within, O Holy Spirit, that we speak not of theory but of actual experience!

First, we will consider how the light enters—“The light of the body is the eye: therefore when your eye is single, your whole body also is full of light.” Secondly, we shall note how this light may be perverted—“When your eye is evil, your body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in you is not darkness.” In conclusion, we shall observe how the light acts within—“If your whole body therefore is full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle does give you light.”

I. First, then, consider HOW THE LIGHT ENTERS THE SOUL. Into the body the light enters through the eye. A man without an eye might as well be without the sun, so far as light is concerned. The eye is as needed as the lamp, if a man is to see. The most brilliant light that ever has been invented, or ever can be discovered, will be of no use to the person who has no eye.

Therefore it is true, "The light of the body is the eye." It is most important to attend to that which is the eye of the inner man. For in vain does Christ Himself shine if His light cannot enter our souls. The condition of the eye of the mind is of the utmost importance—our light or our darkness will depend upon it. The eye of the soul may be viewed as the understanding, the conscience, the motive, or the heart. It would not be possible to confine it to any one of these names. I venture to call it, "the intent of the mind."

Or, if you will, "the aim of the heart," the honesty of the understanding. When God has given a man a true intent to see the light of the Gospel, He has in that honest intent furnished him with an eye for the heavenly light. If the Holy Spirit makes us truly willing to know the Truth of God, He has cleared the mental eye. The worst of it is that men have no will to see the light of God—their foolish heart is darkened, and therefore they do not understand, but altogether misrepresent the doctrine of the Lord Jesus.

The battle of Divine Grace is with man's unwillingness to see those Truths of God against which he is naturally at enmity. If a man wills to see the honest Truth and submits himself to the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, he will not be left in darkness. When a man does not want to see, he cannot see—when he is determined not to learn, when Truth is unpalatable to him, when he designedly twists it from its meaning, then his eye is diseased and the light is hindered from its due effect.

Many things darken the eye of the soul. One of the most common is prejudice. The man conceives that he already has light. His father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather and previous generations—were brought up in a certain religion—and therefore it must be right. Whether the lamp gives light or not, is not the question—it is the *family* lamp—and he will have no other. He will not enquire—he is quite sure and wants no evidence.

When the light of God comes to him, he at once repels it. He cannot be disturbed, and therefore he will not hear, nor read, nor consider the matter—he is satisfied to let things be as they are. The very supposition that he may be wrong he regards as an insult—maliciously invented by an uncharitable mind. What is to be done with one so blinded? Are there not many such?

Sloth, too, is a great blinder of the eye—it draws down the eyelid and shuts out the light by the spirit of slumber. The man does not care what the Gospel is, or is not. Like Pilate, he asks, "What is truth?" but he never waits for an answer. It is too much trouble to some people to think, to search the Scriptures, and to pray. They have no heart for a process so troublesome. "No," says the worldling, "I have other fish to fry. I go my way to my farm and to my merchandise. Let graceless bigots fight about creeds and the like. It matters not one jot what a man believes." Thus do many abide in the blackest darkness, because it is too much trouble to open the shutters and draw up the blinds. Ah me, how dark are they who prefer an indolent ease to the light of God!

The light is often shut out by gross error. I cannot go over the list of the favorite errors of the present hour. For that list has grown too long for one

day's reading. Speciously taught in selected phrases, cunningly supported by a dreamy science and adorned with certain great names, errors come to us nowadays as respectable forms of thought. Falsehoods of which we heard when we were children—but only heard of them as loathsome heresies—long ago decayed and thrown into the limbo of worthless and mischievous imaginations—are now refashioned, freshened up with touches of bright color and brought out as advanced ideas.

When any of these are permitted to occupy the mind, as they so commonly do nowadays, the old Gospel is no longer seen, because the eye is inflamed by the incoming of a foreign and irritating substance. Can it be that what was true a hundred years ago, is not true now? Can it be that the Gospel, which saved souls in the days of the Apostles, cannot save souls now? Is it so, that some men are wiser than God and are qualified to sit in judgment upon Prophets and Apostles? Surely, judicial blindness has

happened to this generation—the chaff of their own folly has darkened their eyes and Christ is hid from them.

One thing darkens the eye more than any other, and that is the love of sin. Nine times out of ten, allowed sin is the cataract which darkens the mental eye. Men cannot see the Truth of God because they love falsehood. The Gospel is not seen because it is too pure for their loose lives and lewd thoughts. Christ's holy example is too severe for the worldly. His Spirit is too pure for lovers of carnal pleasure. When people reject the doctrines of the Gospel, they also tolerate laxity of morals and give predominance to the customs of the world. How can men see, when sin has pricked the very eyeballs of the mind!

“How can you believe,” said Christ, “which receive honor one of another?” The love of worldly honor prevented the Pharisees from believing in the lowly Messiah. When sin, like a handful of mud, seals up the eye, you need not wonder that the man becomes an agnostic, a doubter, a caviler. To have a clear eye one must have a clean heart. The pure in heart shall see God. And therefore the pure in heart see God's Truth, so as to appreciate it and delight in it. Oh, that the Spirit of God may wash the filth out of our eyes, that we may walk in the light, as God is in the light.

Pride, too, is a great darkener of the soul's eye. When a man admires himself he never adores God. He that is taken up with the conceit of his own righteousness will never see the righteousness of Christ. If you believe yourself to be pure, you will never prize the blood which cleanses from all sin. If you believe yourself to be already perfect, you will not prize the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. No man cries for Divine Grace till he perceives his own need of it—if, therefore, we are puffed up with the notion that we

are rich and increased in goods, we shall never see the riches of Grace which are treasured up in Christ Jesus. The light of God dwells not with human self-sufficiency. A man's own shadow is very often the means of keeping him in the dark.

Self-seeking, in every form, is a sad cause of obscuring the light of the soul. Self-seeking, in the grosser form of avarice, makes men grope in the

daytime. The glitter of gold is injurious to the eye. How could Judas see the beauty of Christ when he saw such value in the thirty pieces of silver? How can a man set store by a future Heaven when a present fortune is Heaven enough for him? Mammon repays its worshippers with blind eyes.

Self does the same when it appears as ambition, desire of honor, and respect, or a wish to have a finger in one's own salvation. The proud desire to share the glory of our salvation with Free Grace prevents the entrance of the light of God. Self, in the form of magnifying the nobility of human nature, extolling the grandeur of our common humanity and all that, is a very blinding thing. How can a man that has his eye upon self have any sight for Jesus? Of all antichrists, self is the hardest to overcome.

It is written, "He must increase but I must decrease." But if proud self will not endure a decrease, how can I see Christ increasing? There is no room for Him in my heart. Appreciation of self leads to depreciation of the Lord Jesus.

Multitudes are kept in darkness through fear of men. They dare not see. They feel bound to think as the fashion goes—and there is a fashion of opinions as well as of coats and bonnets. If you resolve to hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints, you will be regarded as antiquated and you will be as much pointed out for your faith, as you would be for your dress if you should walk down the street in the costume of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

To many it would be great sin to be singular. They never think for themselves. In fact, they are mentally shiftless. They ask their way of a certain person supposed to be a deeper student than themselves—of him they enquire what they ought to believe, disbelieve, praise, or blame. I remember well a man who never knew whether he liked a sermon till he had asked a certain knowing old gentleman whether it was a good one or not—he had no home-grown judgment—he imported his ideas. His brains, for safe keeping, were placed in another person's head—this is a very convenient thing and saves a good deal of headache.

But it has its drawbacks. Some persons put all their thinking out and have it done for them by the dozen—but he that would have God's light knows that it comes not to the coward who fears the frown of a mortal and makes *man* his god. God could have given to the crowd a common judgment and have left us to be guided by a central authority, if He had thought it right to do so. But having given to each individual an understanding, He expects us to use it and to an honest personal use of understanding He gives the light.

The eye of the sparrow or of the ant may be very small, yet it sees the great light, if it is a single and clear eye. Pray, then, for Divine Grace, that you may search out for yourselves the Truth of God, free from the fear of man which brings a snare. Let us never enquire, "Have any of the rulers believed?" Whether the rulers have or have not believed, let us follow the Lamb wherever He goes and rejoice in that pure light which flows from Him.

God save you, dear Friends, from having your eye injured by any of the mischiefs I have mentioned. There are legions more of these blinding things—may Divine Grace guard you from them! God give you a “single eye,” by which is meant an eye which does not look at two things at a time—a mind which is free from sinister motives and from anything which would cause you to choose falsehood rather than the Truth of God and wrong rather than right.

God grant that we may have a desire to be right, a resolute design to know the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, and to feel and act in sincere conformity to it! Oh, to be sincere, simple-hearted, child-like and true! We want neither great genius nor sparkling wit—we need an unsophisticated mind—for so the light gets entrance into the soul through the Spirit of God.

II. Secondly, let us consider HOW THE LIGHT MAY BE PERVERTED. Some men might have light enough but their eye is in such an evil condition that the light is turned into darkness. I suppose that in the natural world light could not actually become darkness. But in the spiritual kingdom it is certainly so—“When your eye is evil, your body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in you be not darkness.” Harken, my Brothers and Sisters and take heed.

A man has heard the Gospel of Free Grace and dying love—he has heard a message full of love concerning the forgiveness of sin and pardon bought with blood and freely given to him that believes. The doctrine of justification by faith has been clearly explained to him. He believes firmly in these great evangelical Truths and calls them glorious and precious. But he draws an inference from this teaching which is ruinous to his soul. He considers that, after all, sin is of small consequence and he may indulge in it freely, for God is merciful and Divine Grace is infinite.

At some time or other he will repent and believe in Jesus and then he will be set right, however grossly he may have offended. God is gracious, and therefore, he may be sinful—God freely forgives—and therefore he may recklessly offend. This is to turn light into darkness. Such turning of the Grace of God into lasciviousness is infamous. Words cannot set forth the hideous ingratitude of such depraved arguments. We may justly say of a man who thus turns light into darkness, “his damnation is just.”

Yet no doubt there are many such who silently, in their own hearts, draw from the goodness of God a license to sin. Ah, my Hearer! If your eye is in this condition, the more freely we preach to you the Gospel of the Grace of God, the more surely will you go from sin to sin. This is terrible. O false Hearts! What shall I do with you? You make me wish to be dumb, lest I minister to your condemnation.

In the lowest Hell you are digging for yourselves a deeper Hell—you use the promises of mercy as the instruments of your own destruction. What? Can you hang yourselves nowhere but on the Cross? Can you drown yourselves nowhere but in the waters of Siloah? What has come to you, that you are so infatuated as to find your *death* in the Gospel which is ordained for *life*?

Let me set before you another form of this evil. A man perceives the great value of the means of Divine Grace, but he goes further and misuses them. Having been brought up religiously, he has a deep respect for the ministers of God's House, for the services of the sanctuary, and especially for the two ordinances which Christ has established in His Church—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. He reverences the Sabbath, and the inspired Word, and the Church and all its sacred ministries. But it may be that he proceeds from a due regard of these things to a superstitious trust *in* them, making of them what God has never made of them—thus his light becomes darkness.

He regards attendance upon public worship as a substitute for inward religion. He looks upon membership with a Church as a certificate of salvation. He may be so foolish as to speak of Baptism as an ordinance whereby he was made a member of Christ and a child of God. And of the Supper of the Lord as a saving ordinance, or even as a sacrifice for the quick and dead. When instructive symbols are perverted into instruments of priest-craft, the light is turned into darkness. By multitudes, in these days, aids to faith are degraded into the machinery of superstition.

The Church, which is our mother and nurse, is made into an antichrist and men look to *her* for salvation instead of looking wholly and alone to the Lord Jesus Christ. Outward modes of worship and instruction may be very beneficial, but if they are allowed to usurp the confidence of the soul, they may gender disease and death. When a man's religion becomes his destruction, how sure is that destruction!

I have known many go another way—they have said, "I care very little about the shape or form of religion. A sincere spirit is everything. The letter kills, the spirit gives life." Such a man professes to clutch at the soul of things but I have seen him grow indifferent in creed and licentious in life. He believes everything to have some measure of truth in it—every evil practice to have some good point about it. This is a poisonous atmosphere for any man to breathe. Hear him talk, if you would see how the worse can be made to seem the better. Nothing to him is fixed truth, nor even settled right.

He is like the chameleon, which takes its color from the changing light about it. This he calls "liberty." But assuredly it is not the liberty where-with Christ makes men free. Say, rather, it is the light of charity turned into the darkness of indifference. How great is this darkness! How many are deceived by it! After all, there is light and there is darkness—and they are not the same thing. There is Truth, taught of God and there is a lie, which is the devil's own. And these will never sit at the same table. There is a blessing for the preacher of the Truth of God. But if any man preaches another Gospel, for him there is an anathema which none can reverse.

I have also seen this light turned to darkness in the case of the student who has gathered great erudition and enrolled himself among the learned. He begins to criticize. Do not condemn him for that—he judges very properly at first—he criticizes things that ought to be criticized. But he stops not there. Once having his critical faculty aroused, he is like a boy with a

new knife. He must cut something or other. Nothing comes in his way more often than the Scriptures. And he must have a cut at them. He whittles at Genesis. He makes a gash in Deuteronomy. He halves Isaiah.

He takes slices out of the Gospels and cuts the Epistles into slivers. You see, he has so sharp a knife that he must use it. By-and-by, from a critic he advances to an irreverent fault-finder—and from that to an utter unbeliever—hard in the mouth and stiff in the neck. His light has blinded him. He has taken his own eye to pieces that he might study its anatomy, and from now on the light will be of no more use to him than to the dead.

We have seen the light turned to darkness in a further sense. Hear and understand. There is a blessed light called the full assurance of faith—the more we have of it the better. Blessed is that man who never doubts his God, who hangs with holy confidence upon the eternal promises and the immutable Covenant and is never staggered through unbelief. He walks in the light of God and enjoys Divine fellowship.

But I have seen something very like to this holy confidence which has been before the Lord a very different matter. Assurance has been counterfeited by *presumption*. The man has taken for granted that he is a child of God when he is not—and he has appropriated privileges which are none of his. He has supposed himself to be in the Covenant when he has neither part nor lot. And without repentance, without the new birth—and without saving faith—he has dared to boast of those sacred securities which belong only to the heirs of Grace, sanctified in Christ Jesus. Dreadful is the case of the man who has presumed to hope for Heaven while living an ungodly life—boasting of freedom from all fear, when, indeed—he was destitute of all hope.

I have also seen the light turned to darkness in quite another manner. Sweet and soft is the light of holy fear—it is as the twilight of the evening. It is a light that comes from God—when a man is afraid to sin—when he fears lest he should grieve the Spirit of God. He trembles lest in anything he should err from the teaching of his heavenly Father. But then this light may be corrupted into slavish dread, despondency and despair.

Introspection, or looking within, may degenerate into a morbid habit—under its influence, the soul may refuse to look to Christ—and may enshroud itself in the gloom of remorse. The Truth of God may be distorted till it takes a most alarming shape and the soul, in sullen despair, refuses to be comforted, refuses to believe in the Son of God.

Do you wonder that our Lord seemed to hold up His hands in astonishment as He said, “If the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” If that which should lead *misleads*, how misled you will be! If your better part turns out to be evil, how evil must you be! See to it then, dear Friends, as before the living God, that you have a clear eye and that the light of Christ comes streaming into your soul in all its glorious purity and power.

III. I close by coming to the third and most important point—How THE LIGHT ACTS WHEN IT COMES WITHIN. If the eye is right, single and clear, there is no laborious work for that eye to do to obtain the light.

When the sun is shining, if you wish for light, you simply open your eyes and you have light at once. You have not to rub the eye, or work it into some singular position—let the outward light come to the eye and at once it enters it and conveys an image to the mind.

When the eye is sound, it takes pleasure in the light and with delight conveys the image of things external to the mind within. If the Lord, in His great Grace, has made your eye single, so that you desire only to know the Truth of God and to be yourself true—then without toil you will perceive Truth and the image thereof will readily appear before your mind. The light is willing enough to enter when the window of the soul allows its admission. When that light comes in, you will know it.

No man passes from his natural darkness into heavenly light without being aware that a great change has taken place. Beloved, I will try to show you how the holy light acts when it enters our nature. When it first comes in, it reveals much that was before unperceived. If a room has been long shut up and kept in darkness, the light has a startling effect. You may have hurried through that room with a candle but you never stayed to look, and therefore did not notice the state of things.

The room did not strike you as being very unpleasant, though it smelt a little stale and musty. But now that you have put back the shutters and drawn up the blind, the light has made the mold and dust very manifest. That black festoon of spiders' webs—those insects which hurry out of the light. That all-encrusting dust—these had been overlooked. The room cannot be suffered to remain in such a state. What a change is demanded! All hands are summoned to clean out the den and turn it into a healthy chamber fit to be inhabited.

The light of Heaven reveals a thousand sins and causes their removal. The first effect of the light of God in the soul is painfully unpleasant—it makes you loathe yourself and almost wish that you had never been born. Things grow worse and worse to our consciousness as the light shines more and more. Beloved, we wish it to be so. We would have no part kept in the dark. We would have every idol discovered and broken, every secret chamber of imagery exposed to the sun and then destroyed.

Is it not so? Do you wish to keep the light from any part of your nature? Do you not far rather desire that the light should search you through and through and lay bare all the deceitfulness of your heart and all the falseness of your depraved mind?

As that light continues to enter, it gradually illuminates each faculty of the mind. The *will* by nature prefers the darkness—the man claims the right to act as he pleases and to give no reasons for his waywardness. When the light of God enters the soul, the Lord Jesus becomes altogether lovely, and then the sacred light falls on the proud will and the man sees that it is evil and perverse and he cries, “O Lord Jesus, not my will but Yours, be done.” This same light falls on the outward life which is ruled by the will, and the conduct and conversation become bright with the light of love. The judgment feels the inner illumination and decides according to the Law of truth and righteousness. With the judgment, the delight is lit up, also, and the heart rejoices in the Law of the Lord.

The light is poured in upon the conscience and now that poor, half-blinded thing issues edicts and gives forth verdicts which are according to the oracles of God. What a difference between a natural conscience and a conscience instructed by God and enlightened by His Word! There remains much more to be done in this direction than many of us suspect. We may be living unconsciously in evils for which our consciences have never once accused us. Godly men, in old times, persecuted those who differed from them and thought it a duty to do so—they even called toleration a crime.

The best of men owned Negro slaves and were not conscious of wrong. When Mr. Whitefield left certain Negroes to the Orphan House, he did not dream that he was violating the rights of man—in fact, he was very careful for their present and future welfare. Conscience does not tolerate slavery now. Do you not think that a great enlightenment has taken place upon the slave question? Is not similar light needed as to war, as to wage-paying and wage-earning and a thousand other things? It is a happy thing that we have received a light which will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

There is nothing hid within us which this light will not manifest. And so, as one by one, we see our imperfections, we shall cry for Divine Grace to remove them—and thus we shall grow in holiness through the Grace of God. This same light, falling on the *memory*, awakens penitence for our faults and gratitude for God's goodness. Shining on our *thoughts*, it makes them sparkle with the beauty of holiness. Shining upon our *emotions*, it makes them flash and glow with love to God and heavenly things. A soul is a fine object when thus lit up!

The holy light falls on our motives and unveils the secret heart of all our actions. You do right, but this light shows you why you do right. You are a friend to man but why? You are a Christian professor but are you sincere? The light makes short work with that which did not flow from a pure motive. This light falls also on the spirit in which a deed was done. And here much is seen which some had rather not see.

Did you ever have the light of God brought to bear upon your imagination? Imagination is the playroom of the soul. Here many a man considers that he is without Law. "Surely," he says, "thought is free." The man gloats over sins which he would fear to commit—he finds a pleasure in thinking over lusts which his circumstances compel him to avoid. In the dark chambers of imagination, the heart commits adulteries, murders, thefts and all manner of infamies.

When the light falls here, the man shudders as he learns that as he thinks in his heart, so he is. He trembles as he perceives that the fond *imagination* of sin is *sin*. Then is the floor of imagination purged and the foul dust and chaff are driven into the fire. Fancy then gleams in the light of God and imagination. Washed in the brazen layer, she sings songs on her stringed instruments unto the God of her salvation, who has brought her out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Brethren, we need the light to shine in upon our tempers. We know some Christian people who will not let you mention their tempers—they

have taken out a license to be as surly as they like—on the ground of, “it is their constitution.” “No,” they say, “I cannot help being passionate. My mother was a very quick-tempered woman and I am naturally in that way. There’s no help for it.” Let the light in upon that unseemly thing. If what you say is true, write it down in black and white that you are an incorrigible vixen—and must be so all your life.

What? Do you not like it? If it is true, let the light in upon it. Let it be known to your own self and to others that you are a mad dog and that there is no curing you. Are you angry with me for suggesting it? I am only taking you at your word. Do not say, “I cannot help having a bad temper.” Friend, you *must* help it. Pray God to help you to overcome it at once! For either you must kill it, or it will kill you.

You cannot carry a bad temper into Heaven. They will have none of your passions in the Father’s House above. Let in the light of Christ’s love on it, and the vile thing will be made to die. It is a night bird. It cannot bear the light of Divine Grace and love. Live near to Jesus and His compassion will destroy your evil passion. Try it.

Your desires, your hopes, your fears, your aspirations, should all be set in the light—and what a joy it will be when they all glitter in it! “No part dark”—what a wonderful condition! Some professors appear to have a little light in the upper rooms. They have notions in their heads and ideas on their tongues! Alas, the first floor is dark, very dark. From their common conversation the light of God is absent. Enter at the door and you cannot see your way into the passage, or up the stairs. The light is up a loft but not in the dwelling rooms.

Oh, for light in the region of the heart! Oh, for light upon the household talk and the business conversation! From attic to cellar may the whole houses of our humanity be lighted up! This is the true work of Divine Grace, when the whole man is brought into the light and no part is left to pine in the darkness. Then are we the children of light, when we abide in the light and have no fellowship with darkness. Then is the distinction seen between Israel and Egypt. For while all Egypt sat in a darkness which might be felt, in the land of Goshen there was light.

Where this light comes it gives certainty—we cease to doubt and we know whom we have believed. With this comes direction—we see our way and how to walk in it. We pursue a plain path and are no more in a maze. “This is the way, walk you in it,” is sounded in our ears as the light reveals to us the narrow way which leads to eternal life.

This light, when it dwells in the heart, brings good cheer with it. Darkness is doleful, light brings delight. Did you ever travel by a train which passed through a tunnel but was destitute of a single lamp? Somebody has struck a match and lighted a candle and all eyes have turned towards him. In a small way he was a benefactor—all eyes are glad of light. Oh, what a sweet thing is the light of the Holy Spirit to one that has been long in the darkness of ignorance, sorrow and despair!

A poor boy who was put down in the coal mine to close a door after the coal wagons had passed by, was forced to sit there all alone, hour after hour, in the dark. He was a gracious child. And when one said to him,

“Are you not weary with sitting so long in the dark?” he said, “Yes, I do get tired. But sometimes the men give me a bit of candle and when I get a light I sing.” So do we. When we get a light we sing. Glory be to God, He is our light and our salvation, and therefore we sing. O Child of God, when your eye is single and the light of God fills every part of your being, then you sing, and sing again, and feel that you can never have done with singing on earth, till you begin singing in Heaven!

The text has perplexed many a learned reader. And therefore you will not wonder that I confess that it has puzzled me many times. See what it says—“If your whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light.” Is not this saying the same thing? The Holy Spirit would not use a tautology, nor utter a trite, self-evident thing. Yet we must not go beyond what the text says. It seems to me that our Lord wished us to feel that He could say nothing better in praise of a soul in which there was no part dark than what He had said, namely, “The whole shall be full of light.”

Some have thought that He meant that being lighted within we shall be full of light to others. That is a great Truth of God. But our Lord does not say so here. For He compares our inward light to a candle which shines on ourselves—“as when the bright shining of a candle does give you light.” He refers to our *own* personal comfort. When a room is thoroughly well-lighted in every corner, it has a joyous splendor. One looks about and feels content and satisfied. So, when the whole nature is filled with the light of God, we have sweetness and light to the full and Heaven seems begun below.

It is inexpressibly delightful, luxuriously blessed, to dwell in the full light of God when there is no concealment and no love of evil. When once the sun thus shines full on me, I would cry with Joshua, “Sun, stand still”!

This inner light will make us shine before others. It is the only shining we should seek. A clean lantern with a lighted candle in it makes no noise and yet it wins attention—the darker the night, the more it is valued. There never was a time in which true inner light was more needed than now—may the Lord impart it to each one of us—and then we shall shine as lights in the world! The Lord God bring this light to you and fill you with it. And unto His name shall be the glory!

You have not to work for the light, you have only to *receive* it. Then shall your profiting be known unto all men when it is true profiting to your own character. God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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HYPOCRISY

NO. 237

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 6, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“Beware you of the leaven of the
Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”
Luke 12:1.*

THIS age is full of shams. Pretence never stood in so eminent a position as it does at the present hour. There are few, I fear, who love the naked truth—we can scarcely endure it in our houses. You would scarcely trade with a man who absolutely stated it. If you walked through the streets of London, you might imagine that all the shops were built of marble and that all the doors were made of mahogany and woods of the rarest kinds. And yet you soon discover that there is scarce a piece of any of these precious fabrics to be found anywhere, but that everything is grained and painted and varnished. I find no fault with this, except as it is an outward type of an inward evil that exists. As it is in our streets, so is it everywhere—graining, painting and gilding, are at an enormous premium. Counterfeit has at length attained to such an eminence that it is with the utmost difficulty that you can detect it.

The counterfeit so near approaches to the genuine, that the eye of Wisdom herself needs to be enlightened before she can discern the difference. Specially is this the case in religious matters. There was once an age of intolerant bigotry, when every man was weighed in the balance and if he was not precisely up to the orthodox standard of the day, the fire devoured him. But in this age of charity and of most proper charity, we are very apt to allow the counterfeit to pass current and to imagine that outward show is really as beneficial as inward reality. If ever there was a time when it was needful to say, “Beware you of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy,” it is now.

The minister may cease to preach this doctrine in the days of persecution—when the fire wood is blazing and when the rack is in full operation—few men will be hypocrites. These are the keen detectors of impostures—suffering and pain and death, for Christ’s sake—are not to be endured by mere pretenders. But in this silken age, when to be religious is to be respectable, when to follow Christ is to be honored and when godliness, itself, has become gain, it is doubly necessary that the minister should cry aloud and lift up his voice like a trumpet against this sin, “the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

I am sure that every true child of God will stand at times in doubt of himself and his fear will probably take the shape of a suspicion concerning his own state—

He that never doubted of his state,

He may—perhaps he may—too late.

The Christian, however, does not belong to that class. He will at times begin to be terribly alarmed, lest, after all, his godliness should be but seeming and his profession an empty vanity. He who is true will sometimes suspect himself of falsehood, while he who is false will wrap himself up in a constant confidence of his own sincerity.

My dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, if you are at this time in doubt concerning yourselves, the Truth of God I utter will, perhaps, help you in searching your own heart and trying your own reins. I am sure you will not blame me if I should seem to be severe, but you will rather say, “Sir, I desire to make sure work concerning my own soul. Tell me faithfully and tell me honestly what are the signs of a hypocrite and I will sit down and try to read my own heart, to discover whether these things have a bearing upon me. Happy shall I am if I shall come out of the fire like pure gold.”

We shall note, then, this morning, first, the character of a hypocrite. Then we shall try to cast up his accounts for him, with regard to his loss or gain. And then we shall offer a cure for hypocrisy, which, if constantly carried about with us, will certainly prevent us from attempting to deceive. The cure is contained in these words which follow the text—“For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light. And that which you have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”

I. First, THE HYPOCRITE’S CHARACTER. We have an elaborate description of the hypocrite in the chapter we have just read, the twenty-third of Matthew, and I do not know that I can better portray him than by turning again to the words of Christ.

A hypocrite may be known by the fact that his speech and his actions are contrary to one another. As Jesus says, “they say and they do not.” The hypocrite can speak like an angel and quote texts with the greatest rapidity. He can talk concerning all matters of religion, whether they are theological doctrines, metaphysical questions, or experimental difficulties. In his own esteem he knows much and when he rises to speak, you will often feel abashed at your own ignorance in the presence of his superior knowledge. But see him when he comes to *actions*. What behold you there? The fullest contradiction of everything that he has uttered. He tells others that they must obey the Law—does he obey it? Ah, no. He declares that others must experience this, that, and the other, and he sets up a fine scale of experience, far above even that of the Christian himself. But does he touch it? No, not with so much as one of his fingers.

He will tell others what they should do. But will he remember his own teaching? Not he! Follow him to his house. Trace him to the market, see him in the shop and if you want to refute his preaching you may easily do it from his own life. My Hearer! Is this your case? You are a member of a Church, a deacon, a minister. Is this your case? Is your life a contradiction to your words? Do your hands witness against your lips? How stands

it with you? With a blush, each one of us must confess that, to some extent, our life is contradictory to our profession. We blush and we mourn over this. But I hope there are some here who can say, “Notwithstanding many infirmities, with my whole heart have I strived to run in the ways of Your commandments, O my God, and I have not intentionally spoken that with my lip which I did not intend to carry out in my life.” Ah, believe me, my Hearers, talk is easy, but walk is hard—speech any man may attain unto, but act is difficult. We must have Grace within to make our life holy. But lip-piety needs no Grace. The first mark of a hypocrite, then, is, that he contradicts by his acts what he utters by his words. Do any of you do so? If so, stand convicted of hypocrisy and bow your heads and confess the sin.

The next mark of a hypocrite is that whenever he does right it is that he may be seen of men. The hypocrite sounds a trumpet before he gives his alms and chooses the corner of the streets for his prayers. To him virtue in the dark is almost a vice—he can never detect any beauty in virtue—unless she has a thousand eyes to look upon her and then she is something, indeed! The true Christian, like the nightingale, sings in the night. But the hypocrite has all his songs in the day, when he can be seen and heard of men. To be well-spoken of is the very elixir of his life. If he is praised, it is like sweet wine to him. The censure of man upon a virtue would make him change his opinion concerning it in a moment. For his standard is the opinion of his fellow creatures—his law is the law of self-seeking and of self-honoring. He is virtuous, because to be virtuous is to be praised. But if tomorrow vice were at a premium he would be as vicious as the rest. Applause is what too many are seeking after. They eschew all secret religion and only live where men may behold them.

Now, is this our case? Let us deal honestly with ourselves. If we distribute to the poor, do we desire to do it in secret, when no tongue shall tell? Are our prayers offered in our closets, where God, who hears the cry of the secret ones, listens unto our supplication? Can we say that if every man were struck stone blind and deaf and dumb, we would not alter our conduct the least? Can we declare that the opinion of our fellows is not our guiding law, but that we stand servants to our God and to our conscience and are not to be made to do a wrong thing from flattery, nor are we urged to do a right thing from fear of censure?

Mark, the man who does not act rightly from a higher motive than that of being praised gives sore suspicion that he is a hypocrite. But he who will do a right thing against the opinion of every man and simply because he believes it to be right and sees the stamp of God’s approval upon it—that man need not be afraid that he is a hypocrite. He would be a kind of hypocrite that one has never discovered as yet. Hypocrites do their good works for applause. Is it so with you? If so, be honest and as you would convict another convict yourself.

Again—hypocrites love titles and honors and respect from men. The Pharisee was never so happy as when he was called Rabbi. He never felt himself so really great as when he was stuck up in the highest seat in the

synagogue. Then he must be good, indeed. But the true Christian cares not for titles. It is one of the marks of Christians—that they have generally taken names of abuse to be their distinctive appellations. There was a time when the term Methodist was abusive. What did those good men say who had it so applied to them? “You call us Methodists by way of abuse, do you? It shall be our title.” The name “Puritan” was the lowest of all. It was the symbol which was always employed by the drunkard and swearer to express a godly man. “Well,” says the godly man, “I will be called a Puritan. If that is a name of reproach I will take it.” It has been so with the Christian all the world over. He has chosen for himself the name which his enemy has given him in malice.

Not so the hypocrite. He takes that which is the most honorable. He wishes always to be thought to belong to the most respectable sect and to hold an office in that sect which will confer upon him the most honorable title. Now, can you say from your inmost soul that in religion you are not seeking for honors or titles, but that you can tread these beneath your feet and want no higher degree than that of a sinner saved by grace and no greater honor than to sit at the feet of Jesus and to learn of Him? Are you willing to be the despised followers of the carpenter’s son, as were the fishermen upon the lake? If so, methinks you have but little hypocrisy in you. But if you only follow Him because you are honored by men, farewell to the sincerity of your religion, you are unmasked and stand before the face of this congregation an acknowledged hypocrite.

There was another evidence of an hypocrite which was equally good, namely, that he strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. Hypocrites in these days do not find fault with us for eating with unwashed hands, but they still fix upon some ceremonial omission. Sabbatarianism has furnished hypocrisy with an extremely convenient refuge. Acts of necessity done by the Christian are the objects of the sanctimonious horror of Pharisees—and labors of mercy and smiles of joy are damning sins in the esteem of hypocrites if done upon a Sunday. Though our Father worked up to now and Christ worked and though works of kindness and mercy and charity are the duty of the Sabbath—yet if the Christian is employed in these, he is thought to be offending against God’s holy Law.

The slightest infringement of that which is a ceremonial observance becomes a great sin in the eye of the hypocrite. But he, poor man, who will find fault with you for some little thing in this respect, straining at a gnat, is the man you will find cheating, adulterating his goods, lying, puffing and grinding the poor. I have always noticed that those very particular souls who look out for little things, who are always searching out little points of difference, are just the men who omit the weightier matters of the law and while they are so particular about the tithe of mint and anise and cummin—whole loads of tithe-wheat are smuggled into their own barns. Always suspect yourself when you are more careful about little than about great things. If you find it hurts your conscience more to be absent from the communion than to cheat a widow, rest quite assured that you are wrong. The Thug, you know, thinks it a very proper thing to

murder all he can. But if a little of the blood of his victims should stain his lips, then he goes off to the priest and says he has committed a great sin. The blood has been on his lips—what must he do to get the sin forgiven?

And there are many people of the same class in England. If they should do anything on a Good Friday, or on Christmas Day, poor souls, it is awfully wicked!. But if they should be lazy all the six days of the week, it is no sin at all. Rest you assured that the man who strains at a gnat but yet so allows the camel, is a deceiver. Mark you, my dear Friends, I like you to strain at the gnats. I have no objection to that at all—only do not swallow the camel afterwards. Be as particular as you like about right and wrong. If you think a thing is a little wrong, it is wrong to you. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” If you cannot do it, believing yourself to be right in not doing it, though another man could do it and do right, yet to you it would not be right. Strain the gnats. They are not good things in your wines, strain them out. It is well to get rid of them. But then do not open your mouth and swallow a camel afterwards, for if you do that, you will give no evidence that you are a child of God, but prove that you are a damnable hypocrite.

But read on in this chapter and you will find that these people neglected all the inward part of religion and only observed the outward. As our Savior said, they “made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess.” There are many books which are excellently bound, but there is nothing within them. And there are many persons that have a very spiritual exterior, but there is nothing whatever in the heart. Do you not know some of them? Perhaps if you know yourself you may discover one. Do you not know some who are precisely religious who would scarce omit attending to a single means of grace, who practice the ritual in all its forms and all its ceremonies, who would not turn aside as much as a hair’s breadth from any outward command?

Before the world they stand as eminently pious, because they are minutely attentive to the externals of the sanctuary. But yet they are careless of the inward matter. So long as they take the bread and wine they are not careful about whether they have eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of Christ. So long as they have been baptized with water they are not careful whether they have been buried with Christ in Baptism unto death. So long as they have been up to the House of God they are satisfied. It is nothing to them whether they have had communion with Christ, or not. No, they are perfectly content, so long as they have the shell, without looking for the kernel. The wheat may go where it pleases—the husk and the chaff and the straw, are quite sufficient and enough for them.

Some people I know of are like inns, which have an angel hanging outside for a sign, but they have a devil within for a landlord. There are many men of that kind. They take good care to have an excellent sign hanging out, they must be known by all men to be strictly religious. But within, which is the all-important matter, they are full of wickedness. But I have

sometimes heard persons mistake this matter. They say, "Ah, well, poor man, he is a sad drunkard, certainly, but he is a very good-hearted man at bottom." Now, as Rowland Hill used to say, "that is a most astonishing thing for any man to say of another, that he was bad at top and good at bottom. When men take their fruit to market they cannot make their customers believe, if they see rotten apples at the top, that there are good ones at the bottom."

A man's outward conduct is generally a little better than his heart. Very few men sell better goods than they put in the window. Do not misunderstand me. When I say we must attend more to the inward than the outward, I would not have you leave the outward to itself. "Make clean the outside of the cup and platter"—make it as clean as you can, but take care also that the inward is made clean. Look to that first. Ask yourself such questions as these—"Have I amen born again? Am I passed from darkness to light? Have I amen brought out of the realms of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son? Do I live by private communion near to the side of Jesus? Can I say that my heart pants after the Lord, even as the hart does alter the water brooks? For if I cannot say this, whatever my outward life may be, I am self-deceived and deceive others and the woe of the hypocrite falls upon me. I have made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but the inward part is very wickedness.

Does that come home to any of you? Is this personal preaching? Then God be blessed for it. May the Truth of God be the death of your delusions. You may know a hypocrite by another sign. His religion depends upon the place, or upon the time of day. He rises at seven o'clock, perhaps, and you will find him religious for a quarter of an hour. For he is, as the boy said, "saying his prayers to himself" in the first part of the morning. Well, then you find him pretty pious for another half-hour, for there is family prayer. But when the business begins and he is talking to his men, I won't guarantee that you will be able to admire him.

If one of his servants has been doing something a little amiss, you will find him perhaps using angry and unworthy language. You will find him, too, if he gets a customer whom he thinks to be rather green, not quite pious, for he will be taking him in. You will find, too, that if he sees a good chance at any hour of the day, he will be very ready to do a dirty trick. He was a saint in the morning, for there was nothing to be lost by it—but he has a religion that is not too strict—business is business, he says, and he puts religion aside by stretching his conscience, which is made of very elastic material. Well, sometime in the evening you will find him very pious again, unless he is out on a journey, where neither wife, nor family, nor Church can see him and you will find him at a theater. He would not go if there was a chance of the minister hearing of it, for then he would be excommunicated, but he does not mind going when the eye of the Church or of any of his friends is not upon him.

Fine clothes make fine gentlemen and fine places make fine hypocrites. But the man who is true to his God and to his conscience, is a Christian all day and all night long and a Christian everywhere. "Though you were

to fill my house full of silver and gold," he says, "I would not do a dirty action. Though you should give me the stars and the countless wealth of empires, yet I would not do that which would dishonor God, or disgrace my profession." Put the true Christian where he might sin and by God's grace, he will not do it. He does not hate sin for the sake of the company, but he hates it for its own sake. He says, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

You shall find him a fallible man, but not a false man. You shall find him full of infirmities, but not of intentional lust and of designed iniquity. As a Christian, you must follow Christ in the mire as well in the meads—you must walk with Him in the rain as well as in the sunshine—you must go with Him in the storm as well as in fair weather. He is no Christian who cannot walk with Christ, come rags, come poverty, come contumely or shame. He is the hypocrite who can walk with Christ in silver slippers and leave Him when it becomes necessary for him to go barefoot. The hypocrite's religion is like a chameleon, it takes its color from the light which falls upon it. But the Christian's religion is evermore the same. Is this true then of any of us? Can we say we desire to be evermore the same? Or do we change with our company and with the times? If so, we are hypocrites confessed and let us own it before God and may God make us sincere.

There is another sign of the hypocrite and now the lash will fall on my own back and on most of us too. Hypocrites and other people besides hypocrites, are generally severe with others and very lenient with themselves. Have you ever heard a hypocrite describe himself? I describe him thus—you are a mean, beggarly fellow. "No," says he, "I am not—I am economical." I say to him, "You are dishonest, you are a thief." "No," says he, "I am only cute and sharp for the times." "Well, but," I say to him, "you are proud and conceited." "Oh," he says, "I have only a proper and manly respect." "Yes, but you are a fawning, cringing fellow." "No," he says, "I am all things to all men." Somehow or other he will make vice look like a virtue in himself, but he will deal by the reverse rule with others.

Show him a Christian who is really humble and he says, "I hate his fawning ways." Tell him there is one who is very courageous for Christ—"Oh, he is impudent," says he. Show him one who is liberal, doing what he can for his Master's service, spending and being spent for Him—"Rash and imprudent," says he, "extravagant. The man does not know what he is about." You may point out a virtue and the hypocrite shall at once say it is a vice. Have you ever seen a hypocrite turn doctor? He has a fine beam in his eye, large enough to shut out the light of Heaven from his soul, but nevertheless he is a very skillful oculist. He waits upon some poor Brother, whose eye is a little affected with a mote so tiny that the full blaze of the sun can scarce reveal it. Look at our beam-eyed friend, he puts on a knowing look and cries, "Allow me to extract this mote for you." "You hypocrites! First cast out the beam out of your own eye and then shall you see clearly to cast out the mote out of your brother's eye." There

are people of that sort who make virtues in others into vices and vices in themselves they transform into virtues.

Now, if you are a Christian, I will tell you what will be your spirit—it will be the very reverse. You will be always making excuses for others, but you will never be making excuses for yourself. The true Christian, if he sees himself sin, mourns over it and makes much ado concerning it. He says to another, “Oh, I feel so sinful.” And the other one cries “I cannot really see it. I can see no sin in you. I could wish I were holy as you.” “No,” says the other, “but I am full of infirmity.” John Bunyan describes Mercy and Christiana and the children, after having been washed in the bath and sealed with the seal, as coming up out of the water and being all fair and lovely to look upon. And one began to say to the other, “You are fairer than I!” and “You are more comely than I!” And then each began to bemoan their own spots and to praise the beauty of the others. That is the spirit of a Christian. But the spirit of the hypocrite is the very reverse. He will judge and condemn and punish with lynch-law every other man. And as for himself, he is exempt, he is a king, he knows no law and his conscience slumbers and allows him to go on easily in the very sins which he condemns in others. This is a very prominent mark of the hypocrite and I question whether all of us must not blame ourselves a little here.

II. And now we are going to CAST UP THE HYPOCRITE’S ACCOUNT FOR HIM. Now, Sir, bring us your ledger and let us have a look at it. You are a hypocrite. Well, what is on the profit side? A good deal, I must confess. Here is, first of all credit and honor. If you were to say outright, “You are a thief, you are a private drunkard, you can curse God as well as any man,” or if the world should hear as much, you would have no honor. But as it is you have joined the Church and the minister is very fond of you. The deacons and elders think a great deal of you and you are a very honorable, respectable man. You go walking up to your pew with your Bible and your hymn book and everybody says, “There is an exemplary character.” And they pat their little boys on the head and say, “May you grow up to be a very good man like Mr. So-and-So.”

The next advantage is the case which you enjoy. The minister often preaches a solemn, thundering sermon against sin. You get off all that. You are not a sinner, are you? Not at all. Who would suspect you? You are one of the brightest of the saints. It is almost a pity you were not one of the twelve. There was one among them almost as good as yourself and his end will probably be yours. You escape every thunder of the Law. Your conscience rests easy and the very thing which makes the child of God tremble, puffs you up and the very marks and evidences which cast him down, help to exalt you. The sun of the Gospel which melts wax, hardens the poor clay of your hearts and you get the more exalted in your self-conceit through everything you hear. And that is good, too, is it not? Very much in your favor, certainly.

And then there is another thing. How nicely your shop has prospered through it. That, perhaps, is the part of the bargain which you like the best. Ever since you have made a profession of religion, have not those

who go to your Church and Chapel traded with you? You would not have got on half so well if you had been suspected to be what you really are. But because of that fine cloak of yours, that fine garment of hypocrisy, how nicely you have prospered! What a nice little round sum you have been able to lay by, have you not? All that is the bright side again. And besides that, what honors have you not received in the Church. Are not you made a deacon, or an elder? Yes, perhaps a minister, too—how pleasant that is! And you puff yourself up and you feel satisfied. “Oh, what a good man am I, other people think I am, therefore I must be. It is true I devour the widow’s house. It is true I am not very particular about what I do. Nevertheless the minister, the elders, the deacons think me good, the whole Church applauds me. They cannot all be mistaken—surely I must be a special saint.” That is your profit side of the account, what about the other side? I think we shall be able to strike a balance that will not be much in your favor, Sir.

In the first place, I see a black item down here. Some of the people of the world do not think quite as much of you, as you imagine. The poor widow does not give you much of a character. You will have to be very careful, Sir, or your base deeds will come out. The very first item I see down here is a fear that your hypocrisy will be discovered. It would take you only half as much trouble to be an honest man as it does to be a deceiver. A man who is in the habit of speaking truth, need not mind how he opens his mouth, nor where. But a man who lies should be very careful and have a very good memory and remember all he has ever said before, lest he should trip himself. So it is with you, my Friend, your religion is a Sunday religion and you have to be very careful, so as to make Monday dealings hold their tongues and Sunday doings now as fond as they can. Hard work! I would not stand in your place to have all the trepidation and fear of discovery which so often comes upon you. No, I would sooner be a worldling, than I would have the fear that constantly haunts you, lest you should stand ashamed before the Church by your base iniquity being discovered.

But I see something worse than this—here is constant disquietude of conscience—hypocrites may seem as if they were at ease but they cannot really be. The Christian who is true to God and is really His child, can sometimes say, “I know that Jesus has taken away my sin.” Assurance, vouchsafed to him by the Spirit, calms his fears and he can rest in Christ. But the highest presumption to which the hypocrite can attain, brings no such calm as that which is breathed upon the Christian by the lips of assurance. He can go to his bed, no, he can go to his tomb in peace, but the hypocrite is afraid of a shadow and flees when no man pursues.

And last of all, Mr. Hypocrite, I see an item here which you usually forget—it is this—that in spite of your profession, God abhors you and if there is one man more than another who stinks in the nostrils of Jehovah, it is such as you are—you miserable pretender. There shall be a special place reserved for you among the damned. Think, man, what shall be your misery when your secret deeds of iniquity are read before an assembled

universe and men and angels utter one unanimous hiss against you? What shall it be when the mask is torn off you—when the masquerade of your hypocrisy is done and you are stripped naked to your shame, to be observed of all and to be despised of all? What do you say to this? Shall you go from your deaconship, or from your ministry, to be among the devils in Hell? Shall you go from the sacramental table to drink the sulfur cup of torment? Shall you descend from the song of the sanctuary and from the House of God to the abode of fiends and to the wailing of the damned?

Yes, you shall as sure as this Word is true, if you go on in your hypocrisy. Death shall find you out and Hell shall be your doom, for the hope of the hypocrite is as the spider's web, soon swept away. And where is he when God takes away his hope?

This, then, is the casting up of the hypocrite's account and there is a deficit of an infinite amount.

III. Now for the matter of the CURE OF THE HYPOCRITE. What shall we say to it? Oh, my Friends, I feel that in thus speaking of the hypocrite, I have tried to speak severely, but I have not been able to reach the heart as I could wish. It is a mark of human nature that this is the last sin of which we really suspect ourselves and yet one into which it is most easy to fall. Often do I fall on my knees in an agony of doubt and cry, "Lord, make me sincere. If I am deceived, undeceive me." I do not think that any Christian will live long without some such seasons of anguishing self-examination. Let me put it to you today, let no one exempt himself. You may have been professing Christians for many years and yet you may have been hypocrites. Remember there was a hypocrite among the Apostles, so may there be among the ministers of Christ. There have been deceivers among the Apostolic Churches—how much more may we expect them among us? Do not look around to find them out, it is God's business not yours, to find out hypocrites. But look at yourselves to see whether you are one.

Driving along the other day in the wind I observed a great branch fall just in front of me. I remarked that it was rotten and wondered within myself how long that might have been upon the tree and yet have been rotten after all? Then I thought, "Oh, if the wind of persecution were to sweep through the Church, should I fall off like a rotten branch? Would not many of my Hearers fall off? They have been united to Christ professedly for a long time and have spoken for Him, perhaps preached for Him, but if the time of trial, which shall try the earth, should come upon us again, how many of us would stand?"

Oh, my Hearers do not be content to take your religion at second-hand. Let it not be a superficial work. Do not think that because you have seen me and have seen my elders and we have admitted you into the Church, you are therefore all right. We have been deceived many times. It is not hard work to deceive a kind heart. I have looked into the eyes of some and have tried to read their very soul and yet I have misjudged. I have seen tears in their eyes while they have made a profession of Christ and yet

they have been deceivers after all and I have been very grossly taken in. In fact, the more kind-hearted a man is, the more will human nature endeavor to impose upon him. I am certain I have used the utmost diligence to weed out of my Church those whom I have suspected of hypocrisy and greater diligence shall yet be used.

But, oh, do deal with yourselves, I beseech you. I will not send you to Hell blind-folded if I can help it. I do not wish to be in error myself and God forbid that I should suffer you to be deceived. Oh, if you are not true Christians, away with your profession altogether! If it is not sound work, down with it! Better see the house tumble now, than let it stand till the rain descends and the floods come and the winds beat upon it in the dread eternity of the future. Oh, no, I would rather send every heart home uncomfortable than let the hypocrite sit down at ease. I would rather wound the child of God than allow the hypocrite to escape.

But now for the *cure* of the hypocrite. What shall we do to cure ourselves of any hypocrisy that may exist among us? Let us remember that we cannot do anything in secret even if we try. The all-seeing God, apprehended in the conscience, must be the death of hypocrisy. I cannot try to deceive when I know that God is looking at me. It is impossible for me to play double and false when I believe that I am in the presence of the Most High and that He is reading my thoughts and the secret purposes of my heart. The only way in which the hypocrite can play the hypocrite at all is by forgetting the existence of God. Let us, therefore, remember it—wherever I am, upon my bed or in my secret chamber, God is there. There is not a secret word I speak in the ear of a friend but God hears it.

Do I seek out the most private part of the city for the commission of sin—God is there. Do I choose the shadow of night to cover my iniquity?—He is there looking upon me. The thought of a present Deity, if it were fully realized, would preserve us from sin. He is always looking on me, ever regarding me. We think we are doing many things in secret, but there is nothing concealed from Him with whom we have to do. And the day is coming when all the sins that we have committed shall be read and published. Oh, what a blush shall crimson the cheek of the hypocrite when God shall read the secret diary of his iniquity! O my fellow Professors, let us always look upon our actions in the light of the great proclaiming of them in the Day of Judgment. Pause over everything you do and say, “Can I bear to have this sounded with a trumpet in the ear of all men?” No, take a higher motive and say, “Can I endure to do this and yet to repeat the words, ‘You, God see me’ ”?

You may deceive men and deceive yourselves, but God you cannot, God you shall not. You may die with the name of Christ upon your lips and men may bury you in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, but God shall not be deceived neither by your profession nor by men’s opinion. He shall put you in the scales and if you are found wanting, He shall cry, “Away with him.” He shall ring you and if you have not the ring of the pure coin of Grace, He shall nail you down forever as a counterfeit. He shall strip the mask off you. Virtue is most adorned when unadorned the

most. To detect you, you shall be stripped naked and every cloak shall be torn to tatters. How will you endure this? Will you dig into the depths to hide yourselves? Will you plunge into the sea to find a way of escape? Will you cry for the rocks to hide you and the mountains to fall upon you? In vain shall you cry. The all-seeing God shall read your soul, shall discover your secret, shall reveal your hidden things and tell the world that, though you did eat and drink in his streets, though you preached His name, yet He never knew you, you were still a worker of iniquity and must be driven away forever.

Come let us just for one second reflect that we shall soon lie upon our death bed. A few more months and you and I shall face the cruel tyrant, Death. It will be hard work to play the hypocrite then. When the pulse is faint and few, when the eye strings break, when the tongue is cleaving to the roof of your mouth, it will be in vain to try hypocrisy then. O may God make you sincere! For if you die with an empty profession, you die, indeed. Of all deaths, methinks the most awful is that of the hypocrite and after death, for him to lift up his eyes and find himself lost—and forever! O make sure work of it. May God give you true Grace and true faith and may we all meet in Heaven. This is my earnest prayer, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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ANXIETY, AMBITION, INDECISION NO. 2871

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1904.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 27, 1876.**

***“Neither be you of a doubtful mind.”
Luke 12:29.***

THE chief concern of a man should be to see that his own soul is right in the sight of God. Solomon said, “Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Many persons think a great deal about the adorning of the body, but do not think anything about the ornaments of the soul. The feeding of the physical frame engrosses much care, but the supply of spiritual food is often neglected. Yet, O Man, you yourself are better than your body! Your immortal soul is worth far more than that poor carcass of yours which will soon become food for worms! And all the things that you have, what are they compared with your inner self—your real self—your heart, your soul, your spirit?

In our text, our Savior bids us see to the condition of our mind—“Neither be you of a doubtful mind.” He thus calls our attention to the higher and nobler part of our mind and bids us see to it that it is in a right state. No doubt there are some people who are in easier circumstances than others—some who are in positions where they enjoy many comforts, while others are in places where they suffer many hardships. But, after all, happiness lies more in the mind than it does in the circumstances in which any individual is found and the man within has far more to do with his own joy or sorrow than anything outside of him has. There have been some who have been perfectly free in a prison, while others have been in absolute bondage with wide estates to roam over. We have known some whose spirits have triumphed when all around has tended to depress them. And we have seen others who were wretched and desponding when they had, apparently, all that heart could wish.

It is the *mind* which is the main thing—it will bring you daylight or midnight, wealth or poverty, peace or war. I wish, dear Friends, that half the time we spend in trying to better our circumstances were spent in bettering ourselves after the right fashion and that even a tenth of the trouble we take to fit our circumstances to our desires were used in fitting our desires to our circumstances. If we did that, how much happier men and women we would be! Try as you may, you cannot alter the world in which your lot is cast and you cannot alter God’s Providential

arrangements. So, would it not be better that you should be altered so as to suit the Providence and be resigned to the will of God?

It is beautiful to see how often the Inspired writers of Holy Scripture were busy with what I may call indoor work—the work that has to be done within one's own heart. "Bless the Lord, O my Soul," says David, in the 103rd Psalm, "and all that is within me, bless His holy name." This indoor work, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, will always pay us best. And our Lord Jesus, in His exhortations, often bids us attend to it. Did He not say to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled"? A little later, He said to them, "In the world you shall have tribulation." And He says the same to His disciples in every age. It is no use for you to try to avoid it, for you will have tribulation, yet, "Let not your heart be troubled." All the water in the sea will not hurt your vessel as long as you keep it outside—the danger begins when it gets inside the ship. So it matters little what is outside you, if all is right within. Have that little bird in your bosom that sings sweetly of the love of God! Wear the flower called heart's-ease in your buttonhole and you may go merrily through a perfect wilderness of trouble and a desert of care! A hurricane of afflictions may beat about you, yet you shall be a blessed man—for all the elements of blessedness are within your own heart. God has given them to you and the devil himself cannot take them away!

In speaking upon this text, I mean to preach a good part of the sermon to myself, for I need it as much as anybody does. But I ask each Brother and Sister to take home to themselves any part that suits them. And before I have done, I shall have a word for you unconverted people—and I pray God that that word may do you good and that you may cease to be of a doubtful mind. The original of the text is not easy to explain, for the word translated, "doubtful," is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. It appears to have something to do with meteors, so that the passage might be rendered, "Neither be you of a meteoric mind."

As the word is so unusual, there have been a great many different opinions as to its meaning. Some have said that it relates to high things that float above, such as the clouds. If they are right, our text says to us, "Do not be like the clouds—do not have cloudy minds, blown about with every wind of Doctrine." Others render it, "Do not be like the birds, high up in the air, always on the wing, unsettled and uncertain, ever flying about and never at rest." Others find an allusion to the ship that is far out upon the sea—and the text says to them, "Do not always be at sea, tossed up and down. Have some anchorage. Do not be always drifting to and fro." The word, "doubtful," means so much that I do not expect to be able to tell you all that it means, but shall rather give you a few practical thoughts concerning it.

I. "Neither be you of a doubtful mind." That is, first, CHILDREN OF GOD, BE NOT ANXIOUS. Be not tossed up and down by your outward circumstances. If God prospers you, do not ride high, as the vessel does when the tide lifts it up. And if He does not prosper you, do not sink down as the vessel does when the tide ebbs away again. Do not be so af-

fectured by external things as to get into a state of worry, fretfulness, care, anxiety and distress.

Our Savior's injunction means, "Do not be anxious about your temporal affairs." Be prudent. You have no right to spend the money of other people, nor yet your own, in wastefulness. You are to be careful and discreet, for every Christian should remember that he is only a steward and that he is accountable to his Master for whatever he has and the use he makes of it. But when you have done your best with your little, do not worry because you cannot make it more. And when you have done your best to meet your expenses, do not sit down and wring your hands because you cannot lessen them. You cannot make a shilling into a sovereign, but be thankful if you have the shilling! And if you sometimes find that you must live from hand to mouth, remember that you are not the first child of God who has had his manna every morning, nor the first of God's servants to have bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening with nothing to lay by for the morrow. If this is your case, be not staggered and astonished, as though some new thing had happened to you! And do not begin to fret, and fume, and worry and trouble yourself about what you cannot help. Can you alter it with all your worrying?

Have you—you who are in the habit of worrying and fretting—ever made any profit by doing so? How much a year do you think that anybody would give you for all your fretting? How much has it brought you? Come, Brother, if it is a good business, I would like to go into partnership with you! But I should like first to know something about your profits. As I look at your face, I notice that it is care-worn and anxious. That does not seem to indicate that the business is a profitable one. If I listen to your speech, I hear you murmuring a great deal instead of praising God. That does not seem to me to be a profitable concern. In fact, as far as I have ascertained, either by my own experience or by the observation of others, I have never discovered that anxiety has comforted anybody, or that it has brought any grist to the mill, or any meal to the barrel! Well, if a thing does not pay, what is the good of it?

But perhaps you say, "I cannot help fretting and worrying." No, my good Brother or Sister, but do you not think that the Lord can help you to help it and that your faith in Him, if it were what it ought to be, would soon be the end of your distress and trouble? Have you not found out yet—I have—that the very anxiety which arises through your being in a difficulty, unfits you to meet that difficulty? You are in a great hurry to do something or other and that something or other does more mischief than could possibly have happened if you had kept still, resting in the Lord and waiting patiently for Him! Instead of doing so, you rush this way and that way, and so add to your worries instead of decreasing them. You are like the servant with the basket of eggs on her head, who shakes her head because she is afraid her eggs will fall—and makes them fall by the very process of her trembling!

So, you go and make ten troubles in endeavoring to get out of one. There is a text that is very easy to repeat, but not always so easy to

obey—"Stand still, and see the salvation of God." But you want to see your own salvation, so you cannot stand still! There is many a man who has run before God's cloud and who has been very glad to run or even to crawl back again. Some people are so anxious to carve for themselves that they cut their own fingers! They had better leave the carving in the hands of God and take what He gives them, for He knows far better than they do what is good for them—and His hand is infinitely wiser than theirs can possibly be.

"Oh, but," says one, "I feel that I must be doing *something*." That, "doing," will just be your undoing unless you stop and consider what God would have you do! The probability is that your action will be unwise and hasty while you are in your present feverish condition. Wait till you get quite cool, Brother—you will see your way far better then. At the present moment you are in such a fidget and flutter that you are very apt to mistake your right hand for your left and to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

You say again that you cannot help being anxious. Then, my dear Friend, I must very solemnly ask you what is the difference between you and the man of the world? There is an orphan child and it is afraid it will not be fed—but you have a Father in Heaven—and if you are afraid, surely, it is of little use for you to have such a Father! Are you not dishonoring His holy name by such conduct as that? Do you not think that others who see you in this condition will say, "There is not much power in religion, for these people, who profess to be Christians, are not comforted by it in their time of trouble—and it will not be of much use to them in the hour of their death." Remember Jeremiah's questions, "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein you trust, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?" Surely it is time that we plucked up courage and were not so easily disheartened, for we have worse trials on ahead than any we have yet been called to endure!

"That is just what I dread," says one. What would you do, then, Brother? "I have been thinking that perhaps I had better turn back." But you have no armor for your back—and the perils of going back are far worse than the perils of going forward! Therefore I charge you, if you are, indeed, a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to play the man and let your faith overcome your fear! Obey that gracious word, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you." Do you not believe that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"? You say that you do. Do you not believe that?—

***"He sits a Sovereign on His Throne
And rules all things well"?***

You say that you do. Do you not believe He loves you with an everlasting love? Do you not know that He spared not His only-begotten Son, but delivered Him up for you? And do you think that, after having done so much for you, He will withhold from you anything that is necessary for your well-being? You must not think so. Brother, Sister, it would be un-

kind, ungenerous, ungrateful to think so! Therefore, be not of an anxious or doubtful mind concerning temporal things.

“Well,” says one, “as far as temporal supplies are concerned, I can leave them entirely in the hands of God, but my anxieties arise from quite another form of trouble. There is a Christian Brother who is at enmity against me and he has been spreading an ill report about me, although I have earnestly sought to walk before God in holy fear and have watched every step that I have taken. And I feel so worried that I do not know what to do.” Well, dear Friend, there is one rule which you will generally find to be applicable in such a case as yours. When you do not know what to do, do not do anything at all! And, usually, if the trouble has arisen through false reports about your own character, “the least said, the soonest mended.” I believe that if there is anything you want to have well done, you had better do it yourself, but there is one exception to that rule and that is the matter of defending yourself. No defense is needed for a good man who can say, “By the Grace of God I am what I am.” Therefore you may leave that matter of your own character and, as to the good Brother not getting on with you, if you have done anything that has grieved him, confess the wrong. “Well, perhaps if I did, he might not meet me in the same spirit.” You have nothing to do with that, dear Friend—that is his business and God’s. You go and do the right thing and then be no longer anxious about it, but leave the result with God.

I hear another Brother say, “My anxiety has nothing to do with my personal affairs. I am anxious about the cause of God—the Church over which I preside—the Bible class that I conduct—the mission field that I try to cultivate. Somehow, things do not go as I wish and I am greatly concerned that they are not more prosperous.” And what are you doing, good Friend, to bring about that result? Are you telling the Lord about it and agonizing before Him in prayer? That is right, but if you are telling *yourself* about it and your anxiety is confined to yourself, no good will come of that. “But, Sir, all things seem to be going amiss.” Yes, I am constantly hearing that. There are some of our friends who believe that we have fallen upon the worst days that have ever been known in this world! Well, it may be so. I cannot say much about that. But I will say this, my dear Friends—that you and I are not of anything like so much importance to the Church of God as we may have imagined! And the particular department of work which has been entrusted to us, though we ought to think well of it, and to do it well, it is not, after all, the hinge upon which the whole universe turns! God managed the world very well before we were born and He will manage it quite as well when we are dead! His Church will not die, for the Lord still lives and His Spirit still abides in the Church and, therefore, it must live.

But there will be trouble for us if we begin to think that everything depends upon us. Uzza was well intentioned, no doubt, yet God killed him for putting forth his hand to stop the Ark of the Lord from falling. Let none of us become guilty of Uzza’s sin! It is our business to serve the Lord with all our heart and soul, just as Martha, with all her energy, sought to prepare a supper for Jesus. But when we begin to be cumbered

about our service, then we may expect the Master to say to us, as He did to Martha, “You are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary; and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” It is not well that we should be cumbered about our service! No, Brothers and Sisters; the Lord loves His Church far better than we do and He knows far better than we do how to manage her affairs, so we must—

**“Just do the little we can do,
And leave the rest with Him.”**

May His blessed Spirit help us so to get rid of all improper anxieties!

II. Another meaning of the text will make a second division of our subject. “BE NOT AMBITIOUS.” That is, do not fly high. Do not be as the clouds and the meteors, that not only move about and are uncertain in their movements, but are also high and lofty.

Some people are troubled because they are *aiming at amassing great wealth*. Years ago if anybody had told them they would one day possess what they have already obtained, they would have thought it was an amazing sum, more than sufficient to satisfy all their desires. If somebody had asked them, “Will you retire from business then, and be quite happy and content?” they would have answered, “Oh, yes, certainly!” Well, they have already gathered far more than that, yet they are as grasping as ever and they want more, and more, and more and they are by no means content with what they have, much as it is. We should all be happier than we are if we were more contented with what is really all that we need, namely having food and clothes, having neither poverty nor riches. Many men have been like that dog in the fable that had meat in his mouth, but did not eat it because he saw the reflection of it in the water and was so anxious to get that reflection as well as the substance that he already had that he lost the piece that he might have eaten! Such people are always trying to grasp the reflection instead of enjoying what God has given them. Let us not be of such a mind as that.

There are others who are *ambitious to attain a higher position*. They might be very well content with the kind, good friends they have, but there was a lord who once looked at them—and ever since that time they have thought it a very wonderful thing to know a real, live lord. I have heard of a man who used to boast that the king once spoke to him and though his majesty only told him to get out of the way, he was very proud of having been addressed by the king! And there are many people who think a great deal of that sort of thing. They are only shillings now, but they are anxious to get among the sovereigns. I have no sympathy with that desire—the best society in the world for me is a company of the Lord’s people and whether they are poor or rich, so long as they are God’s saints, I feel myself at home with them! If a Brother spoils the Queen’s English and makes a great many mistakes in pronunciation, that does not matter to me. The real piety that is in the man—the Grace of God that is in his soul—that is the thing which ought to please us! To be proud of our association with the great ones of the earth is both a folly and a sin on the part of any child of God.

Sometimes we are *ambitious in the service of God beyond what we ought to be*. You are doing well in that little Chapel, my Brother—the place is full and God is blessing you—but you want a bigger place, or you want to get away from those poor people whom the Lord has helped through your ministry. Possibly, my Friend, you are a Sunday school teacher and you have charge of the infants, and they love you. And you are fitted for the work, yet you are not content to be an infant class teacher, you would like a senior class—and a great stupid you would make of yourself if you had such a class, for you are not adapted for it! It is always well to be seeking to do more for the Lord Jesus Christ, but I would earnestly discourage you from endeavoring to attain to a higher position merely for the sake of occupying it. Dear Brothers and Sisters, be not ambitious in this sense, for, after all, what is human greatness?

Have you ever met with a really great man who would have given a penny for his own greatness? Do you not know that the higher you rise, even in the Church of Christ, the more responsibility you have and the heavier burdens you have to carry? Do you not also know that the way to be really great is to be little—and that he who is greatest of all is the one who has learned to be least of all? He who is chief in the Church of Christ is he who serves the Church most and who is willing to go lowest for Christ's sake! Cultivate *that* kind of greatness as much as you like, but put aside the other, and be not of ambitious mind even in your Lord's service!

I meet, every now and then, people who are, I hope, God's children, but they seem to me to have got into a very curious state of mind. They have notions that are not at all according to the realities of everyday life—flighty notions—romantic notions about their own rights, dignities, importance and so on. Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, some of us were, in our own estimation, very important individuals, were we not, before the Grace of God came into us? But when the Grace of God works in us, we are made to feel that the very lowest and meanest place is a better position than we have any right to take. When we are in our right senses, we never give ourselves those high and mighty airs. A truly humble Believer does not say, "So-and-So did not treat me with proper respect." Oh, dear me, what is the proper respect to which you and I are entitled? May the Lord preserve us from such a spirit as that!

But there are some people—professing Christians, too—whose heads are always being filled with that kind of nonsense. They do not seem to have learned that the spirit of Christ is a spirit of meekness which teaches us to bear and forbear, to forgive until seventy times seven, to expect to have our rights trampled on and to be willing to lay them all down for any who please to tread upon them. It is blessed to feel, "I will be content to take any place, so long as I can love others and do them good by loving them. As long as I can but love them to Christ and help them to love Christ and manifest the love of Christ to them, I will, by His Grace, be content." O Brothers and Sisters, we all need to go to school to our dear Lord and Master! You have never read that He said anything about His rights, or about defending His dignity. No, He who is the King of kings, and Lord

of lords, was the Servant of servants when He was here upon earth! And, truly, he that serves most is the most royal of all. Therefore, “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,” and then you will not be anxious or ambitious to be great.

III. A third meaning of the text is this, “BE YOU NOT OF AN IRRESOLUTE MIND, WITHOUT DECISION OF CHARACTER.”

If you look at the connection of the passage, you will see that this meaning fits in exceedingly well. There are persons in the world who may be described as time-servers. The main consideration with them is what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or how they shall be clothed—so they are always watching to see which is the best way to go in reference to those matters. As the old proverb has it, they know on which side their bread is buttered, or, according to another familiar saying, they are waiting to see which way the cat jumps! And when they have ascertained that, their “principles” will lead them to jump in that particular direction.

Mr. John Bunyan, in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, has well described just such persons—Mr. By-Ends and Mr. Fair-Speech—and some of us have known their descendants. You remember hearing of the waterman who got his living by looking one way, and pulling another. And that waterman has had a great many sons of very much the same character as himself—and they have made a certain kind of progress in the world by that sort of scheming. But you and I, Beloved, are not to be of an irresolute mind. Every Christian should say, “By the Grace of God my mind is made up to serve Him, cost what it may. Does my Lord desire me to keep the Sabbath holy? Sunday is the best day in my particular line of business, but that does not matter to me. My mind is made up to serve the Lord—and whatever it costs will make no difference to me. There is a party to be held tonight and I know that if I go to it, I shall have to witness the utmost frivolity, and I shall have to be a partaker in what will be, to me, a good deal of sin. Uncle Jonas will be angry if I don’t go, but I mean to do the right thing—whether Uncle Jonas is pleased, or not.” That is the way all you who have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts ought to speak. The question, “What is right?” being answered, you have only to do the right, whatever happens. This is what our Lord meant when He said to His disciples, “Neither be you of a doubtful mind.”

“Oh, but,” some say, “we really must look at both sides of that question. There may come a time when we know that a certain course is right, but, if we take it, we may bring ruin upon ourselves and upon others, too.” Let me read the 4th and 5th verses of this chapter—and when I have done so, there will be no need for you to say anything—“Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him.” And the 8th and 9th verses—“Whoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.” Does not that decide you? God grant that it may and that you may henceforth say,

“I will confess Christ and act for the right and the true and, by the aid of His blessed Spirit I will never hesitate to do as He bids me—

**“Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I’ll follow where He goes’—**

“neither will I be of a doubtful mind.”

IV. A fourth meaning of the text is, BE YOU NOT AT SEA SO FAR AS YOUR OWN PERSONAL SALVATION IS CONCERNED.

Brothers and Sisters, *there are some who are not saved, who yet imagine that they are.* There are many who know nothing of vital godliness, yet who sing as joyfully as the brightest of saints, never suspecting their real condition in the sight of God. Whenever I meet with a man who never has had a doubt about his own condition, I feel inclined to quote to him those lines of Cowper—

**“He has no hope who never had a fear
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late.”**

Beware of all presumption! There are some who even decry anything like self-examination. They cannot bear for us to look for the signs and tokens of the Holy Spirit’s work within them. And if we talk about practical holiness, they say that we are getting upon legal ground and turning aside to the “beggarly elements” of the Law of God. From all such turn away, for they can do you no good! You are exhorted in the Scriptures to examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith, and to prove yourselves. No, self-examination alone is not sufficient—you must cry with the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

But, on the other hand, *there are some who think that doubts and fears are necessary to a child of God.* I draw a very grave distinction between doubting the Truth of God’s promise and questioning whether that promise is made to me—they are two very different things. To doubt the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse from all sin is one thing, but, sometimes, to question whether I really have trusted in that blood is quite another thing. The first is sinful. The second is only proper and discreet. I would advise everyone to often look to the foundation of their faith, to see whether they really have believed in Jesus and have in their heart the true life which grows out of such faith. But, Brothers and Sisters, there is really no reason in a man saying, “Whether I am a child of God, or not, I am sure I do not know. I sometimes hope I am,” and so on.

I suppose there are few men who have not, at some time or other suffered pain, but it is not necessary for us to always have a toothache in order to prove that we really are men. And, in like manner, there are few Christians who have never had any doubts, yet it is not necessary to be always doubting in order to prove that we are Christians! But, as we are glad enough to get rid of pain, so are we to be glad to get rid of doubt by fully trusting our Lord who is so worthy of our trust! Dear Brothers and Sisters, you *ought* to know, you *can* know, you can know *now*, whether you are saved or not! At any rate, if I did not know myself to be saved, I would give no sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till I had

found the Savior. If a shadow of a doubt about my being washed in the blood of Christ were on my soul, I would get to my knees and not rise from them until I did really know that Christ had saved me!

If you are in doubt and yet are content about your condition, I fear that you know nothing at all about the matter, for the true child of God, if he is in any doubt about his salvation, is uneasy till that doubt is gone. He cannot rest till he knows that he is saved and, after all, that is not a very difficult thing to know, for we are told, over and over again in this blessed Book, that he that believes in Christ is not condemned, but has everlasting life! If you have believed in Him, you are not condemned—you have His word for it. He who trusts to Jesus only, builds on a sure foundation! So, if you are trusting in Him, you may have the full assurance that you have passed from death unto life and shall never come into condemnation. Do not, Brothers and Sisters, go limping along all your life when you might run in the way of God's commandments! A good old minister of my acquaintance, when people used to say to him that they hoped, and hoped, and never got any further than that, was in the habit of replying, "You are always hoping and hopping. I hope you will learn to run one of these days—to run without weariness in the ways of God."

The last thing I have to do is to bid all here present who have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to do so at once. My dear Friends, my text says, "Neither be you of a doubtful mind." But you cannot help being of a doubtful mind while you remain as you are and I really wish that your conscience would trouble you even more than it now does—that your uneasiness might become even greater and your unrest yet more unrestful! Look at yourself, my dear Hearer. You have not believed in Christ, so you are in debt to Divine Justice and you are hopelessly bankrupt, for you cannot meet one in a million of the claims that are recorded against you! How can you rest as long as you are thus indebted to God? You are a prisoner, too. When Marshal Bazaine had many of the comforts of life on the Isle of St. Marguerite, off the coast of the South of France, he could not rest till he had regained his liberty. And I marvel how you can be so happy, even with the joys of this world, while you are without the great blessing of spiritual liberty! I wish you felt that you could not rest till you had become emancipated from the bondage of sin and been made the Lord's freeman. How would you like to be in a condemned cell and not to know when your execution was to take place? I am sure that you would pity any poor creature, whatever his crime, if you could see him under such circumstances. Perhaps you say that you are living in a wide world and not in a prison. Yet you are condemned already! It was said of the old Roman Empire that if a man once broke the law, the whole world was a prison for him, for Caesar had almost universal sway. And God sees you wherever you are and everywhere you are in the condemned cell and, perhaps, before the sun shall rise again, your execution will have taken place.

I have been told that some years ago there went into the chamber of horrors at Madame Tussaud's exhibition, a young gentleman who was foolish enough to put himself under the guillotine—in the place which

had been occupied by criminals. And as he lay there, with his bare neck exposed to the terrible knife, he was so struck with horror that he was unable to move—and people who went by thought he was one of the wax figures and he could not stir until someone took him away! And, oh, if you did but know where you really are, with that dreadful axe of Divine Justice just above your head, you might well be paralyzed with horror! Only let your breath fail, or your pulse stop and down it descends to your utter destruction! But alas, you are insensible to these things. May the Spirit of God awaken you! May He make you feel your true position and then, I am sure, you will not be content to remain a moment longer of a doubtful and undecided mind!

Listen, my Friend! That sin of yours can be forgiven, for Jesus died for sinners! That heart of yours can be renewed by Grace, for Jesus lives again! You can be delivered from the wrath to come, for Jesus has gone up on high to plead for just such sinners as you are! What are you to do in order that you may have Christ as your Savior? Why, as the hymn says—

**“Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now!”**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 57:1-6.**

Verse 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusts in You: yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities pass.* The heading of this Psalm—“To the chief musician, Al-Taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave”—tells us when it was written. It is one of David’s “Golden Psalms.” What a mixture of feebleness and strength there is in this first verse—the feebleness so beautified by being clothed with the strength of faith! What a turning away from man and what a turning wholly unto the Lord! And, in coming to the Lord, what humility and what pleading for mercy, and for mercy only! “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.” Yet what holy boldness also! “For my soul trusts in You.” And what joyous confidence and what sweet repose in God! “Yes, in the shadow of Your wings, will I make my refuge.” “If I cannot see the brightness of Your face, the shadow of Your wings shall be enough for me. Only let me get near You—only permit me humbly to trust You, and it shall be enough for me, ‘until these calamities pass.’”

2. *I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performs all things for me.* Do you pray like that, my Brother, my Sister? I hope you do “cry unto God most high.” But do you pray to Him as the One “that performs all things” for you—not merely who *can* perform all things for you, but who is actually *doing* it at the present moment—working out your lasting good by everything that is transpiring around you?

3. *He shall send from Heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah.* If all the forces on earth are not sufficient to save His saint, God will send sufficient reserves from the ranks

of the heavenly host to preserve His people. Or if He does not determine to preserve them on earth, He will take them away from the earth, to be with Him in Glory. But, in one way or another, they shall be eternally secure!

Mark what the Psalmist says of the voracity of his enemy—he speaks of Saul as “him that would swallow me up.” And the Believer in Jesus is, at times, such an objective of the unbeliever’s detestation that he would annihilate him if he could. But God will sooner send help from Heaven for His people than that such a calamity should ever happen.

3, 4. *God shall send forth His mercy and His truth. My soul is among lions.* What peril David was in and what dangers often surround the best of the men—if not from arrows, swords and spears—from the hellish artillery of unbridled tongues! A human tongue is soft, but it can cut to the very quick. And the wounds from a cruel tongue are not easily healed. Many a man will bear, as long as he lives, the scars that were made by a slanderous tongue. God can save us, however, even from this great trial, and enable us to actually rejoice in this sharp affliction. It is no strange thing that has happened unto us, for so evil men persecuted the Prophets that were before us—as they said all manner of evil against them falsely. God Himself was slandered by the old serpent in the Garden of Eden, so it is not surprising that His children should be still slandered by the serpent’s seed.

5. *And I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.* A grand burst of praise and all the grander because of the condition of the man from whom it came! “My soul is among lions,” he says, “but, ‘be You exalted, O God,’” as if he would say, “It does not matter what becomes of me. I shall be content even in this den of lions, so long as You are exalted above the heavens and Your glory above all the earth.”

6. *They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.* He knew that it would be so and he looked upon it as already accomplished—their nets and pits would only injure themselves.

Now look at the next verse in the light of the prayer David had been praying. See what a marvelous act of faith and what a grand result of unwavering confidence in God it is, for a man to be able to sing as David does even when his soul is among lions and fierce and powerful enemies are all round him, seeking his harm!

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

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

LITTLE, BUT LOVELY

NO. 3549

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1917.

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

*“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good
pleasure to give you the kingdom.”
Luke 12:32.*

How kind and tender Jesus was towards His disciples! When He spoke sternly, it was to the outside multitude. Many a time was His spirit moved to rebuke them sharply. Very familiarly, however, did He unbend Himself in the presence of the few attached followers who were gathered round Him and drew near to Him—His chosen, His beloved. To them He unveiled His heart. To them He disclosed the things which He had received of the Father. From then, He kept back nothing that pertained to their welfare. “If it were not so, I would have told you,” was once, at least, His confidential expression. He thus abode with them as a Friend, as an elder Brother, as a loving Father. It is really pleasant to observe how much He thought of them—how deeply He sympathized with them—how far He was from despising them. The great ones of the earth would have shrugged their shoulders and sneered at the poor helpless band that gathered around the Prophet of Nazareth. Not so the Divine Master. Without for a moment concealing the fact that they were a little flock, He looks upon them fondly and applies to them invitingly the very epithet their enemies would have used resentfully—“little”—as He says, “Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Few in number they were, He calls them a flock. Thus He takes upon Himself the office of a shepherd and by implication He guarantees to them feeding and folding, solace and safeguard! And He speaks of “little” with a liking. As we often employ diminutive words to express endearment, calling those we love by little names, so does the Savior here seem to dwell upon the littleness of those He loves. The original word might be properly rendered, “very little.” “Fear not, tiny flock.” There is a double diminutive on which He seems to harp, although it had a pleasant ring about it. So mothers are known to call their baby children by bantling

names in their fondness for the wee creatures. But far surpassing woman's love, our Savior's strong affection can no rival know. In mild accents, He seems to say, "Never mind how few you are, or how despised. Your feebleness gives you a warmer place in My heart and makes Me press you more closely to My bosom. Hush, hush. Be still. Fear not, little flock."

And, oh, how ready He is with a reason to revive their confidence! "It is your Father's good pleasure." Thus does our beloved Lord recognize His own intimate relation with His disciples. "It is your Father's good pleasure." And who was their Father but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? He might have said, "It is My Father's good pleasure"—but then this was the sweeter way of putting it—"It is *your* Father's good pleasure." They would know that their Father was His Father when He thus said, "*your* Father." But had He said, "*My* Father," they might not have so quickly recollected that He was also their Father or, pondering it, they might have had some doubt on the subject. What He does, therefore, is, in effect, to call Himself their Brother, for if His Father is their Father, then He, Himself, must be their Brother. They are near kinsmen! He puts Himself on an equal footing with them when so speaking! At once He lifts them up to Himself while He goes down to them. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Must it not have been delightful to be on such friendly terms with the blessed Lord of Life when He was Incarnate here on earth—to have been able to say with John, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory—the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth"? Not that we have any need to fret because we have not that privilege, for we have a higher one, inasmuch as Jesus said, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." It was better, therefore, for us that Jesus should go in order that we might have the abiding Presence of the Holy Spirit, not only to dwell with us, but also to be in us! Oh, that we might realize and enjoy the Comforter's Presence at this time! It were ill for us to miss the Savior's company without having the consolation of the Spirit! To be without the *bodily* Presence of the Lord and without the *spiritual* Presence of the Holy Spirit were a double loss! Rather let us rejoice that He is in us, and shall be with us evermore. In the Presence of the Comforter we have a higher grade of communion with God than even in the solacing society of the Son of Man. He has gone from us, but He has left the words of His comfort to cheer us. In the power of the Holy Spirit, then, let us talk with one another concerning these words, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Our attention is here drawn, first, to *a little flock and a Great Shepherd*. And then to *a great fear*—what if I say a variety of fears—and *a still greater consolation*.

I. IT WAS A LITTLE FLOCK to whom the Savior spoke. Did He mean, by so designating them, that they were few in point of number? Our Savior's ministry, so far as conversion was concerned, was far from being prolific in its immediate results. The zeal of the Great Preacher painfully contrasted with the apathy of the hearers. The Prophet had foreseen the haze that would overhang the mental atmosphere. "Who has believed our report?" He exclaimed! How few out of Israel were gathered to Him as the fruit of words such as never man spoke, and works such as none but God ever did! It is not recorded of our Savior that He ever preached a sermon through which three thousand were converted. He left that to one of His servants, as if He meant to fulfill that word, "Greater things than these shall you do, because I go unto My Father." He would put that honor on His servants and take the disappointment, as He did the shame and the suffering, to Himself. Such is always His loving way. He will take the bleak side of the hill and the rough part of the battle for Himself. If there is any softer road to take, or any higher honors to win, He will give them to His servants. His converts were few—they were a little flock. Some of you may be residing in localities where there are but a few Believers meeting together. The company looks slender. Do not, I pray you, give place to despondency. You can surely worship God in sincerity and truth, though you may lack the excitement of a crowd. Perhaps you live where there are so few that you can hardly assemble a congregation. Why think yourself denied the privilege of communion with Christ because there are only one or two gathered together in His name? Some of the happiest days Believers have ever known have been alone with Christ! The richest displays of Christ's love have been unfolded to the twos and threes and the small family gatherings. He has kept His word to the letter, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Should you happen to belong to a larger company, you are not, therefore, shut out from the promise bequeathed to the few. A church of five or 5,000 Brothers and Sisters is still a little flock! Compared with the vast outlying mass of unbelievers, it is positively infinitesimal! Think of the millions that know not God—the hundreds of millions that are content to worship idol gods that their own hands have made! Take all Christendom into account and assume for the moment that every nominal professor were a true convert to Christ—the Church would form but a feeble minority—it would be but a little flock. Though the day shall come when the Lord will multiply us and increase

us greatly in the earth beyond all present computation, yet to this hour the Church of God is only a little flock—and this is sometimes an excuse for distrust and a cause of fear.

Not merely in their number were our Lord's immediate followers little. *They did not represent much of this world's wealth.* They had left all that they had. But their little all did not count for much. An old boat or two upon the lake, some nets, a little fishing tackle, and a few et ceteras—surely they were not much to leave! Their capital and their income were alike limited. Their treasurer never had a heavy purse to carry, though he took care to help himself out of its contents. The disciples of Jesus were poor, very poor. They were somewhat akin to their Master, who had not where to lay His head.

Nor from *their social position* could they exert much influence. Most of them were Galileans—countrymen from the most countrified part of the whole country and, as such, little esteemed. They spoke, no doubt, broad country dialects, and were looked upon as unlearned and ignorant men by those who heard them. When the Holy Spirit was on them, they spoke with great power, but there was not a “D. D.” among them, nor yet a professor from any university! They had not a solitary rabbi that could be put in the front, neither was there one that could have been called rabbi, if others had chosen to call him so. No prestige did they derive from rank or title, no princes of the blood, no knights or esquires were associated with them—they were all common peasants and fishermen. And I dare say many fears would cross their minds and many gloomy apprehensions would haunt them as they contemplated the strange adventure on which they were called to go forth. They were to preach the Christ of God, and to convert the world to Him—yet see what lowly people they were! Had they been brought up in the schools of philosophers, had they been the sons of kings or princes, had they the wealth of Croesus at their control, they might have said, “We can do something!” But poverty, ignorance and obscurity combined to make them seem little in the eyes of their fellow men! Therefore, the Savior says, “Fear not, little flock!” Against all adverse circumstances, there stands the actual promise! Be sure of this—the Kingdom of God is yours and you will win the day! Your father in Heaven can do without the dignity, the wealth and the learning of this world. He has resolved to give you the Kingdom, so you shall assuredly have it!

Now the Church of God has not much improved in those respects. The aristocracy of the age and the celebrities of the time, those who occupy high places in fashion or in talent, look down contemptuously on the followers of Jesus. We are not put out of countenance. We know full well

that not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen. Still, God has chosen the poor of this world. Meek and lowly though they are, He enriches them with the gifts of His Kingdom. The Church in the aggregate, like its individual members, is small—small in number and in influence—a “little flock.” And there is another littleness which is common among Christ’s followers. They are *very little in matters of Grace*. They think and know themselves to be little. The greatest among them generally think themselves the least. One who came not behind the chief of Apostles thought himself not worthy to be called an Apostle, such was his sense of unworthiness. Little and little worth the Lord’s people account themselves to be. But in point of age, of growth, of experience, some of them are little—very little. They have only lately been born-again. They are babes in Grace. Jesus meant them when He said, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”—yes, you—you who are new-born sons and daughters! Some, too, are little, not so much because they have been recently converted, as because they have made slow progress. They are of a desponding spirit, and their faith is very feeble. Perhaps they have not walked with God as they should and yet, although they may have little love, little hope, and little joy, little usefulness, and little holiness, compared with what they ought to have, still if they are Believers, if they are the sheep that hear Christ’s voice, know their Shepherd and follow Him—even to them He says, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” He will not destroy you because you are not what you should be in point of attainment! What though you are as smoking flax when you ought to be a burning and a shining light, He will not quench you! Though you are a broken reed in the music when you ought to be a full pipe organ, pouring forth volumes of praise, He will not break you, but He will make something of you yet! Though you have such little faith that you do not know whether you have any or not, He knows! A drop of water is as much water as the whole volume of water in the sea, and a particle of Grace is as truly Grace as the great store of Grace laid up in the Everlasting Covenant! A diamond as small as a pin’s head is as much a diamond as the Koh-I-Noor, so the smallest faith, though it is like a grain of mustard seed, is faith which can move mountains! Jesus knew this—hence He would speak comfortably to those who are little as yet, “Fear not, you weak and trembling ones! It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Your weakness shall not witness against you.”

Now is not this very precious, that little as the flock may be, the Great Shepherd speaks to them so kindly? “Fear not, little flock,” He says. And, oh, how His greatness must have struck them as He thus spoke! They

looked on Him and saw that He was not little. He had become like themselves in poverty and obscurity, but still there was a Divinity in His Character that could not be eclipsed. He was not little in His birth. “Where is He,” asked the wise men from the East, “who is born King of the Jews?” Nor was He little in His wisdom, for when but 12 years old, the doctors in the Temple were astonished at His understanding and answers! He was not little in His power. Did He not teach as one having authority? Did He not heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease as though no symptom could baffle His skill or resist His fiat? He was not little in His influence over men’s hearts—He could turn their current like rivers of water whichever way He would. They had a Great Shepherd—He could protect them, He could provide for them, He could lead them on—He could give them the victory and surely bring them into the rest which He had promised them! I feel just now as though the Master stood among us and we were the little flock, conscious that we could do nothing, devise nothing, develop nothing apart from Him. Are there great destinies before us? Is the world to be converted? Surely we are the last people that could ever be able to accomplish it! His Presence is our encouragement. Looking up here and seeing Him standing in the midst, hard by these emblems of His body and blood, we hear His voice saying, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Behold the baptized Christ giving to His own baptized disciples His own commission! “Go, preach the Gospel to every creature.” He vouchsafes, moreover His own authority, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; He that believes not shall be condemned.” He is the Commander-in-Chief of the little company of nonconformists to the world’s religion, the Leader of the little band of those who desire to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, the Lord and Master of all those who espouse His Cross, rejoice in His name and are not ashamed to bear His reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation! The Lord grant that the sweetness of these words may come home to the hearts of all of you who are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Let us turn our attention to—

II. THE GREAT FEAR AND THE GREAT CONSOLATION IMPLIED IN OUR text. “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

One fear which often agitates God’s servants is that which is alluded to in the foregoing paragraph—*an undue anxiety about temporal things*. A fretfulness that distracts one’s own mind and greatly dishonors God—a disposition utterly unworthy of the sincere Believer! Christ deals with it

in these words, "Seek not what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; neither be you of a doubtful mind. Why, child, know this, it is not only your Father's good pleasure to give you bread and water, but the kingdom!" You ask, "Will His bounty provide me with food convenient and raiment fit?" No, question it not, since He thus promises to put a crown upon your head and give you a mansion in the skies! Surely He who takes the trouble to give you a Kingdom hereafter will not let you starve on the road to it! When Saul went out to seek his father's donkeys, Samuel met him and anointed him to be king, and after that Saul never fretted about his father's donkeys anymore! Are you worrying yourselves about the losses you have had, and the best way of trying to recover them? Here are tidings for you. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Does not that awaken a new and nobler ambition in your breasts? Never mind the donkeys, now, we have other aims and other prospects to engage our thoughts! Affairs of high estate have drawn my mind away from paltry things. Oh, heir of Heaven, you cannot afford to pine and chafe over the little annoyances of this fleeting life! I remember hearing of a crossing-sweeper who was pursuing his humble avocation with great diligence. He had a valuable broom, which he would not have lost or spoiled without much grief. To him the few pence that purchased it were of great importance. But someone—a solicitor of the town tapped him on the shoulder and said, "My good Friend, is your name So-and-So?" "Yes." "Did your father live in such a place?" "He did." "Does your brother live in such a place?" "He does." "Then I have the pleasure to tell you that you have come into an estate worth £10,000 a year." I have been told he walked away without his broom! And I can hardly doubt it, for I do not think I would have shouldered the broom, myself, if I had been in his position! Oh, Christians, let me pluck you by the sleeve and tell you of princely possessions for which you may well turn aside from your present paltry pickings! They are not worthy to be compared! Jesus Christ informs you that "your Father has given you a kingdom which is infinitely more than all the gold of this world." You may well say—"Let those who will, fret about these earthly things—I will not. I have a kingdom in waiting! I will look out for that inheritance and I will begin to rejoice in it." Thus does Christ put to sleep one of His people's fears!

Another fear we have arises from watching the clouds, *forecasting storms and anticipating trouble*. Some of us must confess that we have our desponding moments. One is vexed because he sees his trade gradually slipping away and he anxiously asks, "What shall I do in future years?" Another, with a large family growing up around him, perplexes

himself with the question, "What shall I do with those boys and girls of mine?" As he watches the various tendencies in the young people, he wonders which way they will go, and he begins to fret. He does not commit his cause to God, but he disquiets himself in vain. This is unwise. Others find that their health declines—symptoms of consumption or some other fell disease alarm them, and they say, "What shall I do when this gets worse? How shall I bear it?" "Perhaps I may have painful operations to endure," says one. "Perhaps," says another, "I may have to lie bedridden by the year, together—what shall I do—oh, what shall I do?" Our Lord Jesus Christ counsels you what to do. He says, "Let not your heart be troubled." Don't fear. Have you not always found up to now that God has helped and succored you in every grievous plight? You have been foolish enough to dread a thousand dreary ills that never happened to destroy your peace, save in your dreams—like boys in a fog, before whose eyes huge monsters seem to rise, till they come up to the objects of their dread surprise—and find they are not monstrous scares, but modest friends who come to greet them. You have often been the victims of your own credulity in the past, cheated by your fears! May it not be the same in the dilemma to which just now your gloomy fancy points? This I know—when we are in our right mind, we cast our care on God. Let the Lord do as He wills to us! He will never be unkind to us! He has always been our Friend—He will never be our foe! He will never put us into the furnace unless He means to purge the dross out of us. Nor will there be one degree more heat in that furnace than is absolutely necessary—there will always be mercy to balance the misery—and strength supplied to support the burden to be borne. Cheer up, then! "Fear not, little flock." Let us, for the time being at any rate, shake off all these fears and let us revel in our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. Rough may be the road, but sure will be the end—we are going to the kingdom! When they fetch a foreign princess over to this land to be married to a princely husband, the ship may be tossed on the sea and the tempest rage with fury, but doubtless the bride would say, "I may well bear this slight inconvenience with equanimity—I am on the way to be made a queen." We are on board ship today. We are going to a land where we shall all be princes and kings—as many as believe in Jesus! Come, let us pluck up heart! What though the accommodation are sparse, the passage rough and the wind boisterous, there is a kingdom in prospect! So let us make the best of the voyage. Be not faint-hearted yourself, but help others to be cheerful. With a pilgrimage, rather than a voyage in his view, our sacred songster has helped our mirth in his hymn as he sings—

***“With a scrip on my back and a staff in my hand,
I march on in haste through an enemy’s land—
The way may be rough, but it cannot be long,
So I’ll smooth it with hope, and I’ll cheer it with song!”***

And somewhere or other in this congregation, I think I can hear the hoarse voice of a desponding Believer saying, “Ah, I am not troubled about worldly things! I am not distressed about any trials that may or may not happen to me here below. I have a worse fear haunting me! My terror is more terrible. Suppose I should not be in Christ after all?” The fear lest I have not really believed in Jesus, that I have not experienced a saving repentance, that I have not laid hold upon eternal life, distracts me. Well, precaution is better than presumption—it is better to go fearing to Heaven than to go presuming to Hell! I would rather be haunted with fears all my life and yet found, at length, when the shadows flee, among those who are God’s delight, than I would be inflated with a dauntless confidence all my days, but undeceived at last when the light breaks in and be left in lonely horror, the victim of despair! Tell me now, dear Friend, what it is you fear. Do you fear Hell? Let me ask you another question—Do you fear sin? If you fear sin, the Lord takes pleasure in you. The Lord takes pleasure in them who fear Him, and in them who hope in His mercy. Your doubts are very painful to bear, no doubt, but for all the distress they cause they will not destroy your soul! Doubting, like a toothache, is more distracting than dangerous. I never heard of its proving fatal to anybody yet. There are fluids of the body which serve as safety valves to the constitution. They ward off worse ills. An anxious solicitude whether you are, indeed, a child of God, of which we would by all means have you relieved as soon as possible, may have a salutary effect, nevertheless, upon your mind. It may make you walk more carefully, pray more fervently and live more scrupulously as one who pines for communion with God! I think I have a commission to say to everyone here who fears sin, and trembles lest he or she should not be found at God’s right hand when He gathers His saints together to Himself, “Fear not, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” If you fear because you feel your unworthiness, it is a blessed fear! Trust in the worthiness of Christ and your fear shall give place to faith! Of if you fear because you perceive your feebleness, I am not surprised. Look to Christ’s strength and His succor shall be your solace! Your heavenly Father will, of His own good pleasure, give you the Kingdom of God.

Or do I hear anyone say, “Well, Sir, my fear is not as to the sincerity of my present profession. I trust I am a Christian. I know that I have believed in Jesus, and I do believe in Him. But my serious misgiving is lest

I should not hold on to the end.” Beloved Friend that is a fear you ought not to entertain! Never fear it again as long as you live! If there is anything taught in Scripture for certain, it is the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints! I am as sure that Doctrine is as plainly taught as the Doctrine of the Deity of Christ. Words cannot put it more distinctly than God has graciously revealed it. Hear what Christ says. “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”—cast not, I beseech you, any suspicion upon the fidelity of our Lord! A question may be raised whether the work is begun by Him, but if He has begun it, there can be no question about His completing it! He never forsakes the work of His hands, or begins to build, and then proves unable or unwilling to rear the superstructure. Lay that fear aside and account it a folly! Do you doubt—whether you are now saved, or whether you shall hold out to the end? Then I counsel you to go back to the Cross and begin again as a penitent sinner, to put your trust in a pardoning Savior. Full many a time I have to do that. I see my evidence cut down like the grass, wither like hay and perish like the green herb. What else, then, can I do, but hurry off to the foot of the Cross, there to stand, and thus to say, “Here I come, a sinner, seeking succor from You, my Lord, from You. I come afresh as though I had never come to You before. If You have never washed me, wash me now! If I have never rested in You, here do I lay me down beneath Your shadow. To Your Cross I cling.” You will find your fears vanish when you come to the Cross anew. Do this, I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, as often as you get into the dark for a while, for, notwithstanding all fears to the contrary, it really is “your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” You have not to earn it by your labor, or merit it as a prize—else you might despond, or even despair. What is now amiss, I cannot guess, since He will give it to you freely of His own Grace. It is not the Judge’s good pleasure to award you the kingdom, but it is “your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Therefore, repose in the Grace of God, rely on the precious blood of Christ and cast your fears to the winds!

I think I hear a sigh. It is a sickly thought, and it comes from one who has a sickly frame. “My fear is *about dying*. How shall I stand the last dread hour of parting life? Shall I bear up in the weakness of that mortal agony? Perhaps, after all, I shall sink as one who is vanquished in the fray.” Beloved Brother, there is a peril more perilous than death! “What is that?” you ask. Why, I answer, Life! To live! To live well! There is the point—to live well. If you do succeed in this, you shall find that to die is

nothing but just closing up your life's story. Be it your main care to run the race with honor, then you shall finish your course with joy! You may leave the dying till the time to die comes, if you will see to the living while the time to live lasts! There is one kind of Grace of which we have no immediate need today, that is *dying Grace*. We shall not require the timely succor till the time of our departure is at hand. Or if we crave it we shall not have it. Does any one of you put himself on his dying bed in imagination, to forestall the terrors that his fancy paints? He does a very foolish thing. You cannot know what sort of summons you will get to quit your fleshly tabernacle—what sharp pains you may be called to bear—or what sweet comfort may be provided to cheer your spirit when heart and flesh shall fail. Serve God now with all your strength! Rest in the precious blood now! Seek present communion with your living, loving Lord. Doubt not that He will supply you with sufficient Grace for all your future needs! You know not of the good He has in store. As time and space contract, your mind will expand to survey the eternity beyond. As the film comes over these dull organs of sight, the eyes of your understanding will be opened. As you near the banks of Jordan, the fair fields on yonder side will break on your ravished view. You know nothing of them yet. Full many, I guarantee you, who depart this life hear the songs of angels long before their ears are closed to the sounds of earth! And oh, how precious Christ becomes to them! We have seen the flush of glory on their faces! I should think they hardly knew at what moment they entered Heaven, for before they left earth, the radiance of that bright realm dawned upon them in such visions of Glory! They were lifted up to Pisgah's summit and they looked down on this poor earth from an elevation at which we who still sojourn in the valley do greatly marvel—

***“Jesus can make a dying bed
Seem soft as downy pillows are!
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.”***

Why, some of us have known Believers who, after trembling all their days, triumphed in their last hours! In the prime of their strength they were frightened of a mouse—but in the extremity of their weakness they became so strong that they could face a legion of foes! Nothing could dismay them. Mr. Fearing, who fell over a straw, and said he should never reach the Celestial City, was the very man who died like a giant, singing and shouting with all his might! God is pleased to let some of His servants live in the dark—and die in the light. I think some of us have our candle lit at one watch of the night, some at another. You may have begun your spiritual life in the dark and your path has grown brighter

and brighter. Or you may have begun in the light and have since passed through seasons in which darkness has prevailed, or the lamp that guides your feet has dimly burned. God puts some of His bravest servants to bed in the dark because they can bear it, but others cannot. They cross over the river and angels come to meet them. Do not darken your days with direful dreams of dreaded death! Perhaps you will die in your sleep and never know a pang. Perhaps you never will die—Christ may come and take you to Himself. It may prove such a glorious thing to die, that you may say, with Halliday, “Call this dying? Then it is worthwhile to live, to die like this!” Death may have more of translation than of dissolution in it. If the dogs of Hell howl at you, bid them hold their tongue. Your Father’s good pleasure will not be frustrated—your fair prospects will not be disappointed. Does Conscience accuse you of slips and falls? Tell Conscience of the precious blood, and say, “My Father’s good pleasure will rescue His ransomed child from all his sins.” Do doubts and fears come up like a swelling torrent? Stem them all with this blessed assurance—“God’s counsel will stand, and He will do all His pleasure. We who have put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ shall assuredly possess the Kingdom of God forever and ever!”

Oh, how I wish you, all of you, belonged to the number of Christ’s sheep! Oh, that everyone of you had the promise of the kingdom! The Lord bring you to the feet of Jesus! May the Lord show you what sinners you are and what a Savior He is! Would to God you might all believe in Him and pass from death unto life! The fearless transgressor shall fail without help, while the fearful disciple shall be fondled with Fatherly care. Herd together, you little ones, as a flock—the heritage is reserved for you. “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

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

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

WATCHING FOR CHRIST'S COMING NO. 2302

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 2, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 7 1889.

***“Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to eat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.”
Luke 12:37, 38.***

I AM about to speak of the Second Coming of Christ and I felt thankful that my dear Brother's prayer, although we had not been in consultation with one another upon the matter, was in every way so suitable to the subject upon which I am to speak. He led us in prayer to think of our coming Lord, so that I trust you are on the margin of the subject, now, and that you will not have to make any very great exertion of mind to plunge into mid-stream and be carried away with the full current of thought concerning the Second Advent of the Savior. It is a very appropriate topic when we come to the Lord's Table, for, as that prayer reminded us, the Lord's Supper looks *backward*, and is a memorial of His agony. But it also looks forward and is an anticipation of His Glory. Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, "For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you show the Lord's death till He comes." By looking forward, in a right state of heart, to that Second Coming of Christ which is the joy of His Church, you will also be in a right state of heart for coming to the Communion Table. May the Holy Spirit make it to be so!

The posture at the Communion Table, as you know, according to our Lord's example, was not that of kneeling, but that of reclining. The easiest position which you can assume is the most fitting for the Lord's Supper, but remember that the supper was no sooner finished, than, "they sang a hymn," and when that hymn was concluded, they went out into the Mount of Olives to the agonies of Gethsemane. It often seems to me as if now, after finding rest at the Table by feeding upon Christ, whose real Presence we have—not after a carnal sort, but after a *spiritual* sort—after that, we sing a hymn, as if we would go out to meet our Lord in His Second Coming, not going to the Mount of Olives to see Him in a bloody sweat, but to hear that word of the angel, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven."

I do not think we ought to feel at all surprised if we were to go always expecting Him, not knowing at what hour the Master of the house shall

come. The world does not expect Him—it goes on with its eating and drinking, its marrying and giving in marriage—but His own family should expect Him. When He will return from the wedding, I trust that He will not find the door shut against Him, but that we shall be ready to open to our Lord immediately when He knocks. That is the object of the few words that I shall have to say, tonight, to stir you up, and my own heart, also, to be always watching for Christ's Second Coming.

I. First, THE LORD WILL COME. He that has come once is to come again. He will come a second time. The Lord will come.

He will come again, *for He has promised to return*. We have His own word for it. That is our first reason for expecting Him. Among the last of the words which He spoke to His servant John are these, "Surely I come quickly." You may read it, "I am coming quickly. I am even now upon the road. I am traveling as fast as wisdom allows. I am always coming, and coming quickly." Our Lord has promised to come and to come in Person. Some try to explain the Second Coming of Christ as though it meant the Believer dying. You may, if you like, consider that Christ comes to His saints in death. In a certain sense, He does, but that sense will never bear out the full meaning of the teaching of the Second Advent with which the Scripture is full. No, "the Lord Himself shall *descend from Heaven* with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." He who went up to Heaven will come down from Heaven and stand, in the latter day, upon the earth. Every redeemed soul can say with Job, "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." Christ will as certainly be here again in Glory as He once was here in shame, for He has promised to return.

Moreover, the great scheme of redemption requires Christ's return. It is a part of that scheme that, as He came once with a sin offering, He should come a second time *without* a sin offering, that, as He came once to redeem, He should come a second time to *claim the inheritance which He has so dearly bought*. He came once, that His heel might be bruised. He comes, again, to break the serpent's head and, with a rod of iron, to dash His enemies in pieces, as potters' vessels. He came, once, to wear the crown of thorns. He must come, again, to wear the diadem of universal dominion. He comes to the marriage supper. He comes to gather His saints together. He comes to glorify them with Himself on this same earth where once He and they were despised and rejected of men. Understand this, that the whole drama of redemption cannot be perfected without this last act of the coming of the King!

The complete history of Paradise Regained requires that the New Jerusalem should come down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband—and it also requires that the heavenly Bridegroom should come riding forth on His white horse, conquering and to conquer, King of kings and Lord of lords, amidst the everlasting hallelujahs of saints and angels! It must be so. The man of Nazareth will come again! None shall spit in His face, then, but every knee shall bow before Him. The Crucified shall come, again, and though the nail prints will be

visible, no nails shall, then, fasten His dear hands to the tree. But instead thereof, He shall grasp the scepter of universal sovereignty and He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!

When will He come? Ah, that is the question, the question of questions! *He will come in His own time.* He will come in due time. A brother minister, calling upon me, said, as we sat together, "I should like to ask you a lot of questions about the future." "Oh, well!" I replied, "I cannot answer you, for I daresay I know no more about it than you do." "But," he said, "what about the Lord's Second Advent? Will there not be the millennium, first?" I said, "I cannot tell whether there will be the millennium, first, but this I know, the Scripture has left the whole matter, as far as I can see, with an *intentional indistinctness*, that we may be always expecting Christ to come, and that we may be watching for His coming at any hour and every hour. I think that the millennium will commence *after* His coming, and not before it. I cannot imagine the Kingdom with the King absent. It seems to me to be an essential part of the Millennial Glory that the King shall then be revealed. At the same time, I am not going to lay down anything definite upon that point. He may not come for a thousand years. He may come tonight. The teaching of Scripture is, first of all, 'In such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes.' It is clear that if it were revealed that a thousand years must elapse *before* He would come, we might very well go to sleep for that time, for we should have no reason to expect that He would come when Scripture told us He would not."

"Well," answered my friend, "but when Christ comes, that will be the General Judgment, will it not?" Then I quoted these texts, "The dead in Christ shall rise first." "But the rest of the dead lived not, again, until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." I said, "There is a resurrection from among the dead to which the Apostle Paul labored to attain. We shall all rise, but the righteous shall rise a thousand years before the ungodly. There is to be that interval of time between the one and the other. Whether that is the Millennial Glory, or not, this deponent says not, though he thinks it is. But this is the main point, the Lord shall come. We know not when we are to expect His coming. We are not to lay down, as absolutely fixed, any definite prediction or circumstance that would allow us to go to sleep until that prediction was fulfilled, or that circumstance was apparent."

"Will not the Jews be converted to Christ, and restored to their land?" enquired my friend. I replied, "Yes, I think so. Surely they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son. And God shall give them the Kingdom and the Glory, for they are His people, whom He has not forever cast away. The Jews, who are the natural olive branches, shall yet be grafted into their own olive tree, again, and then shall be the fullness of the Gentiles." "Will that be before Christ comes, or after?" asked my friend. I answered, "I think it will be after He comes, but whether or not, I am not going to commit myself to any definite opinion on the subject."

To you, my dear Friends, I say—Read for yourselves, and search for yourselves, for still, this stands first, and is the only thing that I will insist

upon tonight—the Lord will come. He may come now. He may come tomorrow. He may come in the first watch of the night, or the second watch, or He may wait until the morning watch—but the one word that He gives to you all is, “Watch! Watch! Watch!” that whenever He shall come, you may be ready to open to Him and to say, in the language of the hymn we sang just now—

**“Hallelujah!
Welcome, welcome, Judge Divine!”**

So far I know that we are Scriptural and, therefore, perfectly safe in our statements about the Lord's Second Advent.

Brothers and Sisters, I would be earnest on this point, for *the notion of the delay of Christ's Coming is always harmful*, however you arrive at it, whether it is by studying prophecy, or in any other way. If you come to be of the opinion of the servant mentioned in the 45th verse, you are wrong—“If that servant says in his heart, My lord delays his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.” Do not, therefore, get the idea that the Lord delays His Coming and that He will not or cannot come as yet. Far better would it be for you to stand on the tiptoe of expectation and to be rather, disappointed, to think that He does not come.

I do not wish you to be shaken in mind so as to act fanatically or foolishly, as certain people did in America, when they went out into the woods with “ascension dresses” on, so as to go straight up all of a sudden! Fall into none of those absurd ideas that have led people to leave a chair vacant at the table and to put an empty plate because the Lord might come and need it! And try to avoid all other superstitious nonsense. To stand star-gazing at the prophecies, with your mouth wide open, is just the wrong thing to do! Far better will it be to go on working for your Lord, getting yourself and your service ready for His appearing, and cheering yourself all the while with this thought, “While I am at work, my Master may come. Before I get weary, my Master may return. While others are mocking at me, my Master may appear! And whether they mock or applaud, is nothing to me. I live before the great Taskmaster's eyes, and do my service knowing that He sees me and, expecting that, by-and-by, He will reveal Himself to me, and then He will reveal me and my right intention to misrepresenting men.”

That is the first point, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord will come. Settle that in your minds. He will come in His own time and we are always to be looking for His appearing.

II. Now, secondly, THE LORD BIDS US WATCH FOR HIM. That is the marrow of the text—“Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching.”

Now what is this watching? Not wishing to use my own words, I thought that I would call your attention to the context. The first essential part of this watching is that *we are not to be taken up with present things.*

You remember that the 22nd verse is about not taking thought what you shall eat, or what you shall drink—you are not to be absorbed in that. You who are Christians are not to live the fleshly, selfish life that asks, “What shall I eat and drink? How can I store up my goods? How can I get food and raiment, here?” You are something more than dumb, driven cattle that must think of hay and water. You have immortal spirits! Rise to the dignity of your immortality! Begin to think of the Kingdom, the Kingdom so soon to come, the Kingdom which your Father has given you and which, therefore, you must certainly inherit! Think of the Kingdom which Christ has prepared for you, and for which He is making you kings and priests unto God, that you may reign with Him forever and ever. Oh, be not earthbound! Do not cast your anchor, here, in these troubled waters. Build not your nest on any of these trees—they are all marked for the axe and are coming down—and your nest will come down, too, if you build it here. Set your affection on things above, up yonder—

***“Up where eternal ages roll,
Where solid pleasures never die,
And fruits eternal feast the soul.”***

There project your thoughts and your anxieties—and have a care about the world to come. Be not anxious about the things that pertain to this life. “Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Reading further down, in the 35th verse, you will notice that watching implies *keeping ourselves in a serviceable condition*—“Let your loins be girded about.” You know how the Orientals wear flowing robes which are always getting in their way. They cannot walk without being tripped up, so that, if a man has a piece of work on hand, he just tucks in his robe under his belt, tightens his belt up tightly, and gets ready for his task—as we would say in English, turning the Oriental into the Western figure—rolling up your shirtsleeves and preparing for work. That is the way to wait for the Lord, ready for service, that, when He comes, He may never find you idle.

I called to see a Sister one morning and when I called, she was cleaning the front steps with some whitening, and she said, “Oh, my dear Pastor, I am sorry that you should call upon me just now! I would not have had you see me like this on any account.” I answered, “That is how I like to see you, busy at your work. I should not have liked to have come in and caught you talking to your neighbor over the back palings. That would not have pleased me at all. May your Lord, when He comes, find you just so, doing your duty!” You see exactly what is meant—you are to be doing your duty—you are to be engaged about those vocations to which God has called you. You are to be doing it all out of love to Christ and as service for Him. Oh, that we might watch in that style, with our loins girded about! Work, and wait, and watch! Can you put those three things together? Work, and wait, and watch! This is what your Master asks of you.

And next, He would have us *wait with our lights burning*. If the Master comes home late, let us sit up late for Him. It is not for us to go to bed till He comes home. Have the lights all trimmed. Have His chamber well lit—

have the entrance-hall ready for His approach. When the King comes, have your torches flaming, that you may go out to meet the royal Bridegroom and escort Him to His home! If we are to watch for the Lord as we ought, it must be with lamps burning. Are you making your light to shine among men? Do you think that your conduct and character are an example that will do your neighbors good and are you trying to teach others the way of salvation? Some professors are like dark lanterns, or candles under a bushel. May we never be such! May we stand with our lamps trimmed and our lights burning and we, ourselves, like unto men that wait for their Lord, not walking in darkness, nor concealing our light, but letting it shine brightly! That is the way to watch for Christ, with your belt tight about you because you are ready for work, and your lamp flaming out with brightness because you are anxious to illuminate the dark world in which you live.

To put it very plainly, I think that watching for the Coming of the Lord means acting *just as you would wish to be acting if He were to come*. I saw, in the Orphanage schoolroom, that little motto, "What would Jesus do?" That is a very splendid motto for our whole life, "What would Jesus do in such a case and in such a case?" Do just that. Another good motto is, "What would Jesus think of me if He were to come?" There are some places into which a Christian could not go, for he would not like his Master to find him there. There are some kinds of amusements into which a Believer would never enter, for he would be ashamed for his Master to come and find him there. There are some conditions of angry temper, of pride, petulance, or spiritual sloth in which you would not like to be if you felt that the Master was coming. Suppose an angel's wing should brush your cheek just as you have spoken some unkind word and a voice should say, "Your Master is coming"—you would tremble, I am sure, to meet Him in such a condition! Oh, Beloved, let us try, every morning, to get up as if that were the morning in which Christ would come! And when we go up to bed at night, may we lie down with this thought, "Perhaps I shall be awakened by the ringing out of the silver trumpets heralding His Coming. Before the sun arises, I may be startled from my dreams by the greatest of all cries, 'The Lord is come! The Lord is come!'" What a check, what an incentive, what a bridle, what a spur such thoughts as these would be to us! Take this for the guide of your whole life—act as if Jesus would come during the act in which you are engaged—and if you would not wish to be caught in that act by the Coming of the Lord, let it not be your act.

The second verse of our text speaks about the master coming in the second watch, or in the third watch. *We are to act as those who keep the watches of the age for Christ*. Among the Romans it was as it is on board ship—there were certain watches. A Roman soldier, perhaps, stood on guard for three hours, and when he had been on the watch for three hours, there came another sentry who took his place, and the first man retired and went back to the barracks. And the fresh sentinel stood in his place during his allotted time. Brothers and Sisters, we have succeeded a long line of watchmen! Since the days of our Lord, when He sent out the chosen 12 to stand upon the citadel and tell how the night waxed or

waned, how have the watchers come and gone! Our God has changed the watchers, but He has kept the watch. He still sets watchmen on the walls of Zion who cannot hold their peace day or night, but must watch for the Coming of their Master, watch against evil times, watch against error and watch for the souls of men.

At this time some of us are called to be specially on the watch and dare we sleep? After such a line of lynx-eyed watchmen, who counted not their lives dear unto them that they might hold their post, and watch against the foe, shall we be cowards and be afraid, or shall we be sluggards and go to our beds? By Him that lives, and was dead, and is alive forevermore, we pray that we may never be guilty of treason to His sacred name and Truth! But may we watch on to the last moment when there shall ring out the clarion cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go you out to meet Him." People of the Tabernacle, you are set to watch, tonight, just as they did in the brave days of old! Whitefield and Wesley's men were watchers and those before them, in the days of Luther and of Calvin, and backward even to the days of our Lord! They kept the watches of the night and you must do the same, until—

***"Upstarting at the midnight cry,
'Behold your heavenly Bridegroom near,'"***

you go forth to welcome your returning Lord.

We are to wait with one objective in view, viz., *to open the door to Him and to welcome Him*—"that when He comes and knocks, they may open unto Him immediately." Perhaps you know what it is to go home to a loving, tender wife and children who are watching for you. You have been on a journey. You have been absent for some little time. You have written them letters which they have greatly valued. You have heard from them, but all that is nothing like your personal presence! They are looking out for you and if, perhaps, the boat should fail you, or the train is late—if you arrived at eleven or twelve o'clock at night, you would not expect to find the house all shut up and nobody watching for you! No, you had told them that you would come and you were quite sure that they would watch for you. I feel rebuked, myself, sometimes, for not watching for my Master when I know that, at this very time, my dogs are sitting against the door, waiting for *me*—and long before I reach home, there they will be and, at the first sound of the carriage wheels, they will lift up their voices with delight because their master is coming home! Oh, if we loved our Lord as dogs love their masters, how we should catch the first sound of His Coming—and be waiting, always waiting—and never happy until at last we should see Him!

Pardon me for using a dog as a picture of what you ought to be, but when you have attained to a state above that, I will find another illustration to explain my meaning.

III. Now, lastly, THERE IS A REWARD FOR WATCHERS. Their reward is this, "Blessed are those servants, whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching."

They have a present blessedness. It is a very blessed thing to be on the watch for Christ, it is a blessing to us now. How it detaches you from the

world! You can be poor without murmuring. You can be rich without worldliness. You can be sick without sorrowing. You can be healthy without presumption. If you are always waiting for Christ's Coming, untold blessings are wrapped up in that glorious hope. "Every man that has this hope in him purifies himself even as He is pure." Blessednesses are heaped up one upon another in that state of heart in which a man is always looking for his Lord.

But what will be the blessedness when Jesus *does* come? Well, a part of that blessedness will be in future service. You must not think that when you have done working here, you Sunday school teachers, and those of us who preach and teach, that the Master will say, "I have discharged you from My service. Go and sit on a heavenly mountain and sing yourselves away forever and ever." Not a bit of it! I am but learning how to preach, now—I shall be able to preach, by-and-by. You are only learning to teach now—you will be able to teach, by-and-by. Yes, to angels and principalities, and powers, you shall make known the manifold wisdom of God! I sometimes aspire to the thought of a congregation of angels and archangels, who shall sit and wonder as I tell what God has done for me—and I shall be to them an everlasting monument of the Grace of God to an unworthy wretch, upon whom He looked with infinite compassion and saved with a wonderful salvation!

All those stars, those worlds of light—who knows how many of them are inhabited? I believe there are regions beyond our imagination to which every child of God shall become an everlasting illumination, a living example of the love of God in Christ Jesus! The people in those far distant lands could not see Calvary as this world has seen it, but they shall hear of it from the redeemed! Remember how the Lord will say, "Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things"? He is to keep on doing something, you see. Instead of having some little bit of a village to govern, he is to be made ruler over some great province. So it is in this passage. Read the 44th verse—"Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has." That is, the man who has been a faithful and wise steward of God, here, will be called of God to more eminent service hereafter. If he serves his Master well, when his Master comes, He will promote him to still higher service!

Do you not know how it used to be in the Spartan army? Here is a man who has fought well and been a splendid soldier. He is covered with wounds on his breast. The next time that there is a war, they say, "Poor fellow, we will reward him! He shall lead the way in the first battle! He fought so well before, when he met 100 with a little troop behind him—now he shall meet ten thousand with a larger troop!" "Oh!" you say, "that is giving him *more work*." That is God's way of rewarding His people and a blessed thing it is for the industrious servant! His rest is in serving God with all his might. This shall be our Heaven, not to go there to roost, but to be always on the wing, forever flying and forever resting at the same time. "They do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His

word.” “His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face.” These two things, blended together, make a noble ambition for every Christian!

May the Lord keep you waiting, working, watching, that when He comes, you may have the blessedness of entering upon some larger, higher, nobler service than you could accomplish, now, for which you are preparing by the lowlier and more arduous service of this world! God bless you, Beloved, and if any of you do not know my Lord and, therefore, do not look for His appearing, remember that He will come whether you look for Him or not. And when He comes, you will have to stand at His bar. One of the events that will follow His Coming will be your being summoned before His Judgment Seat—how will you answer Him, then? How will you answer Him if you have refused His love and turned a deaf ear to the invitations of His mercy? If you have delayed, and delayed, and delayed, and delayed, how will you answer Him? How will you answer Him in that day? If you stand speechless, your silence will condemn you and the King will say, “Bind him hand and foot, and take him away.”

God grant that we may believe in the Lord Jesus unto life eternal and then wait for His appearing from Heaven, for His love's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
LUKE 12:12-48.

Verses 13, 14. *And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And He said unto him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?* Our Lord kept to His proper business, which was the preaching of the Gospel and the healing of the sick. We find, in these days, that the minister of the Gospel is asked to do almost everything. He must be a politician. He must be a social reformer. He must be, I know not what! For my part, I often feel as if I could answer, “Who made me to do anything of the kind? If I can preach the Gospel, I shall have done well if I do that to the glory of God and to the salvation of men. Surely there are enough people to be judges and dividers, there are quite sufficient politicians to attend to politics and plenty of men who feel themselves qualified to direct social reforms. Some of us may be spared to attend to *spiritual* affairs.”

15. *And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.* Jesus gave His hearers a good moral and spiritual lesson from the occurrence which they had witnessed, and then passed on to speak of the matter which always occupied His thoughts.

16, 17. *And He spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth, plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?* He did not enquire, “Where can I find a needy case in which I may use my superfluity for charity?” Oh, no! “How can I hoard it? How can I keep it all to myself?” This was a selfish, worldly man.

18-20. *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say*

to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, You fool. Other men said of him, "This is a wise man. He minds the main chance. He is a fellow plentifully endowed with good sense and prudence." But God said unto Him, "You fool."

20. *This night your soul shall be required of you.* I should like you to set that up as the counter picture to the one that we had this morning, "To-day shall you be with Me in Paradise." [Sermon #2078, Volume 35—*The Believing Thief*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] That was said by Christ to the penitent thief, but to this impenitent rich man, God said, "This night your soul shall be required of you."

20, 21. *Then whose shall those things be, which you have provided? So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.* "He that lays up treasure for himself." That was the chief point of this man's wrong-doing—his selfishness. His charity began at home and ended there. He lived only for himself.

22, 23. *And He said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.* Have no anxious, carking care. Do not be looking after the inferior things and neglecting your soul. Take care of your soul—your body will take care of itself better than your soul can. The raiment for the body will come in due time, but the clothing for the soul is the all-important matter. Therefore, see to that.

24-27. *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If you, then, are not able to do that thing which is least, why take you thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.* The lilies simply stand still in the sunlight and silently say to us, "See how beautiful are the thoughts of God?" If we could just drink in God's love and then, almost without speech, show it in our lives, how we should glorify His name!

28. *If then God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith!* But you have some faith, otherwise the Savior would not have said to you, "O you of little faith!" The man who has no faith may well go on fretting, toiling, spinning, but he that has faith, as he goes forth to his daily labor, looks beyond that to the God of Providence, and thus God keeps him without care, and provides for him.

29, 30. *And seek not you what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that you have need of these things.* He knows that you must go and work for these things, but He would not have you fret and fume about them. "Your Father knows." He

will provide. It is enough for Him to know His children's needs, and He will be sure to provide for them.

31. *But rather seek you the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.* Thrown in as a kind of make-weight. You get the *spiritual* and then the common blessings of life shall be added unto you.

32. *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* That is your share. Others may have inferior joys, but you are to have the Kingdom of God! The Lord could not give you more than that and He will not give you less.

33. *Sell that you have, and give alms.* Do not merely give away what you can spare, but even pinch yourself, sometimes, and sell what you can that you may have the more to give.

33. *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts.* Put some of your estate where it cannot be lost. Take care that you invest some of it for God's poor, and God's work, where the interest will be sure and the investment will be safe.

34. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* You can be sure of that. Your heart will go after your treasure and, if none of your treasure has gone to Heaven, none of your heart will go there, either.

35, 36. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and you yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately.* Our Lord constantly reminded His disciples that the time would come when He must leave them for a season, but He always kept before them the thought of His return and bade them watch for Him as those that wait for their lord.

37-39. *Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. As he does not know when the thief will come, he is always watching.*

40, 41. *Be you therefore ready also: for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you think not. Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speak You this parable unto us, or even to all?* And the Lord told him that, while it was spoken to all, it had a very special bearing upon Apostolic men, upon preachers of the Gospel, ministers of Christ.

42-44. *And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has.* Just as Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over all Egypt, so, when men have done well in the ministry of Christ, He will promote them, and they shall do still more for Him.

45, 46. *But and if that servant says in his heart, My lord delays his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder.* This is a truly terrible expression! We are sometimes charged with using too strong expressions with regard to the wrath to come. It is quite impossible that we should do so, even if we tried, for the expressions of the Lord Jesus are more profoundly terrible than any which even mediaeval writers have ever been known to invent!

46. *And will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.* The worst portion that any man can get is with the unbelievers! Are there not some here who may, in this verse, see what a dark doom theirs will be if they are among those who are described as being cut in sunder, and having their portion with the unbelievers?

47. *And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.* So that there are different measures of responsibility—there are degrees in guilt, and degrees in punishment.

48. *But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* O my Brothers and Sisters, let those of us who are privileged with the possession of the Gospel, and privileged with any amount of ability to spread it, enquire whether we could give in a good account if the Lord were to come tonight and summon us, as stewards, to give an account of our stewardship. God bless to us all the reading of His Word! Amen.

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FIRE—THE NEED OF THE TIMES

NO. 854

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 7, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!”
Luke 12:49.***

OUR Lord was here certainly alluding to the opposition and persecution which the Gospel would excite. This is clear from the context, in which He declares that He is not come to send peace on the earth but a sword, and from the parallel passages in the other Gospels, where our Lord is forewarning His disciples that they must look for persecution. Albeit, that this was the first direction of the Savior's thought, He here delivers Himself of a Truth of God of a far wider application and reveals a great peculiarity of the Gospel which causes men to oppose it. He bears witness that the Gospel is an ardent, fervent, flaming thing—a subject for enthusiasm, a theme for intense devotion, a matter which excites men's souls and stirs them to the lowest depths—and for this reason, mainly, it arouses hostility.

If the Gospel were a mere propriety of ceremonies, a truth which would slumber in the creed or lie entombed in the brain. If it were not a *spiritual* principle which lays hold upon the innermost nature, rules the emotions and fires the affections—if it were not all this it would remain unopposed. But because it is so living and forcible a principle, the powers of evil are in arms to stop its course. The subject then, of this morning's meditation will be the fiery nature of the religion of Jesus Christ! And to bring this clearly before you we shall first and foremost CONSIDER THE HISTORY OF THE GOSPEL.

Practically, so far as the most of us are concerned, *it begins with a revelation contained in this Book*—we come to the Bible, therefore, to find out what the Gospel is. Bending over the pages we are struck with the extraordinary doctrines revealed. We find them far from being matters for the curious and the philosophical, but practical truths, touching upon everyday life and bearing upon common human nature. Truths, indeed, so powerful over humanity that they seem to wear the key of man's heart hanging at their belt. We find in this Book the master Truth of the love of God plainly and repeatedly stated.

Right golden are these words, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” We see revealed to us a love of God so vast as to be incomprehensible! So generous as to be a theme for adoring wonder throughout eternity, since the Father gives up His equal Son that He may bleed and die that we, who are rebellious and undeserving, may live through Him! As we believe the doctrine of Divine love, we feel it to be a Truth which sets the soul on fire with joy, gratitude and love. As we peruse the Gospel, we perceive that Divine love has been manifested in connection with a most astonishing display of justice and severity towards sin.

We see God willing to forgive, but not willing to allow His Law to be dishonored, and therefore giving up His only-begotten Son to die a death of pain and ignominy, in order that the penalty of a broken Law might be rendered to justice and yet mercy displayed to rebels! We behold the Savior bleeding on the tree as much to manifest the justice as the love of God. And now, as we behold our Lord's passion, thoughts that burn full into our bosom—holy detestation of sin lifts the torch of heart-searching and the flame of true love burns up our lusts. He dies, the Friend of Sinners dies! Murdered by human sin! Who will not, therefore, loathe the murderous thing? It is impossible to read aright in the illuminated volume of the Cross, printed in crimson characters, without feeling our hearts burn within us with an ardor unquenchable.

As we study more fully the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, we perceive that in consequence of the death of the Crucified and by reason of the love of God, eternal salvation by Divine Grace is freely proclaimed to everyone that believes in Christ! This creates, at first, a fire of opposition to the doctrine of Free Grace, given not for works of righteousness which we have done, but according to the decree of God—for naturally we choose to be saved by our own goodness and we prefer, like Luther on Pilate's staircase, to please ourselves with acts of humiliating penance rather than submit to that voice which says, "By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified." Before long, through God's Spirit, another fire burns in our soul of intense *gratitude* that God should condescend to make a covenant with man and ordain faith in Jesus as the great way of obtaining reconciliation!

Brothers and Sisters, these three Truths—the love of God, the atoning death of Christ and of justification by faith—are doctrines which cannot sleep! They must be active! Like the sword of God, they cannot be quiet. They are a seed which must grow, a leaven which must spread, a fire which must burn on forever! Take any other Truth of the Gospel and you will find it to be of the same energetic character—as, for instance, that of the universal priesthood of all Believers. Priestcraft, throughout all its domains, is stirred to bitterest hate by this Truth of God. How cardinals and bishops gnash their teeth! How priests and friars revile this teaching, "You are a royal priesthood"!

This does away with the pride of a clerical caste—the commerce in pardons and confessions. Every man who believes in Jesus Christ is at once a priest and as much a priest as any other of the saints, so that no *man* has any right to arrogate unto himself in particular the title of priest, or to suppose or imagine that there is any sacerdotal rank in the Church but such as is common to all Believers in Christ Jesus! This Truth of God coming into a man's soul makes him blaze and burn with zeal! Am *I* consecrated to God, ordained to stand as a priest between the living and the dead and to offer acceptable sacrifice through Jesus Christ? Then I will purge myself from uncleanness and diligently serve my God!

"Am I and all my Brethren priests?" asks the Believer. "Then down with priestcraft! We will be no longer duped by pretenders who claim to be channels of Divine Grace and anointed dispensers of the Divine favor." If the Gospel of Jesus Christ had been a mystic philosophy which only a few could comprehend, it would not have been a matter of fire! If it had been a mere pompous bunch of ceremonies which the people could only look upon and admire, it would have had no ardent influence! If it had been a

mere orthodoxy, to be learnt by heart and every jot and tittle to be accepted without consideration, or if it had been a mere law of civilities and legalities, a mere ordinance of propriety and rule and regulation, it would never have been what Christ says it is! But, inasmuch as it is a *principle* which affects the *heart*, which takes possession of our entire manhood, changes, renews, uplifts and inspires us, making us akin with God and filling us with the Divine fullness, it becomes in this world a thing of flame and fire, burning its way to victory! “I came to send fire on the earth.”

I have commenced the history of the Gospel with the Bible, but remember, the Gospel does not long remain a mere writing—it is no sooner thoroughly read and grasped than the reader becomes, according to his ability, a *preacher*. We will suppose when a preacher whom God has truly called to the work, proclaims this Gospel, you will see for a *second* time that it is a thing of fire. Observe the man! If God has sent him, he is little regardful of the graces of oratory. He counts it sheer folly that the servants of God should be the mimics of Demosthenes and Cicero. He learns in another school how to deliver his Master’s message. He comes forward in all sincerity, not in the wisdom of words, but with great plainness of speech and tells to the sons of men the great message from the skies!

The one thing of all others he abhors is to deliver that message with bated breath, with measured cadence and sentences that chill and freeze as they fall from ice-bound lips. He speaks as one who knows that God has sent him—like a man who believes what he says, and moreover, feels that his message is a burden on his *own* soul—a burden which he must be delivered from—a fire within his bones which rages till he gives it vent, for woe is unto him if he preach not the Gospel! I would not utter too sweeping a sentence, but I will venture to say that no man who preaches the Gospel without zeal is sent of God to preach at all.

When I turn to sermons such as Blair’s, so faultless and yet so lifeless, I wonder whether by any possibility a soul could have been converted under them! The absence of enthusiasm in a sermon is fatal! It is the lack of its essential element, the one thing necessary to raise the discourse above the level of a mere essay. In Whitefield’s sermons, of which we have but the rough notes, one perceives coals of juniper and hot thunderbolts which mark him out to be a true Boanerges. Mark, my Brethren, that the fire in the preacher sent of God is not that of mere excitement, nor that alone of an intelligent judgment acting upon the passions. No, but there is also a mysterious influence resting on God’s servants which is irresistible.

The *Holy Spirit* sent down from Heaven anoints all true evangelists and is the true power and fire. The more we believe in the Presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the more likely shall we be to see the Gospel triumphant in our ministry. Brethren, there is nothing in the Gospel, apart from the Spirit of God, which can win upon man, for man hates the Gospel with all his heart. Though the reasonableness of the Gospel of Jesus ought to make the belief of it universal, yet its plain dealing with human sin excites deadly antagonism, and, therefore, the Gospel itself would make no progress were it not for the *Divine power*. There is an invisible arm which pushes forward the conquests of the Truth of God! There is a fire unfed of human fuel which burns a way for the Truth of Jesus Christ into the hearts of men!

In tracing this history of the Gospel, I would have you observe *the effect of the preaching* of such a one as I have described. While he is delivering

the Truth of God of a crucified Savior and bidding men repent of sin and believe in Christ. While he is pleading and exhorting with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, do you see the fire flakes descend in showers from on high? One of them has dropped just yonder and fallen into a heart that had been cold and hard before—observe how it melts all that was hard and iron-like—and tears begin to flow from channels long dried up! Can you hear the sobbing of that anxious one as she confesses her sins and asks for mercy? Do you notice the inward anguish of yonder youth who is convicted of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come and who is ready to cry out, “What must I do to be saved?”

Do you notice the opposite effect in another quarter? Yonder sinner has heard of Jesus and now believes in Him. Mark well the joy he feels! He is not like a man who has learned fresh mathematical truths of a cold, unemotional nature, but he is ready to clap his hands! He has as much as he can do to restrain himself, he feels so overjoyed! Do you observe that man who has now heard that Gospel for some few months? Do you notice that the fire still continues to burn within him? He gives to the cause of God what seems to others to be a lavish waste. He does for Christ what some would think to be a work of fanaticism. He is bold, he is in earnest, he is mighty in prayer—he is, in fact, consecrated, given up, devoted—the zeal of God’s House has eaten him up as it did the Psalmist, so that his meat and his drink is to do the will of Him that sent him. Herein you see the true character of the Gospel! Like fire it thaws the iceberg heart, it makes the iron flow forth to be molded into a Divine shape. It sets the sacrifice on a blaze and man’s whole nature goes up in sacred smoke of gratitude and praise to the Most High!

And now, as surely as God glorifies His Truth and gives seals to the Christian ministry, *opposition is aroused*. If the preacher is supposed to live in the middle ages, his history will be told in a few words. He preaches at first to a crowd. Converts are made. The priests hear of it. He is abhorred and marked for extermination. He resorts to lone places among the hills. He preaches in cottages and private assemblies—converts are still brought in. The hunt grows hotter! The Hell hounds are out, eager for blood. The man is secreted. He takes his pen to write if he cannot use his tongue to speak. At last he is seized. He is dragged before the tribunals. He burns and blazes with sacred eloquence before his judges, but he is condemned to die.

And now he stands upon a fiery pulpit, the firewood blazing all around him! And, if he utters not a single word, yet his death is eloquent. The fire of his earnestness is met by the fire of their malice—we know which of the two fires will win the day! In these times we are screened by a gracious Providence from the Satanic cruelty of persecution. Nowadays it takes another shape—the preacher is no sooner successful than it is reported that he is actuated either by covetous or ambitious designs. It is also currently reported that he said this or that ridiculous or blasphemous thing. There are some who heard him say what he never dreamed of and others stand prepared to be godfathers to the lie and add another of their own invention. And so the slander flies abroad and opposition finds barbed shafts to fling at the too valiant champion.

Parties are made and sides taken for and against—and thus, again, is fulfilled the Master’s saying—“I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter

against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” You may depend upon it, there is no good doing if Satan does not howl! When there is no opposition from the infernal powers, it is because there is nothing to oppose. “Let them be,” says Satan, “let them be! A comfortable congregation, a sober minister—all asleep—let them be! Drive on!” he says to his charioteer, “I need not alight here. Another small congregation—more pews than people—sleepy nothings! Drive on!” he says, “no trouble here for my empire. Drive on to yonder Meeting House where there is an earnest preacher and a people much given to prayer. Stop,” he says, “I must use my best endeavors to stop this invasion of my kingdom.”

Straightway Satan comes to do his best or his worst to hinder the kingdom of Christ. In Hell’s opposition we discern a sign of hopefulness, for where that fire of malice burns against the Gospel there God’s fire of Divine Grace is burning, also! When the fire of conversion has kindled the fire of persecution, it proves its own infinite energy by subjecting even persecution to itself. That famous master in Israel and servant of God, Farel, the Swiss Divine, was converted to God by the sight of a martyr burnt in one of the streets of Paris. The wonderful demeanor of the saint as he stood in the midst of the fire to die, made an impression on his youthful spirit which was never afterwards shaken off.

It has often been through opposition that the Church has made her greatest advances. Hence partly the reason for our Lord’s saying, “How I wish it were already kindled!” as if our Lord had meant, “What does My kingdom care if opposition comes?” Let it come! It is so fruitful a thing to the Church of God, that the sooner it shall come the better! We might almost say, today, if there could be a return to the persecutions of the past, if it were not for the sin which would be caused, “How I wish it were already kindled!”

The Christian man who is slandered and opposed can afford to smile with a sacred contempt at all that can be done against the Gospel of Christ. It was during the persecution which raged against the saints at Jerusalem that the Church obtained one of the greatest pillars that have ever strengthened and adorned her fabric—I mean the Apostle Paul. Breathing out threats against the people of God, he is on the road to Damascus, but the blaze of heavenly fire blinds him, strikes him to the ground and afterwards he becomes a chosen vessel to carry, like an uplifted cresset, that very fire throughout the nations of the earth!

I look, Brothers and Sisters, for recruits to the Truth of God from the ranks of our *enemies*. Never despair, the brightest preacher of Christ may yet be fashioned out of the wretched raw material of Roman Catholic and Anglican priests! In politics, one of the leaders of reform has come to us from the hostile party—and we may expect in religious matters to see the same, or even more wonderful enlightenments! A *monk* reformed Germany! A parish priest was the morning star of England’s day of light! The Lord can send out His warrant to arrest a ringleader in the army of Satan and to say to him, “You shall be no more against Me. You are Mine. Enlist beneath My banner and from this day be a champion for the Truth which you have despised.”

Never let us fear! The fire of God which Christ has cast among us shall go on to burn, let man do what he will to quench it! Thus I have given you a very brief abstract of the history of the Gospel from the Bible and the

man, to the convert and the persecution, until opposition, valiantly met, yields up its spoils.

II. Secondly, LET US STUDY MORE CAREFULLY THE QUALITIES OF THE GOSPEL AS FIRE. First, fire and the Gospel are notable for *spiritual purity*. The most refined form of idolatry that has ever existed has been the Parsee worship of fire. There is a kind of sentiment connected with the sun, the great parent of light and fire, which casts a halo around the error which it cannot excuse. Behold the enlightening flame, so immaterial, so spiritual, so akin to spirit—behold it and see to what the Gospel may be compared!

God Himself, though He has no earthly likeness, has been pleased to say of Himself, that He is “a consuming fire,” fire being as instructive a symbol of God as earth can afford. The Gospel is like fire because it is so pure a thing—there is no admixture of error or unholiness in it. Fire has little of earth. It has no dross. It is a simple element, I was about to say, but what it is no man knows. We scarcely can put it among the component parts of this material earth, it is so pure. Even so, the Gospel is very pure, like silver purified seven times, free from every earthly alloy. Moreover, it is exceedingly spiritual, so spiritual that few understand it. Yes, none but those to whom it is given of the Father. It is but the spiritual man, enlightened of the Spirit of God, who receives of the things which are of God.

It is so different from the trash of Rome! It talks not of the material flesh of Christ as if it could literally dwell in bread and wine! It talks not of aqueous regeneration worked by drops of water! It never consecrates holy *places*, or imputes holiness to *material* substances. It declares that God is a Spirit and that they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The Altar of Christianity is the Person of an unseen Savior. The offering of Christianity is prayer and praise. The worship of Christianity is the uprising of the *heart*—it is not at all a matter for the eyes and hands and nostrils—but altogether spiritual, sublime, elevated, pure, God-like.

Happy are they who have accepted a spiritual and perfect Gospel! The Gospel is like fire, again, because of *its cheering and comforting influence*. He that has received it finds that the cold of this world no longer pinches him. He may be poor, but the Gospel’s fire takes away the chilliness of poverty. He may be sick, but the Gospel gives his soul to rejoice even in the body’s decay. He may be slandered and neglected, but the Gospel honors him in the sight of God. The Gospel, where it is fully received into the *heart*, becomes a Divine source of matchless consolation. Fire, in addition to its warmth, *gives light*. The flaming beacon guides the mariner or warns him of the rocks. The Gospel becomes to us our guide through all the darkness of this mortal life. And if we cannot look into the future, nor know what shall happen to us tomorrow, yet by the light of the Gospel we can see our way in the present path of duty, yes, and see our end in future immortality and blessedness! Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Brothers and Sisters, I need not enlarge here, because your lives are a daily homily upon this subject. You bear about with you this heavenly flame. It is this which cheers and guides you. You have, day by day, found that godliness with contentment is great gain. You have learned to rejoice in the Lord always and to be happy in the favor of the Most High, in the

salvation of Jesus and in the consolation of the blessed Comforter. Thus do you show to others that Christ has sent fire upon the earth.

A third likeness between the Gospel and fire is its *testing qualities*. No test like fire. That piece of jewelry may seem to be gold. The color is an exact imitation. You could scarcely tell but what it was the genuine metal. Yes, but the melting pot will prove all—put it into the crucible and you will soon see. Thus in this world there are a thousand things that glitter, things which draw admirers that are advocated in the name of philanthropy and philosophy and I know not what beside. But it is amazing how different the schemes of politicians and the devices of wise men appear when they are once put into the refining pot of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Despotic rulers and kings are very wise to try and keep the Gospel out of their dominions, for if they have anything crooked in the statute book, the Gospel is sure to show it! If there is anything rotten in the foundations of the government, there is nothing like a preached Gospel to discover and unveil it!

What is the reason, today, that we enjoy such precious liberties in this realm? Liberties which I venture to say are not excelled by those possessed by any people under Heaven—what has been the groundwork of our freedom, but this—that the Gospel preached among us, evermore like a fire, is testing and trying everything in our institutions and that which is not right is sure in the end to give way! Much which now stands, but is not according to the Master's will, is marked to be consumed—and thank God it is so—for we shall be all the better for the overthrow of moss-grown injustice and wrong. The Gospel proves all things and is the great ultimate test as to right and wrong.

Ah, how the fire of the Gospel will test a man's heart. Many a man thinks he carries something good within him and he wraps himself up in the robes of his own righteousness until the Gospel comes—and then he finds that he is naked and poor and miserable! Many a professor imagines that he is serving God and doing well—until, in the Gospel fire, his wood, hay and stubble vanish in smoke! All through this world of ours, the Gospel will burn up with unquenchable fire everything that is evil, and leave nothing but that which is just and true. Of all things under Heaven, the most *intolerant* is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "What," you ask, "intolerant?" Yes, I say, intolerant! The Gospel enables us to proclaim liberty of conscience to all men! The Gospel wields no temporal sword. It asks for no cannon balls to open the gates of a nation for its ministry. The true Gospel prepares no dungeon and no rack. It asks not Peter's sword to cut off Malchus' ear—but while it gives freedom from all bondage, it demands *obedience* to itself!

Within its own realm its power is absolute! Its arguments cut and kill error! Its teachings lay low every proud hope and expose every false way! The Gospel is merciful to the sinner, but merciless to sin! It will not endure evil, but wars against it to overturn it and to set up a throne for Him whose right it is to reign. The Gospel of Jesus Christ will never join hands with infidelity or Popery! It will never enter into league with idolatry! It cannot be at peace with error! False religions can lie down, side by side with one another, for they are equally a lie and there is a brotherhood between them—but the true religion will never rest until all superstitions are utterly exterminated and until the banner of the King eternal, immortal, invisible, shall wave over every mosque and minaret, temple and shrine!

Fire cannot be made tolerant of that which can be consumed—it will burn the stubble until the last particle is gone and the Truth of God is of the same kind.

A further parallel between the Gospel and fire lies in their *essential aggressiveness*. Take a few live coals, put them down in a wheat stack or corn rick and tell the fire, “I have given you a bundle of straw to burn. Now burn—burn away to your heart’s content, for that straw is yours. But you must go no further—burn with propriety and within bounds. Do not begin making sparks and flames, for we will have none of your fierce attacks.” While you are thus talking in this senseless way, the fire has blazed up vehemently, burning the materials surrounding it and if you do not take to your heels you will probably be consumed yourself!

Fire is not to be talked to in that way. It knows nothing about moderation and keeping to itself. Have I not often heard this kind of theory laid down: “You religionists have your own liberty. Keep yourselves respectable and quiet and enjoy yourselves, but leave other people alone. You have no business to be propagandists, compassing sea and land to make proselytes. Why fall into fanaticism? Sit still, now. You have cushioned seats—be comfortable upon them. The minister has his stipend and his pulpit—let him mind his own congregation—it will be as much as he can do if he pleases his own disciples. Why must a man become a firebrand, bigotedly intruding his peculiar views where they are not wanted?”

Yes, that is just what the world desired in Christ’s day, no doubt. Idolaters would have been satisfied if Christianity had kept itself to the handful of disciples which Christ had gathered. Christians might have been ridiculed at first, but by degrees they would have cooled down into a respectable sect like the Pharisees and Sadducees, especially after those uneducated fishermen had died out and some respectable tradesmen in Jerusalem and, perhaps, a squire or two from beyond Jordan had joined the community.

But Christianity did not happen to be a thing that would so soon be frozen. The Gospel of Jesus was a thing of fire! Jerusalem, alone, would not serve its purpose. All Judea and Galilee could not escape from it—

***“More and more the kingdom grows,
Ever mighty to prevail.”***

Asia Minor is set upon a blaze by that fanatical firebrand, Saul of Tarsus, and even that is not enough! The fire burns so fiercely in Asia that the sparks fly across the Bosphorus! Paul is working in Macedonia. He is heard of in Athens, he is talked about in Corinth—and even that is not enough—that restless soul must cross the sea and is found in Rome thundering at the gates of Caesar’s palace! Right away in Spain the new religion is gaining ground. Proconsuls, what are you doing? The gods of Rome defied in far-off Spain?

No, the emissaries have crossed beyond Gaul into the savage land of Britain! They have dared to stand in Albion and proclaim the name of Him that was crucified! Will they never rest? Let us torture them! Rack them! Shut them up in prison! But look!—they come to the tribunals eagerly, and confess themselves Christians with enthusiasm! Pliny writes home to know what is to be done with these people who seem so anxious to die! Well, bring them into the amphitheatre! Fling them to the wild beasts! Let the bears and lions see what they can do with them! Make them die a gladiator’s death amidst the shouts of Rome’s matrons and senators!

It does not stop them, Sir. They have entered the senate! They have disciples among the patricians! The name of Christ was spoken the other day right in the midst of the senate to the Emperor's own face! Yes! They even say that there are some high in rank and of imperial blood who worship the Crucified! Yes, and as years roll on, you priests of Jupiter and Saturn, listen to the tale and be astonished—*your* gods are rolled away from their pedestals! You who are called Pontiff and Pontifex Maximus—all you are sent away—your temples are turned into churches and your places where idolatry reigned supreme become the assembling houses of the saints of the living God!

Will this Gospel of Christ ever stop? Will it not pause today? No, Sirs, it never will, nor can! The true religion of Jesus Christ is essentially warlike. As the heathens spoke of Minerva leaping armed from the head of Jove, so did the religion of Christ spring armed from the very heart of Jesus Christ and it stands in the midst of the world an enemy of all unrighteousness! It is the foe of all oppression, the friend of the poor and needy and the enemy of everything that is at enmity to God! You are no Christian if such is not your Christianity, for Jesus Christ brought not a slumbering faith, but *fire* onto the earth!

Our religion is like fire, again, because of *its tremendous energy and its rapid advance*. Who shall be able to estimate the force of fire? Our forefathers standing on this side the river, as they gazed many years ago upon the old city of London wrapped in flame, must have wondered with great astonishment as they saw cottage and palace, church and hall, monument and cathedral all succumbing to the tongues of flame. It must be an amazing sight, if one could safely see it, to behold a prairie rolling along in great sheets of flame, or to gaze upon Vesuvius when it is spouting away at its utmost force. When you deal with fire you cannot calculate—you are among the imponderables and the immeasurable. I wish we thought of *that* when we are speaking of *religion*. You cannot calculate concerning its spread.

“How many years would it take to convert the world?” asks somebody. Sir, it need not take 10 *minutes*, if God so willed it—because as fire, beyond all reckoning, will sometimes, when circumstances are congenial, suddenly break out and spread—so will the Truth of God. Truth is not a mechanism—and does not depend upon engineering. A thought in *one* mind, why not the same thought in *fifty*? That thought in 50 minds, why not in fifty thousand? The Truth of God which affects a village and stirs it from end to end—why not a town, a city—why not a *nation*? Why not *all* nations? God may, when He wills it, bring all human minds into such a condition that one single text such as this, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” may set all hearts on a blaze!

Vainly do we reckon the missionary costs so much, and only so many can, therefore, be sent! Yes, but God works most by weakest means full often and sometimes achieves by His poorest saints works which He will not perform by those who have every visible appliance. Perhaps no men have ever been more useful than the Moravians, yet what poor men the Moravians have always been! How inadequate their means, yet they make it their lives' duty to propagate the Truth of God as it is in Jesus in every land and God is with them! The Lord has but to stir up the Church in England to a proper sense of her duty and endow her with confidence in

Christ and a conviction that God is about to bless her, and you and I, before these hairs shall be gray, may see such sights as we would not have believed though a man should tell it unto us!

I can believe anything about fire. Let a man tell me that in a house just now a bundle of rags have begun to burn. Let him tell me in five minutes that the shop is on fire. Let him tell me in five minutes more that it is blazing through the shutters, or that the next story is burning, or that the roof is coming in, I could believe it all! Fire can do anything! And so with the Gospel of Jesus—given but an earnest preacher, given but the Truth of God fully declared! Given an earnest people determined to propagate the Gospel and I can understand a *nation* converted to God, yes, and all the nations of the earth suddenly shaken with the majesty of the Truth of God!

Once more, the Gospel resembles fire in this, that it *will ultimately prevail*. It is clearly revealed in Scripture that as the world was once destroyed by water, it will a second time be destroyed by fire. Perhaps they are correct who tell us that the center of the earth is all a molten mass and we dwell but upon the cool crust of it. Perhaps it may be so, that these great volcanoes are the ventilators of subterranean fires. But surely is it predestined that earth and all the works that are in it shall be burnt up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Fire will win the day! Old ocean, you may roll on in your pride and laugh at fire, but fire will lick you up with its tongues of flame! Men, you may erect your machinery with which to protect your cities, but there shall not be a wreck of all your cities left!

Like old Babel's tower, of which only a heap of dust and ruins remains, your pompous cities shall utterly vanish away! So with the Gospel. The seas of iniquity may slow, for awhile, the fire of the Gospel from spreading, but that sea shall be utterly removed by the energy of Divine Truth. The day shall come when the fire of the Gospel shall make the whole world to be a burnt-offering unto the Lord Most High! Let us have courage! Let us look forward to the flight of time and expect the advent of our Master—for the day shall come when He shall reign from the river even to the ends of the earth! And from sea and land, from mountain and valley there shall come up the universal song, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns."

III. Lastly, if the Gospel is thus like fire, LET US CATCH THE FLAME! If this fire shall really burn within us, we shall become from this very moment *fearless of all opposition*. That retired friend will lose the strings which bind his tongue—he will feel that he must speak as God shall bid him. Or if he cannot speak, he will act with all his might in some other way to spread abroad the savor of Immanuel's name! That coward who hid his head and would not own his profession, when the fire burns, will feel that he had rather court opposition than avoid it. There may be some young man here who is about to take up his cross—it has come to this—he must decide which it shall be. Let him do so without fear, for the Master whom he serves will bear him through all opposition!

The fondest relationship which can be lost by our decision for Christ shall be more than made up for us by the union which it cements with Jesus Himself. Better that we lost every friend and all our kinsfolk and had the bad word of all the neighborhood, than that we lost the love of God which passes knowledge. Cast in your lot, dear Friends, with Christ,

and fling down the gauntlet to the world! Let them say their worst. Let them howl, let them bark, yes, let them bite—little shall it matter to the man to whom persecution has become an occasion for *rejoicing*—because now is he made like unto the Prophets which were before him!

If we catch this flame, we shall, after having defied all opposition, *tire utterly of the mere proprieties of religion* which at this present time crush down like a nightmare the mass of the religious world. Do you believe that if Jesus Christ came into this world He would call nine-tenths of our modern religion the Christianity which He preached? Is it the least bit like His own zeal? Many think that all the faith Christianity requires is to put on your best things on Sunday and go to your place of worship with your Bible or hymn-book, or prayer-book. Then you sit there decorously and look at other people's bonnets and dresses. And then you come home again!

Others think it is sufficient to listen to the sermon discreetly, perhaps making a few observations upon the discourse, perhaps making none because there is not enough in the sermon to be a peg to hang a remark upon! The religion of many professors is nothing more than that—if it is hardly that. Do you not know of people who believe the articles and do not doubt them because they never think of them? They have packed them away in the iron safe, with their title deeds which they feel so sure about that they do not care to read them. They are orthodox, but they feel no power in their own souls produced by these Truths of God! They feel no depression because the Truth of God convicts them of sin. There is no exhilaration because the Truth shows them their safety in Christ.

Many, if they get to a supposed saving faith, get no farther. They are saved themselves and that seems to be all they care about. Their neighbors in the next pew may be damned, but what do they care? All down the street in which they live there may be scarcely a person attending a place of worship, but what business is that of theirs? They belong to the denomination of Cain—they say, “Am I my brother's keeper?” Such men have denied the faith! The selfishness which reigns supreme in them is as antichristian as even covetousness, or adultery, or murder could be! The spirit of Christianity is unselfishness and love to others, care of other's souls, a devotedness to the increase of the Master's kingdom.

O Brothers and Sisters, it is sickening work to think of your cushioned seats, your chants, your anthems, your choirs, your organs, your gowns and your bands, and I know not what besides, all made to be instruments of religious *luxury*, if not of pious *amusement*, while you need far more to be stirred up and incited to holy ardor for the propagation of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! One would think Christ came into the world to administer an opiate to the sons of men, or prepare down for all sleepers! But instead of it He came to send fire on the earth—and where His true Gospel is, it is a fire that will not rest and be quiet amidst mere proprieties and rounds of performances.

If we catch this fire, we shall not only become dissatisfied with mere proprieties, but we shall, all of us, become *instant in prayer*. Day and night our soul will go up with cries and moans to God, “O God, how long, how long, how long? Will You not avenge Your own elect? Will not Your Gospel prevail? Why are Your chariots so long in coming? Why does not Christ reign? Why is not the Truth triumphant? Why do You suffer idolatry to rule and priestcraft to reign? Make haste, O God, grasp Your two-

edged sword and strike and let error die and let Truth win the victory!" It is thus we shall be always pleading if this fire burns in our spirits.

This will lead us to *eager service*. Having this fire in us, we shall be trying to do all we can for Christ. We shall never think we have done enough! We shall be uneasy if for a moment we rest! We shall seek, if possible, to snatch souls from the burning—to preach Christ where He is not known and to bring Him fresh jewels for His crown. Brethren, this is a large Church, numbering now nearly 4,000 souls and if you grow cold and lose your earnestness, I would sooner have 40 warm-hearted men and women than the whole multitude of you if you are chilled! For what are you who are cold and indifferent but a clog upon the chariot? What are you but like the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt? Sin begins among you, but no strength do you minister to the Lord's host.

The warm-hearted, earnest, thorough Christian is the life of the Church! And if we cannot *all* be as we would, may the fiery spirits among us never be retarded by those who are more lethargic. May they live above the influences that would drag them down! May we never be content to do as much as others, to pray as much as others, to give as much as others—but may it be our resolve that we will outstrip all—not out of any emulation, but out of a love to Him who has done so much, forgiven so much, secured so much, promised so much to us who are His people!

O lovers of Christ, come and bow at His feet and ask Him to let His love supply you with fire this morning! Come to the Pierced One! Gaze upon the crown of thorns! Look into the hole which the soldier's spear has made! Gaze into the nail prints and say unto your soul—

***'Now, for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss.
My former pride I call my shame
And nail my glory to His Cross.
Yes, and I must and will esteem
All things but loss for Jesus' sake.
O may my soul be found in Him,
And of His righteousness partake.'***

God bless you for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 12:13-53.

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

NO. 1135

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And He said also to the people, When you see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway you say, There comes a shower; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, There will be heat; and it comes to pass. You hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that you do not discern this time? Yes, and why even of yourselves judge you not what is right?”
Luke 12:54-57.

THESE words were addressed by our Savior to the common people who had gathered around Him. He appealed to their common sense. They were able to foretell the weather from the signs which they saw in the heavens and if they could do this, the signs of His coming were even more clear and manifest, so that if they would but use their eyes they might see that He was the Messiah. That they did not do so was an instance of hypocrisy of heart—they did not see the Savior because they would not. Our Savior's coming had been very clearly foretold by the Prophets. The people were generally acquainted with the Prophetic writings and there had been, consequently, a general expectation of the coming of the Messiah at the time. Above all, the scepter had departed from Judah and they knew by this sure signal that the set time for the coming of Shiloh had arrived.

Beyond this, our Savior's Character and miracles attested His Messiahship, for He worked among the people such works as no other man had ever done and taught them with a Divine authority which they could not resist. Did not the blind see? Did not the deaf hear? Did not the lame walk? Were not lepers cleansed and the dead raised? And was not the Gospel preached to the poor? What other tokens could they ask? Were not these the ensigns which their great Prophet, Isaiah, had left on record for their guidance? As certainly as a cloud in the western sky predicted rain and a wind from the south was the sign of heat, so assuredly there were infallible tokens, visible to all who chose to see them, that the Messiah had come!

He charges them to use their common sense and not submit themselves to be hoodwinked by their leaders. He asked, “Judge you not even of yourselves what is right?” Why bow yourselves down that scribes and Pharisees may go over you? Think and judge for yourselves like men! The Lord, here, declares the duty of private judgment and exhorts the people to use it, urging them to yield no more a slavish obedience to the man-

dates of their false leaders, but to use their own wits as they would upon ordinary matters—and even of themselves judge what was right. The people needed awakening from spiritual slumber. They required to be exhorted to manliness of spirit, for they had so completely surrendered their judgments to their blind leaders that the most conspicuous signs of the time were unperceived by them.

I believe that the passage before us might have been spoken by our Lord at the present moment with quite as much appropriateness as when He spoke it then, and therefore have I taken it for a text, hoping that, perhaps, God might bless it to this crooked and perverse generation which scorns the yoke of Christ, but willingly bows its neck to the thralldom of a loathsome priestcraft! First, we shall consider our own times, religiously, on a broad scale. And then, secondly, we shall speak of the times within the little world of ourselves, and both to Believers and unbelievers we shall have to say, “You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that you do not discern this time? Yes, and why even of yourselves judge you not what is right?”

I. First, then, let us carefully CONSIDER THE RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF OUR OWN AGE. At the outset, it must be evident to every Christian man and woman that the times are sadly darkened with superstition. The eastern sky is generally cloudless and when a cloud was seen to arise from the Mediterranean, which lay to the west, the Jews, very naturally, looked for rain, and it came. Innumerable clouds have arisen in these latter days, to the surprise and alarm of all lovers of our nation. Popery, which we thought to be dead and buried, as far as England was concerned, has displayed wonderful signs of vitality and has come back to us—not as a foreign plant, but as a home-grown upas tree—nurtured upon the fattest soil of our country in the enclosure of the National Church.

The clouds of Sacramentarianism, priestcraft, and idolatry are hanging over our nation like a pall. The heavens are darkened by their shadow. When clouds cover the sky we look for showers and we may rest assured that the almost universal tendency of our countrymen towards Popery forbodes evil. Idolatry in a nation always brings down upon it the judgments of God. Look at the pages of history and see whether any once-enlightened nation has ever set up idol gods, Virgin Marys, saints, holy wafers—and followed the superstitions of Antichrist—without sooner or later being chastened of the Lord. Remember the glories of Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella! See what a nation it was in old times and what it has now become! Priestcraft is the Delilah through whose means the Spanish Samson has been shorn of his strength!

Read the story of France and all her late trials, and see if the great bane of the land has not been superstition and the unbelief which is the recoil from it. What good can come to a nation whose peasants are the dupes of the priests and whose statesmen are servile to the Pontiff of Rome? Have the Jesuits ever laid their hands upon a throne without eventually shaking it to its foundations? Have they ever secured power among a people

without demoralizing them to the uttermost? Are they not the common enemies of mankind? Are they not a thousand times more dangerous to men than wolves or serpents? And is not their religion, whether it takes the Roman or the Anglican shape, under all its disguises, the “abomination of desolation,” provoking God beyond measure wherever it comes?

They bring in its train that bestial, or rather, devilish thing, the confessional, with all the shameless vice and infamous uncleanness of which it is both mother and nurse! It was but yesterday I read a little book for the young, edited by a committee of clergy of the Church of England, in which children are urged to confess to the priest—meaning, thereby, the parish clergyman—every immodest word they may have spoken and every indecent act they may have committed! They are taught, thus, to repeat filthiness and to become unblushing in vice. The young girl is told to confess to a man every sin against purity and modesty, and she is told, (and I will quote the very words), that, “however painful it is to acknowledge a fault of this kind, it must be bravely confessed, without lessening it. It is almost always sins of impurity that weak penitents dare not tell in confession.” That is to say, young women have a natural shame about them and the object of the confessional is to make their faces brazen enough to speak of immoral acts in the ear of a man!

This black cloud which hovers over my country warns of great evil to her. As surely as Spain and France have been humbled, and as nation after nation has crumbled down to anarchy, or been altogether destroyed, so surely will this land sink from her greatness and lose her rank among the nations if this deadly evil is not, by some means, stamped out! May God in His infinite mercy take up the gage of battle and go forth and fight His foes on this soil which is wet with the blood of martyrs and still glows with the fires of Smithfield! Oh, children of God, I pray you, discern the times before the threatening shower descends upon our country! And learn to play your parts as men of God, ordained to defend the Truth of God.

What is your duty at the present crisis? It is clearly your business to walk constantly in separation from everything which savors of the abominations of Rome! I do not see this among my fellow Christians and therefore I am ashamed and grieved at heart. I observe among many evangelical churchmen an increased leaning to ritualistic practices—they are even are tinctured with this gall and show it by evident tokens. I see, also, among those who claim to be furthest apart from sacerdotalism, namely, Nonconformists—many leaning in the direction we have indicated. Their buildings are growing more ornate and are pitiful mimics of the ecclesiastical architecture most congenial to Popery. More and more are they studying to attract, by music, chants and sham liturgies. The Meeting House is now a Church, and in the Church the simplicity of Scriptural worship is overlaid with the inventions of human wisdom.

I hate sensuous worship quite as much in a Meeting House as in a cathedral, and rather more. But I see many of my Brethren eager after it and

gradually introducing it, as the people will bear it. Again may it be said, "And so we went towards Rome." It is the imperative duty of every Christian man to say decisively, "I will have no union with this abomination! I declare for God, for Christ, for His Truth—and to this vile Antichrist I will not yield the smallest point! I will not be a sharer of Babylon's sins, lest I be a partaker of her plagues." Happy are those who have not the mark of the beast either on their hands or on their foreheads, but keep the simple way of spiritual worship. In evil times they will feel the same quietude of conscience as Job did when he could say that he had never been enticed to adore the sun or the moon, or to kiss his hand in imitation of the worshippers of the hosts of Heaven.

Watchfully and earnestly should we avoid all communion with the great apostasy. It is also high time for us all, as Christians, to work more carefully in precise obedience to the Word of God. Brothers and Sisters, we should never have had the errors of Rome back among us if the Book of Common Prayer had been, from the first, conformed to the Word of God. There were temporizers abroad of old who gained a present peace for themselves by leaving to their descendants a heritage of error. We need to return to the pure Word of God. Conform the Church to the Scriptures and quicken her with God's Spirit, and she will resist the encroachments of error. But fetter her with compromises and she will become captive to falsehood before long.

Luther did grand service by his Reformation, but he stopped half-way—he left the Church with her face half-washed—and in consequence her whole visage has again become foul. O for a thorough reformation! So long as words stood in the Anglican Prayer Book which, to the common reader, taught baptismal regeneration, they were an invitation and an encouragement to the Popish party to return! And having returned, they are, for them, a castle and high tower! I shall give great offense as I now go further and say, as in the sight of God, that I am persuaded that so long as infant baptism is practiced in any Christian Church, Popery will have a door set wide open for its return. It is one of those nests which must come down, or the foul birds will build in it again. We must come to the Law and to the Testimony, and any ordinance which is not plainly taught in Scripture must be put away!

As long as you give Baptism to an unregenerate child, people will imagine that it must do the child good, for they will ask, "If it does not do it any good, why is it baptized?" The statement that it puts children into the Covenant, or renders them members of the visible Church, is only a veiled form of the fundamental error of Baptismal Regeneration. If you keep up the ordinance, you will always have men superstitiously believing that some good comes to the baby thereby, and what is this but sheer Popery? Since the child cannot understand what is done, any good which it receives must come to it after the occult manner so much in vogue with the superstitious—is it any wonder that Popish beliefs grow out of it? And not only as to infant Baptism, but as to every other doctrine, ordinance, or

precept—we must each seek to get back to this Book and follow closely the Word of God.

The Wesleyan, the Presbyterian, the Baptist, the Independent, the Episcopalian must each be eager to put away everything, however esteemed among them, which is founded upon denominational *tradition* and not upon Inspired Authority. To the Law and to the Testimony must the Church of God return if she would escape future outbreaks of the Anti-Christian evil. Great errors spring from lesser errors. To favor falsehood is to injure Truth. God give to His people to feel that the utmost care becomes them in obeying the Lord and walking after His commands, lest evil come of negligence. And, dear Brothers and Sisters, as the voice of this evil abounds, let us abound in our testimony to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! The more the priests set up their idols, the more let us lift up Christ and Him Crucified! The more they compass sea and land to make proselytes, the more earnestly let us plead with men that they will believe in the *true* Savior. Let the diligence of our enemies shame our indolence—let their earnestness rebuke our lethargy! Let us abundantly distribute the antidote while they industriously disseminate the poison—let us pour out light and so scatter their darkness. This is God’s message to us and let every Christian man and woman read it in the signs of the times.

Furthermore, anyone with half an eye can see that a parching wind of unbelief is sweeping over the churches. Where superstition does not rule, skepticism has fixed its seat. “When you see the south wind blow, you say there will be heat”—this was a well-known weather sign among the Jews, for the south wind blew from the desert, like a blast from the mouth of a furnace. Even so, there will be a burning up of spiritual life wherever the wind of infidelity speeds its course. Alas, in how many of our pulpits are the great Truths of the Gospel kept back and regarded as mere platitudes, unfit for men of culture to repeat! These Truths of God may be believed in by the preacher, but he treats them as worn-out truisms. There are many ministers, nowadays, whom it would be premature to condemn, but whom it is unavoidable to suspect. They profess, by their very position, to be preachers of the Gospel, but their indistinct utterance upon vital points leads us to question whether they know anything of the Truth in their own souls, or do really and heartily believe any *one* of the articles of our faith. These are the men who cry up freedom of thought and denounce all dogmas and creeds.

Knowing this to be the case, and we do know it, for we cannot look abroad without seeing it on all sides, is there not a voice to us out of this evil? When unbelief abounds in the churches, is it not time for true Believers to have done with all reliance upon human wisdom? Gradually the churches have a thicket to look upon of clever preachers, intellectual gentlemen, men of thought, great thinkers and the like, as the necessity of the times, and they have idolized them. And, now, what have these intellectual gentlemen done for their churches? To what have the “men of thought” brought their brethren? Our churches under men who preached

Jesus Christ and nothing else were the bulwarks of Protestantism, and no dissenters deserted to the foe. But under the care of these wonderful thinkers, the rich among Nonconformists see their families hurrying off to the superstitions which their fathers abhorred!

It has come to this, that in one of the conferences about to be held there is a paper to be read upon the “Infrequency of Conversions in the Churches,” a paper grievously needed. The Lord grant that the words spoken on the subject may burn like flames of fire! Who could expect conversions to be worked under many of the sermons which are now preached? I once heard a sermon, most philosophic and metaphysical, which was prefaced by a prayer that God would convert sinners by it, a prayer which seemed a sarcasm upon the discourse! We have had enough of intellectualism and oratorical polish—let them both be thrown out of window, as Jezebel was, with her painted cheeks—and let something better take their place—even the plain preaching of Christ Crucified!

Since there is such infidelity abroad, is it not time for Christians to rise above the atmosphere of doubt and walk in the light of God? If you merely attain to the *theory* of religion you may always live in question as to every Truth of God. But if you rise above the theory, and walk with God continually, doubts will vanish. I never doubt whether there is a sun when it shines on me and makes me warm. I can never doubt the existence of bread when I am eating it. He who feels the life of God gets beyond the reach of philosophic questioning which is the very atmosphere of the age. Brothers and Sisters, you will not question whether prayer is a reality if every day you receive answers to your petitions! You will never doubt the Atonement of Jesus Christ, or His Deity, if sin is your daily grief and Jesus your abiding Companion. You will look the scoffers of the age in the face and say to them, “Get away from me! Our eyes have seen, our ears have heard and our hands have handled of the good Word of Life.”

When we have this faith, let us battle with the unbelief of others. The voice of God is to you, O Believers, “Arise, and let your faith exhibit itself.” When Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord?” then was the moment for Moses to cast down his rod and let it become a serpent. And when Jannes and Jambres cast down their rods and they became serpents, too, then was the opportunity for Moses’ rod to swallow up their rods! In proportion to the unbelief of the age ought to be the energy of God’s saints in working wonders of faith! Do and dare for God, my Brethren! Be bold for Him! Outcry the clamor of the multitude—put it down with the strong voice which proclaims, “There is a God in Israel, and men shall hear it, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear.” Men of faith, gird on your harness and use the strength of God to oppose the strength of unbelief.

Again, is it not clear to every observer who watches this age, that religious apathy abounds? Like that lull which heralds the tempest, a dead calm rests over many of the churches just now. And what is the voice of the terrible sleep of Death but this, “O you that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest till He awakens His Church”? In

your private prayers, I charge you, O men of God, make your wrestling with the Most High far more intense. While the Church sleeps, be on your watchtower. Neither day nor night refrain from supplicating God to arise and bless His Zion. Meanwhile, the Churches which are awake should, in their assemblies for prayer, be more importunate in their pleading. Come together, every one of you, in the time appointed for prayer and cry mightily unto God, for who knows, He might turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind? Now, beyond all times gone by, there is solemn need for supplication. See, my Brethren, that you abound in it.

These times of lethargy require something of us besides prayer, namely, personal *activity*. I would charge each Christian to be doing everything that he can for his Lord, for his Church and for perishing sinners. Let each man do his own work in God's sight and in God's strength—each one taking care that the Church does not suffer through any neglect on his part. Personal consecration is the demand of the age. These days of lethargy are times when living saints should feel intensely for sinners, when they should feel for them an anguish and an agony. In proportion as others grow callous, we must become sensitive. If ever we are to see better times, they must come through the intense earnestness of each separate Believer crying out in pain for the souls of men—as one that travails in birth—till men are saved from everlasting burning.

May each Christian here feel this sacred anguish and in addition may there be more intense and vigorous religious life in all. If we want to awaken others, we must be awake ourselves! If we would urge the Church forward, we must quicken our pace! If we would stimulate a laggard Church, we must, ourselves, throw our whole soul into the cause of God! Personal consecration, deepened daily, is the nearest way to promote the quickening of the entire Church of God to a sense of her high calling. May the Holy Spirit invigorate us to the full force of Grace that we may be the means of awakening the whole Church!

Once again, there is another sad sign of the times which the watchman must sorrowfully report. There is an evident withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from this land. The spots where God is blessing the Word are few and far between. A man may count them on his hand. Where is the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit as in days gone by? Our fathers were known to tell us of the days of Whitfield and Wesley, when the Gospel spread as fire running among the stubble, for men's minds seemed prepared to obey the impulses of God's Spirit. We, ourselves, have seen something of these visitations. And in this place they have been almost continuous. But take the bulk of the churches all round and where is the Spirit of God at this time? Where are the converts that fly as a cloud? The earth has her harvest, but where is the harvest of the Church? Where are revivals now? The Spirit is grieved and is gone from the Church. And, Brothers and Sisters, why?

Have Christian men become worldly? Is it true that you can scarcely tell a Christian from a worldling nowadays? O for more holiness, then! This is the demand which the times make upon us. You men of God be

holy, yes, be perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect. Has unbelief restrained the dew and rain of the Spirit? Is it true that He cannot do many mighty works among us because of our unbelief? O for more faith, then! Put up the prayer, "Lord increase our faith," and rest not, day or night, till the prayer is heard! Or, my Brothers, are we in this evil case because the Gospel has been veiled with wisdom of words? Is it not a fact that too often the Gospel has been preached with high-sounding elocution and not with simplicity of speech?

The poor have left many of our places of worship because they cannot understand the speaker's cumbrous sentences. Many have forgotten that the power of God does not lie in elegance of diction. Is that the cause of the Spirit's withdrawing? If so, let Gospel simplicity be cultivated so that the common people may again hear our preachers gladly! Or, is it that Jesus Christ and His atoning blood have been kept in the background? In many pulpits doctrine is preached, but not the Cross. Precepts are preached, but not the blood. Philosophy is preached, but not the Crucified Savior. If it is so, in God's name let us come back to Jesus Christ and Him Crucified! And if we do so the Spirit of God is sure to be present, for never is Christ preached aright without the Spirit of God, more or less, attending to set His seal to the testimony! He will always honor those who honor the Son of God.

Beloved, we pause for one moment, here, to add, with much gratitude, but far more of jealous trembling, that this little spot does not always wear the same signs as to spiritual weather as the great Church outside, for we have been much favored and just now the tokens with us are those of a more than ordinarily copious shower of Grace. Many of the spiritual have told me that of late they have felt God's Presence among us in a special degree. And if it is so, the voice of God to us, which I trust we shall hear, is, "Servants of God, continue in prayer! Watch for the blessing! Cleanse yourselves from the sins which defile you! Be up and doing in order to win it! Prove the Lord by all holy actions and enterprises, according to His mind, and see if He will not open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing such that you shall not have room enough to receive it!

II. Now, I have to use the text in reference to THE TIMES WITHIN US. There is a little world within our bosom which has its winds and its clouds and if we are wise we shall watch. First, I shall speak to Believers. Believers, there are times with you when the "cloud rises out of the west, and straightway you say, There comes a shower." Times of refreshing—you have had them—look back upon them, they are choice memories. The Holy Spirit bedewed your souls and bestowed on you the excellence of Carmel and Sharon—

***"What peaceful hours you then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory, still."***

Perhaps you have lost them—then sigh for their speedy return! Perhaps you are enjoying them now—be very grateful if you are. Brethren, you

need such visitations! How can the vineyard of the Lord flourish and bring forth fruit to Him if it is not watered from on high?

Sometimes you need refreshing so grievously that you are painfully conscious of the need. Your praises languish and your prayers almost expire. You need to be visited from on high and you feel it. Beloved, since these refreshings are so precious and so much needed, you should eagerly watch for them. You should go up to the top of Carmel, like Elijah's servant, and with anxious eyes look towards the sea. And whenever you have to say, "There is nothing," you should go back to your knees. But you should rise, yet again, with expectancy, even to seven times, and still watch until the cloud appears! You must have the Spirit of God, or how can you live? Much more, how can you bring forth fruit unto perfection? Watch for these showers, then, and when they come, use them! Open your heart, as the earth opens her furrows after a long drought, when there are great gaping cracks in the soil ready to drink in the shower. Let your heart be receptive of the Divine influence. Wait upon the Lord and when the Lord comes to bless you, be like Gideon's fleece, ready to imbibe and retain the dew till you are full of it.

Alas, I fear that many professors are dead to the visitations of the Spirit of God. They have no changes—their Christian profession knows neither drought nor rain. Like the statues in St. Paul's Cathedral, unaffected by heat or cold, they stand all the year round in rigid propriety. They have a dead religion and having a dead religion they are not at all conscious of any spiritual power or weakness. No droughts desolate them and no falling showers cheer them—they are as unaffected by heavenly influences as the deep caverns of Adullam. Brethren, above all things beware of a religion altogether destitute of the changes, feelings, sorrows and joys which are inevitably connected with life. If you have passed into a cast-iron state, may the Lord be pleased to break your profession to shivers—for the heart of flesh out of the heart of iron—is the result of Grace.

I fear that some professors are not grieved at the absence of the Holy Spirit from themselves or others. If God does not bless the ministry upon which they attend, it does not concern them one half so much as a rise in the price of wheat. And if they, themselves, never experience spiritual joy, they never expected it and are not so much troubled as they would be if they lost a shilling! As to godly sorrow, they avoid it, they call it unbelief and improper anxiety. Whether blessed or unblessed, they remain stupidly contented, drugged into indifference. When God places some professors in the center of blessing they make no use of it. They are not sensible of the Spirit's approach and set no store by His operations. If they are not dead they are in such a swoon that God, alone, can discern the difference between them and those who are "dead in trespasses and sins." Beloved, may we never fall into that state—God save us from it! We ought to be sensitive to the approach or removal of the Spirit of God—walking in His power and dwelling under His shadow—and never satisfied unless we daily feel the going forth of His strength.

Believers, we have to speak to you, also, about spiritual drought, for you have such seasons. "You see the south wind blow, and you say, There will be heat; and it comes to pass." You have your times of drought—at least I have mine. They may be sent in chastisement. We do not value the blessing of the Spirit enough and so it is withdrawn. Sometimes they may be intended to try our faith, to see whether we can strike our roots deep down into rivers of waters which never dry and tap the eternal springs which lie beneath, and yield not to the summer's drought. Perhaps our times of drought are sent to drive us to our God, for when the means of Grace fail us and even the Word no longer comforts us, we may fly to the Lord Himself, and drink at the Wellhead.

Perhaps, however, this drought has been occasioned by ourselves. Worldliness is a south wind which soon brings a parching condition upon the spirits of men. If Christian people lie and act as worldly people do—go to worldly amusements and follow worldly maxims—there is no wonder if they become as parched up as the Eastern land when the hot wind has swept over it! There is a tendency, even in our necessary associations with ungodly men, to wither our spiritual verdure—and unless we resort to God, in whom are all our fresh springs—we shall soon find a parching heat burning up our religion. And, ah, Brothers and Sisters, if worldliness does not do it, there is the wind of carnal security which will soon bring barrenness into the soul. Begin to think that you are perfect and the dew of Heaven will forsake you! Fancy that matters are so right with you that you have no need to watch, no call to abound in prayer, no need to walk humbly with God, and your Lord will surely punish you for this by bidding the clouds rain no more upon you!

And if you become proud and haughty and domineering over your Brethren, and talk loftily concerning God's trembling ones, then, again, will the wind from the south turn your garden into a wilderness and make your fruits to perish. Or if you neglect the means of Grace and forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, you will soon be dry as the desert sand. Keep away from the Communion Table, neglect secret prayer, forget reading the Word of God, and you will find that your Lebanon and Bashan will languish and all your flowing brooks will be dried up. Then the lilies of fellowship will droop and the roses of joy will pine away and die for lack of heavenly moisture. Yes, your fat pastures shall be a wilderness and your plenteous harvests shall turn to desolation. May God save us from this! My Brothers and Sisters, if any of the signs of the times in the little world within you betoken such a drought, cry mightily to God and give Him no rest till once again He bids the showers of His mercy gently distil upon your soul, that you may bring forth fruit to His name.

My last and most solemn work is now to come. I have to speak to sinners. Ungodly men are fools before God, but they are very often the reverse of fools in common life. They know what weather there will be. They can read the signs of the skies. Now I ask them to use the wit they have

and, of themselves, judge that which is right. If you lived in Palestine, when you saw a cloud you would expect a shower. When you see sin, do you not expect punishment? Can the righteous God permit His laws to be violated and forever sit still? How, then, can He rule the world? Does it stand to reason that the Judge of all the earth will deal out, eventually, the same measure to the righteous and to the wicked? As you are reasonable men, I beseech you answer that question! God has not punished you yet. He has spared you though you are still opposed to Him and His holiness. What does this cloud of the long-suffering of God mean?

I will tell you. It bears drops of gentle mercy in its bosom. The long-suffering of God is *salvation*. It leads you to repentance. If the Lord had been anxious to destroy you, would He have spared you so long? Does it not look as if He had designs of Grace toward you? You have been rescued from shipwreck, spared from fearer, preserved in battle or accident—and why? Listen to the oath of God, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” Let the very fact of God’s long-suffering be to you an inducement to seek mercy, for where there is such a cloud of long-suffering you may expect a rain of Grace!

The preaching of the Gospel to you, today—does it not argue showers of mercies waiting for you? Why does the Lord commission ministers without number to proclaim His mercy to sinners if He does not wish to save them? The very fact that you are in the House of Prayer and not in Hell—that you are listening to a Gospel warning and not listening to the blast of the Judgment trumpet—seems to me like a hopeful cloud betokening a gracious rain! Come to Jesus, Sinner! By the love that spared you, I entreat you, come to Jesus! We urge you to come to Him by the love which sent the Savior, and which now declares to you that if you believe in Him you shall live. May God grant that you may read these blessed signs of the times and hope in God because of them!

Perhaps at this moment you feel some quickening of your conscience, Sinner! You say, “I wish I were saved! Oh, that I knew where I might find my Lord!” Take these desires as marks of favor to you. Yield to the mysterious impulse. Quench not the Spirit of God! Bow down, now, while there is some life in you, before evil days of hardness come, and kiss the Son lest He be angry! Trust your soul in Jesus’ hands, according to the Gospel command, and you shall live. Listen to me! Do you say, “I will put it off till a more convenient season”? That is the parching wind from the south! Do you not know what it will work upon you? It will dry up all the waters of feeling—it will parch in you all plants of hope. Your soul is hopeful, now, and like the field in spring when the young grass is coming up—but if you delay, this wind of sluggishness will blast all expectation of your salvation—and leave you without hope.

Ah, how many have I seen in this condition! How I have tried to speak with them, but have failed, for they have told me, “I was hopeful once, I was impressible once, but now the harvest is passed and the summer is

ended, and I am not saved. I cannot feel, I cannot repent, I cannot desire, I am perfectly dead—sun burnt, parched, and dried up.” One has been obliged to fear that they spoke the truth and to turn away from their death-beds with this feeling—“You did call them, O God, and they refused. You did stretch out Your hands and they would not regard them. And now, not even a sense of fear or terror is left to them.”

Have any of you been abroad in the fields during the past week? If so, you must have marked the waning year. The leaves are fading all around us, clothing the departing year with a wonderful beauty. As they fade away one by one, they preach to us and say, “You, too, O Men, will soon fall to earth and wither.” Have you heard the sermons of the falling leaves? You say to yourselves, “Winter will soon be here.” You begin to lay in your stocks of fuel to meet the coming cold. And do you not see those gray hairs upon your head—are they not wintry tokens, too? Do you not note those decaying teeth, those trembling limbs, those loosened sinews, that furrowed brow? Do not these betoken that your winter is hastening on? Have you made no provision for *eternity*? Will you be driven forever away, away, away, where there shall be no hope? Have you laid by no stores of comfort for another world?

O fools, and slow of heart! Let even the birds of the air rebuke you! The other day I saw the swallows gathering, holding assemblies, as though they were enquiring and answering questions. And then, when the time was come, away they flew across the sea to sunnier climes! They did not wait here till all their food was gone and they must famish. No, they took to themselves wings and followed the sun. Has all the wisdom entered into birds and have men none? “The stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times, and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the Lord.”

You will wait in this world and linger among its dying joys till you die and perish forever. Oh, that you would take the wings of faith and fly where the Sun of Righteousness points the way! There, where the Cross is the guiding constellation—there steer your course—and you will reach the land of everlasting summer where fading flowers and withering leaves are never known! Believe in Jesus, Sinner! Set your hopes on Him, or if not, I must say to you as Christ did to the people, “When you see the south wind blow, you say, There will be heat; and it comes to pass. You hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that you do not discern this time? Yes, and why even of yourselves judge you not what is right?”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 12:13-21; 30-59.

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ACCIDENTS, NOT PUNISHMENTS NO. 408

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, suppose you that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, No: but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think you that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem! I tell you, No: but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.”
Luke 13:1-5.

THE year 1861 will have a notoriety among its fellows as the year of calamities. Just at that season when man goes forth to reap the fruit of his labors, when the harvest of the earth is ripe and the barns are beginning to burst with the new wheat, Death, the mighty reaper, has come forth to cut down his harvest. Full sheaves have been gathered into his garner—the tomb and terrible have been the wailings which compose the harvest hymn of death. In reading the newspapers during the last two weeks, even the most stolid must have been the subject of very painful feelings.

Not only have there been catastrophes so alarming that the blood chills at their remembrance but column after column of the paper has been devoted to calamities of a minor degree of horror, but which, when added together, are enough to astound the mind with the fearful amount of sudden death which has of late fallen on the sons of men. We have had not only one incident for every day in the week, but two or three. We have not simply been stunned with the alarming noise of one terrific clash, but many have followed upon each other's heels—like Job's messengers—till we have needed Job's patience and resignation to hear the dreadful tale of woes.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, such things as these have always happened in all ages of the world. Think not that this is a new thing. Do not dream, as some do, that this is the produce of an overwrought civilization, or of that modern and most wonderful discovery of steam. If the steam engine had never been known and if the railway had never been constructed there would have been sudden deaths and terrible accidents, not withstanding. In taking up the old records in which our ancestors wrote down their accidents and calamities, we find that the old stage coach yielded quite as heavy a booty to death as does the swiftly-rushing train.

There were gates to Hades then as many as there are now and roads to death quite as steep and precipitous and traveled by quite as vast a multi-

tude as in our present time. Do you doubt that? Permit me to refer you to the chapter before you. Remember those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell. What if no collision crushed them? What if they were not destroyed by the ungovernable iron horse dragging them down from an embankment? Yet some badly built tower, or some wall beaten by the tempest could fall upon eighteen at a time and they might perish. Or worse than that, a despotic ruler, having the lives of men at his girdle like the keys of his palace, might fall upon worshippers in the temple itself and mix their blood with the blood of the bullocks which they were just then sacrificing to the God of Heaven.

Do not think, then, that this is an age in which God is dealing more harshly with us than of old. Do not think that God's Providence has become more lax than it was—there always were sudden deaths and there always will be. There always were seasons when death's wolves hunted in hungry packs and, probably, until the end of this dispensation, the last enemy will hold his periodic festivals and glut the worms with the flesh of men. Be not, therefore, cast down with any sudden fear. Neither be troubled by these calamities. Go about your business and if your avocations should call you to cross the field of death itself, do it and do it bravely. God has not thrown up the reins of the world, He has not taken off His hand from the helm of the great ship. Still—

***“He everywhere has sway,
And all things serve His might;
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light.”***

Only learn to trust Him and you shall not be afraid of sudden fear—“Your soul shall dwell at ease and your seed shall inherit the earth.”

The particular subject of this morning, however, is this—the use which we ought to make of these fearful texts which God is writing in capital letters upon the history of the world. God has spoken once, yes, twice—let it not be said that man regards it not. We have seen a glimmering of God's power. We have beheld something of the readiness with which He can destroy our fellow creatures. Let us “hear the rod and Him that has appointed it,” and in hearing it, let us do two things. First, let us not be so foolish as to draw the conclusion of superstitious and ignorant persons—that conclusions which is hinted at in the text, namely that those who are thus destroyed by accident are sinners above all the sinners that are in the land.

And secondly, let us draw the right and proper inference—let us make practical use of all these events for our own personal improvement. Let us hear the voice of the Savior saying, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.”

I. First then, LET US TAKE HEED THAT WE DO NOT DRAW THE RASH AND HASTY CONCLUSION FROM TERRIBLE ACCIDENTS—THAT THOSE WHO SUFFER BY THEM SUFFER ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR SINS.

It has been most absurdly stated that those who travel on the first day of the week and meet with an accident ought to regard that accident as

being a judgment from God upon them on account of their violating the Christian's day of worship. It has been stated even by godly ministers that the late deplorable collision should be looked upon as an exceedingly wonderful and remarkable visitation of the wrath of God against those unhappy persons who happened to be in the Clayton tunnel.

Now I enter my solemn protest against such an inference as that not in my own name—but in the name of Him who is the Christian's Master and the Christian's Teacher. I say of those who were crushed in that tunnel—do you think that they were sinners more than all the sinners? "I tell you all—except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Or those who perished but last Monday, do you think that they were sinners above all the sinners that were in London? "I tell you, No—but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Now mark, I would not deny but what there have sometimes been judgments of God upon particular persons for sin. Sometimes but I think but exceedingly rarely, such things have occurred.

Some of us have heard in our own experience instances of men who have blasphemed God and defied Him to destroy them and have suddenly fallen dead. And in such cases the punishment has so quickly followed the blasphemy that one could not help perceiving the hand of God in it. The man had wantonly asked for the judgment of God—his prayer was heard and the judgment came. And beyond a doubt, there are what may be called natural judgments. You see a man ragged, poor, houseless. He has been a profligate. He has been a drunkard. He has lost his character and it is but the just judgment of God upon him that he should be starving and that he should be an outcast among men.

You see in the hospitals loathsome specimens of men and women foully diseased. God forbid that we should deny that in such a case—the punishment being the natural result of the sin—there is a judgment of God upon licentiousness and ungodly lusts. And the same may be said in many instances where there is so clear a link between the sin and the punishment that the blindest men may discern that God has made Misery the child of Sin. But in cases of accident—such as that to which I refer—and in cases of sudden and instant death, again, I say, I enter my earnest protest against the foolish and ridiculous idea that those who thus perish are sinners above all the sinners who survive unharmed.

Let me just try to reason this matter out with Christian people—for there are some unenlightened Christian people who will feel horrified by what I have said. Those who are ready at perversions may even dream that I would apologize for the breach of the day of worship. Now I do no such thing. I do not extenuate the sin—I only testify and declare that accidents are not to be viewed as punishments for sin—for punishment belongs not to this world but to the world to come. To all those who hastily look on every calamity as a judgment I would speak in the earnest hope of setting them right.

Let me begin, then, by saying, my dear Brethren, do you not see that *what you say is not true?* And that is the best reason why you should not say it. Does not your own experience and observation teach you that one

event happens both to the righteous and to the wicked? It is true, the wicked man sometimes falls dead in the street. But has not the minister fallen dead in the pulpit? It is true that a pleasure boat, in which men were seeking their own pleasure on a Sunday has suddenly gone down. But is it not equally true that a ship which contained none but godly men, who were bound upon an excursion to preach the Gospel has gone down, too?

The visible Providence of God has no respect of persons. And a storm may gather around the “John Williams” missionary ship, quite as well as around a vessel filled with riotous sinners. Why, do you not perceive that the Providence of God has been, in fact, in its outward dealings, rather harder upon the good than upon the bad? For did not Paul say, as he looked upon the miseries of the righteous in his day, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”? The path of righteousness has often conducted men to the rack, to prison, to the gibbet, to the stake—while the road of sin has often led a man to empire, to dominion and to high esteem among his fellows.

It is not true that in *this world* God does punish men for sin and reward them for their good deeds. Did not David say, “I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree”? And did not this perplex the Psalmist for a little season until he went into the sanctuary of God and then he understood their end? Your faith assures you that the ultimate result of Providence will work out only good to the people of God. Your life, though it be but a brief part of the Divine drama of history, must have taught you that Providence does not outwardly discriminate between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous perish suddenly as well as the wicked. The plague knows no difference between the sinner and the saint. The sword of war is alike pitiless to the sons of God and the sons of Belial.

When God sends forth the scourge, it slays suddenly the innocent as well as the perverse and obstinate. Now, my Brethren, if your idea of an avenging and awarding Providence is not true, why should you talk as if it were? And why, if it is not correct as a *general rule*, should you suppose it to be true in this one particular instance? Get the idea out of your head—for the Gospel of God never needs you to believe an untruth!

But, secondly, there is another reason. The idea that whenever an accident occurs we are to look upon it as a judgment from God would make the Providence of God to be, instead of a great deep, *a fiery shallow pool*. Why, any child can understand the Providence of God, if it is true that when there is a railway accident it is because people travel on a Sunday. I take any little child from the smallest infant class form in the Sunday-School and he will say, “Yes, I see that.” But then if such a thing is Providence. If it is a Providence that can be understood—manifestly it is not the Scriptural idea of Providence—for in the Scripture we are always taught that God’s Providence is “a great deep.”

And even Ezekiel who had the wing of the cherubim and could fly aloft—when he saw the wheels which were the great picture of the Provi-

dence of God—he could only say the wheels were so high that they were terrible and were full of eyes so that he cried, “O wheel!” If—I repeat it to make it plain—if *always* a calamity were the result of some sin, Providence would be as simple as that twice two made four. It would be one of the first lessons that a little child might learn. But Scripture teaches us that Providence is a great depth in which the human intellect may swim and dive but it can neither find a bottom nor a shore. And if you and I pretend that we can find out the reasons of Providence and twist the dispensations of God over our fingers, we only prove our folly—we do not prove that we have begun to understand the ways of God.

Why look, Sirs—suppose for a moment there were some great performance going on and you should step in the middle of it and see one actor upon the stage for a moment and you should say, “Yes, I understand it.” What a simpleton you would be! Do you not know that the great transactions of Providence began near six thousand years ago? And you have only stepped into this world for thirty or forty years and seen one actor on the stage and you say you understand it. Tush! you do not. You have only begun to know. Only He knows the end from the beginning. Only He understands what are the great results and what is the great reason for which the world was made and for which He permits both good and evil to occur. Think not that you know the ways of God. It is to degrade Providence and to bring God down to the level of men when you pretend that you can understand these calamities and find out the secret designs of wisdom.

But next, do you not perceive that such an idea as this would *encourage Phariseeism*? These people who were crushed to death, or scalded, or destroyed under the wheels of railway carriages, were worse sinners than we are! Very well, then—what good people we must be. What excellent examples of virtue! We do not such things as they and therefore God makes all things smooth for us. Inasmuch as we here traveled, some of us every day in the week and yet have never been smashed to pieces, we may on this supposition rank ourselves with the favorites of Deity. And then, do you not see, Brethren, our safety would be an argument for our being Christians? Our having traveled on a railway safely would be an argument that we were regenerate persons—yet I have never read in the Scriptures—“We know that we have passed from death unto life because we have traveled from London to Brighton safely twice a day.”

I never found a verse which looked like this. And yet if it were true that the worst of sinners met with accidents, it would follow as a natural converse to that proposition—that those who do *not* meet with accidents must be very good people. And what Pharisaical notions we thus beget and foster. But I cannot indulge the folly for a moment. As I look for a moment upon the poor mangled bodies of those who have been so suddenly slain, my eyes find tears—but my heart does not boast, nor my lips accuse—far from me be the boastful cry, “God, I thank you that I am not as these men are!” No, no, no—it is NOT the spirit of Christ—nor the spirit of Christianity.

While we can thank God that we are preserved, yet we can say, "It is of Your mercy that we are not consumed." And we must ascribe it to His grace and to His grace alone. But we cannot suppose that we are any better. It is only because He has had mercy and been very long-suffering with us, not willing that we should perish but that we should come to repentance, that He has thus preserved us from going down to the grave and kept us alive.

And then, will you allow me to remark that the supposition against which I am earnestly contending is a *very cruel and unkind one*. For if this were the case—that all persons who thus meet with their death in an extraordinary and terrible manner were greater sinners than the rest—would it not be a crushing blow to bereaved survivors and is it not ungenerous on our part to indulge the idea unless we are compelled by unanswerable reasons to accept it as an awful Truth? Now, I defy you to whisper it in the widow's ear. Go home to her and say, "Your husband was a worse sinner than the rest of men, therefore he died." You have not brutality enough for that.

A little unconscious infant, which had never sinned, though, doubtless, an inheritor of Adam's Fall, is found crushed amidst the debris of the accident. Now think for a moment—what would be the infamous consequence of the supposition that those who perished were worse than others? You would have to make it out that this unconscious infant was a worse sinner than many in the dens of infamy whose lives are yet spared. Do you not perceive that the thing is radically false and I might perhaps show you the injustice of it best by reminding you that it may one day turn upon your own head. Let it be your own case that you should meet with sudden death in such a way—are you willing to be adjudged to damnation on that account? Such an event may happen in the house of God.

Let me recall to my own and to your sorrowful recollection what occurred when once we met together. I can say with a pure heart we met for no object but to serve our God and the minister had no aim in going to that place but that of gathering many to hear who otherwise would not have listened to his voice. Yet there were funerals as the result of a holy effort (for holy effort still we avow it to have been and the after-smile of God has proved it so). There were deaths and deaths among God's People. I was about to say I am glad it was with God's people rather than with others. A fearful fright took hold upon the congregation and they fled—and do you not see that if accidents are to be viewed as judgments, then it is a fair inference that we were sinning in being there?—An insinuation which our consciences repudiates with scorn!

However, if that logic were true it is as true against *us* as it is against *others* and inasmuch as you would repel with indignation the accusation that any were grounded or hurt on account of sin, in being there to worship God—what you repel for yourself repel for others—and be no party to the accusation which is brought against those who have been destroyed during the last fortnight, that they perished on account of any great sin.

Here I anticipate the outcries of prudent and zealous persons who tremble for the ark of God and would touch it with Uzzah's hand. "Well," says one, "but we ought not to talk like this, for it is a very serviceable superstition because there are many people who will be kept from traveling on a Sunday by the accident. We ought to tell them, therefore, that those who perished, perished because they traveled on Sunday." Brethren, I would not tell a lie to save a soul and this would be telling lies. I would do anything to stop Sunday labor and sin—but I would not forge a falsehood even to do that. They might have perished on a Monday as well as on a Sunday. God gives no special immunity any day of the week and accidents may occur as well at one time as at another. It is only a pious fraud when we seek thus to pray upon the superstition of men to make capital for Christ.

The Roman Catholic priest might consistently use such an argument. But an honest Christian man who believes that the religion of Christ can take care of itself without his telling falsehoods scorns to do it. These men did not perish because they traveled on a Sunday. Witness the fact that others perished on the Monday when they were on an errand of mercy. I know not why God sent the accident. God forbid that we should offer our own reason when God has not given us His reason. But we are not allowed to make the superstition of men an instrument for the advancing the glory of God.

You know among Protestants there is a great deal of popery. I meet with people who uphold infant baptism on the plea, "Well, it is not doing any hurt and there is a great deal of good meaning in it and it may do good and even confirmation may be blessed to some people and therefore do not let us speak against it." I have nothing to do with whether the thing does hurt or not. All I have to do with is whether it is *right*, whether it is *Scriptural*, whether it is *true*. And if the Truth does mischief, which is a supposition we can by no means allow, that mischief will not lie at our door. We have nothing to do but to speak the Truth even though the heavens should fall. I say again that any advancement of the Gospel which is owing to the superstition of men is a false advance—and it will by-and-by recoil upon the people who use such an unhallowed weapon.

We have a religion which appeals to man's judgment and common sense and when we cannot get on with that I scorn that we should proceed by any other means. And, Brethren, if there is any person who should harden his heart and say, "Well, I am as safe on one day as another," which is quite true, I must say to him, "The sin of your making such a use as this of a Truth must lie at your own door, not at mine. But if I could keep you from violating the Christian's day of rest by putting before you a superstitious hypothesis, I would *not do it* because I feel that though I might keep you from that one sin a little while, you would by-and-by grow too intelligent to be duped by me and then you would come to look upon me as a priest who had played upon your fears instead of appealing to your judgment."

Oh, it is time for us to know that our Christianity is not a weak, shivering thing that appeals to the petty superstitious fears of ignorant and darkened minds! It is a manly thing, loving the light and needing no sanctified frauds for its defense. Yes, Critic! Turn your lantern upon us and let it glare into our very eyes. We are not afraid—Truth is mighty and it can prevail—and if it cannot prevail in the daylight we have no wish that the sun should set to give it an opportunity. I believe that very much infidelity has sprung from the very natural desire of some Christian people to make use of common mistakes. “Oh,” they have said, “this popular error is a very good one, it keeps people right. Let us perpetuate the mistake, for it evidently does good.” And then, when the mistake has been found out, infidels have said, “Oh, you see how these Christian people are found out in their tricks.”

Let us have no tricks, Brethren. Let us not talk to men as though they were little children and could be frightened by tales of ghosts and witches. The fact is that this is not the time of retribution and it is worse than idle for us to teach that it is so.

And now, lastly—and then I leave this point—do you not perceive that the un-Christian and un-Scriptural supposition that when men suddenly meet with death it is the result of sin, *robs Christianity of one of its noblest arguments for the immortality of the soul?* Brethren, we assert daily with Scripture for our warrant that God is just and inasmuch as He is just, He must punish sin and reward the righteous. Manifestly He does not do it in *this world*. I think I have plainly shown that in this world one event happens to both. The righteous man is poor as well as the wicked and he dies suddenly as well as the most graceless.

Very well, then—the inference is natural and clear that there must be a *next world* in which these things must be righted. If there is a God He must be just. And if He is just He must punish sin. And since He does *not* do it in *this world*, there therefore must be *another state* in which men shall receive the due reward of their works and they that have sown to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, while they that have sown to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Make this world the reaping place and you have taken the sting out of sin. “Oh,” says the sinner, “if the sorrows men endure here is all the punishment they will have, we will sin greedily.” Say to them, “No. *This* is not the world of punishment but the world of probation. It is not the court of justice but the land of mercy. It is not the prison of terror but the house of long-suffering.” And you have opened before their eyes the gates of the *future*. You have set the judgment Throne before their eyes. You have reminded them of, “Come, you blessed,” and “Depart, you cursed.” You have a more reasonable, not to say a more Scriptural ground of appeal to their consciences and to their hearts.

I have thus spoken with the view of putting down as much as I can the idea which is too current among the ungodly—that we as Christians hold every calamity to be a judgment. We do not. We do not believe that those

eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell were sinners above all the sinners that were in Jerusalem.

II. Now to our second point. WHAT USE, THEN, OUGHT WE TO MAKE OF THIS VOICE OF GOD AS HEARD AMIDST THE SHRIEKS AND GROANS OF DYING MEN?

Two uses—first, *inquiry* and secondly, *warning*. The first *inquiry*. We should ask ourselves—“Why may it not be my case that I may very soon and suddenly be cut off? Have I a lease of my life? Have I any special guardianship which ensures me that I shall not suddenly pass the portals of the tomb? Have I received a charter of longevity? Have I been covered with such a coat of armor that I am invulnerable to the arrows of death? Why am I not to die?”

And the next question it should suggest is this—“Am not I as great a sinner as those who died? Are there not with me, even with *me*, sins against the Lord my God? If in outward sin others have exceeded me, are not the thoughts of my heart evil? Does not the same Law which curses them curse me? I have not continued in all the things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them. It is as impossible that I should be saved by my works as that they should be. Am not I under the Law as well as they by nature and therefore am not I as well as they under the curse?”

Instead of thinking of their sins which would make me proud, I should think of my own which will make me humble. Instead of speculating upon *their* guilt—which is no business of mine—I should turn my eyes within and think upon *my own* transgression for which I must personally answer before the Most High God. Then the next question is, “Have I repented of my sin? I need not be inquiring whether *they* have or not—have *I*? Since I am liable to the same calamity, am I prepared to meet it? Have I felt, through the Holy Spirit’s convincing power, the blackness and depravity of my heart? Have I been led to confess before God that I deserve His wrath and that His displeasure, if it lights on me, will be my just due? Do I hate sin? Have I learned to abhor it? Have I, through the Holy Spirit, turned away from it as from a deadly poison and do I seek now to honor Christ my Master?

“Am I washed in His blood? Do I bear His likeness? Do I reflect His character? Do I seek to live to His praise?” If not, I am in as great a danger as they were and may quite as suddenly be cut off and then where am *I*? I will not ask where are *they*? And then, again, instead of prying into the future destiny of these unhappy men and women, how much better to inquire into our own destiny and our own state!—

**“What am I? My soul, awake,
And an impartial survey take.”**

Am I prepared to die? If now the gates of Hell should be opened, shall I enter there? If now beneath me the wide jaws of death should gape, am I prepared with confidence to walk through the midst of them, fearing no evil, because God is with me?

This is the proper use to make of these accidents. This is the wisest way to apply the judgments of God to our own selves and to our own con-

dition. O Sirs, God has spoken to every man in London during these last two weeks. He has spoken to me. He has spoken to you. Men, women and children. God's voice has rung out of the dark tunnel—has spoken from the sunset and from the glaring bonfire round which lay the corpses of men and women. And He has said to you, "Be you also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes." It is so spoken to you that I hope it may set you inquiring, "Am I prepared? Am I ready? Am I willing now to face my Judge and hear the sentence pronounced upon my soul?"

When we have used it thus for inquiry, let me remind you that we ought to use it also for *warning*. "You shall all likewise perish." "No," says one, "not *likewise*. We shall not all be crushed, many of us will die in our beds. We shall not all be burned. Many of us will tranquilly close our eyes." Yes, but the text says, "You shall all likewise *perish*." And let me remind you that some of you may perish in the same identical manner. You have no reason to believe that you may not also *suddenly* be cut off while walking the streets. You may fall dead while eating your meals—how many have perished with the staff of life in their hands! You shall be in your bed and your bed shall suddenly be made your tomb. You shall be strong, hale, hearty and in health—and either by an accident or by the stoppage of the circulation of your blood, you shall be suddenly hurried before your God. Oh, may sudden death to you be sudden glory!

But it may happen with some of us that in the same sudden manner as others have died, so shall we. But lately in America, a Brother, while preaching the Word, laid down his body and his charge at once. You remember the death of Dr. Beaumont, who, while proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, closed his eyes to earth? And I remember the death of a minister in this country, who had but just given out the verse—

**"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode;
I'd leave Your earthly courts and flee
Up to Your house, my God,"**

when it pleased God to grant him the desire of his heart and he appeared before the King in His beauty. Then may not such a sudden death as that happen to you and to me?

But it is quite certain that, let death come when it may, there are some few respects in which it will come to us in just the same manner as it has to those who have so lately been hurried away. First, it will come quite as *surely*. They could not, travel as fast as they would, escape from the Pursuer. They could not journey where they may, *from* home or *to* home, escape the shaft when the time had come. And so shall we perish. Just as surely, as certainly as death has set his seal upon the corpses which are not covered with the sod, so certainly shall he set his seal on us (unless the Lord should come before), for "it is appointed unto all men once to die and after death the judgment."

There is no discharge in this way. There is no escape for any individual. There is no bridge over this river. There is no ferry by which we may cross

this Jordan dry shod. Into your chill depths, O river, each one of us must descend. In your cold stream our blood must be frozen. And beneath your foaming billows our head must sink! We, too, must surely die. "Trite," you say, "and commonplace"—and death is commonplace, but it only happens once to us. God grant that that once dying may perpetually be in our minds till we die daily and find it not hard work to die at the last.

Well then, as death comes both to them and to us surely, so will it come both to them and to us most *potently* and *irresistibly*. When death surprised them, then what help had they? A child's card house was not more easily crushed than these ponderous carriages. What could they do to help one another? They are sitting talking side by side. The scream is heard and before a second cry can be uttered they are crushed and mangled. The husband may seek to extricate his wife, but heavy timbers have covered her body he can only find at last her poor head and she is dead. He takes his sorrowful seat by her side and puts his hand upon her brow until it is stone cold and though he has seen one and another plucked with broken bones from the midst of the ruined mass, he has to leave her body there. Alas, his children are motherless and himself robbed of the partner of his bosom.

They could not resist. They might do what they would, but as soon as the moment came, on they went—and death or broken bones was the result. So with you and me—bribe the physician with the largest fee, but he could not put fresh blood into your veins. Pay him in masses of gold but he could not make the pulse give another throb. Death, irresistible conqueror of men, there is none that can stand against you, your word is law, your will is destiny! So shall it come to us as it did to them—it shall come with power and none of us can resist.

When it came to them, it came *instantly* and would not delay. So will it come to us. We may have longer notice than they but when the hour has struck there shall be no postponing it. Gather up your feet in your bed, O Patriarch, for you must die and not live! Give the last kiss to your wife. You veteran soldier of the cross put your hands upon your children's heads and give them the dying benediction—for all your prayers cannot lengthen out your life and all your tears cannot add a drop to the dry well-spring of your being. You must go. The Master sends for you and He allows no delay.

No, though your whole family should be ready to sacrifice their lives to buy you but an hour of respite, it must not be. Though a nation should be a holocaust, a willing sacrifice, to give its sovereign another week in addition to his reign, yet it must not be. Though the whole flock should willingly consent to tread the dark vaults of the tomb to let their pastor's life be spared but for another year, it must not be. Death will have no delay. The time is up, the clock has struck, the sand has run out and as certainly as they died when their time was come—in the field by sudden accident—so certainly must we.

And then, again, let us remember that death will come to us as it did to them with *terrors*. Not with the crash of broken timbers perhaps. Not with the darkness of the tunnel, not with the smoke and with the steam. Not with the shrieks of women and the groans of dying men—but yet with terrors. For meet death where we may, if we are not in Christ and if the Shepherd’s rod and staff do not comfort us, to die must be an awful and tremendous thing. Yes, in your body, O Sinner—with downy pillows beneath your head and a wife’s tender arm to bear you up and a tender hand to wipe your clammy sweat—you will find it awful work to face the monster and feel his sting and enter into his dread dominion. It is awful work at any time and at every time—under the best and most propitious circumstances—for a man to die unprepared.

And now I would send you away with this one thought abiding on your memories. We are dying creatures—not living creatures. And we shall soon be gone. Perhaps, as here I stand and rudely talk of these mysterious things, soon shall this hand be stretched and dumb the mouth that lisps the faltering strain. Power supreme, O everlasting King, come when You may! Oh, may You never intrude upon an ill-spent hour—but find me wrapped in meditation high, singing to my great Creator—doing works of mercy to the poor and needy ones. Or bearing in my arms the poor and weary of the flock. Or solacing the disconsolate, or blowing the blast of the Gospel trumpet in the ears of deaf and perishing souls!

Then come when You will, if You are with me in life, I shall not fear to meet You in death. But oh, let my soul be ready with her wedding-garment, with her lamp trimmed and her light burning, ready to see her Master and enter into the joy of her Lord! Souls, you know the way of salvation, you have heard it often, hear it yet again—“He that believes on the Lord Jesus has everlasting life.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” “Believe you with your heart and with your mouth make confession.” May the Holy Spirit give the grace to do both and this done, you may say—

***“Come, death and some celestial band,
To bear my soul away!”***

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

“THIS YEAR ALSO”

NO. 1451A

FOR THE NEW YEAR - 1879.
FROM THE SICK CHAMBER OF C. H. SPURGEON.

“This year also.”
Luke 13:6.

AT the opening of another year and at the commencement of another volume of sermons, we earnestly desire to utter the word of exhortation, but alas, at this present, the preacher is a prisoner and must speak from his pillow instead of his pulpit! Let not the few words which we can put together come with diminished power from a sick man, for the musket fired by a wounded soldier sends forth the bullet with none the less force. Our desire is to speak with living words, or not at all. He who enables us to sit up and compose these trembling sentences is entreated to clothe them with His Spirit, that they may be according to His own mind.

The interceding vinedresser pleaded for the fruitless fig tree, “let it alone this year also,” dating, as it were, a year from the time wherein he spoke. Trees and fruit-bearing plants have a natural measurement for their lives—evidently a year came to its close when it was time to seek fruit on the fig tree and another year commenced when the vinedresser began, again, his digging and pruning work. Men are such barren things that their fruitage marks no certain periods and it becomes necessary to make artificial divisions of time for them. There seems to be no set period for man’s spiritual harvest or vintage, or if there is, the sheaves and the clusters come not in their season and hence we have to say one to another—“This shall be the beginning of a new year.”

Be it so, then. Let us congratulate each other upon seeing the dawn of “this year also,” and let us unitedly pray that we may enter upon it, continue in it and come to its close under the unfailing blessing of the Lord to whom all years belong.

I. The beginning of a new year SUGGESTS A RETROSPECT. Let us take it deliberately and honestly. “This year also”—then there had been former years. The dresser of the vineyard was not, for the first time, aware of the fig tree’s failure and neither had the owner come, for the first time, seeking figs in vain. God, who gives us “this year also,” has given us others before it—His sparing mercy is no novelty! His patience has already been taxed by our provocations. First came our youthful years when even a little fruit unto God is peculiarly sweet to Him. How did we spend them? Did our strength run all into wild wood and wanton branch? If so, we may well bewail that wasted vigor, that life misspent, that sin exceedingly multiplied.

He who saw us misuse those golden months of youth, nevertheless affords us “this year also,” and we should enter upon it with a holy jealousy lest what of strength and ardor may be left to us should be allowed to run away into the same wasteful courses as before. Upon the heels of our

youthful years came those of early manhood when we began to muster a household and to become as a tree fixed in its place. Then, also, fruit would have been precious. Did we bear any? Did we present unto the Lord a basket of summer fruit? Did we offer Him the first-fruits of our strength? If we did so, we may well adore the Divine Grace which so early saved us! But if not, the past chides us and, lifting an admonitory finger, it warns us not to let “this year also” follow the way of the rest of our lives!

He who has wasted youth and the morning of manhood has surely had enough of fooling—the time past may well suffice him to have worked the will of the flesh—it will be a superfluity of haughtiness to suffer “this year also” to be trod down in the service of sin. Many of us are now in the prime of life and our years already spent are not few. Have we still a need to confess that our years are eaten up by the grasshopper and the canker-worm? Have we reached the half-way house and still know not where we are going? Are we fools at forty? Are we half a century old by the calendar and yet far off from years of discretion? Alas, great God, that there should be men past this age who are still without knowledge!

Unsaved at sixty? Unregenerate at seventy? Unawakened at eighty? Unrenewed at ninety? These are each and all startling words! Perhaps they will fall upon ears which they should make tingle, but they will hear them as though they heard them not. Continuance in evil breeds callousness of heart and when the soul has long been sleeping in indifference, it is hard to arouse it from the deadly slumber. The sound of the words, “this year also,” makes some of us remember years of great mercy, sparkling and flashing with delight. Were those years laid at the Lord’s feet? They were comparable to the silver bells upon the horses—were they “holiness unto the Lord?”

If not, how shall we answer for it if “this year also” should be musical with merry mercy and yet be spent in the ways of carelessness? The same words recall some of us our years of sharp affliction when we were, indeed, dug about and fertilized. How went those years? God was doing great things for us, exercising careful and expensive husbandry, caring for us with exceedingly great and wise care—did we render according to the benefit received? Did we rise from the bed more patient and gentle, weaned from the world and welded to Christ? Did we bring forth clusters to reward the dresser of the vineyard? Let us not refuse these questions of self-examination, for it may be this is to be another of these years of captivity, another season of the furnace and the refining pot! The Lord grant that the coming tribulation may take more chaff out of us than any of its predecessors—and leave the wheat cleaner and better.

The new year also reminds us of opportunities for usefulness which have come and gone—and of unfulfilled resolutions which have blossomed only to fade. Shall “this year also” be as those which have gone before? May we not hope for Grace to advance upon Grace already gained and should we not seek for power to turn our poor sickly promises into robust action? Looking back on the past we lament the follies by which we would not willingly be held captive “this year also,” and we adore the forgiving

mercy, the preserving Providence, the boundless liberality, the Divine love of which we hope to be partakers "this year also."

II. If the preacher could think freely, he could carry the text at his pleasure in many directions, but he is feeble and so must let it drive with the current which bears it on to a second consideration—the text MENTIONS A MERCY. It was in great goodness that the tree which cumbered the soil was allowed to stand for another year. Prolonged life should always be regarded as a gift of mercy. We must view "this year also" as a grant from Divine Grace. It is wrong to speak as if we cared nothing for life and looked upon our being here as an evil or a punishment. We are here "this year also" as the result of love's pleading and in pursuance of love's designs.

The wicked man should count that the Lord's longsuffering points to his salvation and he should permit the cords of love to draw him to it. O that the Holy Spirit would make the blasphemer, the Sabbath-breaker and the openly vicious to feel what a wonder it is that their lives are prolonged "this year also!" Are they spared to curse, riot and defy their Maker? Shall this be the only fruit of patient mercy? The procrastinator who has put off the messenger of Heaven with his delays and promises—ought he not wonder that he is allowed to see "this year also?" How is it that the Lord has borne with him and put up with his vacillations and hesitations? Is this year of Grace to be spent in the same manner?

Transient impressions, hasty resolves and speedy apostasies—are these to be the weary story over and over again? The startled conscience, the tyrant passion, the smothered emotion! Are these to be the tokens of yet another year? May God forbid that any one of us should hesitate and delay through "this year also." Infinite Pity holds back the axe of Justice—shall it be insulted by the repetition of the sins which caused the uplifting of the instrument of wrath? What can be more tantalizing to the heart of goodness than indecision? Well might the Lord's Prophet become impatient and cry, "How long halt you between two opinions?" Well may God Himself push for a decision and demand an immediate reply!

O undecided Soul, will you swing much longer between Heaven and Hell and act as if it were hard to choose between the slavery of Satan and the liberty of the Great Father's home of love? "This year also" will you sport in defiance of Justice and pervert the generosity of Mercy into a license for still further rebellion? "This year also" must Divine Love be made an occasion for continued sin? O do not act so basely, so contrary to every noble instinct, so injuriously to your own best interests! The Believer is kept out of Heaven "this year also" in love and not in anger. There are some for whose sake it is necessary he should abide in the flesh—some to be helped by Him on their heavenward way—and others to be led to the Redeemer's feet by His instruction.

The Heaven of many *saints* is not yet prepared for them because their nearest companions have not yet arrived and their spiritual children have not yet gathered in Glory in sufficient number to give them a thoroughly heavenly welcome! They must wait "this year also" that their rest may be the more glorious and that the sheaves which they will bring with them

may afford them greater joy. Surely, for the sake of souls, for the delight of glorifying our Lord and for the increase of the jewels of our crown, we may be glad to wait below “this year also.”

This is a wide field, but we may not linger in it, for our space is little and our strengths even less.

III. Our last feeble utterance shall remind you that the expression, “This year also,” IMPLIES A LIMIT. The vine-dresser asked for no longer a reprieve than one year. If his digging and fertilizing should not prove successful, he would plead no more and the tree would be cut down. Even when Jesus is the Pleader, the request of mercy has its boundaries and times. It is not forever that we shall be let alone and allowed to cumber the ground. If we will not repent, we must perish! If we will not be benefited by the spade we must fall by the axe! There will come a *last* year for each one of us! Therefore let each one say to himself—Is this my last?

If it should be the last with the preacher, he would gird up his loins to deliver the Lord’s message with all his soul and bid his fellow men be reconciled to God. Dear Friend, is “this year also” to be your last? Are you ready to see the curtain rise upon *eternity*? Are you prepared, now, to hear the midnight cry and to enter into the marriage supper? The Judgment and all that will follow is surely the heritage of every living man—blessed are they who, by faith in Jesus, are able to face the bar of God without a thought of terror! If we live to be counted among the oldest inhabitants we must depart at last—there must be an end and the Voice must be heard—“Thus says the Lord, this year you shall die.”

So many have gone before us and are going every hour, that no man should need any other memento and yet man is so eager to forget his own mortality and, thereby, to forfeit his hopes of bliss, that we cannot too often bring it before the mind’s eyes. O mortal Man, what do you think? Prepare to meet your God, for you must meet Him! Seek the Savior, yes, seek Him before another sun sinks to its rest!

Once more, “this year also,” and it may be for this year, only, the Cross is uplifted as the lighthouse of the world—the one Light to which no eye can look in vain! Oh that millions would look that way and live! Soon the Lord Jesus will come a second time and then the blaze of His Throne will supplant the mild radiance of His Cross! The *Judge* will be seen rather than the Redeemer! Now He saves, but *then* He will destroy! Let us hear His voice at this moment! He has given us another day, let us be eager to avail ourselves of the gracious season! Let us believe in Jesus this day, seeing it may be our last!

These are the pleas of one who now falls back on his pillow in very weakness. Hear them for your souls’ sakes and live! Amen.

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

JUDGMENT THREATENING BUT MERCY SPARING

NO. 650

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 17, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Cut it down; why does it use up the ground? But he answered
and said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also.”*
Luke 13:7, 8.

THE comparison of a man to a tree and of human works to fruit is exceedingly common in Scripture because it is most suggestive, natural, and appropriate. As fruit is the production of the tree's life and the end for which the tree exists, so obedience to the Divine will and holiness unto the Lord should be the product of man's life and for it he was at first created. When men plant trees in a vineyard, they very naturally expect to find fruit on them. And if at the age and season of fruit bearing they find no produce, their natural and justifiable expectation is disappointed.

Even thus, speaking after the manner of men, it is natural that the great Maker of all should look for the good fruit of obedience and love from the men who are the objects of His providential care and be grieved when He meets with no return. Man is very much more God's property than a tree can ever be the property of the man who plants a vineyard. And as God has spent so much more skill and wisdom in the creation of a man than a farmer can have spent in the mere planting of trees, it becomes the more natural that God should look for fruit from His creature, man. And the more reasonable that His most righteous requirements should not be refused.

Trees that bear no fruit must be cut down. And sinners who bear no repentance, faith and holiness, must die. It is only a matter of time as to whether or not the vineyard shall be cleared of the encumbrance of its barren trees. And it is but a matter of time as to when the world shall be delivered from the burdensome presence of barren souls. It stands to reason that barren trees, which soon become the haunts of all sorts of mischievous creatures, should be a nuisance to the vineyard. Neither can sinners be permitted forever to become the dwelling places of evil spirits and the dens of iniquity—a thorough riddance must be made of impenitent sinners as well as of rotten trees. There is a time for felling fruitless trees, and there is an appointed season for hewing down and casting into the fire the useless sinner.

I. We shall not linger on the threshold of our solemn work this morning, for our burden is very heavy and we would be rid of it speedily. We shall address ourselves at once to those persons who are living without God and without Christ, among whom many of my hearers must be numbered. We shall speak to those who are not saved—there are such in the

professing Church everywhere. O may the Holy Spirit find them out by our word and bring them in real earnest to consider their ways.

To all unprofitable, unfruitful sinners, we utter this hard, but needful sentence—TO CUT YOU DOWN WOULD BE MOST REASONABLE. It is right and reasonable to fell barren trees and it is just as right and reasonable that *you* should be cut down.

1. This will appear in the first place, if we reflect that this is the shortest and the surest way to deal with you. It will cost the least trouble and be most certainly effectual in removing you from the place to which you are an injury rather than a benefit. When the owner of the vineyard says to the gardener concerning the tree, “Cut it down,” the remedy is very sharp, but it is very simple. The felling is soon done, the clearance is thorough—and when another tree is planted the benefit is evident. To dig about the tree, to trench it, to feed it, to prune it and water it—all this takes time—requiring care and labor and attention.

And, after all that, the process may fail and love’s labor may be lost. To spare is difficult and involves trouble. To cut down is easy and effectual. Unconverted Hearer, to preach the Gospel to you, to call you to repentance, to entreat, exhort, instruct and warn you is a laborious process and will probably be unsuccessful, after all. The work will require much thought! Providential agencies must be directed with wisdom! Saints must pray with earnestness! Ministers must plead with tears! The Scriptures must be written and those Scriptures must be expounded and explained!

All this is more than you have any natural right to expect that God should do with you, when He has in His hands a far simpler remedy by which He may at once ease Himself of His adversary and prevent your being any further offense—He has but to take away your breath and permit your body to descend into the grave and your soul into Hell and the vineyard is clear and there is room for another tree.

This sharp, short, simple process is one which commends itself to men in the case of trees. And it is one in which it is a thousand wonders that the Lord has not used with you! There will be no more blaspheming God, Sinner, when the axe has laid you low! There will be no more rejecting the promise of His mercy! No more violating Sundays! No more despising Scripture when the day of doom arrives! Death shall end all these abominations forever! We shall no more have to agonize for you in vain. No more shall we weep bitterly because of your hardness of heart—no longer study to meet your objections and sigh at your constant oppositions.

The flames of Hell will end all this, to your sad and awful cost. No longer will a long-suffering God be wearied with your sins and pressed down under the load of your iniquities. He will make short work in righteousness and a clean work, too. He will sweep you away with the broom of destruction and your rebellions will end and your iniquities will receive a reward most sure and terrible! Barren fig tree, you will draw the fatness from the ground no longer and overshadow with evil influence your fellow trees no more! You are become a mere waste and worse than a waste.

Sinner, I ask you, is not the readiest plan to be rid of you suggested by the text, “Cut it down”? You yourself would do thus with a *tree*! What reason is there why the Lord should not deal thus with you? Do you argue

that you are of far greater importance than a tree? How do you figure this? A tree is far more valuable to *you* than *you* can be supposed to be to the infinite God! The gardener would possibly lose something by cutting down his tree—but how can you suppose *that* your ruin would be any damage to the great God?

The man who has many acres of vineyard is not much distressed if one barren vine is cut down, for there are so many more. If God had but one man in His dominions, it might seem to be of importance whether that man were saved or not—but there are so many of our race that your loss will be no more than the blowing of one atom of sand from the shore, or the removal of one drop from the sea! You yourself could not well complain of being cut down, for you do not think much of your own soul—you are not concerned about its salvation—you trifle with its best interests!

Why should you expect another to value you at a higher rate than you have set upon yourself? You fling away your soul for passing joys! You neglect the great salvation! You live in daily disobedience against God, who alone can do you good! Even the preaching of the Gospel, that all-powerful engine, seems to have no effect upon you because you despise yourself. Well, man, if God despises you, too, and commands His angels to cut you down, you cannot complain—it is but reasonable that God should estimate you at your own price and weigh you in your own balances!

You have wantonly used the axe to yourself on many occasions. Why should not the proper Executioner use it in earnest? Some men ruin their health by their sins. They wildly dash the axe against their own roots and wound themselves terribly. On your soul you are using that axe continually—for you damage it by sin and seek out folly and the way to damnation—and labor to be lost! You cannot, therefore, complain. The crushing of you will be of no more consequence in this great universe than the killing of some one ant upon the hill. You will never be missed! You may think greatly of yourself, but you are no more than a mere worm compared with the great universe of God.

Beware, O rebellious, unrepentant Sinner! My love yearns for your salvation, but my reason approves of your ruin! I foresee it and expect it speedily unless you turn unto the Lord and live.

2. Another reason makes the argument for judgment very powerful, namely, that sufficient space for repentance has already been given you! If there had been any hope of your repentance, I think many of you would have repented long ago. I do not know what can be done for some of you more than has been done. You have been dug about—the digging, I suppose, is to loosen the roots of their hold upon the earth. And you have had affliction, trial and trouble—like the gardener's great spade—to wean you from earth and loosen your hold of carnal things. You have had sickness—you have tossed to and fro upon the bed of pain.

You have been in the jaws of death and the horrid teeth seemed above and beneath you, as though they would enclose you forever—but all this has been of no avail. Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more. Already some of you have been smitten until your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint, but you will not hear the rod. By the blueness of the wound, says Solomon, the heart is made bet-

ter. But in your case it has not been so. Those blue wounds of yours—those great and grievous afflictions—have not been sanctified to you, but rather you have gone on offending God and provoking the Most High.

The gardener spoke of feeding as well as of digging and some of you have had plentiful helps towards repentance. The Gospel has been put close by your roots hundreds of times. You have a Bible in every house. You have had, some of you, the advantage of godly training from your youth up. You have been warned again and again and again, sometimes sternly, sometimes affectionately. You have heard the wooing voice of Mercy and the thundering notes of Judgment! But yet, though Jesus Christ's own Gospel has been laid close to your roots, O barren Tree, you are barren still! What is the use, then, of sparing you?

Sparing has been tried and it has had no effect—the other remedy is certain—“Cut it down.” O God, cut not down the sinner! And yet we dare not say it would be unreasonable, but on the contrary, the most natural result of slighted mercy. O Sinner, you may well say—

**“I have long withstood His Grace,
Long provoked Him to His face.
Would not hearken to His calls,
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.
Depths of mercy! Can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners spare?”**

3. Sinner, I argue your case somewhat harshly, you think. Ah, Man, would God I could make you think me harsh if you would but have pity on your own soul! For my harshness is only apparent, not real, and your carelessness for your soul is *real* harshness, for you care not for your own soul but treat it as a thing to be cast away and its ruin to be laughed at, as though it were contemptible.

And all this while there has been no sign of improvement whatever in you. If there had been some little fruit. If some tears of repentance had been flowing from your eyes. If there had been some seeking after Christ. If your heart had been a little softened. If you had but a little faith in Jesus, though it were but as a grain of mustard seed, then there were, indeed, reasons for sparing you! But, sorrowful to add, your sparing has had an ill effect upon you. Because God has not punished you, therefore you have waxed wanton and bold! You have said, “Does God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?”

You think that He is altogether such an One as *you* are and that He will never bring you into judgment. You fancy that His sword is rusted into the scabbard and His arm waxed short. Strange madness of evil that you should pervert the long-suffering which calls you to repentance into a reason for running to greater lengths of sin! What? When Jehovah spares you that you may turn to Him—shall that very sparing make you lift up the foot of your rebellion and *spurn* Him? It has done so. Up to this time you have grown hardened instead of softened. You have grown older, but you are no wiser, except it be with Satan's subtlety to be more wise in sin.

The Gospel has not now the effect it once had on you. This voice could make your soul shiver and your very blood chill in its veins, but it cannot do so now. These eyes have sometimes looked on you and seemed as

though they flashed with fire—but now they are dull as lead to you. Once, when we spoke to you of the wrath to come, the tears would flow—there were some tears of gentle pity for your own soul. But ah, it is not so with you now! You will go your way and our most earnest tones will seem but as the whistling wind and our most importunate entreaties as a child's playful song.

O God, it is reasonable, indeed, that You should lift up that sharp axe of Yours and say, "Cut it down." I think I could abundantly justify the severity of God, if now He were to use it, when I thus perceive that all His sparing has had no effect but to make you worse! When I perceive that, notwithstanding these years of waiting, there are no tokens of improvement in you, if He says, "Cut it down," Justice and Reason say, "yes, Lord, it is well it should be so."

4. But there are other reasons why, "Cut it down," is most reasonable, when we consider the Owner and the other trees. First of all, here is a tree which brings forth no fruit whatever and therefore is of no service. It is like money badly invested bringing in no interest. It is a dead loss to the owner. What is the use of keeping it? The dead tree is neither useful nor ornamental—it can yield no service and afford no pleasure. Cut it down, by all means!

And even so with you, Sinner! What is the use of you? You are of use to your children, to your family. In business you may be of some service to the world—but, then, the world did not make you! And your children and your family—they did not create you. God has made you. God has planted you. God is your proprietor—you have done nothing for God. Even in coming up to His House today, you did not come with any desire to honor Him. And tomorrow, if you should chance to give something to the poor, it will not be because they are God's, nor out of love to Him. You neither pray to God, nor praise God, nor live for God.

You live for anything, for everything, for nothing, sooner than live for the God that made you. Then what is the good of you to God? All His other creatures praise Him. There is not a spider spinning its web from leaf to leaf but does His bidding. "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib," but you do not know. Would you keep a horse that never did you service? Would you have a dog in your house that never licked your hand or fawned upon you, or did your will? You would say, "What is the good of this? A servant in my house to feed upon my bread, to be clothed with my bounty, and yet never to obey me but to live in constant reckless disregard of my most reasonable commands!"

You would say to such a servant, "Get out! You are no servant of mine." Well might the Lord say this to you! All these years preserving Goodness has winked at the past. Longsuffering has borne with your follies and your faults—but it cannot be so forever, for reason demands that a useless thing should not always stand and—"Cut it down," is the natural inference from the uselessness of your life.

Nor is this all. While you have been thus living without yielding anything, you have been a very costly tree. The tree in the vineyard does not cost much except to dig about it and to feed it and to prune it. There is, of course, the expense of the gardener who has to watch over it, but this is

very little. You may let the barren tree stand, for it is no great expense. But see what it costs to keep *you*! You have to be daily fed. The breath in your nostrils must come from God every moment. There has to be an emanation from Omnipotence at every single tick of that clock, or else you would not live.

The complicated machinery of the human body needs to be tended and kept in order by the great Master Craftsman, or else before long the cogs would cease to act upon one another and the wheels would be broken and the whole machine would be put out of gear. Your body is a mass of thousands of strings—and fails if one is gone. The good harpist must watch with sedulous care to prevent the strings from snapping.

You cost God much patience, much bounty, much skill, much power. Why should He spare you? What is there in you that He should go on with you in this manner? You would not spare the gnat that was always stinging you, buzzing in your face and every moment insulting you. If it cost you much of your poor gold to spare that poor gnat's life, you would not be long about it—you would crush it! And oh, it is a marvel that Jehovah does not deal thus with *you*, for you are more impertinent than that gnat could be! Sinner, if you were in God's place and were as ill-treated by your creature as the Lord is by *you*, would you lavish love and goodness upon him to receive hardness of heart and rebellion in return? Assuredly not! Judge, then, whether it is not right that the Lord should say, "Cut it down."

But there is a worse consideration, namely, that all this while you have been filling up space which somebody might have been filling to the glory of God. Where that barren tree stands there might have been a tree loaded with fruit. You are using up the ground, as the text says, that is, doing nothing but just being a cumbersome nuisance. If another mother had those children, she would pray for them and weep over them and teach them of Christ—but you do no such thing. If another man had that money it would be laid out for God's glory—but you lay it out for your own pleasure and forget the God who gave it to you!

If another had sat in that seat which you occupy, it may be that he had long ago repented in sackcloth and ashes! But you, like the men of Capernaum, have been hardened, instead of being softened under the Gospel. It may be, man of influence, if another had stood where you have stood in the world's judgment, he would have led hundreds in the path of right—but you, standing there, have done no such thing! Oh, if another had your gifts, young man, he would not be making a company laugh at the tavern, but pleading with all his might for Jesus! If another had but your gifts of utterance he would be spending in prayer and teaching what you now spend in fun and frolic to make amusement for fools.

Oh, if another had that time to live in, he would live in earnest for his Master. If that young saint, just going through the flood, had your health and vigor, how would he spend and be spent! I recollect a minister of Christ who had but one talent, but much heart. I remember hearing him pray this prayer—"O God, I wish I had ten talents, that I might serve You better." When I think of some that have them and do not serve my Master with them, I am inclined to pray, "Lord take away their ten talents and

trust me with them if You will, for I do desire to have something more to lay out for You.”

Take heed, O my dear, but sinful Hearer, lest the Lord remove you suddenly and fill up your place with one who will be obedient to His will. Moreover and to make bad worse even to the worst degree—all this while ungodly men are spreading an evil influence. Thinking over the two lines of the verse we have been singing, I felt a horror of great darkness as I realized fully their solemn truthfulness with regard to some of you—

***“I have shed His precious blood,
Trampled on the Son of God.
Filled with pains unspeakable
I who yet am not in Hell.”***

Well may the question arise—“Why to me this waste of love?” It is so apparently a waste of long-suffering and mercy that some transgressors should be spared at all, that they may well marvel. Look at it, and I think you will see it very clearly—the very fact that God does not punish sin on the spot is mischievously interpreted. Men in all ages have drawn a wicked inference from the patience of the great Judge. The Preacher, in Ecclesiastes, says, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” “Why,” you say, “So-and-So drinks and swears and he has lived to be a hale, hearty old man. He has plunged into all sorts of folly and wickedness. He was a thief and everything bad besides, and yet he prospers in the world and grows rich. Instead of God sinking him down at once to Hell, He has favored him and fattened him as a bullock in rich pasture. “Oh,” the worldling says, “there is no justice in God. He does not punish sin.”

The very fact that you are spared, O Sinner, is doing mischief in the world. Do you see that? Your mere existence in this world is to others an inducement to continue in sin! While you are spared, others look at you and say, “God has not punished *him*.” Therefore they infer that He will not punish sin at all. Moreover, how many there are of you whose example is fearfully contagious—whose lips and lives combine to lead your associates astray from God? In this dreadful disease which has ravaged our fields and destroyed the cattle, farmers have been advised as soon as ever the cow is attacked with the disease, to kill it on the spot and bury it five feet deep out of the way.

Let us reflect that the murrain of sin is much more pestilential and more certain to kill than this murrain among the cattle and therefore stern Justice cries, “Let the sinner be at once sent where He cannot increase the plague of iniquity—it is of no use sparing him—he grows no better. All the means used only make him worse and meanwhile we must look to the welfare of others, lest he perish not alone in his iniquity. He teaches his children to swear! He makes others worldly! The whole current of his life is to incite men to rebel against God—let his desperate course be stopped at once. The leprosy is upon him and all that he touches he pollutes—for high sanitary reasons, therefore, he must be removed.”

It is better that one die than that many should be smitten and therefore the highest consideration for the good of mankind in general renders it necessary that the mandate should go forth, “Cut it down.”

II. The second most solemn work is to remind you, O impenitent Sinner, that FOR GOD TO HAVE SPARED YOU SO LONG IS A VERY WONDERFUL THING. That the infinitely just and holy God should have spared you, unconverted man, unconverted woman, up till now, is no small timing but a matter for adoring wonder. Let me show you this. Consider, negatively, God is not sparing you because He is insensible towards your sins—He is angry with the wicked every day. If the Lord could be indifferent towards sin and could bring His holy mind to treat it as a mere trifle, then it would be no wonder that He should let the transgressor live.

But He cannot endure iniquity—all the day long His anger smokes and burns towards evil and yet He holds back the thunderbolt and does not smite the guilty. If you had been angry for half-an-hour, you would have come to hard words or blows. But here is the Judge of all the earth angry every day for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or eighty years with some of you and yet He has not destroyed you! It is not because the offense is at a distance and therefore far from His observant eyes. No—your sins are like smoke in His nose—your iniquities provoke Him to His face! You touch the apple of His eye and yet, for all that, though this accursed thing called sin intrudes into His Presence every instant, yet still He has spared you until now!

Mark, Sinner, He has spared you not because He was unable to have destroyed you. He might have bid the tiles fall from the roof, or the fever might have killed you in the street. The air might have refused to heave your lungs, or the blood might have ceased its circulation in your veins. The gates to death are many. The quiver of Judgment is full of sharp arrows. The Lord has but to will it and your soul is required of you. He said to the foolish rich man, “This night your soul shall be required of you,” and he never saw the morning. And He might as easily have sent the same sad message to you, and what then?

As I have said before, this great patience is not manifested towards your sinful soul because the Lord is at all dependent upon *you*—your living will not increase and your dying will not diminish His Glory! You will be no more missed than one sere leaf is missed in a forest, or one dew-drop in a thousand leagues of grass. Judgment needs but a word to work its utmost vengeance and you are so provoking that the marvel is that Divine severity has spared you so long! Admire and wonder at this long-suffering. Remember that this wonder is increased when you think of the fruit He deserved to have had of you. A God so good and so gracious ought to have been *loved* by you. He has treated you so well and given you such capacities for pleasure that He ought to have had *some* service of you.

You are not to God what the ox is to its owner—you give to the ox but his grass or his straw and you have done with him. But God gives to you not only your daily food, but your very *life*—you are wholly dependent upon Him! Nothing can be so much yours as you are God’s. You ought to have served Him, to have delighted in that service, to spend and to have been spent for your Lord! He asks no more of you than He ought to have had and yet He asks you to love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your strength—this was His first and great commandment—and this you have constantly, persistently broken.

Oh, think, then, when you have given to God such a bad return, when He ought to have received so much better—think, I pray you, how you must have provoked Him! And ah, my Hearers! I have to touch upon a very solemn part of the business now when I notice again that some, perhaps here present, have been guilty of very God-provoking sins. Some offenses provoke God much more than others—I believe that cursing does, for it is wanton insolence by which nothing can be gained. It is altogether a gratuitous piece of insult. To swear, to imprecate the curse of God upon one's limbs and souls, is an unnecessary, superfluous sin.

There cannot be any pleasure in pronouncing oaths any more than in uttering any other form of words. It is just because man will hate his Maker and will provoke Him, that he does this. O Sinner, did you ever ask God to damn you and are you not astonished that He has not done it? Did you ever desire that the blast should come upon you and do you not marvel that He has not long ago swept you where His wrath would wither you forever? Swearing is a sin that provokes the Most High! O Sinner, abhor this most detestable of vices!

Infidelity, and how many are guilty of that? How provoking to God for a man to deny His very existence! Standing up and breathing God's air and living upon God's life and yet saying that there is no God? An insignificant worm dares challenge the Almighty to prove His Godhead and existence by a tremendous act of justice. This is a God-provoking sin. So again is persecution. There may be some here present who have persecuted wife and child because of their following Christ. "He that touches you touches the apple of My eye," says God. Beware, Sinner—you will not touch the Lord's eye long without feeling His heavy hand!

If any man injures your children, the blood is in your cheek at once! If you are a father you feel that you will show yourself strong in their defense—even so the heavenly Father will avenge His own elect. Therefore, take heed lest you persevere in this Heaven-provoking sin. And slander, too—lying against God's servants—inventing and spreading wicked tales against those who walk in God's fear. This is another evil which awakens the anger of God and stirs up righteous fury against the man who is guilty of it. Beware! Beware!

Filthiness, filthiness of body and of life, will also provoke the Most Holy One. This once brought Hell out of Heaven upon Sodom! God sent down fire and brimstone because of the lusts of the flesh that made Sodom to stink in His nostrils. The harlot and the adulterer and the fornicator shall know that they sin not without provoking God very terribly. And let me add here among these God-provoking sins there is that quenching of conscience of which some of you have been guilty. Ah, my dear Hearers, there are not many of you to whom I spoke under these first heads, for I know that very few of you would indulge in these grosser sins!

But there are some of you quite as bad in another sense, for you know the right and choose the wrong! You hear of Christ and do not give your hearts to Him. We had hoped of some of you that long before this we should have seen you walking in the Lord's fear. But you are still strangers to Christ. You must have had hard work to do this. You must have had a terrible tug with conscience, some of you! I know you have been sti-

fling many a holy desire and when the Spirit of God has been striving with you, you have been so desperately set on mischief that still you have gone on in the error of your ways.

Now these sins provoke God. I do not believe that I stand in this pulpit and plead with you in God's name and then go back and tell my Master that you have rejected His warnings without God's being angry with your hardness of heart and stiff necks. I know if we send an Ambassador to a foreign court to try and make peace and he honestly and earnestly lays down proper stipulations for peace, if they are rejected, you will soon find the newspapers and public opinion ringing with indignation. "Why," they say, "will not the men have peace when the terms are so reasonable? Get out the iron-dads, let them have war—war to the knife. If they will not yield to what is reasonable, thus let us dress ourselves in thunder and go forth across the sea."

And what do you think? Shall God be always provoked? Shall mercy be preached to you in vain forever? Shall Christ be presented and always rejected and will you continue to be His enemies and shall He never proclaim war against your souls? It is a marvel! It is a wonder that these God-provoking sins have so long been borne with, and that you are not yet cut down!

III. And now, WHAT IS THE REASON FOR ALL THIS LONG-SUFFERING? Why is it that this tree has not been cut down? The answer is because there is One who pleads for sinners. I have shown you, and some of you will think I have shown you with very great severity, too, how reasonable it is that you should be cut down. I wish you felt it, for if you felt how reasonable it was that God should send you to Hell, then you would begin to tremble and there would be some hope for you!

I can assure you I have trembled for you when I have thought how rational, how just—no, it would seem to me, how *necessary* it was that some of you should be lost—it has made me tremble for you, and I would to God you would tremble for yourselves! But what has been the secret cause that you have been kept alive? The answer is Jesus Christ has pleaded for you! The crucified Savior has interfered for you! And you ask me, "Why?" I answer, because Jesus Christ has an interest in you all. We do not believe in general redemption, but we believe in every word of this precious Bible—and there are many passages in the Scripture which seem to show that Christ's death had an universal bearing upon the sons of men.

We are told that He tasted death for every man. What does that mean? Does it mean that Jesus Christ died to *save* every man? I do not believe it does, for it seems to me that everything which Christ intended to accomplish by the act of His death He must accomplish or else He will be defeated, which is not supposable. Those whom Christ died to save I believe He will save effectually, through His substitutionary sacrifice. But did He in any other sense die for the rest of mankind?

He did. Nothing can be much more plain in Scripture, it seems to me, than that all sinners are spared as the result of Jesus Christ's death. And this is the sense in which men are said to trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. We read of some who denied the Lord that bought them. No one who is bought with blood for eternal salvation ever tramples on that

blood—but Jesus Christ has shed His blood for the reprieve of men that they may be spared—and those who turn God’s sparing mercy into an occasion for fresh sin do trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. You can hold that doctrine without holding universal redemption, or without at all contradicting that undoubted Truth of God that Jesus laid down His life for His sheep and that where He suffered He suffered not in vain.

Now, Sinner, whether you know it or not, you are indebted to Him that did hang upon the tree for the breath that is now in you. You had not been on praying ground and pleading terms with God this morning if it had not been for that dear suffering One. Our text represents the gardener as only asking to have it spared—but Jesus Christ did something more than ask—He pleaded, not with His mouth only, but with pierced hands and pierced feet, and pierced side. And those prevailing pleas have moved the heart of God, and you are yet spared. May I speak to you, then? If your life had been spared, when you were condemned to die, by *my* intervention—suppose such a case—would you despise me?

If I had power at the Court and when you were condemned to die, had gone in and pleaded for you and you had been reprieved—year after year would you *hate* me? Would you speak against me? Would you rail at my character? Would you find fault with my friends? I know you better—you would *love* me! You would be grateful for the sparing of your life. O Sinner, I would you would treat the Lord Jesus as you would treat man! I would you would think of the Lord Jesus Christ as you would think of your fellow man who had delivered you from death!

You are not in Hell where you would have been if He had not come in and pleaded for you. I do beseech you, think of the misery of lost souls and recollect that you would have been in such a woeful case yourself this morning if He had not lifted up that hand once pierced for human sin. There, there, where the flames can no abatement know, where a drop of water is a gift too great to be received—there, where hope is excluded and despair sits upon a throne of iron, binding captive souls in everlasting bands—where “Forever!” is written on the fire and “Forever!” is printed on the chain and “Forever! Forever! Forever!” rings out as the awful death-knell of everything like hope and rest—there you would have been this morning—this morning—if sparing Grace had not prevented!

Where are your companions, your old companions? You sat in the pot-house with them. They are in Hell, but you are not. When you were younger you sinned with them and they are lost, but you are not. Why this difference? Why are they cast away and you spared? I can only ascribe it to the gracious long-suffering of Jehovah. O, I pray you look at Him who spared you and weep and mourn for your sins! May the Spirit of God come down on you this morning and draw you to the foot of His dear Cross! And as you see the blood which has spared your blood and the death which has made you live until now, I do trust that the Divine Spirit may make you fall down and say, “O Jesus, how can I offend You? How can I stand out against You? Accept me and save me for Your mercy’s sake.”

While I have thus spoken of the *general* interest which Christ has in you all, I have good hope that Christ has a *special* interest in some of you!

I hope that He has specially redeemed you from among men and bought you not with silver and gold, but with His own precious blood, having loved you with an everlasting love. I trust He intends with the bands of His kindness to draw you this morning. “Oh,” says one, “I cannot think that such can be the case!” But suppose you were to find out before long that you were chosen of God and dear to Christ and were to be a jewel in His crown forever—what would you say, then, of yourself?

“I would mourn that I could ever have hated Him that loved me so well! Oh, that I could ever have stood out against Him that was determined to save me! What a fool I was to quarrel with Him who had paid my price and chosen me by His Grace and taken me to be married unto Himself forever!”

I tell you that God will forgive you, but you will never forgive yourselves for having stood out and resisted so long. Oh, may eternal Mercy, which has not yet said, “Cut it down,” now dig about you and feed you that you may bring forth fruit—and then it shall be all to the praise of Him whose precious blood has saved us from eternal wrath. May God bless these feeble words of mine. He knows how I meant them—how I meant to speak them, how I meant to have wept over you, how I wanted that my soul should heave with passionate desire for your conversion—but if there have been no such outward manifestations, yet I pray God that the Truth itself may be irresistible and may He get to Himself the victory and His shall be the praise, forevermore. Amen.

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

THE LIFTING UP OF THE BOWED DOWN

NO. 1426

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 14, 1878,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.”
Luke 13:10-13.

I BELIEVE that the infirmity of this woman was not only physical but spiritual. Her outward appearance was the index of her deep and long-continued depression of mind. She was bent double as to her body and she was bowed down by sadness as to her mind. There is always a sympathy between body and soul, but it is not always so plainly seen as in her case. Many sad sights would meet us on all hands if it were so. Imagine for a moment what would be the result upon the present congregation if our outward forms were to set forth our inward states. If someone having an eye like that of the Savior could gaze upon us, now, and could see the inward in the outward, what would be the appearance of this crowd?

Very deplorable sights would be seen, for in many a pew dead persons would be sitting, looking forth from the glassy eyes of death, bearing the semblance of life and a name to live, but all the while being dead as to spiritual things! My Friend, you would shudder as you found yourself placed next to a corpse! Alas, the corpse would not shudder, but would remain as insensible as ungodly persons usually are, though the precious Truth of the Gospel rings in their ears—ears which hear but hear in vain. A large number of souls will be found in all congregations, “dead in trespasses and sins,” and yet sitting as God’s people sit and not to be discerned from the living in Zion!

Even in those cases in which there *is* spiritual life, the aspect would not be altogether lovely. Here we should see a man blind and there, another maimed, and a third twisted from perfect uprightness. Spiritual deformity assumes many forms and each form is painful to look upon. A paralyzed man with a trembling faith, set forth by a trembling body, would be an uncomfortable neighbor. A person subject to fits of passion or despair would be equally undesirable if his body also suffered from fits. How sad it would be to have around us persons with a fever upon them, or shivering with malaria, hot and cold by turns, burning almost to fanaticism at one moment and then chilled as with a northern wind with utter indifference.

I will not try to sketch in further detail the crippled, lame, blind and impotent folks who are assembled in this Bethesda. Surely if the flesh were shaped according to the spirit, this Tabernacle would be turned into

an hospital and each man would flee from his fellow and wish to run from himself! If to any one of us our inward ailments were to be set forth upon our brow, I guarantee you we should not linger long at the mirror, nor scarcely dare to think upon the wretched objects which our eyes would behold there. Let us quit the imaginary scene with this consoling thought—Jesus is among us, notwithstanding that we are sick! And although He sees nothing to delight His eyes if He judges us according to the Law, yet, since His mercy delights to relieve human misery, there is abundant scope for Him here in the midst of these thousands of ailing souls!

In that synagogue on the Sabbath, this poor woman described in the text must have been one of the least observed. Her particular disease would render her very short in stature. She was dwarfed to almost half her original height and, in consequence, like other very short persons, she would be almost lost in a standing crowd. A person so bent down as she was might have come in and gone out and not have been noticed by anyone standing upon the floor of the meeting place. But I can imagine that our Lord occupied a somewhat elevated position, as He was *teaching* in the synagogue, for He had probably gone to one of the higher places for the greater convenience of being seen and heard. And for this reason He could more readily see her than others could.

Jesus always occupies a place from which He can spy out those who are bowed down. His quick eyes did not miss its mark. She, poor soul, was naturally the least observed of all the people in the company, yet she was the most observed, for our Lord's gracious eyes glanced over all the rest and lighted upon her with fixed regard. There His tender look remained till He had worked the deed of love. Perhaps there is someone in the crowd, this morning, the least observed of anybody, who is yet noticed by the Savior! Remember, He sees not as man sees, but observes most those whom man passes over as beneath his regard. Nobody knows you, nobody cares for you. Your peculiar trouble is quite unknown and you would not reveal it for the world. You feel quite alone! There is no solitude like that which is to be found in a dense throng and you are in that solitude now.

Be not, however, quite despairing, for you have a Friend left. The preacher's heart is going after you, but that will little help you—there is far more joy in the fact that as our Master observed most, the least observed one on that Sabbath in the synagogue, so we trust He will do, this day, and His eyes shall light on you, even *you!* He will not pass you by, but will deal out a special Sabbath blessing to your weary heart. Though by yourself accounted to be among the last, you shall now be put upon the first by the Lord's working a notable miracle of love upon you! In the hope that this may be so, we will proceed, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to look into the gracious deed which was done to this poor woman.

I. Our first subject for consideration is THE BOWING DOWN OF THE AFFLICTED. We read of this woman, "she had a spirit of infirmity and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up." Upon which we remark, first, that she had lost all her natural brightness. I can imagine that when she was a girl she was light of foot as a young roe, that her face was

dimpled with many a smile and that her eyes flashed with childish glee. She had her share of the brightness and beauty of youth and walked erect like others of her race, looking up to the sun by day and to the sparkling stars at night, rejoicing in all around her and feeling life to be a joy.

But there gradually crept over her an infirmity which dragged her down, probably a weakness of the spine—either the muscles and ligatures began to tighten so that she was bound together and drawn more and more towards herself and towards the earth—or else the muscles commenced to relax, so that she could not retain the perpendicular position and her body dropped forward more and more. I suppose either of these causes might cause her to be bowed together, so that she could in nowise lift herself up. At any rate, for 18 years she had not gazed upon the sun! For 18 years no star of night had gladdened her eyes! Her face was drawn downward towards the dust and all the light of her life was dim. She walked about as if she were searching for a grave and I do not doubt she often felt that it would have been gladness to have found one! She was as truly fettered as if bound in iron and as much in prison as if surrounded by stone walls.

Alas, we know certain of the children of God who are at this moment in much the same condition! They are perpetually bowed down and though they remember happier days, the memory only serves to deepen their present gloom. They sometimes sing in the minor key—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the sweet refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?
What blissful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.”***

They seldom enter into communion with God—seldom or never behold the face of the Well-Beloved. They try to hold on by believing and they succeed. But they have little peace, little comfort, little joy—they have lost the crown and flower of spiritual life, though that life still remains.

I feel certain that I am addressing more than two or three who are in such a plight at this moment and I pray the Comforter to bless my discourse to them. This poor woman was bowed towards herself and towards that which was depressing. She seemed to grow downwards—her *life* was stooping! She bent lower and lower and lower, as the weight of years pressed upon her. Her looks were all earthward—nothing heavenly, nothing bright could come before her eyes—her views were narrowed to the dust and to the grave. So are there some of God’s people whose thoughts sink always like lead and their feelings run in a deep groove, always cutting a lower channel. You cannot give them delight, but you can readily cause them alarm! By a strange art they squeeze the juice of sorrow from the clusters of Eshcol. Where others would leap for joy, they stoop for very grief, for they draw the unhappy inference that joyous things are not meant for the likes of them.

Cordials expressly prepared for mourners, they dare not accept and the more comforting they are, the more are they afraid to appropriate them. If

there is a dark passage in the Word of God, they are sure to read it and say, "That applies to me." If there is a thundering portion in a sermon, they remember every syllable of it and although they wonder how the preacher knows them so well, yet they are sure that he aimed every word at them! If anything occurs in Providence, either adverse or propitious, instead of reading it as a token for good, whether they might rationally do so or not, they manage to translate it into a sign of evil. "All these things are against me," they say, for they can see nothing but the earth and can imagine nothing but fear and distress.

We have known certain prudent, but somewhat unfeeling persons *blame* these people and chide them for being low spirited. And that brings us to notice, next, that she could not lift herself up. There was no use in blaming *her*. There may have been a time, perhaps, when her older sisters said, "Sister, you should keep yourself more upright! You should not be so round shouldered. You are getting quite out of figure—you must be careful or you will become deformed." Dear me, what good advice some people can give! Advice is usually given free and this is very proper since in most cases that is its full value! Advice given to persons who become depressed in spirit is usually unwise and causes pain and aggravation of spirit. I sometimes wish that those who are so ready with their advice had themselves suffered a little, for then, perhaps, they would have the wisdom to hold their tongues. Of what use is it to advise a blind person to see, or to tell one who cannot lift herself up that she ought to be upright and should not look so much upon the earth? This is a needless increase of misery! Some persons who pretend to be comforters might more fitly be classed with tormentors.

A *spiritual* infirmity is as real as a physical one. When Satan binds a soul it is as truly bound as when a man binds an ox or an ass. It cannot get free. It is of necessity in bondage and that was the condition of this poor woman. I may be speaking to some who have bravely attempted to rally their spirits—they have tried change of scenery, they have gone into godly company, they have asked Christian people to comfort them—they have frequented the House of God and read consoling books. But they are still bound and there is no disputing it. As one that pours vinegar upon niter, so is he that sings songs to a sad heart—there is an incongruity about the choicest joys when forced upon broken spirits.

Some distressed souls are so sick that they abhor all manner of meat and draw near unto the gates of death. Yet, if any one of my hearers is in this plight, he need not despair, for Jesus can lift up those who are most bowed down! The worst point, perhaps, about the poor woman's case was that she had borne her trouble for 18 years and, therefore, her disease was chronic and her illness confirmed. Eighteen years! It is a long, long time! Eighteen years of happiness!—the years fly like Mercuries with wings on their heels—they come and they are gone! Eighteen years of happy life—how short a span!

But eighteen years of pain! Eighteen years of being bowed down to the earth. Eighteen years in which the body approximated rather to the fashion of a brute than to that of a man—what a period this must be! Eighteen long years—each with 12 dreary months dragging like a chain behind it!

She had been 18 years under the bond of the devil—what a woe was this! Can a child of God be 18 years in despondency? I am bound to answer, “yes!” There is one instance, that of Mr. Timothy Rogers, who has written a book upon Religious Melancholy, a very wonderful book, too, who was, I think, 28 years in despondency. He tells the story himself and there can be no question as to his accuracy. Similar instances are well known to those familiar with religious biographies. Individuals have been locked up for many years in the gloomy den of despair and yet, after all, have been singularly brought out into joy and comfort.

Eighteen years’ despondency must be a frightful affliction and yet there is an escape out of it, for though the devil may take 18 years to forge a chain, it does not take our blessed Lord 18 minutes to break it! He can soon set the captive free! Build, build your dungeons, O Fiend of Hell, and lay the foundations deep and place the courses of granite so fast together that none can stir a stone of your fabric—but when HE comes, your Master who will destroy all your works—HE does but speak and like the unsubstantial fabric of a vision, your Bastille vanishes into thin air! Eighteen years of melancholy do not prove that Jesus cannot set the captive free—they only offer Him an opportunity for displaying His gracious power!

Note further about this poor woman, that bowed down as she was, both in mind and body, she yet frequented the House of Prayer. Our Lord was in the synagogue and there was she! She might very well have said, “It is very painful for me to go into a public place. I ought to be excused.” But no, there she was! Dear child of God, the devil has sometimes suggested to you that it is vain for you to go anymore to hear the Word of God. Go just the same! He knows you are likely to escape from his hands so long as you hear the Word and, therefore, if he can keep you away, he will do so. It was while in the House of Prayer that this woman found her liberty! And there *you* may find it! Therefore continue to go up to the House of the Lord, come what may.

All this while, too, she was a daughter of Abraham. The devil had tied her up like an ox or an ass, but he could not take away her privileged character. She was still a daughter of Abraham, still a believing soul trusting in God by humble faith. When the Savior healed her, He did not say, “Your sins are forgiven you.” There was no particular sin in the case. He did not address her as He did those whose infirmity had been caused by sin, for, notwithstanding her being thus bowed down, all she needed was *comfort*, not rebuke. Her heart was right with God. I know it was, for the moment she was healed she began to glorify God, which showed that she was ready for it and that the praise was waiting in her spirit for the glad opportunity!

In going up to the House of God, she felt some measure of comfort, though for 18 years she was bowed down. Where else could she have gone? What good could she have gained by staying at home? A sick child is best in its father’s house and she was best where prayer was known to be made. Here, then, is a picture of what may still be seen among the sons of men and may possibly be your case, dear Hearer. May the Holy Spirit bless this description to your hearts’ encouragement.

II. I invite you, secondly, to notice THE HAND OF SATAN IN THIS BONDAGE. We should not have known it if our Lord had not told us, that it was Satan who had bound this poor woman for 18 years! He must have bound her very cunningly to make the knot hold all that time, for he does not appear to have *possessed* her. You notice, in reading the Evangelists, that our Lord never laid His hand on a person possessed with a devil! Satan had not possessed her, but he had fallen upon her once upon a time 18 years before and bound her up as men tie a beast in its stable. And she had not been able to get free all that while. The devil can tie, in a moment, a knot which you and I cannot unloose in 18 years!

He had, in this case, so securely fastened his victim that no power of herself or others could help—in the same way, when permitted, he can tie up any one of God's own people in a very short time and by almost any means. Perhaps one word from a preacher, which was never meant to cause sadness, may make a heart wretched. One single sentence out of a good book, or one misunderstood passage of Scripture may be quite enough, in Satan's cunning hand, to fasten up a child of God in a long bondage. Satan had bound the woman to herself and to the earth.

There is a cruel way of tying a beast which is somewhat after the same fashion—I have seen a poor animal's head fastened to its knee or foot—and somewhat after that fashion Satan had bound the woman downward to herself. So there are some children of God whose thoughts are all about themselves—they have turned their eyes so that they look inside and see only the transactions of the little world within themselves. They are always lamenting their own infirmities, always mourning their own corruptions, always watching their own emotions. The one and only subject of their thoughts is their own condition! If they ever change the scene and turn to another subject, it is only to gaze upon the earth beneath them, to groan over this poor world with its sorrows, its miseries, its sins and its disappointments. Thus they are tied to themselves and to the earth and cannot look up to Christ as they should, nor let the sunlight of His love shine fully upon them.

They go mourning without the sun, pressed down with cares and burdens. Our Lord uses the figure of an ox or an ass tied up and He says that even on the Sabbath its owner could loose it for watering. This poor woman was restrained from what her soul needed. She was like an ass or an ox which cannot get to the trough to drink. She knew the promises, she heard them read every Sabbath. She went to the synagogue and heard of Him who comes to loose the captives, but she could not rejoice in the promise or enter into liberty. So are there multitudes of God's dear people who are fastened to themselves and cannot get to watering, cannot drink from the River of Life, nor find consolation in the Scriptures. They know how precious the Gospel is and how consolatory are the blessings of the Covenant, but they cannot enjoy the consolations or the blessings. Oh that they could! They sigh and cry, but they feel themselves to be bound.

There is a saving clause here. Satan had done a good deal to the poor woman, but he had done all he could do. You may rest assured that whenever Satan smites a child of God, he never spares his strength. He knows nothing of mercy, neither does any other consideration restrain

him. When the Lord delivered Job into Satan's hand for a time, what destruction and havoc he made with Job's property! He did not save him chick or *child*, or sheep, or goat, or camel, or ox. He smote him right and left and caused ruin to Job's whole estate. When, under a second permit, he came to touch him in his bone and in his flesh, nothing would satisfy the devil but covering Job from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head with boils and blisters.

He might have pained him quite sufficiently by torturing one part of his body, but this would not suffice. He must glut himself with vengeance! The devil would do all he could and, therefore, he covered him with running sores. Yet, as in Job's case, there was a limit, so was there here—Satan had bound this woman, but he had not killed her. He might bend her towards the grave, but he could not bend her into it. He might make her droop over till she was bent double, but he could not take away her poor feeble life! With all his infernal craft, he could not make her die before her time! Moreover, she was still a woman and he could not make a beast of her, notwithstanding that she was thus bowed down into the form of a brute.

Even so the devil cannot destroy you, O child of God! He can smite you, but he cannot slay you. He worries those whom he cannot destroy and feels a malicious joy in doing so. He knows there is no hope of your destruction, for you are beyond shot of his gun, but if he cannot wound you with the shot, he will frighten you with the powder if he can! If he cannot slay, he will bind, as if for the slaughter—yes, and he knows how to make a poor soul feel a thousand deaths in fearing one! But all this while, Satan was quite unable to touch this poor woman as to her true standing—she was a daughter of Abraham 18 years before, when the devil first attacked her and she was a daughter of Abraham 18 years afterwards, when the fiend had done his worst!

And you, dear heart, if you should never have a comfortable sense of the Lord's love for 18 years, are still His beloved! And if never once He should give you any token of His love which you could sensibly enjoy and, if by reason of bewilderment and distraction, you should keep on writing bitter things against yourself all this while, yet still your name is on the hands of Christ where none can erase it! You belong to Jesus and none shall pluck you out of His hands! The devil may bind you fast, but Christ has bound you faster, still, with cords of everlasting love which must and shall hold you to the end!

That poor woman was being prepared, even by the agency of the devil, to glorify God! Nobody in the synagogue could glorify God as she could when she was, at last, set free! Every year out of the 18 gave emphasis to the utterance of her thanksgiving! The deeper her sorrow the sweeter her song! I should like to have been there that morning, to have heard her tell the story of the emancipating power of the Christ of God! The devil must have felt that he had lost all his trouble and he must have regretted that he had not let her alone all the 18 years, since he had only been qualifying her, thereby, to tell out more sweetly the story of Jesus' wondrous power!

III. I want you to notice, in the third place, THE LIBERATOR AT HIS WORK. We have seen the woman bound by the devil, but here comes the Liberator! And the first thing we read of Him is that He saw her. His eyes looked round, reading every heart as He glanced from one to another. At last He saw the woman! Yes, that was the very one He was seeking! We are not to think that He saw her in the same common way as I see one of you, but He read every line of her character and history, every thought of her heart, every desire of her soul! Nobody had told Him that she had been bound 18 years, but He knew all about it—how she came to be bound, what she had suffered during the time, how she had prayed for healing and how the infirmity still pressed upon her.

In one minute He had read her history and understood her case. He saw her and oh, what meaning there was in His searching glance! Our Lord had wonderful eyes! All the painters in the world will never be able to produce a satisfactory picture of Christ because they cannot copy those expressive eyes! Heaven lay calmly reposing in His eyes—they were not only bright and penetrating, but they were full of a melting *power*—a tenderness irresistible, a strength which secured confidence. As He looked at the poor woman I doubt not the tears started from our Lord's eyes, but they were not tears of unmingled sorrow, for He knew that He could heal her and He anticipated the joy of doing so!

When He had gazed upon her, He called her to Him. Did He know her name? Oh, yes, He knows all our names and His calling is therefore personal and unmistakable. "I have called you by your name," says He, "you are Mine." Look, there is the poor creature coming up the aisle! That pitiful mass of sorrow, though bowed to the earth, is moving! Is it a woman? You can hardly see that she has a face, but she is coming towards Him who called her. She could not stand upright, but she could come as she was—bent and infirm as she was! I rejoice in my Master's way of healing people, for He comes to them where they are. He does not propose to them that if they will *do* something He will do the rest, but He begins and ends!

He bids them approach Him as they are and does not ask them to mend or prepare. May my blessed Master, this morning, look on some of you till you feel, "The preacher means me, the preacher's Master means me!" And then may there sound a voice in your ears saying, "Come to Jesus just as you are." Then may you have Grace to reply—

***"Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind,
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yes, all I need, in You to find,
O Lamb of God, I come."***

When the woman came, the great Liberator said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." How could that be true? She was still as bent as she was before! He meant that the spell of Satan was taken off from her, that the power which had made her thus to bow herself was broken. This she believed in her inmost soul, even as Jesus said it, though as yet she was not at all different in appearance from her former state.

Oh, that some of you who are God's dear people would have power to believe this morning that the end of your gloom has come—power to believe that your 18 years are over—and that you're time of doubt and de-

spondency is ended! I pray that God may give you Grace to know that when this morning's sun first gilded, the east light was ordained for you! Behold, I come today to publish the glad message from the Lord! Come forth, you prisoners! Leap you captives, for Jesus comes to set you free today! The woman was liberated, but she could not actually enjoy the liberty and I will tell you why directly. Our Lord proceeded to give her full enlargement in His own way—He laid His hands on her. She suffered from lack of strength and by putting His hands upon her, I conceive that the Lord poured His life into her.

The warm stream of His own infinite power and vitality came into contact with the lethargic stream of her painful existence and so quickened it that she lifted herself up! The deed of love was done—Jesus Himself had done it! Beloved mourners, if we could get you away, this morning, from thinking about *yourselves* to thinking about our *Lord Jesus*. If we could get you away from looking down upon your cares to thinking of Him—what a change would come over you! If His hands could be laid upon you, those dear pierced hands which bought you, those mighty hands which rule Heaven and earth on your behalf—those blessed hands which are outstretched to plead for sinners, those dear hands which will press you to His bosom forever—if you could feel these by thinking of Him, then would you soon recover your early joy and renew the elasticity of your spirit and the bowing down of your soul would pass away like a night dream, to be forgotten forever!

O Spirit of the Lord, make it so!

IV. I will not linger there, but invite you, now, to notice THE LOOSING OF THE BOUND. We are told she was made straight at once! Now, what I want you to notice is this—she must have lifted herself up—that was her own act and deed. No pressure or force was put upon her—she lifted herself up—and yet she was “made straight.” She was passive, in so much as a miracle was worked upon her, but she was active, too, and, being enabled, she lifted herself up. What a wonderful meeting there is here of the active and the passive in the salvation of men!

The Arminian says to the sinner, “Now, Sinner, you are a responsible being! You must do this and do that.” The Calvinist says, “Truly, Sinner, you are responsible enough, but you are also unable to do anything of yourself. God must work in you both *to will and to do*.” What shall we do with these two teachers? They fell to fighting a hundred years ago most frightfully! We will not let them fight now, but what shall we do with them? We will let both speak and believe what is true in both their testimonies. Is it true what the Arminian says, that there must be an *effort* on the sinner's part or he will never be saved? Unquestionably it is! As soon as the Lord *gives spiritual life* there is *spiritual activity*. Nobody is ever lugged into Heaven by his ears, or carried there asleep on a feather bed! God deals with us as with responsible, intelligent beings. That is true and what is the use of denying it?

Now, what has the Calvinist to say? He says that the sinner is bound by the infirmity of sin and cannot lift himself up and when he does so, it is God that does it all and the Lord must have all the glory of it. Is not that true, too? “Oh,” says the Arminian, “I never denied that the Lord is to

have the glory! I will sing a hymn with you to the Divine honor and I will pray the same prayer with you for the Divine power." All Christians are thorough Calvinists when they come to singing and praying! But it is a pity to doubt as a doctrine what we profess on our knees and in our songs! It is most true that Jesus, alone, saves the sinner and equally true that the sinner *believes* unto salvation. The Holy Spirit never believed on behalf of anybody—a man must believe for himself and repent for himself or be lost!

But yet there was never a grain of true faith or true repentance in this world unless it was produced by the Holy Spirit. I am not going to explain these difficulties, because they are not difficulties, except in *theory*. They are plain facts of practical everyday life. The poor woman knew, at any rate, where to put the crown. She did not say, "I straightened myself," no, but she glorified God and attributed all the work to His gracious power. The most remarkable fact is that she was made straight immediately, for there was something beyond her infirmity to be overcome. Suppose that any person had been diseased of the spine, or of the nerves and muscles for 18 years—even if the disease which occasioned his being deformed could be entirely removed, what would be the effect? Why, the result of the disease would still remain, for the body would have become set through long continuance in one posture!

You have doubtless heard of the fakirs and others in India—a man will hold his hand up for years in pursuance of a vow, but when the years of his penance are over, he cannot bring his hand down—it has become fixed and immovable. In this case the bond which held the poor bowed body was taken away and, at the same time, the consequent rigidity was removed and she, in a moment stood up straight! This was a double display of miraculous power! O my poor tried Friend, if the Lord will visit you this morning He will not only take away the first and greatest cause of your sadness, but the very tendency to melancholy shall depart! The long grooves which you have worn shall be smoothed! The ruts in the road of sorrow which you have worn by long continuance in sadness shall be filled up and you shall be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!

The cure being thus perfect, the woman rose up to glorify God! I wish I had been there! I have been wishing so all the morning. I would have liked to have seen that hypocritical ruler of the synagogue when he made his angry speech! I would have liked to have seen him when the Master so thoroughly silenced him! But especially I would have rejoiced to have seen this poor woman standing upright and to have heard her praise the Lord! What did she say? It is not recorded, but we can well imagine. It was something like this—"I have been 18 years in and out among you. You have seen me and know what a poor, miserable, wretched object I was! But God has lifted me up all in a moment. Blessed be His name, I have been made straight!"

What she spoke with her mouth was not half of what she expressed! No reporter could have taken it down! She spoke with her eyes, she spoke with her hands, she spoke with every limb of her body! I suppose she moved about to see if she was really straight and to make sure that it was

not all a delusion. She must have been, all over, a living mass of pleasure and by every movement she praised God from the sole of her feet to the crown of her head! Never was there a more eloquent woman in the universe! She was like one new-born, delivered from a long death, joyous with all the novelty of a fresh life! Well might she glorify God!

She made no mistake as to how the cure was worked—she traced it to a Divine power—and that Divine power she extolled. Brother, Sister, can you glorify Christ, this morning, that He has set *you* free? Though bound so long, you need not be bound any longer! Christ is able to deliver you! Trust Him, believe Him, be made straight and then go and tell your kinsfolk and acquaintances, “You knew how depressed I was, for you cheered me in my sorrow as best you could, but now I have to tell you what the Lord has done for my soul.”

V. Fifthly, let us reflect upon OUR REASON FOR EXPECTING THE LORD JESUS TO DO THE SAME THING TODAY as He did 1,800 years and more, ago. What was His reason for setting this woman free? According to His own statement it was, first of all, human kindness. He says, “When you have your ox, or your ass tied up and you see that it is thirsty, you untie the knot and lead the poor creature away down to the river, or the tank, to water. None of you would leave an ox tied up to famish.” This is good reasoning and leads us to believe that Jesus will help sorrowing ones!

Tried Soul, would you not loose an ox or an ass if you saw it suffering? “Yes,” you say. And do you think the Lord will not loose *you*? Have you more heart of mercy than the Christ of God? Come, come, think not so meanly of my Master! If your heart would lead you to pity an ass, do you think His heart will not lead Him to pity you? He has not forgotten you—He still remembers you. His tender humanity moves Him to set you free! More than that, there was a special relationship. He tells this master of the synagogue that a man would loose his ox or his ass. Perhaps he might not think it his business to go and loose that which belonged to another man, but if it is his own ass, his own ox—he will loose him.

And do you think, dear Heart, that the Lord Jesus will not loose you? He bought you with His blood! His Father gave you to Him! He has loved you with an everlasting love—will He not loose you? You are His property! Do you not know that He sweeps His house to find His lost coin? He runs over hill and dale to find His lost sheep? And will He not come and loose His poor tied-up ox or ass? Will He not liberate His captive daughter? Assuredly He will! Are you a daughter of Abraham, a child of faith, and will He not set you free? Depend upon it, He will!

Next, there was a point of antagonism which moved the Savior to act promptly. He says, “This woman being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound.” Now, if I knew the devil had tied anything up, I am sure I would try to unloose it, wouldn’t you? We may be sure some mischief is brewing when the devil is working and, therefore, it must be a good deed to undo his work. But Jesus Christ came into the world on purpose to destroy the works of the devil! And so when He saw the woman like a tied-up ox, He said, “I will unloose her if for nothing else than I may undo what the devil has done.” Now, dear tried Friend, inasmuch as your sorrow may

be traced to Satanic influence, Jesus Christ will prove, in your case, more than a match for the devil and He will set you free!

Then think of her sorrowful condition. An ox or an ass tied up to the manger without water would soon be in a very sad plight. Pity it, poor thing. Hear the lowing of the ox, as hour after hour its thirst gnaws upon it. Would you not pity it? And do you think the Lord does not pity His poor, tried, tempted, afflicted children? Those tears—shall they fall for nothing? Those sleepless nights—shall they be disregarded? That broken heart which gladly would, but cannot believe the promise, shall that forever be denied a hearing? Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up the heart of His mercy? Ah, no! He will remember your sorrowful estate and hear your groans for He puts your tears into His bottle!

Last of all, there was this reason to move the heart of Christ, that she had been 18 years in that state. “Then,” said He, “she shall be loosed at once.” The master of the synagogue would have said, “She has been bound 18 years and she may well wait till tomorrow, for it is only one day.” “No,” says Christ, “if she has been bound 18 years, she shall not wait a minute! She has had too much of it already. She shall be set free at once.” Do not, therefore, argue from the length of your despondency that it shall not come to an end, but rather argue from it that release is near! The night has been so long, it must be so much nearer the dawn! You have been scourged so long that it must be so much nearer the last stroke, for the Lord does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Therefore take heart and be of a good courage!

Oh, that my Divine Master would now come and do what I gladly would do but cannot, namely, make every child of God here leap for joy! I know what this being bound by Satan means. The devil has not tied me up for 18 years at a stretch and I do not think he ever will, but he has brought me into sad bondage many a time. Still, my Master comes and sets me free and leads me out to water—and what a drink I get at such times! I seem as if I could drink up the Jordan at a draught when I get to His promises and quaff my fill of His sweet love!

I know by this that He will lead other poor souls out to the water and when He does so to any of you, I pray you drink like an ox! You may be tied up again—therefore drink as much as you can of His Grace and rejoice while you may! Eat that which is good and let your soul delight in fatness. Be glad in the Lord, you righteous, and shout for joy all you that are upright in heart, for the Lord looses the prisoners. May He loose many now! Amen.

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A SABBATH MIRACLE

NO. 2891

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.”
Luke 13:10-13.

WHAT blessed days Sabbath days are! I mean not only the Jewish Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, but the Christian Sabbath on the first day of the week. I remember a friend in Newcastle telling me that when he was looking at a house in that city which was to be let, he was taken to the top of it and the agent said to him, “You see that there is a fine view from here. You can see a long way today, but on Sundays you can see Durham Cathedral.” My friend asked, “Why on Sundays?” And the reply was, “You cannot see it the rest of the week because of the smoke, but, on Sundays it is usually clear enough to get a glimpse of it.” What views some of us have had of Heaven and what views of Jesus Christ have been accorded to us on Sabbath days! We might have seen Him on other days if there had not been so much smoke from business, care and sin, but the blessed breath from Heaven has blown it all away on the Lord’s Day and we have been able to look even into that which is within the veil!

Our Lord Jesus Christ has performed wonders of Grace on all the days of the week. I would not be surprised to hear that there are Christians here who were converted on a Monday, or a Tuesday, or a Wednesday, or a Thursday, or a Friday, or a Saturday! But I should quite expect to learn that for every one of them, there are 10 here who were brought to Christ on the Sabbath! Heaven’s gates seem to be set more widely open on that day than during the rest of the week, or else we have more inclination to enter them then. When the full history of the Sabbath shall be unfolded, we shall begin to know what infinite mercy it was on God’s part to set aside one day in seven especially for His worship and for our spiritual benefit. Thousands upon thousands, yes, millions upon millions have found Jesus very near and rejoiced in Him on the Lord’s Day!

Our Savior was known to use the day for public worship and for the pursuance of His high and holy calling of blessing the children of men.

So, finding that on that day He could meet with many in the synagogue, He was accustomed to go there and teach. Among the people who came on the particular Sabbath of which our text speaks, there was one poor woman who was possessed by an evil spirit. And that evil spirit had, I suppose, so affected her nerves and so influenced her entire system that her spinal cord was greatly weakened. Evidently she had suffered from the worst kind of curvature of the spine, for she was bent double, "and could in no wise lift herself up." I am afraid that if any one of you had been in such a sad state as that, you would have said, "I shall never go to the synagogue anymore," and that your friends would have said, "We think you had better not go. You are such an object and you are so unwell, that you will be best at home. You can read a good book there and you can worship God just as acceptably in your own parlor as you can by going up to the public assembly of His people."

I am also afraid that there are some here who would have felt that they could be excused for a much lighter affliction than that poor woman suffered from, for I have known some who could not come out to the service if it happened to be wet—though they went to business on wet days. Many people imagine that Sunday is a convenient day for being ill and getting a little rest so as to be fortified for the more important business which requires all their energies Monday and during the rest of the week. It seems as though they thought that cheating God out of His day is a very small matter, but that robbing themselves of even a portion of a day would greatly grieve them.

If this poor woman had not gone to the synagogue, I do not know that she would ever have met with Christ. So I commend her example to you even if your bodily infirmities increase so much that you might make very justifiable excuses for being absent. There was a dear Sister, now in Heaven, who attended this Tabernacle for years though she was so deaf that she never heard a word that was spoken. The reasons she gave for being here were that, at any rate, she could join in the hymns and that had she stayed away, she would have felt as if she was dissociated from the people of God and other people, perhaps, might not have known the reason for her absence—and it might, therefore, have been a bad example to them. So she said, "Though I do not hear a word, I love to be there," and she has told me that some of the happiest hours she has ever spent have been those when she has thus had communion with the people of God, although she could not fully understand all that was being said or done. In like manner, dear Friends, as often as the people of God assemble for worship, join with them!

Notice one thing more about this woman. She did not get any good through going to the synagogue, as long as she merely went there. She went to the synagogue bent double and she came back bent double. If she went all those 18 years, as I daresay she did, she was unable to lift herself up all that long time! Do not, I pray you—you who are regular attendants at the House of God and yet remain unsaved—get into the notion that all you need is to attend Divine Service so many times on the Sabbath or on weeknights, for, if you do, you will not likely ever get a

blessing. This poor woman was not healed until she met with the Lord Jesus Christ! And I wish each one of you would come here saying, "Oh, that I might meet with Jesus today! Oh, that Jesus would meet with me!" It is a rule, with very few exceptions, that what a man fishes for he is most likely to catch. If any come here merely out of idle curiosity, it is possible, though not certain, that their curiosity will be satisfied. If any come to find fault, I have no doubt that they will find plenty to complain of. But if any of you have come determined to find Christ if He is to be found, it will be a very surprising thing if you have to go away without discovering Him! This is what you really need if you are to be restored from all the ills that sin has worked—you must come to Christ Himself.

I. Coming to the story of this poor woman who was bent double, the first thing to be noted is that CHRIST'S COMPASSION WAS EXCITED. Jesus, while He was teaching in the synagogue, looked into the faces of His congregation and as He looked at them, He saw this woman and His heart was at once moved with compassion towards her.

Note that it *was not her prayers that moved Him*, or any plea she urged, for she did not speak to Him, or plead with Him. This was one of the cases in which no request for healing was presented to the Savior. It was the sight of her misery that touched His heart. Perhaps, dear Friends, if she had not been bent double, Christ's notice might not have been so quickly drawn to her. But because she was what people call, "quite an object," and looked so sad, she attracted Christ's attention.

Notice, also, that Christ *was not moved to compassion by the prayers of anybody else for her*. Sometimes He healed the sick when their fathers, or mothers, or friends brought them to Him. But nobody brought this poor woman to Jesus. It does not seem as if anybody had sufficient compassion upon her to ask Jesus to heal her, or, if they had the compassion, they had not enough faith to believe that it was possible for her to be healed. There she was, a poor lone woman and, possibly, it was the sight of her with not a friend to help her, that touched Christ's heart and moved Him to fix His gaze upon her with a view to curing her sad complaint.

Notice, further, that *Christ's heart was not touched by any description which she gave Him of her condition*. She gave Him no description and none was needed. He looked at her—that was all that was required, for He already knew all about her. She did not say, "I have been bound by Satan for 18 years," but Christ knew that she had been. As He looked at her, He read her life story as a man reads a book. And as He read the story, His heart was moved with compassion towards her. I wonder whether there is a soul here that has not been asking the Lord for a blessing because that soul does not think it is likely that any blessing would come? I wonder whether there is anyone here who has not dared to hope and, therefore, has not dared to pray? My Master has a wonderful eye for such souls as these! There may have been in that synagogue a man wearing a gold ring, or a lady in a fine dress, but Christ did not notice them or their adornment. He picked out the person who was the most miserable, the most wretched and who most needed His pity—and

upon her He fixed those blessed eyes of His with a compassion tender as the heart of a woman! And His whole soul was moved with pity for her because she was so grievously bound by the accursed power of Satan.

Now let us look at this woman's case a little more closely. She "was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up." That, in itself, was a painful thing—all the beauty of the woman's form and figure had gone. And being bent double like that must have produced most serious injury to every organ of the poor creature's body. I have no doubt that she was the subject of a thousand aches and pains through the posture in which she had been bent. Besides, it is a beautiful thing to be able to look up—but to be always obliged to look down is something terrible! Through this trying affliction, the poor woman could not even see the Savior though, happily, He could see her, bent down as she was in the crowd. Instead of looking up with the face of a woman, she had to carry her head down towards the earth like a poor beast—and I would not wonder if the spirit of evil that was in her had made her feel unhappy, sorrowful and almost despairing. I am also inclined to think that her mind may have been, like her body, bent towards the earth and that this, too, was caused by Satanic influence.

Perhaps the worst point about her case was that she had been for 18 years in that sad condition. We do not know how it came about. She may, as a girl, have been able to run in the fields and spend her days right merrily but, all of a sudden, perhaps, there came upon her this evil spirit and she began to feel weakness of the spine and, by-and-by, she was bent double, the sun of her life was put out and her days were dark with sorrow and pain—and this had continued for 18 years! What a long time that is to be such a sufferer! Eighteen years of happiness may pass very quickly, but 18 years of pain is a very long period. This woman, for 18 years, could not lift up her head to look at the sun. For 18 years Satan had possessed her, bowed her body together and filled her mind with morbid thoughts, dreary dreams and terrible forebodings of dreadful things to happen in the future! Jesus knew all about those 18 years, so we do not wonder that He had compassion upon her.

Possibly in this congregation—no, I am quite sure I have some who, in soul, are like this poor woman was in body. You feel that you would gladly give all you have to be saved, but you have long ago given up all hope of that. You did, at one time, hear the Gospel with some degree of pleasure, but now, even while you listen to it, you keep on condemning yourself and saying, "Salvation will never come to me." You have fallen into a condition of chronic melancholy and you are so sad that friends who used to cheer you, gave you up in despair long ago. Perhaps they call you foolish, but God knows that it is not folly, but a most grievous calamity that has happened to you. You cannot see Jesus and you do not think that He can see you—but He does and that is your only ray of hope! If I were to attempt to comfort you, I know that I would fail. If you are the person of whom I am thinking, no language from merely human lips will ever comfort you—there will have to be a Divine Voice reaching your inmost soul or else you will never be loosed from your infirmity! We meet

with some such persons every now and then and we try to cheer them. It is right that we should do so. We pity them and we are quite sure that our Lord Jesus Christ pities them still more, for there is not one of us whose heart is one half as tender towards his fellow man as the heart of Christ, Himself, is and must be. So, you poor afflicted ones tossed with tempest and not comforted—you downtrodden, sin-burdened souls—Jesus picks you out of this throng, as He picked out that poor woman in the synagogue, that He may have mercy upon you as He had upon her!

II. Secondly, JESUS ISSUED A COMMAND—“He called her to Him.”

Somehow or other He managed to attract her attention and then, probably not without considerable difficulty and pain, she made a great effort and, at last, was able to see Him. And He said something to this effect, “Will that poor woman over yonder who is bent double, come here to Me?” Whatever words He may have used, we know that “He called her to Him.” Was not that command *a proof of great Grace and condescension on Christ’s part?* If He, the Messiah, who spoke as never man spoke, had called the ruler of the synagogue and spoken familiarly to him, one might not have wondered so much. Yet, out of all that throng He did not call anyone except that poor decrepit, bowed-down, Satan-possessed daughter of Abraham! And we are expressly told that, “He called her to Him.” He might have called to her from a distance and said, “Be healed,” but He did not, for He wished to show His special sympathy with such a sad case of suffering.

This call was not only given in great condescension, but it was also *given directly and personally to her*—“He called her to Him.” If Jesus had said, “I wish any person here who suffers from a spirit of infirmity to come to Me,” perhaps she might have come, perhaps she might not. But, instead of giving a general intimation like that, He fixed His eyes on her, and “called her to Him.” Do any of you remember a sermon—I do very well—in which the preacher seemed to speak to nobody but yourself? I am fully persuaded that if I had been like the prisoners in some of our jails—shut up in a box where I could not see anybody but the preacher—on the occasion when the Lord met with me, the preacher could not have addressed himself more pointedly to me than he then did! And on the occasion to which our text refers, Christ addressed Himself to this woman personally and pointedly. I am hoping that the description I have given of the woman will make someone here say, “Ah, that is just my case!” Well, if so, O poor bowed-down daughter, poor languishing, desponding man, Jesus calls you! If that description applies to you, take the personal call to yourself and say, “This condescending, pointed call is addressed to me.”

Then do as this poor woman did—make it *a call which was promptly obeyed*. I daresay that the other people in the synagogue were very surprised that Christ called *her*, yet they made way for her and, strange object as she was—perhaps, every step painful to her—she managed to get where Christ was. As she was coming towards Him, she heard Him make this extraordinary statement, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” And when she got close to Him, He laid both His hands on her, “and

immediately she was made straight.” How startled she must have been—even at Christ’s first call—and little did she dream that He was going to cure her in such a fashion! And perhaps there is someone here whom Christ means to save, yet you have not even been thinking of Him. Nevertheless, thus is it written in the counsels of eternity, “In the Tabernacle, on that summer Sunday night, such-and-such a soul must be delivered from the bondage of Satan.” If it is so written, all the devils in Hell cannot hold you captive beyond the appointed moment! And all the weight of your sins and the evil habits that you have formed and so long practiced shall burn like so much straw in a blazing fire, for God’s eternal decree of Mercy must be fulfilled! And He who comes to deliver you is none other than Christ, the Son of God, “mighty to save,” before whom gates of brass are broken and bars of iron are snapped in sunder!

It was a glorious Sabbath for that poor woman when the Lord came forth, determined to heal her! And this will be a glorious Sabbath for you if the Lord now resolves to save you! He is even now calling you doubters, you desponding ones, you who have given up all hope! He is calling *you*, will you not come to Him? Will you not trust Him? He asks you to believe, not that *you* are good, but that He is good—not that you can be healed by your neighbor, but that you can be healed by your Savior! He asks you to come and listen to His gracious words while He says, “Your sins are forgiven you; go in peace.” “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.”

III. We have so far noticed two things—Christ’s compassion excited and His command issued. Next, CHRIST’S POWER WAS MANIFESTED—and that was done in a very instructive way.

Jesus said to her, “*Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.*” It is the Word of the Lord that has power in it. Whenever people are converted and brought to Christ, it is by God’s Word that the deed is done. Fine sermons never win souls—you may blaze away, young man, at a terrific rate with your brilliant oratory and your fine pieces of poetry and quotations from eminent authors! And your sermon ending may be like the set piece at a display of fireworks, or the final burst of brightness with which it all ends—but all that will not save souls! What does save souls, then? Why, the Word of the Lord, the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! I have noticed that the very words of Scripture are usually those that reach the heart, so, Brothers and Sisters, if you really want to find the Lord, give good heed to His Word! Incline your ears and come to Him—hear, and your soul shall live, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of the Lord.”

In addition to speaking to the woman, *Christ laid His hands on her* and that is the way that healing reaches sin-sick souls, by being brought into contact with Christ! When the pure Humanity of Christ is recognized by us and we perceive that He is our Brother and our Friend—when we see that He bears both our sins and our sorrows and carries our sicknesses in His own blessed Person—when we realize that Christ has become our

Representative and Surety—a sense of peace comes to our soul! One reason why Jesus is so well qualified to save us is that—

***“He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same”—***

and He is, therefore, able to aid those who are tempted. Bowed-down woman, He puts His pierced hands upon you! Sorely troubled man, know you not that God has taken your nature upon Himself and now says to you, “Be you comforted, for I have loved you and lived for you and died for you”? God grant that you may feel that healing touch and experience that Divine Deliverance this very hour!

That afflicted woman was healed immediately. One of the most wonderful things about Christ’s cures was that, as a general rule, they were worked in an instant. Can you imagine—I have often tried to do so—the strange sensations that passed through some of those people when they were healed in a moment? Think of this poor woman—18 years bent double and then completely restored in a single instant! What a paradise must have been condensed into those few minutes! At first I suppose she may have thought that she was only dreaming. What? Was she able to stand upright and to look into the face of Him who had worked such a wonderful cure for her? The rapture must have seemed almost too much for her when she realized that she was healed in an instant! And what if, just now, you should be *saved* in an instant? Remember that to pardon sin does not take God a single second—to save a soul from death and Hell is a more rapid work than for the lightning bolt to fall from Heaven! At one moment a great load of sin may be upon you and you may be fully conscious of the terrible burden—the next instant every sin is gone and you are conscious that it is so—and ready to leap for joy! Nobody can work this mighty miracle of mercy but the Lord Jesus Christ, yet He can do it more swiftly than I can speak of it. Oh, that some who have been bound by Satan for 18 years, or even longer, may prove that they do not need 18 minutes, or even 18 seconds to get free—but may they now look to Jesus and, believing in Him, find instantaneous healing!

Once more, *this woman’s cure was perfect* as well as instantaneous. She did not lift herself up a little and find that the Satanic bondage was being somewhat relaxed. No, she was perfectly healed and, better still, she was *permanently* healed! Her malady did not come back. We have known doctors set a man up for a little time and, after that, there has been a relapse. But this woman was both made straight and kept straight—and if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the salvation which He gives us, though it is instantaneous, is also perfect and everlasting, for whoever trusts in Christ is saved immediately and saved forever! The gifts and calling of God are not matters for repentance on His part—He does not give salvation and then take it back, but, having once given it, it remains the property of its possessor world without end! Then what a precious Christ He is and what a glorious Healer! I hope some sick one here is saying, “I wish He would look this way, oh, that Jesus would look on me!” He is looking upon you, Soul! Hear what He says to you, “Come unto Me. Trust in Me.” If you trust Jesus now, though you have been

bent double these eighteen, these twenty-eight, these thirty-eight, these forty-eight, these fifty-eight, these sixty-eight—these 98 years, or these 118 years, if such a person could be, if you did but look to Him, come to Him, trust Him—in a moment He would make you whole! Oh, that you may do so!

IV. The last thing of all is this—CHRIST'S POWER WAS GLORIFIED.

It is said of this woman that, immediately, being made straight, she “glorified God.” I should think she did! I should not mind having interruptions in our service from people who had found Christ. Our Methodist friends in the olden times, when they found peace, used to shout, “Hallelujah!” Well, if they really had found Christ, I think they were warranted in shouting. If ever a man might cry, “Eureka! Eureka!” it was not the old philosopher, but the new-born child of God! Oh, what bliss it is to find the Savior! If one were, for a little while, delirious with the excessive joy of being saved by Grace, it might be excusable. It is said that some of our young converts are wonderfully enthusiastic. Yes, and well they may be! If you had received such a blessing as they have, you would be enthusiastic, too! If you have ever known the weight of sin crushing you to the dust and then have had it suddenly borne away, you must have felt a mighty rebound when that great load had been removed. Could that healed woman help clapping her hands? Did she not stand up before the whole congregation in the synagogue and say, “That Man must be the Son of God, blessed be His holy name! After 18 years of bondage, He has healed me in a moment!”

Or suppose that she was of the very quiet sort—like the most of you good Sisters—if she did not say a word, yet I think she glorified God by simply standing up straight. If she did not say anything, but just walked away home, all who had known her in her long time of affliction, when they saw her stand up, a fine tall handsome woman—and knew that she must be the same person—must have been struck with wonder and have said, “What new power is this? Who but God could thus have restored this woman?” I would like, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that you and I would so live that our very lives would preach for Jesus Christ—that people would only have to listen to our ordinary conversation, or to see the cheerfulness of our countenance, or to perceive the hopefulness of our spirit under trouble, our justness and integrity, our readiness to forgive, our zeal for God! It is good to preach with your tongue if God has called you to do so. But never forget that the best preaching in the world is done by other members of the body. So, preach with your feet—by your walk and conversation! Let your whole being be a living, powerful, irresistible illustration of the power of Jesus Christ to bless and save!

It was so in the case of this woman, for I do not think that after she had clapped her hands once and stood up to testify before the whole congregation, that she was finished glorifying God. Oh, no! All her life she would be glad to tell that story over and over again! I wonder whether she got married after that wonderful healing? It is very likely that she did. And if so, and she had children of her own, as they sat on her knee one of the first stories she would tell them would be about when she was

bent double for 18 years and then that wonderful Prophet called her to Him in the synagogue, one Sabbath, and made her straight in a moment! Perhaps she lived long enough to tell the story of Christ's suffering and death. If she ever saw any of her grandchildren, I am sure they would say, "Come, Granny, tell us your story," and she would tell it so well that they would want to hear it again and again!

I think that every Christian should go home to his friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for them. There is a Brother—not far from me at this moment—who had been a wild young man, fond of all the sports of the country. He went to London and heard a sermon that was the means of his conversion. When he went home, one of his friends with whom he used to follow the hounds, said to him, "Well, Tom, what is the best thing you heard in London?" And Tom replied, "The best thing I heard in London is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Oh," said his companion, "you have gone mad!" "No," answered Tom, "I was mad before I went to London, but I have been cured." I hope you will be able to give such testimony as that concerning what Jesus Christ has done for your souls, even as this poor woman "was made straight, and glorified God."

Some people may say to you, "You had better hold your tongue, for you will break down if you try to tell such a story as that." That would be the very best thing you could do! There is nothing like a break-down when you are telling your story of redeeming Grace and dying love—it is the very glory of it when you break down with emotion and cannot say any more—for your hearers will be all the more anxious to know the rest of it! And there will be a deeper impression produced by your breaking down than there would have been if you had kept right on. But, anyway, do tell the story! Tell it as long as you have any breath in your body! Tell how "Jesus has done all things well" and saved your soul. Make Heaven and earth to ring with the glad news! And when you go Home to Glory, tell the angels all about it, for they will be glad to hear your story and they will break out into fresh praise as they listen to it! May God thus bless every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 9.

This Psalm has a dedication which is very difficult to understand—"To the chief Musician upon Muth-labben. A Psalm of David." Either "Muth-labben" is the tune to which the Psalm was to be sung, or some musical instrument that is now forgotten, or else it alludes to Ben, who was one of the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chronicles 15:18. In all probability, however, the true translation of the title is, "A Psalm on the death of the son," or, "on the death of the champion," and it is thought by some that it was composed by David after the death of giant Goliath. If it is so, I think you will see, as we read the Psalm, that it well proclaims the victory which God had worked.

Verse 1. *I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Your marvelous works.* It will be well if we also resolve that we will praise the Lord. Most people have something or someone to praise, so let us select the Lord, even Jehovah, as the Subject of our song. Let us resolve that we will praise Him continually, for it may be difficult, sometimes, to do it. The heart may be very heavy—it may even be inclined to rebellion and murmuring—but let us make this strong resolution in the power of God’s Grace—“I will show forth all Your marvelous works.” Here is room for great variety of praise and here are abundant topics for praise, for there is no work of God which is not marvelous and worthy of being praised with our whole heart! So, Lord, I will not be dumb. You have given me a tongue—I am not like the brute beasts that cannot speak—my tongue is the glory of my frame, so with it I will show forth all Your marvelous works.

2. *I will be glad and rejoice in You: I will sing praise to Your name, O You most High.* Get up, then, my Soul, out of the dark places of your despondency! Rise, my drooping spirit, to something higher and better. If you cannot be glad in anything else, be glad in your God—be glad that you have a God and such a God—and that He is still your God. Whatever else you may have lost, you have not lost Him. “I will be glad and rejoice.” The reduplication of the words indicates a double joy—a double gladness! As the Apostle says, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” Be glad twice over, for you have double cause for rejoicing in the Lord.

3. *When my enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at Your Presence.* As much as to say, “The Presence of God is quite enough to make my adversaries flee—yes, and to utterly cut them off.” As John Wesley said, “The best of all is God is with us.” And if God is with us, it matters little to us who are against us!

4. *For You have maintained my right and my cause; You sat in the throne judging right.* One of our noblemen has this for his motto, “I will maintain it.” But the Christian has a far better one—“You have maintained my right.” If David sang thus after he had hurled the stone from his sling into Goliath’s skull, he might well magnify the name of the Lord who had maintained the rights of His people and put the uncircumcised champion of the Philistines to confusion and death!

5, 6. *You have rebuked the heathen, You have destroyed the wicked, You have put out their name forever and ever. O you enemy.* You can conceive of David, standing on the prostrate form of his fallen foe, and looking on that gigantic countenance and those mighty limbs, crying out, “O you enemy”—

6, 7. *Destructions are finished forever! And you have destroyed cities, their memory is perished with them. But the Lord shall endure forever: He has prepared His Throne for judgment.* “You have destroyed cities,” but you could not destroy God. When you did defy the armies of other nations, you could easily put them to rout, but when you did defy the living God—then there was the end of you, for you could not overcome Him, nor overcome His people. Blessed be God for this—our faith is founded

upon a rock that never shall be removed—and our confidence is fixed upon One who can never fail us and whose Truth must stand fast forever!

8-10. *And He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know Your name will put their trust in You.* The basis of faith is knowledge and there is no knowledge like that which comes from experience. If you know the name of God as Jehovah—the Self-Existent and Ever-Living God—you will have good reason for trusting Him. And then, if you know His many precious names—such as Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord Our Righteousness, Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord My Banner, Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord Will Provide, Jehovah-Shalom, the Peace-Giving God and Jehovah-Shammah, the God Who Is There Where His People Are—yes, if any one name of God is fully understood by you, you will put your trust in Him!

10-12. *For You, LORD, have not forsaken them that seek You. Sing praises to the LORD who dwells in Zion: declare among the people His doings. When He makes inquisition for blood, He remembers them. When the great Coroner's Inquest shall be held upon all who have wrongly suffered, the commission will open by an enquiry concerning the blood of the martyrs—"When He makes inquisition for blood, He remembers them."* His suffering ones, who laid down their lives for the Truth of God's sake, shall find that their blood was precious in His sight.

12. *He forgets not the cry of the humble.* Is there no consolation in these words for some of you? You have been humbled and brought down from your high place. Now, then, is your time to cry—and when you do so, you will prove that "He forgets not the cry of the humble." There are many who give heed to the petitions of their needy fellow creatures and feel their force for a time—but they are engaged in business, or occupied in other ways—and they soon forget. Other things crowd out the needy one's petition and so he is left without help. But it is never so with God—"He forgets not the cry of the humble." Notice in the next verse how David avails himself of that Truth. He seems to say, "Is it true that God does not forget the cry of the humble? Then I will cry to Him and my humble cry shall go up to His ear and to His heart."

13. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord.* What a blessed prayer that is—a prayer useful on all occasions—under a sense of sin, or under a load of sorrow—burdened with labor, or crushed with despondency. It is a prayer which is like the cherubim's sword which turned every way—you may use it as you will. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord."

13. *Consider my trouble which I suffer by them that hate me, You that lifted me up from the gates of death.* What a lift that is—lifted up from the gates of death into life and ultimately into Heaven! What an Almighty God our Lord proves Himself to be at a dead lift! When every other arm is paralyzed, He comes to us and lifts us up from the gates of death.

14. *That I may show forth all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion.* From the gates of death to the gates of Zion is the lift which God gives to His poor suffering people!

14, 15. *I will rejoice in Your salvation. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made.* If you picture David with the carcass of the giant before him, the Philistines put to ignominious flight and the Israelites in full pursuit after them, you can understand His saying, “The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made.”

15, 16. *In the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The LORD is known by the judgment which He executes: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Meditation. Selah.* The probable meaning of these words is, “Consider and pause.” They are musical rests, perhaps, but they also suggest to us how well it is, in our reading of the Scriptures, sometimes to stop a while and inwardly digest the Words that we have read.

17. *The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.* Even if they are not outwardly as wicked as other men are, yet their forgetfulness of God is the highest form of injustice to Him! It is treason against the Majesty of Heaven! It is robbing God of what is His right! It is a combination of everything that is evil!

18-20. *For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. Arise, O LORD, let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in Your sight. Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men.* They boast that they are men and that they quit themselves like men. Yet let them know that although they are men, they are only men—with all the infirmities and imperfections of men—and that there is a God who will, in due time, let men know that they are but men and that the best of men are but men at the best!

20. *Selah.* Pause again, think over what we have been reading and lift up your heart in prayer to God, seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit to apply His Truth to your soul.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—9, 146.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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CHRIST LOOSENS FROM INFIRMITIES

NO. 3195

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 1910.

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

“And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said unto her, Woman, you are loosened from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.”
Luke 13:11-13.

[See Sermons #1426, Volume 24—THE LIFTING UP OF THE BOWED DOWN and #2891, Volume 50—A SABBATH MIRACLE—for sermons on the same miracle—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

OUR text commences with a “behold”—“behold, there was a woman.” And as it was often remarked by the Puritan writers, whenever we see the word, “behold,” in Scripture, we are to regard it as a *nota bene*, as a mark in the margin calling our particular attention to what follows. Where Christ worked wonders, we should have attentive eyes and ears. When Jesus is dispensing blessings, whether to ourselves or to others, we should never be in a state of indifference!

I shall use this miracle as a type, as it were, for doubtless the miracles of Christ were so intended. Our Lord was declared to be “a Prophet mighty in deed and word.” He was to be a Prophet like unto Moses and He is the only one who was like unto Moses in these two respects. Many Prophets followed Moses who were mighty in “word”—such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah, but then they were not “mighty in deed.” Many, on the other hand, were “mighty in deed”—like Elijah and Elisha, but they were not “mighty in word.” Our Lord was mighty in both respects and a Prophet in both respects—“a Prophet mighty in deed and word.” I take it, therefore, that His miraculous deeds are parts of His prophecies. They are the illustrations of His great life-sermon. The words which fell from His lips are as the text and the letter of the Book, but the miracles are the pictures from which our childlike minds may often learn more than from the words, themselves. We shall so use the picture before us now—may the Holy Spirit give us instruction!

I. In the first place, THIS WOMAN, BOWED DOWN WITH A SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY, TYPIFIES TO US THE CASE OF VERY MANY—very many whom we have seen and some of whom are listening to these words. Oh, that the same miracle might be worked in them as in her! She typifies persons who are depressed in spirit, who cannot look up to Heaven and

rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, persons who have a hope, a good hope, too, but not a strong one—a hope which enables them to hold on as the men did in Paul’s shipwreck when, on boards and broken pieces of the ship they came safe to land, but not a hope which gives them an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They are saved, like this woman, who was a true daughter of Abraham, notwithstanding all her infirmities. She was truly of the promised seed, notwithstanding that she could not lift herself up, so these are genuine Christians, truly saved, and yet constantly subject to infirmity.

In some, it takes this shape. They believe in Christ and rest on the precious blood, yet they *are sometimes afraid that they have sinned the unpardonable sin*. Though their better and more reasonable selves will do battle against the delusion, still they hug it to their hearts. Seeing that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a sin which is unto death—and that when a man has committed it, his spirit dies—and repentance, the desire to be saved and all good emotions cease to be when that dreadful spiritual death is ours, I say that they can thus reason with themselves in their better moments and see that their fear is a delusion, but they soon fall back again into that dreadful slough. They see no signs of Grace, but they think they see signs of reprobation.

Many have I met with—I may say that I meet with such people every week—*who are afraid that they are hypocrites*. When I encounter persons troubled with this fear, I cannot help smiling at them, for if they really were hypocrites, they would not be afraid of it and their fear of presumption argues very strongly that they are not living in it!

Then this infirmity will take another shape. If you drive them from the other errors, they say *they are afraid that they are self-deluded*. This is a very proper fear when it leads to self-examination and comes to an end. But it becomes a very improper fear when it perpetually destroys our joy, prevents our saying, “Abba, Father,” with an unfaltering tongue and keeps us at a distance from the precious Savior who would have us come very near to Him and be most familiar with His brotherly heart.

Supposing this difficulty should be met, still there are tens of thousands who *are very much in doubt concerning their election*. What if they should not be elect, they say? This, of course results from ignorance, for if they read the Word, they would soon discover that all those who believe in Christ may be certain of their election—faith being the public mark of God’s privately chosen people! If you make your calling sure, you have made your election sure! If you know yourself now to be a lover of God, resting upon the great Propitiation which He has set forth for sin, then you may know that this is a work of Grace in your soul! God never worked a work of Grace where He had not made an *election* of Grace. That fear, therefore, may be easily driven away and yet thousands are in bondage to it!

Others are afflicted *with the daily fear that they shall not persevere*. They say, “After all our professions and prayers, we fear we shall yet be

castaways.” The Apostle Paul was not afflicted with this fear. He strove lest this fear should ever come near him. He so lived with holy diligence, that he might always be in a state of blessed assurance, lest, after having preached to others, he, himself, should be a castaway. But he could say, “I know that my Redeemer lives,” even as Job could. And he could also say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” Still, tens of thousands are perpetually subject to that form of bondage! They cannot reach, in fact, the full assurance of faith. They have scarcely even the glimmering of Assurance. They trust—they trust as the publican did, “standing afar off,” but they have never yet come with John to lean their heads upon the bosom of the Savior! They are His disciples and His servants, but they can scarcely understand how He can call them His friends and permit them to enjoy close communion with Himself.

Now, Beloved, this woman thus bowed down was very like these persons for the following reasons—

Her infirmity much marred her beauty. The beauty and dignity of the human form is to walk erect, to look the sun in the face and gaze upon the heavens. This woman could do nothing of the kind. She was, no doubt, very conscious of this and shrank from the public gaze. So unbelief, distrust, mistrust, suspicion—these direful infirmities to which some are subject, spoil their spiritual beauty. They have the Divine Grace of humility. In this respect, they very often excel others, but the other graces, the noble graces of faith and holy confidence and courage—these they cannot display. The beauty of their character is marred.

Moreover, *this woman had her enjoyment spoiled.* It must have been a sad thing for her to go about the world bent double. She could not gaze on the beauties of Nature as others could and all her motions must have been, if not painful, yet certainly exceedingly inconvenient. Such is the case with the doubting, distrustful soul under infirmity. He can do but little. Prayer is a painful groaning out of his soul. When he sings, it is usually in a deep bass. His harp hangs upon the willows. He feels that he is in Babylon and cannot sing the songs of Zion.

This woman, too, *must have been very unfit for active service.* Little of household duty could she perform, and that with pain. And as to public acts of mercy, she could take but small part in them, being subject to this constant infirmity. And so is it with you who are “Much-Afraids” or, “Fearings,” you who have troubled spirits. You cannot lead the van in the day of battle. You can scarcely tell others of the Savior’s preciousness. You cannot expect to be great reapers in the Master’s harvest. You have to stay by the stuff while others go forth to fight. There is a special law which David made of old concerning those who tarried there, so you do get a blessing, but you miss the higher blessing of noble activity and Christian service.

I might thus enlarge and show the likeness more clearly, but I think you can draw the picture for yourselves. You see the woman come into the synagogue and your pity is at once excited. But if you love the souls of men and God has made you to be tender as a nursing mother to others, you will pity, yet more, many of the true seed of Abraham who are bowed down with infirmity.

It appears, from our Savior's words, that *this woman's infirmity was coupled with Satanic influence*. "Whom Satan has bound," He said, "lo, these eighteen years." We do not know how much Satan has to do with us. I do know that we often lay a great deal on his back which he does not deserve—and that we do a thousand evil things ourselves and then ascribe them to him. Still, there are gracious souls who do walk in the paths of holiness, who do hate sin, who, for all that, sometimes cannot enjoy peace. We cannot blame them. We must believe that the Satanic spirit is at work, marring their joy and spoiling their comfort. Dr. Watts says—

***"He worries whom he cannot devour
With a malicious joy"—***

and doubtless that is true. He knows he cannot destroy you because you are in Christ and, therefore, if the dog cannot bite, he will at least bark. Like Mercy, in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, you will often be alarmed by the evil ones and all the more so because these evil ones know that in a little while you will be out of gunshot of all the powers of Hell, and beyond the hearing of all the bellowing of the fiends of the Pit! Satan had much to do with this poor woman's infirmity.

It appears, very clearly, too, from reading the passage, that *the woman's weakness was beyond all human art*. "She could in no wise lift herself up," which implies, I think, that she had tried all ways within her reach and knowledge. "She could in no wise." Neither by those mechanical operations which have sometimes been found effective in such diseases, nor by those medicines which were much vaunted in that age, could she receive the slightest relief. She had done her best and physicians had done their worst—and yet notwithstanding all, she could by no means lift herself up—and, truly, there are many in this condition spiritually. Have you ever been, as a Christian pastor, utterly baffled in dealing with some cases of spiritual distress? Have you ever been driven to pray, feeling the blessedness of prayer all the more because you have proved the futility of your own efforts to comfort a sin-distressed, Satan-tossed spirit? Often has that been my case. There has been the promise to meet the case, but the poor soul could not lay hold of it! There has been the cheering Word of God which has been efficient enough at other times, but it seemed to be a dead letter to this poor spirit in bondage. There has been the case, in point, and the experience of somebody else just like the case in hand, which we tried to tell with sympathy. We tried to work ourselves, as it were, into the position of the sufferer with whom we were dealing. But still, for all that, we seemed to be speaking to the

winds and trying to comfort one who was so conditioned to sorrow that he felt that for him to cast off the somber weeds would be a sin, and to cease to mourn would be presumption. Many a time has such a case come before us and we have thought of this woman—and could only pray that the Master would put His hand upon the person, for our hand and our voice were utterly powerless!

Poor soul, she had been a long time in this case! Eighteen years! Eighteen years! Well, that is not very long if you are in health, strength and prosperity. How the years trip along as with wings on their heels! They are scarcely here before they are fled! But 18 years of infirmity, pain and constantly-increasing weakness! Eighteen years she dragged her chain until the iron entered into her soul. Eighteen years! Two long apprenticeships to sorrow till she had become the acquaintance of grief. Yes, and some such persons, though prisoners of hope, are kept in bondage as long as that. Their disease is like an intermittent fever which comes on, sometimes, and then is relieved. They have times when they are at their worst—the ebb tide—and then they have their floods again. Now and then they have a glimpse of summer, but soon the cold chilly winter comes on them again. Sometimes they half think they have escaped and leap like the emancipated slave when his fetters are broken, but they very soon have to go back again to the jails and the manacles, having no permanent relief, still being prisoners year after year. I know I am describing a case which is known to some of you. Perhaps I am photographing you!

Yet for all this, *this woman was a daughter of Abraham.* The Lord Jesus knew her pedigree and assured the ruler of the synagogue of it. She was one of the true seed of Israel notwithstanding all her failings. “Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, to be loosened even on the Sabbath?” demanded the Master. Yes, and you, poor anxious spirit, though your faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet, if you have a simple faith in Christ, you are safe! You, troubled and tossed one, though your boat seems ready to be swallowed up by the waves, if you have taken Jesus into the vessel, you shall come safely to the land! Poor Heart, you may be brought very low, but you shall never be brought low enough to perish, for underneath there are the everlasting arms. Like Jonah, you may go to the bottoms of the mountains and think that the earth with her bars is about you forever, but you shall yet be brought up and you shall sing Jonah’s song, “Salvation is of the Lord!” God does not cast off His people because of their dark frames and feelings. He does not love them because of their high enjoyments—neither will He reject them because of their deep depressions. Christian is dear. Father Honest is dear. Valiant-for-Truth, too, is dear to the King of the pilgrims! And Ready-to-Halt, upon his crutches, is equally dear, and Mr. Fearing and Miss Much-Afraid, though they may lie in Doubting Castle till they are almost

starved, shall surely be brought out, for they are true pilgrims and shall at length safely reach the Celestial City!

II. But we must pass on to our second point, namely that THE EXAMPLE OF THIS WOMAN IS INSTRUCTIVE TO ALL IN HER CASE.

Observe that *she did not tamely yield to her infirmity without effort*. The expression, “She could *in no wise* lift herself up”—an old Saxon form of saying, “She could in no ways lift herself up”—shows, as I have said before, that she had tried her best. I believe some of you might stand upright if you liked. I am quite certain that in some cases, people get into the way of surrendering to depression until at last they become powerless against it. Some stimulant is given them in the form of a sick husband, or a dying child and they grow quite cheerful. Under some real trouble, they become patient, but when this real trouble is taken away, they begin manufacturing troubles of their own. They are never happy, I might almost say, except when they are miserable—and never cheerful except when they have something to cast them down! If they have a real trouble, they get strength to bear it, but at other times, they are morbidly troubled in spirit. Now, let us imitate this woman and shake off our doubts and our unbelief as much as possible. Let us strike up the hymn—

***“Begone, unbelief, my Savior is near!
And for my relief will surely appear.
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform,
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm!”***

Let us say, with David, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him.” Do not so soon yield to the shafts of unbelief. Hold up the shield of faith and say to your soul, “No, as the Lord lives, who is the Rock of my salvation, my castle and my high tower, my weapon of defense and my glory, I will not yield to unbelief. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. And though all things go against me, yet will I stay myself upon the mighty God of Jacob, and I will not fear.” The woman, then, had done her best.

Note next, that although bent double and, therefore, having an excellent excuse for staying at home, *yet she was found at the synagogue*. I believe she was always found there from the fact that the length of time during which she had been sick was well known—not merely known to Christ because of His Godhead, but known as a matter of common talk and common knowledge in the synagogue, probably, during the whole of the 18 years she had been an attendant there. “Ah,” she thought, “if I miss the blessing of health, yet I will not be absent from the place where God’s people meet together for worship. I have had sweet enjoyments in the singing of the Psalms and in listening to the Word—and I will not be away when such Divine Grace is being dispensed.”

O mourners, never let Satan prevail upon you to “forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.” If you cannot get comfort, still go to the sanctuary. It is the most likely place for you to get

it. One of the sweet traits of character in mourners is that they love to go to the assemblies of God's people. I knew one aged woman who had year after year been in this mournful state, and after trying long to comfort her, but in vain, I said to her, "Well, what do you go to the House of Prayer for? Why don't you stay at home?" "Why, that is my only comfort!" she said. "I thought you told me you were a hypocrite," I answered, "and that you had no right to the promises or any of the good things?" "Ah, but I could not stay away from the place where my best friends, my kindred, dwell," she replied. "And do you read your Bible?" I asked her. "I suppose you have burned that." "Burned my Bible!" she said in horror. "I'd sooner be burned myself!" "But do you read it? You say there is nothing there for you—if you were to lay hold upon the promises, it would be presumption—you are afraid to grasp any one of the good things of the Covenant!" "Ah, but I could not do without reading my Bible. That is my daily bread. It is my constant food," she responded. "But do you pray?" "Pray! Oh yes, I shall die praying!" "But you told me that you had no faith at all, that you were not one of God's people, that you were a deceiver and I know not what besides!" "Yes, I am afraid, sometimes, that I am. I am afraid now that I am, but as long as I live I'll pray." All the marks of the child of God were in her private character—and could be seen in her walk and conversation—and yet she was always bowed down and could by no means lift herself up!

I remember a Brother minister who was the means, in God's hands, of comforting a woman when she lay dying in this plight. He said to her, "Well, Sarah, you tell me you do not love Christ at all. Are you sure you do not?" "Yes, Sir. I am sure I do not." He went up to the window and wrote on a piece of paper, "*I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ.*" "Now, Sarah," he said "just put your name at the bottom of that." "What is it, Sir? I do not know what it is." When she read it, she said, "No, I'd rather be torn in pieces than I'd put my name to such a thing as that!" "Well," he said, "but if it is true, you may as well write it as say it." And this was the means of convincing and persuading her that there really was love to Christ in her soul, after all! But in many cases you cannot comfort these poor souls at all. They will still say that they are not the Lord's people, yet they cling to the means of Grace and, by-and-by, we trust they will get deliverance.

Observe another thing, that though we are not told it in so many words in the narrative, we may be sure it is true, *when the Lord Jesus called her, she came at once*. She was called and there was no hesitation in her answer. Such speed as she could make in her poor, pitiable plight, she made. She did not say, as another said, "Lord, if You will, you can." She did not doubt His will. Nor did she imitate another and say, "If You can do anything." She doubted not His power. She said nothing, but we know what she felt. There is not a trace of unbelief! There is every sign of obedience. Now, Soul, when Christ does call you, by His Grace, make

haste to run to Him! When, under the preaching of the Lord, you feel as though the iceberg is beginning to melt, do not get away from the sunlight and go back to the old winter gloom! "Make hay while the sun shines," says the old proverb—take care that you do the same. When God gives you a little light, prize it. Thank Him for it and ask for more. If you have got starlight, ask for moonlight. When you have got moonlight, do not sit down and weep because it is only moonlight, but ask Him for more, and He will give you sunlight, and when you have got that, be grateful, and He will give you yet more! He will make your day to be as the light of seven days, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Think much of little mercies since you deserve none. Do not throw away these pearls because they are not the greatest that were ever found, but keep them, thank God for them, and then soon He will send you the best treasures from the treasury of His Grace.

As soon as this woman was healed, she was, in another respect, an example to us, namely, that *she glorified God*. Her face did it. With what luster was it lit up! Her whole gait did it. How erect she stood! And then I am sure her tongue did it. The woman might well be pardoned for speaking this once in the midst of the assembly. Restored as she was, all of a sudden, she could not help telling out the joy she felt within! The bells of her heart were ringing merry peals! She must give glory to God who had worked the cure. Some of you profess to have been cured, but have you given glory to God? Some of you profess to be Christians, and yet you have never come forward to avow it! You have been afraid to unite yourselves with the Christian Church! Your Master bids you confess Him. The mode of confession which He prescribes is that you be baptized in His name—and yet, though He has saved you, you stand back and are disobedient. Take care! "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

I was, this week, by the bedside of a dying man, an heir of Heaven, washed in the precious blood of Jesus, I believe, and rejoicing in that fact, too, but yet he could not help saying, "I ought, years ago, to have taken my stand with God's people. You have often given me many hard blows in the Tabernacle, but never too hard. Tell the people, when you speak to them again, when they know anything is a duty, never to postpone it, for that Word of God is true, 'That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' I am not condemned, I am not cast away, for I am in Christ. I am resting on His precious blood and I am saved. But, though saved, I am being chastened." And he was sorely chastened with many doubts, fears and troubles of soul. If you are God's child, any duty neglected will bring upon your soul some chastisement. If you are not God's child, you may do very much as you like and your *punishment* will, perhaps, not come upon you until the next world. But if you are one of the King's favorites, you must walk very tenderly and very attentively, or

else, as surely as you are dear to the heart of God, you shall feel the rod upon you to chasten you and to bring you back into the path of obedience!

This woman glorified God. Brothers and Sisters, can we not do something more to glorify God than we have yet done? If we have done that which seemed to be our duty on certain occasions, may there not be yet more for us to do? There is very much land yet to be possessed for King Jesus! This wicked city is given over to sin and we are doing so little! Ah, some of you do what you can, but we who do what we can, might do more if we had more strength with which to do it—and more strength is to be had for the asking! Oh, that we could enlarge our desires for the glory of King Jesus! Oh, to set Him upon a glorious high throne and to crown Him with many crowns, to prostrate ourselves at His feet and to bring others, too, to lie prostrate at His feet, that He might be King in Jeshurun, King of kings and Lord of lords, reigning in our souls forever and ever! Imitate this woman. If you have been bowed down and yet restored to comfort! See that, like she did, you instantly fall to glorifying God.

III. And this brings us to the last point—THE WOMAN'S CURE IS EXCEEDINGLY INSTRUCTIVE TO PERSONS IN ALIKE CASE.

She went to the synagogue, but she did not get her cure alone by going there. Means and ordinances are nothing in themselves! They are to be used, but they are only dry skin bottles, without water, unless there is something more than these. This woman *met with Christ in the synagogue*—and *then* came the healing! May we, too, meet with Jesus! That great encounter is possible here, or anywhere, for—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

The great matter is to meet with Him! And if we meet with Him, we meet with all we need!

Now, observe the woman's cure. In the first place, *it was a complete cure*. No part of the infirmity remained. She was not left a little crooked, but still much restored. No, “she was made straight.” When Jesus heals, He heals not by halves. His works of Grace may have it said of each one of them, “It is finished.” Salvation is a finished work throughout.

In the next place, *the woman's cure was a perpetual and permanent one*. She did not return, by-and-by, by a terrible relapse, to her former posture. Once made to walk upright, she remained so. When Jesus sheds abroad life, love and joy in the soul, it is ours for a perpetual inheritance and we may hold it till we die, nor lose it even then!

Notice, too, that *the woman was healed immediately*. That is a point which Luke takes care to mention. The cure did not take days, or weeks, or months, or years, as physicians cures do—but she was cured immediately! Here is encouragement for you who have been depressed for years. There is yet a possibility that you may be perfectly and speedily restored. Yet may the dust be taken from your eyes! Yet may your face be anointed with fresh oil! Yet may you glow and glisten in the light of Je-

sus' Countenance while you reflect the light that shines upon you from Him! It may happen tonight—at this moment! Gates may be taken from off their hinges, for the mighty Samson, whom we serve, can tear up Gaza's gates, posts and bars and all if He wills to set His captives free! If you are bound by all the fetters that self can forge, yet at one emancipating word from Christ, you shall be entirely free! Doubting Castle may be very strong, but He who comes to fight with Giant Despair is stronger, still. He who has kept you beneath his power is mighty, but the All Mighty is He who conquered at Bozrah and who will conquer everywhere else when He comes forth for the deliverance of His people! Take down your harps from the willows! Be encouraged! Jesus Christ loosens the prisoners! He is the Lord, the Liberator. He comes to set the captives free and to glorify Himself in them!

I remind you of the thought with which we commenced this third point, namely, *that the woman's restoration was effected by Jesus Christ, by His laying His hands upon her.* Many of His cures were worked in this way, by bringing His own Personality into contact with human infirmity. "He laid His hands upon her." O Soul, Christ came in human flesh and that contact with humanity is the source of all salvation! If you believe in Christ, He comes a second time into contact with you! Oh, that your soul might get a touch of Him tonight! He is a Man like yourself, though He is also "very God of very God."

In order to save us, He suffered unutterable pangs. The whole weight of our sin was laid upon Him, till He was bruised as beneath the wheels of the car of vengeance. Beneath the upper and the nether millstones of Divine Vengeance, the Savior was ground like fine flour! God knows, and God alone knows, what agonies He bore. All this was substitutionary for sinners. Let not your sins, then, depress you. Had you no sin, you would not need a Savior. Come with your sin and trust in Him! Let not your weakness distress you. Had you no weakness, you would not need a mighty Savior. Come and take hold upon His strength, for all His strength is meant for the weak, the hopeless and the helpless. Sitting on the dunghill of your sin, yet trust in Jesus and you shall be lifted up to dwell among the princes of the blood-royal! There must be power to save in God when He becomes Man to bleed and die. Nothing can be impossible to Him who built the world and who bears the pillars thereof upon His shoulders—and yet gives His hands to the nails and His heart to the spear! Nothing can be impossible to Immanuel, God With Us, when He smarts, and groans, and submits to the bloody sweat, and then empties out His heart's blood that He might redeem men from their iniquities—

***"O come all you in whom are fixed
The deadly stains of sin!"***

Draw near to the Crucified! Let your souls contemplate Christ. Let your faith look to Him. Let your love embrace Him. Cast away all other confidences as mere vanities that will delude you. Away with them! Trust in nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ—His Person, His work, His life, His

death, His Resurrection, His Ascension, His glorious pleading before the Throne of God for sinners such as we are! Ah, when you come to die, you who are strong and you who are depressed, will be very much alike in this matter—that you will have to come back where Wesley was when he said—

**“Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom flee!
Other refuge have I none—
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.”**

Look to the wounds of Christ, they will heal your wounds! Look to the death of Christ, it will be the death of your doubts! Look to the life of Christ, it shall be the life of your hopes! Look to the glory of Christ, it shall be the glory of your souls here, and the glory of your souls forever and ever!

May God add His blessing and bring many of His bondaged ones out of prison! This shall be to His eternal praise! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 13:1-13.**

Verse 1. *There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.* This was a matter of common town talk, so of course they brought the news to Jesus. Notice how wisely He used this shameful incident. You and I too often hear the news of what is happening, but we learn nothing from it—our Savior’s gracious mind turned everything to good account—He was like the bee that gathers honey from every flower.

2. *And Jesus answering said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?* “Do you imagine that there was some extraordinary guilt which brought this judgment upon them, and that those who were spared may be supposed to have been more innocent than they were?”

3. *I tell you, No, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.* There would come upon them, also, because of their sin, a sudden and overwhelming calamity. When we read of the most dreadful things happening to men, we may conclude that something similar will happen to us if we are impenitent—if not in this world, yet in that which is to come!

4, 5. *Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, do you think that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No, but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.* [See Sermon #408, Volume 7—ACCIDENTS, NOT PUNISHMENTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This was a foreshadowing of the overthrow of Jerusalem and the razing of its walls and towers to the ground which happened not long after. And even that overthrow of Jerusalem was but a rehearsal of the tremendous doom that shall come upon all who remain impenitent.

6. *He spoke also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. He had a right to seek fruit upon the tree, for it was planted where fruit-bearing trees were growing and where it shared in the general culture that was bestowed upon all the trees in the vineyard.*

7. *Then he said to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I have been seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why let it cumber the ground? This was sound reasoning. "It yields nothing, though it draws the goodness out of the ground and so injures those trees that are producing fruit—'cut it down; why let it cumber the ground?'"*

8-9. *And he answering said unto him, Sir, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it, and fertilize it: and if it bears fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down.* [See Sermons #650, Volume 11—JUDGMENT THREATENING BUT MERCY SPARING and #1451-A, Volume 25—"THIS YEAR ALSO"—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He asks for a respite, but only a limited one. "After that, you shall cut it down." If, after the trial of another year, it shall still be fruitless, then even the pleader will not ask for any further respite.

10, 11. *And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over, and could in no way straighten herself.* If she was there when Christ was speaking about the fruitless fig tree, I feel pretty certain that she said "That must mean me. I am the fruitless fig tree." But the Master did not mean her—He had other words and more cheering tidings for her!

12. *And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosened from your infirmity.* Oh, what glad news this must have been to her! How it must have thrilled her whole body! As she learned that she was to be restored to an upright position, what delight must have filled her heart!

13. *And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.* What expressions of fervent gratitude! What notes of glad exultation came from that woman's joyful lips! Surely even cherubim and seraphim could not more heartily and earnestly praise God than she did when "she was made straight and glorified God."

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

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

THE MUSTARD SEED—A SERMON FOR THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER NO. 2110

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Then said He, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden. And it grew and became a great tree. And the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.”
Luke 13:18-19.*

I SHALL not attempt fully to explain this great little parable. A full exposition may be left for another occasion. The parable may be understood to relate to our Lord Himself, who is the living Seed. You know also how His Church is the tree that springs from Him and how greatly it grows and spreads its branches until it covers the earth. From the one man Christ Jesus, despised and rejected of men, slain and buried and so hidden away from among men—from Him, I say—there arises a multitude which no one can number.

These spread themselves, like some tree which grows by the rivers of waters and they yielded both gracious shelter and spiritual food. I called it a great little parable and so it is—it has a world of teaching within the smallest compass. The parable is itself like a grain of mustard seed but its meanings are as a great tree.

At this time of the year, Sunday school teachers come together especially to pray for a blessing on their work and pastors are invited to say a word to cheer them in their self-denying service. This request I would cheerfully fulfill, and therefore my discourse will not be a full explanation of the parable, but an adaptation of it to the cheering of those who are engaged in the admirable work of teaching the young the fear of the Lord. Never service was more important. To overlook it would be a grave fault. We rejoice to encourage our friends in their labor of love.

In this parable light is thrown upon the work of those who teach the Gospel. First, notice a very simple work—“a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden.” Secondly, observe what came of it—“it grew and became a great tree. And the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.”

FIRST, NOTICE A VERY SIMPLE WORK. The work of teaching the Gospel is as the casting of a grain of mustard seed into a garden.

Note, first, what the nameless man did. “It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took.” He *took* it. That is to say, picked it out from the bulk. It was only one grain and a grain of a very insignificant seed. But he did not let it lie on the shelf. He took it in his hand to put it to its proper use. A grain of mustard seed is too small a thing for public exhibition. The man who takes it in his hand is almost the only one who spies it out. It was only a grain of mustard seed but the man set it before his own mind as a distinct object to be dealt with.

He was not sowing mustard over broad acres but he was sowing “a grain of mustard seed” in his garden. It is well for the teacher to know what he is going to teach, to have that Truth of God distinctly in his mind’s eye, as the man had the grain of mustard seed between his fingers. Depend upon it, unless a Truth is clearly seen and distinctly recognized by the teacher, little will come of it to the taught. It may be a very simple Truth, but if a someone takes it, understands it, grasps it and loves it, he will do something with it.

Beloved, first and foremost, let us ourselves take the Gospel, let us believe it, let us appreciate it, let us prize it beyond all things. For the Truth of God lives as it is loved and no hand is so fit for its sowing as the hand which grasps it well.

Further, in this little parable we notice that this man had a garden—“Like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden.” Some Christian people have no garden—no personal sphere of service. They belong to the whole clan of Christians, and they pine to see the entire band go out to cultivate the whole world—but they do not come to personal particulars. It is delightful to be warmed up by missionary addresses and to feel a zeal for the salvation of all the nations. But, after all, the net result of a general theoretic earnestness for all the world does not amount to much.

As we should have no horticulture if people had no gardens, so we shall have no missionary work done unless *each person* has a mission. It is the duty of every Believer in Christ, like the first man, Adam, to have a garden to dress and to till. Children are in the Sunday schools by millions—thank God for that! But have you a class of your own? All the Church at work for Christ! Glorious theory! Are you up and doing for your Lord? It will be a grand time when every Believer has his allotment and is sowing it with the seed of the Truth of God.

The wilderness and the solitary place will blossom as the rose when each Christian cultivates his own plot of roses. Where should this unnamed man sow his mustard seed but in his own garden? It was near him and dear to him and to it he went. Teach your own children, speak to your neighbors, seek the conversion of those whom God has especially entrusted to you.

Having a garden and having this seed, the man sowed it—and simple as this is—it is the hinge of the instruction. You have a number of seeds in a pillbox. There they are—look at them! Take that box down this day a year from now, and the seeds will be just the same. Lay them by in that dry box for seven years and nothing will happen. Truth is not to be kept to ourselves. It is to be published and advocated. There is an old Proverb, “truth is mighty and will prevail.” The Proverb is true in a sense, but it needs to be taken with a grain of salt.

If you put Truth away and leave it without a voice, it won’t prevail. It will not even contend. When have great Truths prevailed? Why, when brave men have persisted in declaring them. Daring spirits have taken up a cause which has been at the first, unpopular—and they have spoken about it so earnestly and so often that at length the cause has commanded attention. They have pressed on and on until the cause has triumphed altogether.

The Truth of God has been mighty and has prevailed, but yet not without the people who gave it life and tongue. Not even the Gospel itself, if it is not taught, will prevail. If revealed Truth is laid on one side and kept in silence, it will not grow. Mark how through the dark ages the Gospel lay asleep in old books in the libraries of monasteries until Luther and his fellow Reformers fetched it out and sowed it in the minds of men!

This man simply cast it into his garden. He did not wrap it around with gold leaf, or otherwise adorn it—he put it into the ground. The naked seed came into contact with the naked soil. O Teachers, do not try to make the Gospel look fine! Do not overlay it with your fine words or elaborate explanations. The Gospel seed is to be put into the young heart just as it is. Get the Truth of God concerning the Lord Jesus into the children's minds. Make them know, not what you can say about the Truth, but what the Truth itself says. It is wicked to take the Gospel and make a peg of it to hang our old clothes upon.

The Gospel is not a boat to be freighted with human thoughts, fine speculations, scraps of poetry and pretty tales. No, no. The Gospel is the thought of God. In and of itself it is the message which the soul needs. It is the Gospel, itself, which will grow. Take a Truth of God, especially that great doctrine that humanity is lost and that Christ is the only Savior, and see to it that you place it in the mind. Teach plainly the great Truth of God that whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life, and that the Lord Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the tree and suffered for us, the Just for the unjust—I say take these Truths of God and set them forth to the mind and see what will come of it.

Sow the Truth of God. Not your *reflections* on the Truth of God, not your *embellishments* of it, but the Truth itself. This is to be brought into contact with the mind, for the Truth is the seed, and the human mind is the soil for it to grow in.

These remarks of mine are very plain and trite. And yet everything depends upon the simple operation described. Nearly everything has been tried in preaching of late, except the plain and clear statement of the glad tidings and of the atoning sacrifice. People have talked about what the Church can do, and what the Gospel can do. We have been informed as to the proofs of the Gospel, or the doubts about it, and so forth. But when will they give us the Gospel itself? Friends, we must come to the point and teach the *Gospel*—for this is the living and incorruptible seed which abides forever.

It is an easy thing to deliver an address upon mustard seed, to give the children a taste of the pungency of mustard, to tell them how mustard seed would grow, what kind of a tree it would produce and how the birds would sing among its branches. But this is not sowing mustard seed. It is all very fine to talk about the *influence* of the Gospel, the *ethics* of Christianity, the elevating *power* of the love of Christ, and so on. But what we want is the *Gospel itself*, which exercises that influence.

Sow the seed—tell the children the doctrine of the Cross, the fact that with the stripes of Jesus we are healed, and that by faith in Him we are justified. What is wanted is not talk *about* the Gospel but the *Gospel itself*. We must continually bring the living Word of the living God into contact

with the hearts of men. Oh, for the aid of the Holy Spirit in this! He will help us, for He delights to glorify Jesus.

That which is described in the parable was an insignificant business—the man took the tiny seed and put it into his garden. It is a very commonplace affair to sit down with a dozen children around you and open your Bible and tell them the well-worn tale of how Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. No Pharisee is likely to stand and blow a trumpet when he is going to teach children. He is more likely to point to the children in the temple and sneeringly say, “Hear you what these say?” It is a lowly business altogether, but, to the mustard seed and to the man with a garden, the sowing is the all-important matter.

The mustard seed will never grow unless put into the soil. The owner of the garden will never have a crop of mustard unless he sows the seed. Dear Sunday school Teacher, do not become weary of your humble work, for none can measure its importance. Tell the boys and girls of the Son of God who lived, and loved, and died—that the ungodly might be saved. Urge them to immediate faith in the mighty Savior that they may be saved at once. Tell of the new birth, and how the souls of human beings are renewed by the Holy Spirit, without whose Divine working none can enter the kingdom of Heaven.

Cast in mustard seed and nothing else but mustard seed, if you want to grow mustard. Teach the Gospel of Divine Grace and nothing but the Gospel of Divine Grace, if you would see Grace growing in the hearts of your young people.

Secondly, let us consider what it was that the man sowed. We have seen that he sowed. What did he sow? It was one single seed and that seed a very small one—so very, very small, that the Jews were accustomed to say, “As small as a mustard seed.” Therefore the Savior speaks of it as the smallest among seeds, which it may not have been, absolutely, but which it was according to common parlance. Our Lord was not teaching botany but speaking a popular parable.

Yes, the Gospel seems a very simple thing—Believe and live! Look to Jesus lying in the sinner’s place! Look to Jesus crucified, even as Israel looked to the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It is simplicity itself. In fact, the Gospel is so plain a matter that our superior people are weary of it, and look for something more difficult to comprehend. People nowadays are like the person who liked to hear the Scriptures “properly confounded.” Or like the other who said, “You should hear our minister dispense with the Truth.”

Sowing seed is work too ordinary for the moderns. They demand new methods. But, Beloved, we must not run after vain inventions. Our one business is to sow the Word of God in the minds of children. It is yours and mine to teach everybody the simple truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. We know nothing else among adults or among children. This one seed, apparently so little, so insignificant, we continue to sow.

They sneeringly say, “What can be the moral result of preaching such a Gospel? Surely it would be better to discourse upon morals, social eco-

nomics, and the sciences?” Ah, Friends, if you can do any good in those ways, we will not hinder you, but our belief is that a hundred times more can be done with the Gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes. The Gospel is not the enemy of any good thing—rather, it is the force by which good things are to be carried out!

Whatsoever things are pure and honest and of good repute are all nurtured by that Spirit which is begotten by the simple Gospel of Christ. But, remember, conversions do not come by essays upon morals—but by the teaching of salvation by Christ. The cleansing and raising of our race will not be effected by politics or science—but by the Word of the Lord—which lives and abides forever. To bring the greatest blessings upon our rising youth, we must labor to implant in their minds faith in the Lord Jesus. Oh, for Divine power in this work!

But the seed, though very small, was a *living* thing. There is a great difference between a mustard seed and a piece of wax of the same size. Life slumbers in that seed. What life is, we cannot tell. Even if you take a microscope you cannot spy it out. It is a mystery, but it is essential to a seed. The Gospel has a something in it not readily discoverable by the philosophical inquirer, if, indeed, he can perceive it at all. Take a maxim of Socrates or of Plato, and inquire whether a nation or a tribe has ever been transformed by it from barbarism to culture.

A maxim of a philosopher may have measurably influenced a person in some right direction but who has ever heard of a someone's whole character being transformed by any observation of Confucius or Socrates? I confess I never have. Human teachings are barren. But within the Gospel—with all its triteness and simplicity—there is a Divine life and that life makes all the difference. The human can never rival the Divine, for it lacks the life-fire. It is better to preach five Words of God's Word than five million words of human wisdom.

Human words may seem to be the wiser and more attractive, but there is no heavenly life in them. Within God's Word, however simple it may be, there dwells an omnipotence like that of God from whose lips it came. To tell the truth, any seed is a very comprehensive thing. Within the mustard seed what is to be found? Why, there is all in it that ever comes out of it. It must be so. Every branch and every leaf and every flower and every seed that is to be is, in its essence, all within the seed. It needs to be developed but it is all there.

And so, within the simple Gospel, how much lies concentrated? Look at it! Within that Truth lie regeneration, repentance, faith, holiness, zeal, consecration, perfection. Heaven hides itself away within the Gospel. Like a young bird in its nest, glory dwells in Divine Grace. We may not at first see all its results, nor, indeed, shall we see them at all until we sow the seed and it grows. Yet it is all there. Do you believe it, young Teacher? Have you realized what you have in your hands when you grasp the Gospel of the Grace of God?

It is the most wonderful thing beneath the skies. Do you believe in the Gospel which you have to teach? Do you discern that within its apparently narrow lines the Eternal, the Infinite, the Perfect and the Divine are all enclosed? As in the babe of Bethlehem there was the Eternal God, so within the simple teaching of, “Believe and live,” there are all the elements

of eternal blessedness for people and boundless glory for God. It is a very comprehensive thing, that little seed, that Gospel of God.

And for this reason it is so wonderful—it is a Divine creation. Summon your chemists, bring them together with all their vessels and their fires. Select a jury of the greatest chemists now alive, analytical or otherwise, as you will. Learned Sirs, will you kindly make us a mustard seed? You may take a mustard seed and pound it and analyze it, and you may thus ascertain all its ingredients. So far so good. Is not your work well begun? Now make a single mustard seed. We will give you a week. It is a very small affair. You have all the elements of mustard in yonder mortar.

Make us one living grain. We do not ask for a ton weight. One grain of mustard seed will suffice us. Great Chemists, have you not made so small a thing? A month has gone by. Only one grain of mustard seed we asked of you and where is it? Have you not made one in a month? What are you doing? Shall we allow you seven years? Yes, with all the laboratories in the kingdom at your service, and all known substances for your material, and all the world's coal beds for your fuel—get to your work. The air is black with your smoke and the streams run foul with your waste products. But where is the mustard seed?

This baffles the wise. They cannot make a living seed. No. And nobody can make a Gospel, or even a new Gospel text. The thinkers of the age could not even concoct another life of Christ to match with the four Gospels which we have already. I go further—they could not create a new incident which would be congruous with the facts we already know. Plenty of novel writers nowadays can beat out imaginary histories upon their anvils—let them write a fifth Gospel—say the Gospel according to Peter, or Andrew. Let us have it!

They will not even commence the task. Who will write a new Psalm, or even a new promise? Clever chemists prove their wisdom by saying at once, “No, we cannot make a mustard seed.” And wise thinkers will equally confess that they cannot make another Gospel. My learned Brethren are trying very hard to make a new Gospel for this nineteenth century, but you teachers had better go on with the old one. The advanced men cannot put life into their theory. This living Word is the finger of God. That simple grain of mustard seed must be made by God, or not at all.

He must put life into the Gospel, or it will not have power in the heart. The Gospel of Sunday school teachers, that Gospel of, “Believe and live,” however people may despise it, has God-given life in it. You cannot make another which can supplant it, for you cannot put life into your invention. Go on and use the one living Truth with your children, for nothing else has God's life in it.

I want you to see what a little affair the sowing seemed, as we answer the question, What was it to him? It was a very natural act. He sowed a seed. It is a most natural thing that we should teach others what we believe ourselves. I cannot make out how some professors can call themselves Christians and yet never communicate the faith to others. That the young people of our Churches should gather other young people around them and tell them of Jesus, whom they love, is as natural as for a gardener to put seeds into his prepared ground.

To sow a mustard seed is a very inexpensive act. Only one grain of mustard—nobody can find me a coin small enough to express its value. I do not know how much mustard seed the man had—certainly it is not a rare thing—but he only took one grain of it and cast it into his garden. He emptied no exchequer by that expenditure. This is one of the excellencies of Sunday school work—that it neither exhausts the Church of people nor of money. However much of it is done, it does not lessen the resources of our Zion. It is done freely, quietly, without excitement, without sacrifice of life—and yet what a fountain of blessing it is!

Still, it was an act of *faith*. It is always an act of faith to sow seed, because you have, for the time, to give it up and receive nothing in return. The farmer takes his choice seed corn and throws it into the soil of his field. He might have made many a loaf of bread with it but he casts it away. Only his faith saves him from being judged a maniac—he expects it to return to him fifty-fold. If you had never seen a harvest, you would think that someone burying good wheat under the clods had gone mad. If you had never seen conversions, it might seem an absurd thing to be constantly teaching boys and girls the story of the Man who was nailed to the tree.

We preach and teach as a work of faith, and remember, it is only as an act of faith that it will answer its purpose. The rule of the harvest is, “According to your faith, be it unto you.” Believe, dear Teacher, believe in the Gospel. Believe in what you are doing when you tell it. Believe that great results from slender causes will spring. Go on sowing your mustard seed of salvation by faith, expecting and believing that fruit will come from it. It was an act which brought the sower no honor. The Savior has chronicled the fact that the man took a grain of mustard seed and sowed it, but thousands of people had gone on sowing mustard seed for half a lifetime without a word.

Nobody has ever spoken in your honor, my Friend, though you have taught the Truth of God. Dear Teacher, go on sowing, though nobody should observe your diligence or praise your faithfulness. Sow the seed of precious Truth in the garden of the child’s mind, for much more will come of it than you have dared to hope.

It seems to me that our Lord selected the mustard seed in this parable, not because its results are the greatest possible from a seed—for an oak or a cedar grow much greater than a mustard tree—but He selected it because it is the greatest result as compared with the size of the seed. Follow out the analogy. Come to yonder school and see! That earnest young man is teaching a boy, one of those wild creatures of the street. They swarm in every quarter. A dozen young Turks are before him, or young Arabs of the street. He is teaching them the Gospel. Small affair, is it not?

Yes, very. But what may come of it? Think of how joyfully much may grow out of this little! What is that young man teaching? Only one elementary Truth. Do not sneer. It is Truth, but it is the mere alphabet of it. He touches upon nothing deep in theology. He only says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Dear Boy, believe in the Lord Jesus and live.” That is all he says. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? The teacher, himself, is teaching the one Truth in a very poor way—at least, *he* thinks so.

Ask him, when he is done, what he thinks of his own teaching and he replies, "I do not feel fit to teach." Yes, that young man's teaching is sighed over and in his own judgment it is poor and weak, but there is life in the Truth he imparts and eternal results will follow—results of which I have now to speak in the second part of my sermon. May the good Spirit help me so to speak as to encourage my beloved friends who have given themselves up to the Christ-like work of teaching the little ones!

SECONDLY, let us enquire, WHAT CAME OF IT? First, "it grew." That was what the sower hoped would come of it—he placed the seed in the ground hoping that it would grow. It is not reasonable to suppose that he would have sown it if he had not hoped that it would spring up. Dear Teacher, do you always sow in hope, do you trust that the Word will live and grow? If you do not, I do not think your success is very probable. Expect the Truth of God to take root and expand and grow up. Teach Divine Truth with earnestness and expect that the Life within it will unveil its wonders.

But though the sower expected growth, he could not, himself, have made it grow. After he had placed the seed in the ground he could water it, he could pray God to make the sun shine on it, but he could not directly produce growth. Only He that made the seed could cause it to grow. Growth is a continuance of that almighty act by which life is at first given. The putting of life into the seed is God's work, and the bringing forth of the life from the seed is God's work, too. This is a matter within your hope, but far beyond your power.

A very wonderful thing it is that the seed should grow. If we did not see it every day, we should be more astonished at the growth of seed than at all the wonders of magicians. A growing seed is God's abiding miracle. You see a piece of ground near London covered with a market garden and after a few months you go by the place and you see streets and a public square and a Church and a great population. You say to yourself, "It is remarkable that all these houses should have sprung up in a few months." Yet that is not at all so wonderful as for a plowed field to become covered four feet high with corn and all without the use of wagons to bring the material, or tools to work it up into a harvest.

Without noise of hammer, or the ringing of trowels—without handiwork of man—the whole has been done. Wonder at the growth of Divine Grace! See how it increases, deepens, strengthens! Growth in Grace is a marvel of Divine love. That a person should repent through the Gospel, that he should believe in Jesus, that he should be totally changed, that he should have a hope of Heaven, that he should receive power to become a child of God—these are all marvelous things. Yet they are going on under our eyes and we fail to admire them as we should. The growth of holiness in such fallen creatures as we are is the admiration of angels, the delight of all intelligent beings.

To the sower, this growth was very pleasing. How pleasant it is to see the seed of Divine Grace grow in children! Do you not remember when you first sowed mustard and cress as a child, how the very next morning you went and turned the ground up to see how much it had grown? How pleased you were when you saw the little yellow shoots, and afterward a green leaf or two! So is it with the true teacher—he or she is anxious to

see growth and makes eager inquiry for it. What was expected is taking place, and it is most delightful to that teacher, whatever it may be to others.

An unsympathetic person cries, "Oh, I do not think anything of that child's emotions. It is merely a passing impression—he will soon forget it." The teacher does not think so. The cold critic says, "I don't think much of a child's weeping. Children's tears lie very near the surface." But the teacher is full of hope that in these tears is a real sorrow for sin and an earnest seeking after the Lord. The questioner says, "It is nothing for a child to say that he gives his heart to Jesus. Youngsters soon think that they believe. They are so easily led."

People talk thus because they do not love children and live with the desire to save them. If you sympathize with children, you are pleased with every hopeful token, and are on the watch for every mark of Divine life within them. If you are a florist, you will see more of the progress of your plants than if you are no gardener and have no interest in such things. Think, then, of what my text says—"It grew." Oh, for a prayer just now from all of you this morning, "Lord, make the Gospel grow wherever it falls! Whether the preacher scatters it, or the teacher sows it. Whether it falls among the aged people, or the young—Lord, make the Gospel grow!" Pray hard for it, Friends! *You* cannot make it grow, but you can prevail with God to bless it to His honor and praise.

Next, having started growing, it became a tree. Luke says, "It became a great tree." It was great in itself, but the greatness was seen mainly in comparison with the size of the seed. The growth was great. Here is the wonder—not that it became a tree—but that, being a mustard seed, it should become "a great tree." Do you see the point of the parable? I have already brought it before you. Listen! It was only a word spoken—"Dear boy, look to Jesus." Only such a word and a soul was saved, its sin was forgiven—its whole being was changed—a new heir of Heaven was born!

Do you see the growth? A *word* produces salvation! A grain of mustard seed becomes a great tree! A little teaching brings eternal life. That is not all—the teacher, with many prayers and tears, took her girl home and pleaded with her for Christ and the girl was led to yield her heart to the dominion of Christ Jesus—a holy, heavenly life came out of that pleading. See! She becomes a thoughtful girl, a loving wife, a gracious mother, a matron in Israel—such an one as Dorcas among the poor, or Hannah with her Samuel.

What a great result from a little cause! The teacher's words were tearfully spoken. They could not have been printed, for they were far too broken and childlike. But they were, in God's hands, the means of fashioning a life most sweet, most chaste, most beautiful!

A boy was about as wild as any roamer of our streets. A teacher knelt by his side with his arm about the lad's neck. He pleaded with God for the boy and with the boy for God. That boy was converted and as a youth in business he was an example to the workroom. As a father he was a guide to his household. As a man of God he was a light to all around. As a preacher of righteousness he adorned the doctrine of God, his Savior, in all things. There is much more which I might easily picture, but you can work it out as well as I can. All that is to be desired may spring out of the

simple talk of a humble Christian with a youth. A mustard seed becomes a great tree—a few words of holy admonition may produce a noble life.

But is that all? Beloved, our teaching may preserve souls from the deep darkness of the abode of the lost. A soul left to itself might hurry down from folly to vice, from vice to obduracy, from obduracy to fixed resolve to perish. But by the means of loving teaching, all this is changed. Rescued from the power of sin, like a lamb snatched from between the jaws of the lion, the youth is now no longer the victim of vice but seeks holy and heavenly things. Hell has lost its prey, and see up yonder! Heaven's wide gate has received a precious soul. "Sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem" many have come who were led there from the Sunday school.

They who once were foul are now white-robed, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Harken to their songs of praise! You may keep on listening, for those songs will never come to an end. All this was brought about through a brief address of a trembling brother who stood up one Sunday afternoon to close the school and talk a little about the Cross of Jesus. Or all this came of a gentle sister who could never have spoken in public, yet was enabled to warn a young girl who was growing giddy and seemed likely to go sadly astray. Wonderful that a soul's taking the road to Heaven or to Hell should be made, in the purpose of God, to hinge upon the humble endeavors of a weak but faithful teacher! You see how the mustard seed grew until it became a great tree.

This great tree became a shelter—"the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it." Mustard in the East does grow very large, indeed. The most common kind of it may be found eight or ten feet high but there is a kind which will grow almost like a forest tree. There probably were some of these latter trees in the sheltered region wherein our Lord was speaking. A mustard which grew here and there in Palestine was of surprising dimensions. When the tree grew, the birds came to it.

Here we have unexpected influences. Think of it. That man took a mustard seed which you could hardly see if I held it up. When he took the mustard seed—when he put it into his garden—had he any thought of bringing birds to that spot? Not he. You do not know all you are doing when you are teaching a child the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. When you are trying to bring a soul to Christ, your action has ten thousand hooks to it and these may seize on innumerable things. Holy teaching is the opening of a well and no one knows all the effects which the waters will produce on that spot.

There seems no link between sowing a grain of mustard seed and birds of the air, but the winged wanderers soon made a happy connection. There may seem no connection between teaching that boy and the reclaiming of cannibals in New Guinea, but I can see a very possible connection. Tribes in Central Africa may have their destiny shaped by your instruction of a tiny child. When John Pounds bribed an urchin with a hot potato to come and learn to read the Bible, I am sure John Pounds had no idea at all of the Ragged Schools in London, but there is a clear line of cause and effect in the whole matter. A hot potato might be the coat of arms of the Ragged School Union.

When Nasmyth went about from house to house visiting in the slums of London, I do not suppose that he saw in his act the founding of the Lon-

don City Mission and all the Country Town Missions. No one can tell the end of his beginnings, the growth of his sowings. Go on doing good in little ways and you shall one day wonder at the great results. Do the next thing that lies before you. Do it well. Do it unto the Lord. Leave results with His unbounded liberality of love, but hope to reap at least a hundredfold.

How many fowls came and roosted under that one mustard tree I do not know. How many birds in a day, how many birds in the year, came and found a resting place and picked the seeds they loved so well, I cannot tell. When one person is converted, how many may receive a blessing out of him, none can tell. Now is the day for romances—our literature is drenched with tales religious or irreligious. What stories might be written concerning benefits bestowed, directly and indirectly, by a single godly man or woman! When you have written a thrilling story upon the subject, I can assure you I can match it with something better, still. One single individual can scatter benedictions across a continent and belt the world with blessing.

But what is that I hear? I see this mustard tree—it is a very wonderful tree. But I not only see, I hear! Music! Music! The birds! The birds! It is early morning, the sun is scarcely up—what torrents of song! Is that the way to produce music? Shall I sow mustard seed and reap songs? I thought we must buy an organ, or purchase a violin, or buy some wind or stringed instrument, to produce music—but here is a new plan altogether! Nebuchadnezzar had his flutes, harps, sackbuts, psaltery, dulcimers, and all kinds of music—but all that mingled sound could not rival the melody of *birds*. I shall sow mustard seed now and get music in God's own way.

Friends, when you teach your children the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, you are sowing the music of Heaven. Every time you tell the tidings of pardon bought with blood, you are filling the choirs of Glory with sweet voices which, to the Eternal Name, shall day and night sing out songs of devout gratitude. Go on, then, if this is to be the result. If even Heaven's high harmonies depend upon the simple teaching of a Ragged School, let us never cease from our hallowed service.

Having said so much, I now close with these three practical observations. Are we not highly honored to be entrusted with such a marvelous thing as the Gospel? If it is a seed comprehending so much within it which will come to so much if it is properly used, blessed and happy are we to have such good news to proclaim! I thought this morning, when I awoke into the damp, and rain, and felt my bones complaining, I shall be glad when four more Sundays shall have gone and I shall be free to take a little rest in a sunnier clime.

Jaded in mind and weary in spirit, I braced myself with this reflection—what blessed work I have to do! What a glorious Gospel have I to preach! I ought to be a very happy man, to have such glad tidings to bear to my fellows. I said to myself, "So I am." Well now, Beloved Teacher, next Sunday when you leave your bed and say, "I have had a hard week's work and I could half wish that I had not to go to my class," answer yourself thus—"But I am a happy person to have to talk to children about Christ Jesus. If I had to teach them arithmetic or carpentering, I might get tired of it—but to talk about Jesus, whom I love—why, it is a joy forever!

Let us be encouraged to sow the good seed in evil times. If we do not see the Gospel prospering elsewhere, let us not despair. If there were no more mustard seed in the world, and I had only one grain of it, I should be all the more anxious to sow it. You can produce any quantity if only one seed will grow. So now today there is not very much Gospel about—the Church has given it up—a great many preachers preach everything but the living Truth of God.

This is sad but it is a strong reason why you and I should teach more Gospel than ever. I have often thought to myself that other men may teach socialism, deliver lectures, or collect a band of fiddlers that they may gather a congregation—but I will preach the Gospel. I will preach more Gospel than ever, if I can. I will stick more to the one cardinal point. The others can attend to the odds and ends but I will keep to Christ Crucified. To those of vast ability who are looking to the events of the day I would say, “Allow one poor fool to keep on preaching the Gospel.”

Beloved Teachers, be fools for Christ, and keep to the Gospel! Don’t be afraid. It has life in it and it will grow—only you bring it out and let it grow. I am sometimes afraid that we may prepare our sermons and addresses too much, so as to make *ourselves* shine. If so, we are like the man who tried to grow potatoes—he never grew any and he wondered much—“for,” said he, “I very carefully boiled them for hours.” So, it is very possible to extract all the life out of the Gospel and put so much of yourself into it that Christ will not bless it.

And, lastly, we are bound to do it. If so much will come out of so little, we are bound to go for it. Nowadays people want ten percent for their money. Hosts of fools are readily caught by any scheme or speculation or limited liability company that promises to give them immense dividends! I would like to make you wise by inviting you to an investment which is *sure*. Sow a mustard seed and grow a tree. Talk of Christ and save a soul—that soul saved will be a blessing for ages and a joy to God throughout eternity.

Was there ever such an investment as this? Let us go on with it. If on our simple word eternity is hung, let us speak with all our heart. Life, death, and Hell, and worlds unknown hang on the lips of the earnest teacher of the Gospel of Jesus. Let us never cease speaking while we have breath in our bodies. The Lord bless you! Amen and Amen.

**Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon: Matthew 13:1-23.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—916, 643, 30.**

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THE STRAIT GATE

NO. 3560

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 1917.

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

***“Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you,
will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”
Luke 13:24.***

THE precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ are dictated by the soundest wisdom. He has given us Divine Prescriptions for the health of our souls and His Commandments, though clothed with Sovereign Authority, are spoken in such infinite kindness that we may regard them as the advice of a true and faithful Friend. This is not a legal, but a Gospel exhortation, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” He, Himself, is the only gate, or the door, by which we can find admission, and the way to enter in through Jesus Christ is not by working, but by believing! Then, as to the strife we are urged to carry on, it is an earnest endeavor to steer clear of all the rocks, shoals and quicksands of popular fallacies and deceitful traditions, and to sail in the deep waters with His Covenant for our chart, and His Word for our compass, in simple obedience to His statutes, trusting to Him as our Pilot, whose voice we always hear, though His face we cannot see. The storm signal may well awaken your fears, but the cry of peril had need excite your caution. The mere mention sounds like a menace. “Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Listen to that warning, lest you be among the, “many” that founder—perhaps you shall be among the few that escape. Listen to what Jesus tells you shall come to pass with the multitude, that it may never come to pass with you as individuals. Mark now—

I. A GATE WHICH IT IS MOST DESIRABLE TO ENTER.

Surely “many” would not seek to enter if they were not convinced of the desirableness of passing through it! The very fact that so many, although they fail, will at least seek to enter, proves that there is a desire, a reason and a motive why men and women should aim to enter.

This gate—that is, Christ—it is most desirable for us to pass through *because it is the gate of the City of Refuge*. Cities of refuge were appointed for men-slayers, who, when they were pursued by the avenger of blood, they might pass the gate and be secure within the sanctuary or city. The

Gospel of Jesus Christ is intended as a refuge for those who have broken the Law of God, whom vengeance is pursuing, who will certainly be overtaken, to their eternal destruction, unless they fly to Christ and find shelter in Him. Outside of Christ the sword of fire pursues us swift and sharp. From God's wrath there is but one escape—and that is by a simple faith in Christ. Believe in Him and the sword is sheathed, and the energy and the love of God will become your everlasting portion! But refuse to believe in Jesus and your innumerable sins, written in His book, shall be laid at your door in that day when the pillars of Heaven shall reel and the stars shall fall like withered fig leaves from the tree! Oh, who would not wish to escape from the wrath to come! Mr. Whitefield, when preaching, would often hold up his hands and cry, "Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!" There is more weight and meaning in these words than tongue can tell or heart conceive. The wrath to come! the wrath to come! When past that Gate, like Noah after he had passed into the ark, you are safe from the overwhelming deluge—you are sheltered from the devouring conflagration which shall consume the earth—you are rescued from the death and the doom that await the countless multitudes of the impenitent! Who would not wish to enter where there is salvation, the only place where salvation can be found?

It is desirable to enter this gate because *it is the gate of a home*. There is sweet music in that word, "home." Jesus is the home of His people's hearts. We are at rest when we get to Christ. We have all we need when we have Jesus. Happiness is the portion of the Christian in this life while he lives upon his Savior. I have seen outside in the night refugee crowds of persons waiting an hour beforehand, till the doors were opened. Poor souls! Shivering in the cold, but in expectation of being warmed and comforted in a little time for a little while, when they would be admitted. What do you think, O homeless men and women—were there a permanent home for you, a home from which you never could be banished, a home into which you could be introduced as dear children—would it not be worth your while to wait for a long time at the door, and to knock again and again right vehemently, could you but ultimately gain admission? Jesus is a home for the homeless, a rest for the weary, a comfort for the comfortless. Is your heart broken—Jesus can comfort you! Have you been banished from your family, or one by one have the dear ones been taken to their last resting place? Do you feel solitary, friendless, cheerless, accounting "the black flowing river" to be preferred before this troubled stream of life, and that pitiless society of men and women, all eager for gain and gaiety, reckoning nothing of your griefs or your groans? Oh, come to Jesus! Trust in Him and He will light up a star in

the black midnight sky! He will kindle a fire in your hearts that shall make them glow with joy and comfort, even now! It were worthwhile to be a Christian, irrespective of the hereafter. Such present comfort as a belief in Jesus imparts is an inestimable compensation! This is the gate of refuge, and it is the gate of a home.

Moreover, *it leads to a blessed feast.* We read just now of the supper that was spread. Jesus does not feed our bodies, but He does what is better—He feeds our minds. A hungry stomach is terrible, but a hungry heart is far more dreadful, for a loaf of bread will fill the one, but what can satisfy the other? Oh, when the heart gets to craving, and pining, and yearning after something it cannot get, it is like the sea that cannot rest—it is like the grave that never can be filled—it is like the horseleech, whose daughters cry, “Give, give, give!” Happy the man who believes in Jesus, for he becomes at once a contented man. Not only does he find rest in Christ, but joy and gladness, peace and abiding satisfaction are the portion of his lot. I tell you what I do know—and I would not lie, even for the Lord, Himself—I tell you that there is a mirth to be found in faith in Christ which cannot be matched! Speak of their buoyant spirits who make merry in the dance, or of the festive glee of those that are filled with wine? It is but the crackling of a handful of thorns under a pot—how soon it is gone! But the joy of the man who meditates on the love of Christ which embraces him, on the blood of Christ which cleanses him, on the arm of Christ which upholds him, on the hand of Christ which leads him, on the crown of Christ which is to be his portion—the joy of such a man is constant, deep, overflowing, beyond the power of expression! The poorest Christian in all the world—bedridden, living on parish allowance, full of pains and ready to die—when his heart is stayed upon Christ, would not change places with the youngest, brightest, richest, noblest spirit to be found outside the Church of God! No, kings and emperors, boast no more of your beggarly crowns—their glitter will soon fade! Your purple robes will soon be moth eaten! Your silver shall soon be cankered—of your palace, not a stone shall be left upon its fellow! Bitter shall be the dregs of your wine cups and all your music shall end in discord! I tell you that the poorest of all the company of the faithful in Christ Jesus excel you, and “would not change their blest estate for all that earth calls good or great.” So abundantly worthwhile is it to come to Christ for the happiness, as well as the repose, which we find in Him.

Well likewise, dear Friends, may men desire to pass through the strait gate, knowing it is the *gate which leads to Paradise.* There was one gate of Paradise through which our father—Adam—and our mother—Eve—went weeping as they left the Garden all behind them to wander into the desert world. Can you picture them to yourselves, with the cherubim be-

hind them and the flaming sword bidding them be gone, for Paradise was no place for rebels? Men have wandered up and down the world since then to find the gate of Paradise, that they might enter yet again. They have scaled the peaks of Sinai, but they have not found it there. They have traversed the tracks of the wilderness, weary and footsore, jaded and faint, but they have found no gate to Paradise anywhere in all their expeditions. The scholar has searched for it in the ancient books. The astronomer has hunted for it among the stars. Sages, as they were called, have sought to find it by studying their arts—and fools have tried to find it among their viols and their bowls. But there is only one gate! Look, there it is! It is in the form of a cross, and he that will find the gate of Heaven finds the Cross and the Man that did hang thereon! Happy he who can come up to it and pass through it, reposing all his confidence in the Atonement once made by the Man of Suffering on Calvary's tree. On earth he is saved, and in the article of death he shall pass through that gate of pearl unchallenged, walk the streets of gold unabashed and bow before the excellent Glory without a fear! He is free in Heaven. The Cross is a mark of a citizen of the skies! Having truly believed in Jesus, everlasting happiness is his beyond all doubt! Who, then, would not pass through the strait gate?

And who would not wish to pass through it when he considers what will be the lot of those outside the gate? How we tremble at the thought of that outer darkness where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! There are many enquiries, nowadays, about eternal punishment. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, do not rashly or carelessly challenge the bitter experience of such condemnation! Speculate as you will about the Doctrine, but I pray you do not trifle with the reality. To be lost forever, let that mean what it may, will be more than you can bear though your ribs were iron and your bones were brass. Tempt not the avenging angel! Beware that you forget not God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be no one to deliver you! By the living God, I pray you fear and tremble, lest you be found out of Chris in the day of His appearing. Rest not, be not patient, much less merry, till you are saved! To be in danger of the fire of Hell is a peril that no heart can adequately realize, no language fitly paint! Oh, I beseech you, halt not, give yourself no rest till you have got beyond that danger! Flee for your lives, for the fiery shower will soon descend! Escape! God, in His mercy, quicken your pace that you may escape soon, lest the hour of mercy cease and the Day of Judgment come! Surely these are reasons enough for wanting to pass in at the strait gate! Observe still further what our Lord tells us.

II. THERE IS A CROWD OF PEOPLE WHO WILL SEEK TO ENTER AND WILL NOT BE ABLE.

Who are these? If you look closely *at the crowd who this day seek to pass*, I think you will see a considerable difference between seeking and striving. You are not merely advised to seek—you are urgently bid to strive. Striving is a more vehement exercise than seeking. Are you among those who coolly seek admission because, forsooth, they suppose it is the proper thing? Many there are who come up to the gate of mercy and seek to enter, not striving, not particularly anxious, certainly far enough from being agitated. And when they look at the gate, they object to the lintel because it is too low, nor will they deign to stoop. There is no believing in Jesus with a proud heart! He that trusts Christ must feel himself to be guilty, and acknowledge it. He never will savingly believe till he has been thoroughly convinced of sin. But many say, “I will never stoop to that. Unless I have something to do in the work, and share some of the merit, I cannot enter.” No, Sirs, some of you are quite unable to believe in Christ because you believe in yourselves! As long as a man thinks himself a fine fellow, how can he think well of Jesus? You eclipse the sun! You hold up your own little hands before the sunlight—how can you expect to see? You are too good to go to Heaven, or, at least, too good in your own apprehension. Oh, Man, I pray God will prick that bubble, that blown-up bladder, and let out the gas so that you may discern what you really are, for you are nothing, after all, but a poor worm, contemptible, notwithstanding your conceit and pride, in spite of your poverty, an arrogant worm, that dares to lift up its head when it has nothing to glory in! Oh, bow yourself in lowly self-abhorrence, otherwise you may seek to enter, but shall not be able!

Some are unable to enter because *the pride of life will not let them*. They come to this gate in their carriage and pair, and expect to drive in, but they cannot get admission. There is no different way of salvation for a peer of the realm than for a pauper in the workhouse! The greatest prince that ever lived must trust Jesus just as the poorest peasant does. I recollect a minister once telling me that he attended the bedside of a very proud woman, of considerable wealth, and she said to him, “Do you think, Sir, that when I am in Heaven, such a person as Betty—my maid—will be in the same place as I am? I never could endure her company here. She is a good servant in her way, but I am sure I could not put up with her in Heaven.” “No, Madam,” he said, “I do not suppose you will ever be where Betty will be.” He knew Betty to be one of the humblest and most consistent of Christian women anywhere—and he might have told her proud mistress that in the sight of God, meekness is preferable to majesty. The Lord Jesus, in the day of His coming, will wipe out all such distinctions as may very properly exist on earth, though they cannot be recognized beyond the skies. Oh, rich man, glory not in your rich-

est! All your wealth, if you could take it with you, would not buy a single paving stone in the streets of Heaven! Do not trust in this poor stuff! Oh, lay it aside as a crown of glorying, and pass humbly through the gate with Lazarus!

Some are unable to enter because *they carry contraband goods with them*. When you land in France, there stands the gendarme who wants to see what you are carrying in that basket. If you attempt to push by, you will soon find yourself in custody. He must know what is there—contraband goods cannot be taken in. So at the gate of mercy which is Christ, no man can be saved if he desires to keep his sins. He must give up every false way. “Oh,” says the drunk, “I’d like to get to Heaven, but I must smuggle in this bottle somehow.” “I would like to be a Christian,” says another. “I do not mind taking Dr. Watts’ hymns with me, but I should like, sometimes, to sing a Bacchanalian song, or a light serenade.” “Well,” cries another, “I enjoy myself on Sunday with God’s people, but you must not deny me the amusements of the world during the week—I cannot give them up.” Well then you cannot enter, for Jesus Christ never saves us *in our sins*—He saves us *from our sins*. “Doctor,” says the fool, “make me well, but I’d like to keep my fever.” “No,” says the doctor, “how can you be well while you keep the fever?” How can a man be saved from his sins while he clings to his sins? What is salvation but to be delivered from sin? Sin lovers may seek to be saved, but they shall not be able—while they hug their sins—they cannot have Christ! Some of you are in this grievous predicament. You have been attending this House of Prayer a good long time. I do not know what hinders you, but this I do know, there is a worm somewhere eating out the heart of that fair looking apple. Some private sin that you pamper is destroying your souls! Oh, that you had Grace to give it up and to come in by the strait gate, trusting in Jesus Christ!

Not a few are unable to enter in because they *want to postpone the matter until tomorrow*. Today, at any rate, you are engaged with other plans and projects. “A little longer let me revel in some of the sensual enjoyments of life, and afterwards I will come in.” Procrastinators are among the most hopeless of people! He that has “tomorrow” quivering on his lips is never likely to have Grace reigning in his heart.

Others, and these are in the worst plight of all, *think that they are in* and that they have entered. They mistake the outside of the gate for the inside! A strange mistake to fall into, but many do thus delude themselves. They rub their backs against the posts and then they tell us they are as near Heaven as anybody else. They have never passed the threshold—they have never found shelter in Christ—albeit they may have felt

wonderfully excited at a revival meeting, and sung as loudly and lustily as any of the congregation—

“I do believe, I will believe.”

There is a considerable show of reformation about them. Although they have not got a new garment, they have mended up the old one. They are not new creatures, but still, they are better behaved creatures than they were before! And they are, “all right.” Be not deceived, my dear Friends! Beware of mistaking a work of nature for the operation of God’s Grace. Do not be taken in by the devil’s counterfeits. They are well made—they look genuine—when they are brand new they shine and glitter like fine gold, but they will not stand the test! Everyone of them will have a nail driven through them one day—they will never pass current with God. If you have a religion, let it be real and true, not feigned and hypocritical! Of all cheats, the man who cheats himself is certainly the least wise and, I think he is the least honest. Do not play the knave with your own soul! Suspect yourself too much rather than too little. Better journey to Heaven in terror of Hell than dream of the happy land while drifting in the other direction. “Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes!” Be on your guard, everyone of you. Let not anyone deceive himself!

Thus it is that a crowd—I had almost said a countless crowd—of people nowadays seek to enter in, but for manifold reasons they are not able to do so. And yet there is a more appalling aspect to the same fact. “Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” *The dying are not able.* Panic-stricken, the dying man sends for the minister whom he never went to hear when his health was good and hours hung heavy in his hands. The charm of Sundays lay in their dissipation—an excursion up the river, or a cheap trip to Brighton and back—anything, everything, sooner than hear the Gospel! He never read his Bible. He never prayed. Now the doctor shakes his head and the nurse suggests that they “fetch a clergyman.” Poor soul! She means right, but what do you think he can do? What can we ministers do for you? What can any man do for his fellow creature? “None of us can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” He begins to seek, when, alas, he cannot think, poor fellow, for he is in *articulo mortis*, with the throes of his last struggle! His head swims, pains grow at his vitals, a glassy film is over his eyes, rambling words fall from his lips. Could he think, he has got something else to think about than the dread future that awaits him! Look at his weeping wife. See those dear children, brought in to get a last kiss from their father? Were his mind more vigorous, it were not likely to be taken up with spiritual thoughts—there is too much in the solemn farewell to occupy the moments left in preparation

for the future. "Pray for me, Sir," he says, with fainting, failing breath. Yes, he is seeking to enter in! In 99 cases out of a 100 I fear the answer is, he shall not be able. Little hope have I for deathbed repentances. Never trust to them, I beseech you!

Such a vestibule as a deathbed you may never have. To die in the street may be your lot. Should you have a deathbed, you will have something else to think about besides religion. Oh, how often have I heard Christian men say, when they have been dying, "Ah, Sir, if I had a God to seek now, what a misery it would be! What a blessing it is that, with all the cares that now come upon me, I have a sure and certain hope in Christ, for I found Him years ago." Oh, dear Hearers, do not be among those who postpone and procrastinate, till, in a dying hour, after a fashion, you seek to enter and find you shall not be able!

Some years ago I was awakened about three o'clock in the morning by a sharp ring of the doorbell. I was urged without delay to visit a house not very far off London Bridge. I went and up two flights of stairs I was shown into a room, the occupants of which were a nurse and a dying man. There was nobody else. "Oh, Sir," she said, "Mr. So-and-So, about half an hour ago, begged me to send for you." "What does he want?" I asked. "He is dying, Sir," she replied. I said, "I see that. What sort of a man was he?" "He came home last night, Sir, from Brighton. He had been out all day. I looked for a Bible, Sir, but there is not one in the house. I hope you have got one with you." "Oh," I said, "a Bible would be of no use to him, now! If he could understand me, I could tell him the way of salvation in the very words of Holy Scripture." I spoke to him, but he gave me no answer. I spoke again—still there was no reply. All sense had fled. I stood a few minutes gazing at his face, till I perceived he was dead—his soul had departed. That man in his lifetime had been known to jeer at me. In strong language he had often denounced me as a hypocrite. Yet he was no sooner smitten with the darts of death than he sought my presence and my counsel, feeling in his heart, no doubt, that I was a servant of God, though he did not care to acknowledge it with his lips. There I stood, unable to help him. Promptly as I had responded to his call, what could I do but look at his corpse and go home again? He had, when too late, sighed for the ministry of reconciliation, sought to enter in, but he was not able. There was no space left him, then, for repentance—he had wasted the opportunity. Therefore, I pray and beseech you, my dear Hearers, by the near approach of death—it may be much nearer than you think—give earnest heed to these things! I look round in this building and note the pews and sittings from which hearers, whose faces were once familiar to us have gone—some to Glory, some I know not where. God knows. Oh, let not the next removal, if it is yours, vacate

the seat of a scoffer, or of a neglecter, or of one who, having been touched in his conscience, silenced the secret monitor and would not turn! As the Lord lives, you must turn or burn! You must either repent or be ruined forever! May God give you wisdom to choose the better part!

It appears from Scripture that *even after death there will be some who will seek to enter and shall not be able*. I do not attempt to explain what I cannot understand, but I find the Master represents those on the left hand asking a question, "When saw we You hungry, and fed You not?" As if they had some glimmering hope that the sentence upon them might be reversed. And I read in another place of those who will come and knock at the door, and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But the Master of the house, having already risen up and shut the door, will answer, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." Is there, then, such a thing as prayer in Hell? When the soul has passed out of the body without hope, will it seek for hope hereafter? Perhaps so. Did not the rich man pray to Abraham to send Lazarus? It is but natural to expect that, as they doubted God's promises on earth, they may doubt God's threats in Hell, and may hope, perhaps, that there will be a way of escape. They will seek, they will seek, but they shall not be able, not able to enter Heaven! They said they were not able on earth—they shall find they are not able in Hell, either! *Non possumus* is the sinner's cry. "We are not able to leave our sins! We are not able to believe! We are not able to be serious! We are not able to be prayerful!" And then, how it will be thrown back into their teeth! Not able to enter Heaven, not able to escape from torment, not able to live, not able to die—not able because the gate of Heaven admits no sinner who has not been washed in the Redeemer's blood! Back with you, Sir! You would not come to the Fountain, you would not wash! Back with you! You are not able! Not able because Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and you never thought of preparation! Away with you, Sir! How can you enter when you are not prepared? Heaven is a place for which a fitness is needed. Men cannot enjoy that which would be contrary to their natures. Away with you, Sirs! You could not enjoy Heaven if you were admitted, for you are not changed in heart! Away with you!

What? Do you linger? Do you cry? Do you pray? Do you weep? Do you entreat? Away with you! No, the angels shall sweep you away, for is it not written—You yourselves shall be thrust out—unceremoniously driven and scourged away from the gate of Glory because you would not come to the gate of Grace? These are terrible things to utter. I well might shrink from speaking thus, were it not that fidelity to your souls makes such demands that I must ring the warning. If you die without faith in Christ, behold there is a gulf fixed between you and Heaven. I do not know what that means, but I know what idea it gives to me, and should

give to you. Between Heaven and Hell there is no traffic! None ever passed from Hell to Heaven—

***“There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave to which we hasten!
But darkness, death, and long despair
Reign in eternal silence there!”***

They would gladly pass the gulf—were it fire, they could be glad to pass it! Were it full of torments, many and manifold as a Spanish Inquisition could invent—they would be glad to bear them—could they but hope to cross the gulf. But no, the voice is heard—an angel’s voice—“He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is unjust, let him be unjust still.” The wax has cooled—you cannot alter the impression. The die is cast—you cannot remold it. The tree has fallen—there it lies.

I wish I could speak now in words that would burn their way right into your inmost hearts. Alas, I cannot. I must, however, just repeat the text again, and leave it with you. “Many shall seek in that dread day to enter, but shall not be able. Oh, enter then, enter! Enter now, while yet the gate stands wide open and mercy bids you come! Make haste to enter while yet the avenging angel lingers, and the angel of mercy stands with outstretched arms and cries, “Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” May God, the ever-blessed Spirit, without whom no warning can be effectual, and no invitation can be attractive, sweetly compel you to trust Christ tonight! Here is the Gospel in a few words—Jesus suffered the wrath and torment we justly merited. He doubtless bore the penalty of *your* transgressions if you penitently believe in His Sacrifice. When you trust in Him for pardon, ‘tis proof your sins were laid on Him for judgment! You are, therefore, a forgiven man! A pardoned woman! You are saved—saved forever! If you have a simple, child-like trust, you may go home singing for joy of heart, knowing that you have already entered the strait gate! And Grace on earth and glory in Heaven lie before you! May God bless you richly, and may you adore Him gratefully, for His dear name’s sake. Amen.

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

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

SELF-DELUSION

NO. 475

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.”
Luke 13:24.***

EVERY wise merchant will occasionally hold a stock-taking, when he will cast up his accounts, examine what he has on hand, and ascertain decisively whether his trade is prosperous or declining. Every man who is wise in the kingdom of Heaven, will do the same by himself. He will cry, “Search me, O God and try me.” And he will frequently set apart special seasons for self-examination, to discover whether things are right between God and his soul. The God whom we worship is a great heart-searcher. Of old His servants knew Him as, “the Lord which searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men.”

We who are called to be the mouth for God unto the people feel ourselves impelled to stir you up in His name to make diligent search, for we would not have you come short of the promised rest. We should be unfaithful to your souls if we did not warn you against deception, and excite you to solemn trial of your state. That which every wise man does, that which God Himself does with you, I may well exhort you to do with yourselves this morning.

O may God help you to deal very faithfully with your own hearts. Let the oldest Saint here look well to the fundamentals of his piety, for gray heads may cover black hearts. And let not the young Believer, in the first flush of his joyous faith, despise the word of warning, for the greenness of youth may be joined to the rottenness of hypocrisy.

I shall not, this morning, aim to introduce doubts and fears into your minds. No, verily, I rather hope that the rough winds of self-examination may help to drive them away. It is not security, but carnal security, which we would kill. Not confidence, but fleshly confidence, which we would overthrow. Not peace, but false peace which we would destroy. I am sure I am right in taking such a text as this, and in desiring to force it home upon your attention. For Christ, speaking to His own disciples, says, “I say unto YOU.”

Notice with great care how He repeats the personal pronoun, *you, you, yourselves*, some twelve times in a few verses. As if this were a matter especially belonging to professors—a subject which ought to come under our immediate notice, not as having reference to aliens and foreigners from the commonwealth of Israel, but to us, the professed followers of Jesus.

Let us bow our strength to our solemn work at once. O great Master of assemblies, make our words as goads to the conscience, and fasten them as nails in the memory!

I. Our first remark is this—MANY PROFESSORS ABE DECEIVED. So the text teaches us. It does not say, “a few *may* be misled,” but “*many shall* seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” That many professors are deceived is clear enough from the language of Christ Himself, both here

and in other places. For instance, “Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise and *five were foolish*.”

We hope that in our Churches we have not such a division as this! It were a fearful thing to contemplate only one half as sincere, and the other half graceless, having the lamp of profession, without the secret vessel of spiritual life! Yet, so alarming a proportion as five out of ten should make us search ourselves very carefully, lest we are found among the virgins, and among the virgins having lamps, yes, and among those whose lamps are burning—and yet should be cast away as having no oil in our vessels!

Remember how the Master in another parable puts the multitude of the lost clearly before us—“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the Throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand but the goats on the left.” Now, by these goats are meant those who are in the flock but are not sheep.

A separation is needed, for they once were mingled. Yes, so mingled that they had a sort of hope, and were able impudently to plead—“Lord, when did we see You hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto You?” Yet I do not discover in the parable that there were more sheep than goats. I find, at any rate, that the goats did make up a very considerable multitude. And though they expected to receive the benediction with the blessed, He said, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Remember, also, another parable of our Savior, where the sower went forth to sow his seed. Here there were three places where the seed fell in vain, and only one where it brought forth fruit. And, out of the three where it fell in vain, there were two that must be numbered with professors. In the one case it fell where the thorns sprang up and choked it—there was religion but worldliness killed it. In the next, it fell where there was not much depth of earth. And the Master tells us that there are some who hear the Word and with joy receive it. But when persecution comes by-and-by, they are offended, for there was never a deep work in their inner spirit.

Tremble, my Hearers, so many of you as have received the Word with joy and gladness, lest *you* should be found to have had no depth of earth and so, by-and-by, the good things which have blossomed and budded in you should perish before the burning sun of persecution.

Nor are these parables so few. I might occupy much of your time by recalling them. But let me remind you that Christ Himself is compared by Malachi to a refiner. “He shall purify the sons of Levi. He shall be like a refiner’s fire and like a fuller’s soap.” Now, of the mass that is put into the refining furnace, how little comes out pure gold or silver? All those who have to deal with metals will tell you that the ore and the slag make up, by far, the greater part, and that if they get but a small percentage, they are well rewarded for all their toil and trouble.

The Master says He will bring a third part through the fire, and happy should it be for us, if we are not found among the two-thirds that shall be

put away like dross. You will remember, too, that Christ compares Himself to a farmer winnowing his corn. "Whose fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor and gather His wheat into the garner. But He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Ask the farmer whether the chaff does not make a very considerable part of the unwinnowed mass, and whether it is not most intimately connected with the wheat.

A large heap, it lies upon the floor—wait till the fan has been used and diligently applied and you shall see the heap diminished by handfuls, for the chaff has fled, and now only the good grain is left. All these metaphors, and many more, go to warn us that there are many professors who are deceived—many that are in Israel, who are not of Israel. Many that are mingled with us, who, like the mixed multitude which came up out of Egypt with Moses, shall never enter into the promised land, but shall leave their carcasses to perish in the wilderness.

But, dear Friends, we are not left to inferences, for Holy Scripture gives us facts. Let me recall them to your recollection. Among the Apostles themselves, chosen by Christ, having Christ for their teacher and exemplar, there was a Judas. "I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Were it very reasonable to suppose that our modern Churches have a smaller proportion than this of devilish deceivers? If even among Apostles, one in twelve is a liar, deceiving, and being deceived, O Lord, how should Your people search and try themselves, lest they be found wanting at the last!

Remember, too, that in the early Church, within a few days after the Spirit of God had been poured out, when that Church was in the overflowing joy of her espousals, there were found two at least who were false to their profession. Ananias and Sapphira "lied unto the Holy Spirit," and fell dead before the rebuke of Peter. If, with the Spirit just poured out, there were spots in their solemn feasts. If in the first glory of the Church's sky there were wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness and darkness forever, how much more in these days of the Church's weakness, when we have need enough to cry, "Descend, O sacred fire, descend again. For without You Your Church shall die"?

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles also informs us of an instance of a wonderful success in the city of Samaria. And yet even here, among the early converts of this revival, there was found an arch-impostor. Philip the Evangelist preaches in Samaria and it is written, "Then Simon Magus believed also." But you know how false he was. For Peter said, "Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the Holy Spirit can be purchased with money." "I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

Well, if in one of the earliest of revivals, when converts were numerous, when miracles abounded, when the whole city was full of joy—we still find a Simon Magus—what must we expect now? And, Brethren, I scarcely need to remind you, that with Paul as an overseer of the Church, the cases of deception and apostasy were not few. "All they which are in Asia are turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." "Demas has forsaken me." "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil."

Hymenaeus and Alexander having made shipwreck of faith, the Apostle says, "Whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme." Philetus is mentioned, "Who has strayed according to the truth."

I say, there were even in such Churches as the Galatians—men who were accursed because they preached another Gospel. And in the Church of Corinth there were found evil ones who had to be cast out of the assembly. Moreover, Brethren, you will remember that the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, gives no flattering character of the seven Churches in Asia, though they were like seven golden candlesticks.

Of the best of them He might say, “I have somewhat against you.” Of Sardis it is said, “You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.” And of Laodicea, you will remember it was, “neither cold nor hot, so that Christ did spew it out of His mouth.” Put these things together, and you will see they make up a mass of hypocrisy and deception in the most favorable age of the Church’s history. And we therefore think ourselves far from an uncharitable judgment when we expect to find in the Church of today many that are deceived. But, friends, I need not argue thus. For we *know* that there are such, and know it to our shame.

Every now and then a cedar falls in our midst. “Howl fir trees,” when the cedars fall. We have seen—who has not, that has had any experience in the religious world?—we have seen our leaders turn their backs in the day of battle. And our teachers fail to sustain their own character. Ah, and we have the painful conviction that there are others who are not discovered yet, whose sins do not go beforehand unto judgment but follow after, who are nevertheless tainted at the core. There are the many covetous professors who are as grasping and as grinding as if they never professed to be Christians.

And you know that “covetousness is idolatry.” There are the many time-serving Christians who hold with the world and with Christ, too. And you know that we cannot serve two masters. There are the many secret sinners among Christians who have their petty vices which come not under human observation, and who, because they are thought to be good, write themselves down among the godly. Now we know there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and woe to them when their secret sins shall be published on the housetops!

Then we have the legal professors who trust to their own works, and shall find that the curse of Sinai shall wither them. And what more shall I say? Have we not many who are not so inconsistent that we could put our finger upon any open sin sufficient to deserve excommunication, but who are guilty of enormous spiritual wickedness? They are dead, they bring forth no fruit. Their hearts are hard as a millstone with regard to the conversion of sinners.

They have not the *faith* of God’s elect. They do not live by faith. They have not the *spirit* of Christ, and therefore they are none of His. God knows we have sought to use all care and diligence in this Church, both to keep out unworthy persons, and to cast out unhallowed livers. But, despite all that, we cannot but be conscious, and we tell it to you faithfully, that the enemy still continues to sow tares among the wheat. The gold is mixed with the dross, and the wine with water—for evil men thrust themselves into the heritage of the Lord.

When our muster-roll shall be revised at last, how many out of our more than two thousand members will be found to be base-born pretenders unto godliness! O my Brethren, I implore you by the precious blood of

Christ, which was not shed to make you hypocrites, but shed that a sincere people might show forth His praise—I beseech you, search and look, lest at the last it be said of you—“Mene, Mene Tekel, you are weighed in the balances and found wanting.”

II. We shall now turn to a second point. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THERE ARE FALSE PROFESSORS.

There is an imitation of the externals of godliness which is not easy to detect. Art can carve a statue so that it almost breathes. And some of us, in looking at very skillful paintings, have mistaken them for realities. In a notable picture in the Exhibition, you will have noticed an imitation of sunlight shining under a door so well painted that many go up to it to ascertain if it is not really a gleam from the sun. We know that men can counterfeit coins and notes so well that only the most experienced can detect them.

And in all commercial transactions men are so well aware of the subtlety of their fellows, that they look well lest they are deceived. The vital mysteries of godliness are mysterious—the inner life cannot be perceived by the carnal eye, and the outer life of the godly seems to most men to be but morality carried out with care. And therefore it becomes but a very simple task for a man to make himself look just like a Christian, so as to deceive the very elect. To learn by heart that which others say *from* the heart—to get the outline of a Believer’s experience and then to adapt it skillfully to one’s self as *our* experience—this is a thing so simple that instead of wondering that there *are* hypocrites, I often marvel that there are not ten times more!

And then, again, the Graces—the real Graces within—even they are very easy to counterfeit. There is a repentance that needs to be repented of—and yet it approaches as near as possible to true repentance. Does repentance make men hate sin? They who have a false repentance may detest some crimes. Does repentance make men resolve that they will not sin? So will this false repentance. For Balaam said, “If Barak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I will not go beyond the word of the Lord.”

Does true repentance make men humble themselves? So does false repentance. For Ahab humbled himself before God, and yet he perished. There is a line of distinction so fine that an eagle’s eye has not seen it, and only God Himself, and the soul which is enlightened with His Spirit, can tell whether this repentance is genuine or not. And as for faith, how easy it is to counterfeit this! Even in Christ’s day there was a faith which worked miracles, but did not save the soul. And Paul tells us that if we had a faith which could remove mountains, yet if we had not charity, it would profit us nothing.

I know it, that a man may say that he is saved by faith without works. And his faith may give him comfort, his faith help him in trials, it may make him forsake some sins, and yet it may not be the faith which looks alone to Christ and so saves the soul. To imitate these things, to so cunning and well-practiced a counterfeiter as Satan, is no great difficulty.

Dear Friends, let us remember, too, that there are so many things which *help* a man to deceive himself. He himself is naturally disposed to be very partial. “Let well enough alone,” is a proverb which most men have learned. Very few men *care* to look at the worst of their own state. They

would rather say, "Peace, peace," than think too harshly of themselves. What man ever gave *himself* a bad character? Or if he did, what man could not abundantly excuse himself for having such a character?

Then there is the devil who never wants us to be too careful, for heedlessness is one of the nets in which he takes his prey. He will whisper in the ear, "It is all well," and so beguile the simple soul to its sure ruin. Beside that, there are the inconsistencies of true Christians. Self and Satan will always use these. "Why, you are as good as old So-and-So." Or, "David sinned, therefore you may be a saint and sin. Lot fell, therefore you may fall and be a saint." And so, what with the flesh, what with the sins of true Christians, and what with the devil, it is easy for a man to fall asleep in carnal security, dreaming about Heaven, and never having his dream broken till he lifts up his eyes in Hell.

Beloved, I must add to this point, that I marvel not that so many are deceived, when I see the careless way in which you deal with religion. When men have to do with their estates, they are very careful—they retain a lawyer to go back over the title-deeds perhaps for two or three hundred years. In trade they will hurry here and there to attend to their commercial engagements. They would not launch into speculations, nor would they run great risks.

But the soul, the poor soul—how men play with it as a toy and despise it as if it were worthless earth! Two or three minutes in the morning, when they first roll out of bed. Two or three odd minutes in the evening, when they are nearly asleep—the ends of the day given to their souls—and all the best part given to the body! And then, the Sunday! How carelessly spent by most people! With what indifference do you lend your ears too often to the preaching of the Word! It is an old song. You have heard it so many times. Heaven has become a trifle to you. Hell is almost a jest. Eternity a notion, and death but a bugbear.

Alas, alas! It is a marvel that there are not more deceived. The wonder is that *any* find the gate—that any discover eternal life—when we are so, so mad, so foolish, so insane, as to trifle where we ought to be awfully in earnest, and to play and toy where the whole heart is all too little to be given to a work of such dread, such everlasting importance! God help us, since it is so easy to be deceived, to search and watch, and look and test, that we are not found castaways at the last!

III. But now for a third point and that is a very solemn one, namely, that THIS DELUSION MAY CONTINUE THROUGHOUT LIFE, even to the very last moment. And probably the first minutes of our life in the next world may be tintured with the same delusion.

Strange to think so, and yet some Scriptures seem to hint as much. Let me tell you one or two parables which Christ has used, which prove that this delusion may last long. There are the Tares and the Wheat—"Let both grow together until the harvest." It appears that the time of division does not arrive until the reapers, who are the angels, gather together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn. So, you see, you may stand in a professing state through your whole three-score years and ten, and you may be carried to your grave, followed by a train of devout men, who make great lamentation over you.

And yet, though laid in the grave like a sheep, the worm may devour you, and you may wake in the morning to shame and everlasting con-

tempt. The separation may never occur, so far as the Church on earth is concerned. It may go on till the angelic revisers shall correct the list and cut you off who are not of God.

Another parable—the Draw Net repeats the same warning, “The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net that is cast into the sea and gathers of every kind.” When does the division come? Not till they have drawn the net to land. *Then* they put the good into vessels, and throw the bad away. So not till the land comes—that is, till eternity has begun, shall be the great division. And some of you may remain in the net of the Church till it is pulled ashore at the Day of Judgment, and we may some of us be expecting to find you in the vessels—and yet you will be thrown away. Or we may expect ourselves to be there and yet ourselves may be thrown away.

I refer you again to another parable, where the same Truth of God is taught but, perhaps, even more forcibly. A great king made a supper, and it is said, “When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how came you in here?” Here was a man who remained in the kingdom, that is in the visible Church—till the king came in to see the guests—that is until Christ comes to judge the quick and dead. Then was he cast out, but not till then.

Many postpone all trial of themselves as to their possession of the righteousness of Christ to the last moment. No, some manage to defer it, with all the miserable discoveries which it brings, until the grave is past, and the great assize is held, but further the lie cannot be played—further the examination cannot be deferred. When Jesus comes, it will be impossible for any to remain ignorant of their true state, for that day will pour a flood of light into the dark corners of the dark hearts and reveal the most secret of all secret things.

Solemn reflection! Solemn reflection for every man and woman here who has made a profession of godliness! You may be sitting at the table, and you may continue to sit there without any of your fellow guests taking any exception to you. But when the King comes in, whose eyes can read the secrets of all hearts, He will say, “How came you in here, not having on a wedding garment?” Then will your nakedness and defilement startle you from your fancied security!

Speechless confusion shall cover you. Your heart shall find no excuse, the sentence shall bear justice on its forefront. “Bind him hand and foot.” Let resistance and escape be made impossible. “Cast him into outer darkness,” for he shunned the light. “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”—fit doom

for one who would not weep nor search his soul.

Sundry other parables utter same warning notes, but I shall quote only one more and that is, the Unprofitable Servant. He was a servant, and remained so. And he had the impudence to present himself among the other servants to receive the reward. Yes, and when he had no reward, he had the impertinence to argue with his Master and to claim that he had done his best with his Lord’s money. You may have a talent—and, oh, how many of you have—which you are burying in the earth.

And you may never be upbraided by your fellow servants. But when *He* comes, you may, with brazen face, go up to ask for your reward but He shall say, “Take the unprofitable servant!” And you know what the doom

of such must be. Therefore, from Christ's own language, we have the most satisfactory and solemn cause to believe that the delusion of many may continue even to the last. The blindness of the self-deceiver may continue until he finds himself in the tenfold night of eternal perdition.

But we need not go to Scripture for a proof of this, for we *know* that it is so ourselves. We have not an exact way of testing men's states—it were foolish to pretend to infallibility—but there are times when one can form a very accurate guess, the door of man's heart now and then stands on the jar. Deathbeds tell tales. It is not every man who has the hardihood to dance with death, and wear a mask upon the brink of the grave. Ah, how many there are who go through the first and the second gate, but they cannot open the iron gate that leads into the City.

I have seen some that could brave it out when in life, who have made a sorry figure in the article of death. It is a gloomy thing to hear a high professor, after all his boastings, compelled to condemn himself out of his own mouth—"I have been a hypocrite, I have sat at the Lord's Table, and I have drunk the cup of devils, too. I was respected, when I was not respectable. I was accepted among Saints, when I was a foul villain the whole while."

Some men have had to hang in chains before their execution. Some wretches lift up their eyes before they are actually in torment. But there have been others, more stolid still, who have gone right through the iron gate, with perfect quietness and calmness. And when we have heard their friends say, "Oh, he died such an easy death!" we have remembered that passage concerning the wicked, "There are no bands in their death—but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men."

This is the mark of the wicked, not of the righteous. O that sullen quietude, that dead calm, in which some men float into another world! How wretched that awful peace which heralds the overwhelming tempest and hurricane! Have I not watched the spirits of unregenerate professors, and seen the ghastly horror of the dread suspense which they labored to conceal. Not that their lives were inconsistent, but they had no spiritual life—no care for souls, no love for Christ, no private prayer, no secret fellowship with Him. And now, at last, they have no triumph, and no comfort of the Spirit.

When their time has come to die, they have talked as glibly as any, and they have closed their eyes as peacefully as any, but, like Dives, "In Hell they have lifted up their eyes, being in torment," and found their delusion dissipated, when, alas, it was too late. I warn you, dear Hearers, that delusion may continue for even fifty, sixty, or seventy years. You may say, "It is all well with my soul," and have neither doubt nor fear the whole time—and yet you may turn out rotten at the last.

The glorious Dreamer has sketched the end of the false professor. I quote his words, that you may see the scene before your eyes. "Now while I was gazing upon all these things, I turned my head to look back and saw Ignorance come up to the riverside. But he soon got over, and that without that difficulty which the other two men met with. For it happened that there was then in that place, one Vainhope, a ferryman, that with his boat helped him over. So he, as the others I saw, did ascend the hill, to come

up to the gate, only he came alone. Neither did any men meet him with the least encouragement.

“When he was come up to the gate, he looked up to the writing that was above, and then began to knock, supposing that entrance should have been quickly administered to him. But he was asked by the men that looked over the top of the gate, Where did you come from? And what do you want? He answered. I have eaten and drank in the presence of the King, and He has taught in our streets. Then they asked him for his certificate, that they might go in and show it to the King. So he fumbled in his bosom for one and found none.

“Then said they, Have you none? But the man answered never a word. So they told the King, but He would not come down to see him but commanded the two Shining Ones that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the city, to go out and take Ignorance and bind him hand and foot and take him away. Then they took him up and carried him through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the hill and put him in there. *Then I saw that there was a way to Hell, even from the gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.*”

IV. The next point is this—that this delusion, even to the last, MAY SEEM TO HAVE THE MOST EXCELLENT ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT IT. I shall prove this from Scripture. A man may be a deceiver, and he may accomplish his task all the more readily because he can say, “I have made, and I have maintained a very respectable profession in the Church. I do not know that I have ever tarnished my character. I believe I am looked upon by most people as a pattern and example.”

Yes, this may be all correct, and yet you may be shut out at the last. Remember that the five foolish virgins *were* virgins. They had not forfeited the chastity of their character, but were of such good repute as to have virtuous companions, and to have allowance to meet the honored bridegroom. They had lamps. Mark that. I do not find that they threw them away. Those lamps were burning, too, for a long time. And they had *some* oil, mark, or else the lamps could not have burned so long.

But they had not the oil in the vessel, though they had the oil in the lamp. Here was the fatal blunder. So the man may say, “Well, I am all right. The lamp burns. Does it not burn as well as yours? *You*, you say have other oil in your vessel. That does not matter. I have as much oil *in my lamp* as you. Mine shines as brightly. I am careful with it. And if I sleep, you sleep too—so that I have as decent a profession as you have.” And yet, for all this, *God* may at the last rend you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver you. How often is the candle of the wicked put out, and his beauty utterly consumed.

Again, some may bring a very careful outward observance of religion as an excellent argument, and think the conclusion to be drawn is very satisfactory. “Lord, we have eaten and drank in Your presence and You have preached in our streets.” You have been baptized. You are always at the Lord’s Table. Your pew always sees you in it whenever the doors are opened. All this is very proper and right. But it may all help to make you more easily deceived. You may conclude that you must be right because of this. And yet, the *Master* may say, “I never knew you.”

If means of Divine Grace could raise men to Heaven, Capernaum would not have been cast down to Hell. If attendance at the temple could save

the soul, then Caiaphas would be in Glory. If hearing the Word would be enough, then Herod would be in Heaven. O Brethren, more than this you must have, or you will miss everlasting life! Further, you may even go the length of manifesting much religious activity, and you may conclude from this that it must be all right with you—as those did who said, “In Your name we have done many wonderful works.”

We may have been preachers and have converted our hundreds and attracted our thousands. We may have been Sunday school teachers and led our little ones to Christ. We may have been missionaries, whose names have been applauded at the public meeting. But, for all that, we may be found castaways at the last. For it is not the doing of mighty works, but *vital union with Christ* by real faith, which shall be the point that shall decide the question.

O Friends, your preaching, praying, almsgiving, tract distributing—unless Divine Grace is in you—only help you in your delusion, and make it the more difficult to arouse you from it. The more diligent in service the self-deceiver becomes, the more strong is the net in which his foot is taken. Every duty performed may be but another fetter to bind our souls if we are graceless professors. O that I could awaken you, you desperately bewitched and stupefied deceivers!

Dear Friends, even the righteousness of God may furnish us with a plea if we choose our own delusions, and from every holy thing we may fetch apologies. We may say, “Religion is very hard. God is very strict and severe. Nobody can carry it out as he should. Therefore it will be well with me.” Just as *he* said, “Lord, I knew that you were an austere man, gathering where you had not scattered seed, and reaping where you had not sown.” And so, knowing that we are not what we should be, we may keep up our delusion by the excuse that there are very few who are, and that God is a hard master.

And so we may go on, keeping our eyes fast shut, till the flames of Hell shall wake us up to sleep and dream no more. I know some who will even make it an excuse that they did not know what religion required of them, and they will plead ignorance. “It is true,” they will say, “I have not done as I should, but I did not know about it.” Just as they did on the left hand. “When saw we *You* hungry and fed *You* not, or thirsty, and gave *You* no drink?” “I did not know,” says the man, “that Christ was on earth. I knew there was a parcel of poor people about that many despised and called fanatics. I did not suppose that feeding them would have been feeding Christ. I did not know Christ.”

“No,” says Christ, “and I do not know you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity, for I *never* knew you.” Ah, Beloved, if you *will* be deceived, it is the easiest task in the world to accomplish your purpose. Any fool can delude himself. It needs no wise, and persevering, and patient man to invent a method by which to drag his soul into a damnable delusion. This can be done by sitting still. If you would be saved, you must “*strive* to enter in at the narrow gate.” But if you would be damned, there is no striving wanted. It is only a little matter of neglect, and the whole is done. “How shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great a salvation?”

V. And now to the last point—this delusion may last through life and be sustained by many specious arguments but IT MUST ALL BE DISPELLED. Ah, if this pretty dreaming could last forever—if the man could have hope

forever—then I need not be earnest with you this morning. But since it must be dispelled, hear me! Hear me, Men and Brethren, while briefly I utter a few solemn warnings!

Remember, Professor, you will then be all alone. There will be no minister to comfort you—no deacons and Church members to say you have maintained a good profession. You will have then to look at your own acts, your own faith, and your own life, in the solemn privacy of eternity. And *then* you will give the right verdict, if you do not now. Then, too, your conscience will be awake. You would give a thousand worlds if you could make it sleep then, for *conscience* is “the worm” of Hell and it “dies not.” It is the fire that can *never* be quenched.

Then you will not be able to satisfy conscience with pretences, nor with promises. It will gnaw and bite and devour and vex you. The fury of its fire will consume once and for all your proud conceits, and comfortable fancies. Then, too, your mind shall be more sensitive than it is now. Now you think little of Hell or Heaven, time or eternity. But then those words will stick like daggers in you. You will feel, then, that the soul *was* of importance—no, that it was all-important.

You will then be made to feel those themes which now only enter your ears and are forgotten. There will be no cups in which to drown your thoughts, no theatres in which to dissipate your melancholy, no gay company in which to laugh or talk away the impressions of the Sunday. There will be no chance, then, of laughing at the minister, or pacifying your conscience about these things. But your sensitive soul, wounded in every point, shall be made to cry aloud, and never shall its cries cease, for then you shall be lost, lost, lost forever!

Then your *knowledge* shall *increase*, and you shall know what you know not now, and all you know shall only make your folly appear the more folly, because when there was hope you despised it, and when Christ was preached to you, you were content with the counterfeit, and despised the reality. But hear me—hear me once again, Man! Then *God* shall deal with you. Now it is only my poor voice. It is only my feeble utterance that goes to your heart today, and you will forget it all. Or perhaps you do not feel it now. But when God deals with you, it will be another thing.

Oh, if I were a Baxter, I would preach my sermon out in tears and weep over you proud and high Professors that will not search and examine yourselves whether you are in the faith! But if *I* cannot get at you, God will. Those eyes of fire shall shed a light into the dark corners of your soul. That finger shall find out the leprous spots which now you have so well concealed. *His* hand shall rip open your breast, to look at your heart, and expose it to the assembled universe. As sure as God shall deal with you, so would I have you surely deal with God. Make *sure* work for eternity. Pull it down, pull it down, if it is built on the sand! Consume it, consume it, if it is “wood, hay, stubble,” and cry to God this day that you may build upon the Rock and use nothing but “gold, silver and precious stones,” that your building may abide the fire.

Sinners! A word to you. If the Professor, “if the righteous scarcely are saved,” where will *you* appear? Drunkard, surely *you* shall drink the cup of wrath! Swearer! Surely you shall have your “damns” and your “anathemas” replayed into your soul abundantly! Thief! You shall find that you

have stolen your own soul! Harlot! Whoremonger! You shall find at the last that God abhors you, and He will cast you from His Presence. I say, if even the best living of men need thus to search and try, and if many of *them* shall be shut out, careless Sinners, what must then, become of you?

And you timid ones—you timid Christians! I have not preached this to alarm you. Let me bid you, however—fly to Jesus again this morning. If there is all this ado, when we come to sift and try, would it not be better for you and me to cling to the Cross again, with, “Just as I am, I trust You, Jesus—I trust You alone.” For oh, remember, none can perish that are clinging to the Cross!

But, proud Professors! The last word must still be for you. You may soar, yes, like Icarus, with wings of wax, but the higher you fly, the more terrible will be your fall. And what will become of you? Think of what has become of others like you, now in Hell! What would they give for your Sabbaths over again? What would they give to be here, that they might hear one faithful sermon—that they might repent and escape from the wrath of God? Think, while you are here, how they are cursing themselves to think that they threw away the golden hour and lost the opportunity! How they gnaw their tongues, while they say, “I came from the table of God to the place of fiends. I came from the pulpit into Hell. I descended from Mount Zion to the very depths of Hades. I was brought from Jerusalem to Tophet.”

And this is to be your lot, proud Professor! Unless you repent. What do you say, Man? Are you willing to make your bed in Hell, after having talked of leaning your head on Jesus’ bosom? What? Will you dwell with everlasting burnings, after having sung of everlasting love? What? Must you be driven from His Presence, when you have boasted of being justified by His righteousness, and washed in His blood? It must be so, Professor. It must be so, unless God helps you to make true work, and real work, and sure work of it by the Holy Spirit.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. For he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.”

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GREAT CHANGES

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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IN THE YEAR 1862.

***“And, behold, there are last which shall be first,
and there are first which shall be last.”
Luke 13:30.***

IN some of the books printed in the olden times, the authors were known to put a hand in the margin, as if to point out some passage to which they would have particular attention directed. Now, wherever we see in Holy Scripture the word, “behold,” it answers the same end. It is intended to show us that there is either something new, something impressive, or something which is speedily to transpire and, therefore, needs immediate attention. Or else there is usually something contrary to what men expect and, therefore, their consideration is the more earnestly directed to it. Seeing this, “behold,” in the margin, a signpost as it were—a directory for us to stop and pause and learn—let us do so tonight and may the Spirit of God be our Instructor, that we may listen to profit.

“There are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.” Similar passages occur in Matthew and Mark as well as in Luke. In Matthew, the connection in which it stands shows that there Christ intended it to relate to temporal circumstances. Peter had told him that he, together with his fellow Apostles, had left all that he had to follow Christ. And his Master informed him that he should be no loser by it, but rather, he should greatly profit through having left house and lands, and children and wife for Christ’s name’s sake and the Gospel’s. “For,” said Christ, “there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.” Brothers and Sisters, let us then hear and understand this, *that circumstances shall very soon be altered*. The high and mighty shall not always be so elevated! The base and mean shall not always occupy such a humiliating position! Throughout the whole history of the world, sin has been striding in high places with shoes of iron and brass, while godliness has walked barefoot through the valley.

Multitudes of most ungodly men have worn the tiara and have thrown the purple about their shoulders while a far more than equal number of the virtuous have been slaves to tug the galley oar, or have been condemned to long imprisonments, or have “wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.” Still, Dives wears the scarlet and fine linen and fares sumptuously every day, while Lazarus lies at his gate full of sores and the dogs give him the charity of their tongues. Still Nero is on the throne and Paul rots in the Mamertine dungeon. Still a Charles II shall have the crown while the

Puritan shall be found “despised and rejected of men.” You can scarcely turn to any page of history in which you do not see the wicked in great power, spreading himself like a green bay tree, while the righteous is plagued all daylong and chastened every morning!

Well, the time is coming when all this shall be changed! One wave of your hand, O Death, and where is the dignity of sin? One blast of Your breath, O God, and where are the glories of the mighty? Where are the pomp and the power of the ungodly man who vexed Your saints? See there, Dives has gone down to the nethermost pit and Lazarus is lifted to the Throne of God! See there, Nero rots and is corrupt, while Paul, on angels wings, is borne to the right hand of the Majesty on high! Poverty-stricken, having hardly a place where he can lay his head, the humble tentmaker took rank with the very lowest, but, though last, he now stands first, nearest the eternal Throne of God—

“Midst the bright ones, doubly bright.”

Proud, having all the earth at his beck, Rome’s legions at his call, Nero reigned and thought himself a god, but now the meanest slave is greater than he and they mock and jeer him, even they, the princes who lost their thrones by him and the men whom he trampled in the dust! In Hell they greet him with the cry, “Are you become like one of us?” and marvel greatly because the mighty are fallen and the proud are stained in the mire! Patience, then, patience, you who are the sons of poverty and yet the sons of God! Hush your boasting, you that are the heirs of wrath and yet the heirs of fortune—the tables shall soon turn—eternity shall undo the incongruities of life! Time, your inequalities shall all be forgotten, Justice shall right every wrong, “the first shall be last, and the last shall be first.”

So, Brothers and Sisters, to pass on, there is no doubt that *this is equally true with regard to the world’s esteem*. For many a long year the precious sons of God, comparable to fine gold, have been esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. For the first three centuries there was no villainy too vile to be laid at the door of the Christians. They were baser than the greatest miscreants. The world hooted them from the streets! No terms were thought bad enough for them. “It is not fit that they should live,” was the world’s verdict upon the followers of the Crucified. And even today a godly man is held in no reputation. There are no racks, ‘tis true—no prisons, no fines—but there are the jeers and the mockery, the shrugging of the shoulder, the reviling, the shame and the spitting! These have not ceased even now. Genius, intellect, science, taste, poetry and literature have their golden shrines. Godliness it just tolerated in its own conventicle.

I may be addressing some Christians, especially some young converts who feel it very hard to have the cold shoulder in society, to be neglected by their friends, to be threatened by their parents, to be forsaken by all who once counted them to be good. Yes, patience, patience, patience! You that are the last for Christ shall be the first with Christ by-and-by! Those that are first today in honor and think themselves great and famous because *they* will never yield to fanaticism, because *they* will never be enthusiastic after Christ—they shall be among the last! The day comes when they shall “awake to shame and everlasting contempt.” The

organs of public sentiment will change their tone. The world that honored the ungodly shall see their shame. The eyes that once looked slightly on saints shall be made to honor them as the noblest of the noble and they that hated Christ shall be lightly esteemed. Let those two thoughts be riveted upon our memories!

But I choose to dwell rather upon two other thoughts. The first part of my text seems to me to teach *wonders of Grace*. And the next part of it seems to me to teach *wonders of sin*.

I. Here, surely, is A WONDER OF GRACE—"There are last that shall be first."

Here is Divine Sovereignty—choosing the last to make them first. Here is Sovereign Grace—forgiving the greatest sin to make the brightest saint. Here is Almighty Power changing the most degraded, turning the current of the most strong-minded sinner and making his soul "willing in the day of God's power."

What does it mean, those that are last? I take it, if I understand the sense aright, it means this—there are some that are *last in pedigree*, born of impious parents in some low hovel, in some dingy room, an attic or a cellar, in some court where the first sound that reached their ear was blasphemy, and the first sight that greeted their eye was drunkenness. How many we have of such in London who are, indeed, last if we consider their birth! Poor things, they are born not simply to poverty, but they seem to be the nurslings of vice! One's eyes might weep tears of blood when we think how unhappily some children are placed in the very first moment of their advent into society. Glory be to God, however, there are some of these that shall be first! God will find His jewels in the dens, alleys and slums of London—and take up to His Eternal Throne those that were the sons of harlots and the children of the thief—that they may sing forever of His amazing Grace!

Last, too, they are in education. Turned out into the street to pick up from every boy the vice he has acquired, to learn from evil men, villainy of which their young hearts would not have dreamed. If you should go into our Ragged Schools, especially some in the very lowest neighborhoods, or if you would hear Mr. Gregory, the missionary in St. Giles's, tell his tale of all the sin he sees and the education that our young men of St. Giles's get, O gentlemen of St. James's, it might well make you blush—blush with shame that you are not doing something for them—shame for yourselves that you let your neighbors live like this! They are still your neighbors, though they are hidden behind the tall houses of your gorgeous streets and crescents, your squares and terraces! Well, these are last in education, but glory be to God, some who were trained for the gallows and tutored for the convict settlement, shall, nevertheless, be taught of the Lord and inducted into the fellowship of the saints! Irresistible Grace shall come and pluck them out of the furnace, hating the garment spotted with the flesh, yet esteeming them that they, also, may be jewels in the Redeemer's crown!

Then, again, they are *last in morals*. At eventide, see her as she goes out to hunt for souls. See him, too, as at eventide he reels from gin palace to gin palace to drink, to swear, to curse. Ah, we are not without

those who are last in morals in this huge den of vice, this city of iniquity! Could Sodom find sinners that would match with the sinners of London? What do you think? Could Tyre and Sidon outdo the iniquities that are near our doors and may be seen in our own streets? I think not! You need not, tonight, go many steps when once the sun is down before you will see under every gaslight some that are last. Blessed be God—some of them shall be first! Praise the Lord, you angels, there are some of them here tonight, some of them saved! Some of them snatched from the fire and they will sing in Heaven—and they do sing on earth right sweetly to the praise of the love that has made the last to be the first!

Some of these appear, beside their moral debasement, to have the last disposition that could ever be susceptible of Grace. You know the men I mean. Men that when you look into their faces, you feel you would not like to meet them on a dark night. There are such men whose very countenances betray a stolidity and hardness that is not altogether common to men. Do you remember what the Scotsman said to Rowland Hill when he looked long into his face? Rowland asked him, “What are you looking there for?” “I was looking at the lines on your face,” he said. “And what do you think of me?” said Rowland. “Why,” said the man, “I was thinking that if it hadn’t been for the Grace of God, you would have been one of the biggest scoundrels living.” And Rowland said ‘twas even so. He felt that himself. And I think we have all felt so. We have all felt, as one good man said, “There goes John Bradford if it were not for the Grace of God.” To the ale-house, to the prison, to the gallows—each of us might have come if Sovereign Grace had not prevented!

There are men who seem naturally more coarse, more rough, more wild, more outrageous than others. They have furious passions, they have a fiendish temper. What other word could I use? They have a temper that seems to make them like very maniacs over a little provocation. They know not what to do but stamp and rave, and say they know not what! These are the last men you would think could be saved. Yes, but there are many of them that *have* been made first. Strange is it that God picks out the very men whom we would throw away—the most worthless, the most hopeless, hapless and helpless. Sovereign Grace had fixed its eye upon them and said of each one of them, “I will have that man.” That man’s will stood out stoutly and resisted to the uttermost the pleading voice of salvation, but Grace would have him! O that strong will of his, how useful it is now in the cause of Christ! That hard heart of his, now softened, seems to give a holy courage and a dauntless and a fearless manner which would be unknown to men of a different mold! “There are last that shall be first.”

What inferences do we draw from all this? We draw these lessons. There is an encouragement for some of you who think you are last. I bless God there are always some of the last ones coming into the Tabernacle. God deliver us from having an exclusively respectable congregation! I like to see men of all classes. I like to see the poor come in and I like to see the base and vile come in—and I know they do. I feel like Rowland Hill, when it was said to him, “It is only the tag, rag, and bobtail that go to Surrey Chapel.” “Ah, then!” he said, “Welcome tag, and welcome rag, and welcome bobtail—these are just the sort we want to see

come into the Chapel.” “Ah,” I hear someone say with a sigh, “that means me, that means me! I am one of those men. I am one of the last.” Then there is encouragement for you! Mercy’s gates stand wide open and Christ invites you in! Trust Him at this very hour, for, “there are last that shall be first.”

And, Brothers and Sisters, what cause for humiliation to us who are saved! Were not we the last? I am sure, when I look at that headstrong boy, when I think of that hard, stubborn boy that never did and would not yield—when I think of that child who could bear any measure of chastisement but never would make an apology for anything—and then think of myself saved by Grace, I marvel! How is it that God should choose such an one as I am? And I think you can all say, “Why me, Lord? Why me?” And you can put it down to this, “There are last that shall be first.”

And what a reason this is why you and I should serve Christ, too! What? Did He look on me when I was last, and will I not work for Him? Stand out of the way, you groups of cold-hearted men! Stand out of the way, you careless professors that cannot serve your Master! I must and will do God service, for I owe Him more than you do. Mary, I implore you, by the gentleness of your spirit, stand back, stand back! I *must* break *my* alabaster box over that blessed head, for I have much forgiven and, therefore, I love much. I *must* do much for Him. Give me great sinners to make great saints! They are glorious raw material for Grace to work upon and when you do get them saved, they will shake the very gates of Hell! The ringleaders in Satan’s camp make noble sergeants in the camp of Christ! The bravest of the brave are they. God send us many such and we will sweep before us yet the hosts of evil and drive iniquity into the depths of the sea. “There are last that shall be first.” O dear Friends, I wish the net would catch some of the last right now. I know that young man over there thinks that Christ will never save him. “There are last that shall be first.” I know that young woman has written it down in her conscience that she is an odd person—she is sure to be passed over—one of the last, I see. Ah, and you shall be among the first! Only believe Christ, only trust Him! He is God! He can save you! He is Man! He is *willing* to save you! Trust Him, His promise is given! He will save you, He will wash you from every sin and bring you with joy before His face at the last!

II. But now I must take the second part of the text, as briefly as possible, and speak of WONDERS OF SIN. “There are first that shall be last.”

First in ancestry, hushed to your slumber with a holy lullaby, candled on the knee of piety, hanging at the breast of tenderness and love—from your mother’s arms you shall go to the frightful grasp of the Destroyer! And from a father’s rejected counsel to the sinner’s direst doom!

“There are first that shall be last.” *First in training*, taught in the Sunday school, prayed over, wept over.

“There are first that shall be last.” *First in privileges*, sitting under a faithful ministry, warned, exhorted, entreated, pleaded with. “There are first that shall be last.” Having much light and knowledge, having an

awakened conscience, but quenching it, having the warnings of the Spirit, but stifling them. "There are first that shall be last." Regularly in the house of God, well-read in Scripture, well-trained in Doctrine, understanding the way of God, but not running in it, knowing your duty but doing it not. "There are first that shall be last." O my Hearers, I speak to thousands of you that are among the first tonight! When I said there were last ones here, I glanced for the few, but oh, how many of you belong to the tribes and families of men who are of the first! You are not Sabbath-breakers, the most of you—you go to a place of worship. You are not heathens—you have a Bible, sometimes you read it—and you know what faith in Christ means, if you have it not in your hearts. O London! London! London! You fair metropolis of merchandize and wealth! How are you exalted to Heaven by your privileges! Christ is now preached in the corner of every street, in your parks, in your fields! Christ is preached in your theatres. He is preached where every man can hear of Him if he will. First and foremost as you stand, O inhabitants of London, the envy of many nations and their refuge of the oppressed of all nations—how many of you shall be worse off than the savages of Africa or the cannibals of New Zealand? "There are first that shall be last."

I cannot preach on this text. I have not the strength. I have not the power of thought to point out this solemn Truth of God as I gladly would and to thrust it on your consciences. I can only thus make it ring and sound in your ears by saying again, "There are first that shall be last."

Remember, if it is so with you—and this is the conclusion of the whole matter—your being last will involve awful responsibilities because you *were* first! You cannot perish as others do. If you do reject Christ, how shall you escape who neglect so great a salvation? Sirs, I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you in the Day of Judgment! Besides this, how shall you escape from the remorse of your conscience, when conscience, wide awake, shall cry, "You knew your duty, but you did it not"? The caverns of Hades shall say, with dull and dreary echoes, "You knew your duty, but you did it not." Every revolution of eternity, as it brings some fresh crisis of your pain, shall say to you, "You knew your duty, but you did it not." Banished from Heaven to Tophet, from the Temple of the Lord to Gehenna, from the voice of the minister to weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, from the song of the sanctuary to the howling of the Pit—this, this shall be the edge of the sword, this the tooth of the devouring worm—"You knew your duty, but you did it not!"

O you first ones, God help you! If you ever should be last, how terrible will be your doom! Let us then engage in great searching of our hearts tonight. I search my own soul now—what if I, standing first in Gospel privileges, the teacher of this people—what if I be among the last? My Brothers, you the elders and deacons of this Church, the first in our Israel—what if you are among the last? You young men and women of our Catechumen classes, of our Bible classes—you young men of our College, first, most hopeful of all—what if you are found among the last? You Sunday school teachers and superintendents, you who teach young children the way to Heaven—what if you learn not the way to Heaven yourselves? What if you, the first, should be the last? You, the Beloved of

my soul, whom these hands have baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ! You with whom we have had sweet communion at the blessed feast of the Lord's Table—what if you, the first, should be among the last? I can but reiterate the cry. I can but stand here, like Jonah, and cry aloud with one unvarying note of warning, "Take heed, you first, that you are not among the last!" And what shall we all say, rolling the two sentences into one? O Grace, make me among the first! Let me not be among the last at the last! O God, help me now to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven! I do accept Christ as my Savior—

***"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to His Cross I cling."***

Say that in your souls after me, you who feel it—

***"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To You whose blood can cleanse each spot
O Lamb of God, I come."***

Trust the Master now, my Hearers. Say in your spirits, "Yes, we're guilty and vile! Save us, Lord, or we perish." Let the cry of your repentance and the utterance of your faith go up to Heaven in one sound! And then God commissions us to say to you, from His Word, that He absolves you from the guilt of all your sin when you have believed in Jesus Christ His Son. He that *believes* on the Son has everlasting life and shall never perish! He shall never come into condemnation, but the love of God shall rest on him in time and eternity. God grant it to us all, for His name's sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 51; 142.

Psalm 51:—This Psalm is dedicated to the chief musician—it was intended to be sung. Yet it is not by any means a joyous piece of music. It seems more fit to be sung—or sighed—as a solo for the solitary penitence of a broken heart than for the united songs of Believers. Yet, in God's ears it is clear that the voice of penitence is full of music, for this penitential Psalm is dedicated to the chief musician.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness.* No eye can spy out the tender attributes of God like an eye that is sore with weeping on account of acknowledged sin, so David prays, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness." This word, "loving-kindness," is a rich double word and it was specially suitable just then, for he who has a broken heart—bruised and broken on account of sin, needs double mercy from God.

1. *According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* "They are on record and I cannot erase the terrible lines, nor can You erase them, O Lord, without displaying a multitude of Your tender mercies. It will need Omnipotence, itself, to get rid of this sin engraved in brass. Therefore, according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity.* "Wash me through and through, O Lord. Wash me thoroughly!" A hypocrite is satisfied with the

washing of his garments, but the true penitent cries, “Wash me! Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity. It is almost the only thing that I can really call my own and it is most sadly mine. O Lord, wash my iniquity right away!”

2. *And cleanse me from my sin.* “If washing will not suffice, put me in the fire, but somehow, somehow, O Lord, cleanse me from my sin!” You notice that David’s prayer is not concerning the punishment of his sin, but concerning the sin itself. That is the one thing which is eating into his heart—look how many words he uses to describe it—“My sin, my iniquity, my transgressions.” He cries to God to help him to get rid of that which is the source of all his sorrow. The thief dreads the gallows, but the penitent fears not the punishment of his sin—it is the sin, itself, that terrifies him!

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* “I cannot get away from it and I cannot get rid of it. It stares me in the face. It haunts me in my lying down and my rising up. I am obliged to acknowledge my sin, for it is always before me.”

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight.* “It is true that I have grieved others and that I have done much injury to others by my sin, but in all this, I have sinned most against You. The virus—the essence of my sin is that it has been committed against You, O my God!”

4. *That You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* “My sin was committed within Your jurisdiction and against Your Law, O Lord and, therefore, as I am summoned to appear at Your court, I cannot disobey the summons. I am compelled to give an answer to the charge brought against me—and my answer is that I am guilty, without any extenuating circumstances that I can plead before You, O Lord! I am guilty through and through.”

5. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* David does not say that by way of making an excuse for himself, but rather to aggravate his own guilt. He admits that his guiltiness is really a part of himself. He does not say, “Lord, I was acting contrary to my nature when I committed this sin. You know that it was not like me to do that.” Oh, no! He says, “Lord, You know that I was acting quite in accordance with my nature. It was just like me to fall into this terrible sin.” We have sometimes heard people say that they were surprised to find that they had been guilty of certain sins—let it not be so with you, but rather be surprised to find yourself kept from guilt, amazed when you are preserved from sin—for the whole tendency of unrenowned human nature is towards iniquity. “In sin did my mother conceive me.”

6. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* As much as to say, “Lord, that which You desire” to see in me is not there, and though You have made me also to desire it, yet I fear that I have not at present gone beyond the desire, for still within me, in my secret soul, there lies a tendency to evil, and unless I keep a strict watch over myself, I soon go astray. Lord, make me inwardly clean! I cannot bear that it should be otherwise with me.”

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.* As the priest purges the unclean man by dipping the bunch of hyssop into the blood of the

sacrifice, and then sprinkling him with it, so, “purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.”

7. *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* “That is to say, I shall be clean if You do wash me, O Lord! My own washing makes me no cleaner. My own cleaning make me fouler than I was before, but if You will purge me and if You will do it with the sacrificial blood, then I shall be whiter than snow.” This is grand faith on David’s part! I cannot help calling your attention to it—that he, with a sense of his sin heavy upon him and bowed down to the very earth with the consciousness of his great guilt, yet dares to say, “Wash me”—adulterous, murderous David—“wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” No faith brings greater Glory to God than the faith of the audaciously guilty when they dare to believe that God can forgive them! Not even the unfallen seraphim can render to God purer homage than when you, a defiled and condemned sinner, dare to believe in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus and so believe as to say, with David, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* If a good man ever goes astray, he may depend upon it that his sin will be very costly to him. And the better a man is, the more expensive will his sin be to him in the long run. God breaks the very bones of His children when He chastens them for their sin. I do not doubt that many a time their pilgrim way has been all the more weary in their later days by reason of their sins in their earlier days. There is many a pain that shoots through old bones, that is meant to remind the old bones what they were when they were young. God will certainly chasten us for our iniquities if we are His own people.

9. *Hide Your face from my sins,* “Lord, do not look at them. Refuse to see them! Hide Your face, not from me, but from my sins.”

9. *And blot out all my iniquities.* See how he comes back to that note again and again? He is never far away from it. There are certain tunes in which one note is constantly repeated, so is it here. David prays, “O God, put away my sin, blot out my sin, forgive my sin.” He cries for nothing else but that—“Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.” He longs for the time when not one of them shall be in existence!

10, 11. *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.* These are the groans of a true child of God. Never has a man, without the Spirit of God within him, prayed to God in this fashion. David, therefore, notwithstanding all his sin, still had the life of God within his soul and when Nathan came to reprove him, the sacred fire began to burn again. Here are some of the sparks of it—and some of the smoke of it, too “Cast me not away from Your Presence’—

“Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord.”

“Say not, I can no longer use you. You shall no longer stand in My courts, for you have disgraced Me. Get away from My Presence.’ ‘Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.”

12. *Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit.* David longs for his Lord to come back to him. When God flogs

His children, they still cling to Him and they cry to Him. They do not wish to run away and hide themselves from Him. No, their only comfort is to weep upon their Father's bosom and to wait for the kiss of forgiveness from His lips. So David prays, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit."

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted to You.* Do you not see, Brothers and Sisters, that we must be in a right state of heart if we are to serve God well? We cannot teach transgressors His way with a confident hope that they will be converted to Him unless we, ourselves, possess the joy of God's salvation and are upheld by His Holy Spirit! If we go to God's work out of order, we shall make a mess of it and accomplish nothing that is really worth doing. But when God gives us His comforting Grace within and His upholding on every hand, then shall we teach with power and sinners shall learn to profit—"Then will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You."

14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* None sing so loudly the praises of Redeeming Grace as those who have been forgiven great sins. There is no music, outside Heaven, that has such a volume of God-glorifying praise in it as the song of the man who loves much because he has had much forgiven—"My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness."

15. *O Lord, open You my lips.* He felt as if he could not be trusted to open his own lips and, certainly, he was not to be trusted to open his own eyes, for when he had opened them before, he had looked on that which led him into sin. So now he would have God to keep his very lips, that he shall never speak again except as he shall be guided from on high—"O Lord, open You my lips."

15, 16. *And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it.* Very naturally David's mind began to think of the multitudes of bulls, lambs and rams that were burnt upon Jehovah's altar. There is nothing that makes a man so spiritual and so Evangelical as a deep sense of sin. You cannot be a Sacramentarian and a ceremonialist very long if you have a broken heart. Those pretty toys do very well for the kind of "miserable sinners" who do not know what either misery or sin means! But he who really has had his heart broken on account of the guilt of his sin cannot be content with the mere outward sacrifice—he must have that which is *spiritual*—"You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it:"

16, 17. *You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* David has to feel that it is better to have one genuine sigh for sin than to make ten thousand bulls shed their blood upon the sacrificial altar! And if you are truly broken from your sin—if you do really hate it, and cry to God for the pardon of it—if the Spirit of God has really given you complete cleansing from your guilt by the precious blood of Jesus—this is better than all the material sacrifices offered in all the temples that were ever built and overlaid with gold! "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

18. *Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem.* As much as though David said, “I have done great hurt to Zion, I have pulled down the walls of Jerusalem by my sin. Now, Lord, build them up again. Undo the mischief which Your poor foolish servant has worked by his backslidings.” So may any backsliders among us pray to the Lord, “Visit Your Church so graciously, Lord, that my sin may not injure her!”

19. *Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bulls upon Your altar.* Oh, yes, we are sure to bring to God the best that we have when we once get our sins forgiven! After we have looked to Christ, who is the one great Sacrifice for sin, then we bring to God all that we can, to show how grateful we are for His pardoning mercy!

Psalm 142. Maschil of David. A prayer when he was in the cave. This “Maschil of David” is instructive to us, for the experience of one Believer is very edifying to another. We are so much alike that as in water, face answers to face, so the heart of men answers to man—and what one Believer has felt awakens sympathy in the rest of God’s people.

Psalm 142:1, 2. *I cried unto the LORD with my voice: with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before Him; I showed before Him my trouble.* David mentions that he prayed with his voice. This is an unimportant matter compared with praying with the heart, but when the heart is full of prayer, it is often very helpful to be able to use the voice to give expression to the emotions of the soul. To have a room in which, without disturbing others and without ostentatiously revealing your private experiences to others, you can speak aloud unto the Lord, will be found to be a great advantage in prayer. Some men’s thoughts become more concentrated and flow more freely—and their hearts are better able to pour out their deepest and fullest expressions when they can pray aloud. So David says that in the cave, where he would not be likely to disturb anybody, he cried with his voice unto the Lord—“With my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.”

You can see from verse 2 what was the style of his prayer. “I poured out my complaint.” The figure is a very simple one. Just as you pour out water from a bottle, so David let his heart’s complaint flow out before the Lord. In pouring out water, it sometimes comes slowly and sometimes fast—at times with a rush, followed by a pause. There is no prayer better than that which naturally flows from the renewed heart without any strain or effort, it was so with David—“I poured out my complaint before Him, I showed before Him my trouble.” Just as a patient shows his wounds to the surgeon, so take away the covering from your broken heart and wounded spirit and set your trouble before the Lord, who already sees it! It will be no novelty or cause of surprise to Him and He desires you to manifest such trustfulness in Him as will lead you to lay before Him your complaint and your trouble.

3. *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path.* “My spirit was so overwhelmed within me, that I did not know where I was, or what I was. I could not make heads or tails of myself. I

seemed to be like a skein of silk or wool in a tangle. My thoughts, as George Herbert would have said, were all a case of knives, sharp to cut and wound. I could not make myself out! I was a puzzle even to myself, but You knew my path even then.”

3, 4. *In the way wherein I walked have they privately laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.* This is a terrible condition for anyone to be in—to have every friend forsake you—to find that those who used to know you best, do not want to know you any longer, but turn their heads away as if it would be a disgrace to them to be known to have been your friends. This is a grand opportunity for testing the reality of your faith! Can you believe God now? Can you take Him to be your Friend now that you have not another friend in the world? Fine-weather faith is very cheap and easily obtained—but the faith that can stand fast in the time of the storm and tempest—that hardy mountaineering faith which hides in God in the coldest winter and finds its summertime in Him alone—that is the faith that is worth having and worth keeping!

6. *I cried unto You, O LORD: I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.* “I left the broken reeds alone and leaned upon my God. I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.”

6, 7. *Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name: the righteous shall compass me about; for You shall deal bountifully with me.* This is a beautiful metaphor, suggesting that when the saints heard that God brought him out of prison, they would gather round him, gaze upon him as a miracle of mercy and ask him to tell them his wonderful tale. He would be the center of their delighted observation and their own faith and hope in the Lord would be greatly increased. As a little imprisoned bird might long for emancipation, David says, “O Lord, open my cage door and let me fly and I will sing, as I mount, to the praise of Him who gave me my liberty! ‘Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Your name: the righteous shall compass me about, for You shall deal bountifully with me.’”

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NO. 3520

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 13, 1916.**

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

***“It cannot be that a Prophet should perish out of Jerusalem.”
Luke 13:33.***

I CAN scarcely tell you under what singular feelings I am led to adopt this text. It has entered my mind, whispered in my ears and I might almost say, it has haunted my thoughts, for all the day long has it been fresh in my memory, and again and again it has recurred to me in the night watches. There is no comfort that I can extract from the meditation, and not much instruction that I can deduce from the oracular sentence. Conscience, however, lays on me a strong constraint. Any portion from the Word of God that comes forcibly home to my own soul, I am prone to accept, as it were, in trust for your sakes. So I aim to deliver unto you that which I also received. Be it void of comfort or charged with rebuke, God grant it may be acknowledged to your profit and accepted to His praise!

“It cannot be that a Prophet should perish out of Jerusalem.” Probably this was a proverb among the Jews which our Savior used and endorsed. For many years Jerusalem had been stained with the blood of Prophets. These godly men might have lived securely in the rural districts of Judah and among her various towns and hamlets, and though sometimes annoyed, never exposed to violence—but so had the seat of judgment become the throne of iniquity that vengeance was reeked where justice should have ruled! Jerusalem, the metropolis of government, the center of religion and the priests, became notorious as the scene of judicial murder and vindictive martyrdom! It had been, through a number of years, the place where one after another of God’s servants had been stoned and put to death. Our Savior seems to have felt that He was safe while in Herod’s jurisdiction, but that when He got to Jerusalem, He was in imminent peril from conspirators—that there a baptism of blood awaited Him, when His life would be sacrificed and He would become, as it were, the Prince of Martyrs—an offering of the noblest life, a shedding of the richest blood that ever was poured out on the altar at Jerusalem! It seems strange that Jerusalem should have sunk so low as to monopolize the sin of murdering the Prophets—that it should have become renowned

for persecution and vindictive cruelty—a city within whose walls God’s servants might look in vain for shelter. Where popular feeling and the public courts were alike against them. Where summary indictment and certain conviction were sure to be their lot! “Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You that stone the Prophets and kill them who are sent to you!”

From generation to generation had they thus framed mischief and done violence—until our Lord accuses and holds them guilty of the slaughter of His servants from “the blood of righteous Abel unto that of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom they slew between the Temple and the altar.” What a fearful contrast this presents to the name that Jerusalem had received, and the position that had been assigned to her! Was she not called Jerusalem, the place of righteousness and of peace? Her bards had praised her in glowing sonnets as, “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” How did the Psalmist draw lively, lovely images of her security, surrounded by mountains that served as natural fortresses to protect her! And did he not even picture the little hills that environed her as companions of the mountain on which the Temple stood? “Why leap you so, you high hills? This is the hill which God delights to dwell in.” Where else did acceptable sacrifices smoke? As for the altars of the high places, they were an abomination to the Lord! The one altar at Jerusalem God had ordained for acceptable sacrifice. There the tribes came up to worship. It was the meeting place and rallying point of all the families of Israel at their annual festivals—

***“Unto her gates, with joys unknown
Did Judah’s tribes repair.
The Son of David held His throne
And sat in judgment there.”***

Her mountain was illustrious in history. It was on one of her pinnacles that Abraham drew the knife to slay his son! And on the spot where the plague was stopped in David’s day when the outstretched hand of the angel was arrested at the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, was built, stone by stone, the Temple where God delighted to dwell! It was the source from where light went streaming through the land as from the sun, and at the same time it was the great lake into which the rivers of sacred prayer and praise constantly flowed, gleaming in their fullness! Oh, Jerusalem, your very name was dear to the captives as they sat mournfully down by Babylon’s streams and wept, saying, one with another, “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joys.” You seem so fair a city, so perfect a chrysolite! Your halls seem so truly made of agate, and your gates of carbuncle that in your glory we see a type of the abode of the saints of God—

“Jerusalem, my happy home!

***Name ever dear to me.
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"***

And has it come to this? Well, then, might the Savior, whom you did despise and reject, weep over you! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Has it come to this? "You kill the Prophets and stone them that are sent to you." Has it come to this? No marvel that your house is left unto you desolate, that the holy city is given up to the abomination of desolation, and is left to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles! Has it come to this? Oh, horror of horrors! What sorrows are too sad and heart-rending to follow at the heels of sin! Look, my Brothers and Sisters—that same sin which once cast down Lucifer from his throne, degraded him from the royalties of Heaven and doomed him to the Pit that burns with fire and brimstone forever—that same sin has plucked this pearl from the regal diadem of the King of Kings, subjected it to the direst dishonor and made it a by-word in the earth! So is her beauty spoiled! So is her sacredness and such are the wages of sin, and such the recompense of transgressions! As you think of this city of the great king converted into a place of butchery and a shamble for Prophets, I would have you recollect that—

I. THE LIKE RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION IS STILL INFLICTED WHENEVER SIN SEEKS SHELTER UNDER THE SOLEMN SANCTIONS OF A SOUNDING PROFESSION!

Now and then we are startled. Someone who had stood foremost among the saints has all of a sudden excited public gaze, conspicuous as a fiend. I remember such a man. He preached the Gospel and seemed to preach it with intense sincerity. At any rate, there was such fervor in his manner that zeal seemed to animate his heart. His words moved many—souls were converted under his ministry, souls that shall make glad the angels of God throughout eternity! He comforted the saints and many disciples were refreshed by his discourses. But in an evil hour he turned aside. His fall was precipitate. The sink was abysmal. Of drunkards he became one of the worst! Of swearers the most profane! Among licentious the most lewd! No slave of Satan was ever more in earnest to destroy himself and to do his black master's bidding than that same man who once ministered at the altar of God and appeared to be a star in the right hand of Christ! And why may not such a collapse occur to me? And why may it not occur to you, my Brother? Every man, it has well been said, has not a soul of crystal whereby other men can read his actions. You look fair. You seem to be a saint. Yet there may be a worm in the center of your fair plant after all! Sudden death often surprises those who appear to be in sound health, though slow disease has long been sapping the strength of their system. Be not deceived by appearances—make sure of your salvation! Jerusalem killed the Prophets. Maybe you will likewise

believe your pretensions to virtue. You have heard of a woman out of whom seven devils were cast. Did you never hear of one into whom seven devils entered?

There she stands. Never woman seemed more pure! Never penitent wept more sparkling tears! Like another Mary Magdalene, she washed her Savior's feet with her tears. Yes, she seems to sit at Jesus' feet and love Him with all her heart. Earnest in season and out of season, we admire her. But the time of trial comes—that time which tests the metal whether it is gold or not. She gives her heart to another than her Savior. Once led astray, no lips are more defiling than hers! No feet run more swiftly in the way of the Destroyer. It happened unto her that she did in theory know the way of righteousness, but the gracefulness of her profession was not the Grace of God in truth—so presently she turned aside, and she, who seemed to be a Hannah, turned out to be a Jezebel! And she who once could sing, as we thought, the grateful song of Mary, must hence forever weep a doleful *Miserere!* Take care, my Sister, that you are safely built upon the Rock of Ages! As Jerusalem killed the Prophets, so may you. I say so because I find it in God's Word.

Have we not too often seen instances of those who were regular outward attendants upon God's House who seemed to adorn the earthly courts and bid fair for Heaven? Who rejoiced continually in holy things with a full measure of assurance and rather frowned on some of the Brethren who were sometimes depressed and filled with doubt and fears—have not we seen you very Church members become the victims of some darling sin, the prey of some base lust which has driven you like bullocks to the slaughter? "There is a sin unto death." Our eyes have seen the mischief! Our ears have listened to the tale! Our hearts have been pained by the recital hundreds of times! From my youth up I have felt indescribable terror when I heard of such an one who seemed to be a pillar in the Church moved from his place—"Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present evil world." When I have heard of it, sometimes I have been ready to wail with the Prophet, "Howl, fir tree, for the cedar has fallen." Those who seemed better than ourselves, more gracious and far more gifted, have turned aside—and we have felt that it is only by a miracle of Grace we have not done the same—

***"So stones hang in the air
So sparks in ocean live,
Kept alive with death so near,
I to God the glory give."***

Jerusalem killed the Prophets, and *there is that secret wickedness in the hearts of every one of us* that would have made us do the same a thousand times—that would have turned us from saints into devils, if the constraining, preserving Grace of God had not defended us! Let us, then, humbly acknowledge all this. Let us carefully search ourselves to see

whether we are in the faith and then let us gratefully bless that mighty hand which, having begun its gracious work, will not leave us until it has perfectly performed its purpose and fulfilled in us all the designs of love! Looked at thus, this passage conveys a very solemn warning. How terrible must be the deathbed of a man who, after having made a profession, and perhaps preached the Gospel, has become an apostate! Can we picture the siege of Jerusalem? I believe that all human rhetoric must fail in the description and that if a painter dipped his brush in blood, he could not sketch the horrors of that awful time! If those days had not been shortened, surely the whole race had been swept away! There never was and never shall be until the Last Tremendous Day, anything that can be paralleled with the destruction of Jerusalem under Vespasian and Titus! In like manner, there is nothing, I think, that can parallel—certainly nothing that can exceed—the horrors of the dying bed of an apostate. Did you ever read the story of Francis Spire, or of John Auld, in the days of the last nonconforming reformation in England? If you ever read the stories of these deathbeds, they will ring in your ears at night, and make you cry out, “O God, if I am damned, let it not be as an apostate! If I must perish, yet let me not perish as one who, like a dog, returns to his vomit, or like a sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.” Jerusalem stoned the Prophets! You young men who are just putting on your harness, boast not as though you were taking it off!

Beginners in the way of Grace, it is a great and solemn Truth of God that every child of God will hold on until the end, but it is an equally solemn Truth that many who profess to be the Lord’s are self-deceivers and will turn out apostates after all! They will go back to the beggarly elements from which they appear to have escaped and begin to stone the Prophets, whom once they professed to reverence and love! How dreadful their doom! To see the Lord when fire blazes before Him, and the clouds form a chariot beneath Him—when “He shall come, but not the same as once in lowliness He came”—when He shall appear in rainbow wreath and clouds of storm, how dreadful will it be to those who turned their backs upon Him! In vain shall they call upon the mountains and rocks to cover them! They must face Him whom they deserted. They must be arraigned before Him whom they treacherously betrayed. Oh, how they will fall in speechless, helpless, hopeless dismay before Him! And oh, how He will trample on them in His anger because they trampled on His blood in their treachery and crucified to themselves the Lord of Life afresh! God save us from their eternal woes, for of all bitter remorse and fell despair, theirs must be the most tormenting! The privileges they enjoyed aggravate the perdition in which they are engulfed. Down from Heaven’s gates they are thrust into Hell by the back door! Their faces, once towards Jerusalem the Golden, now confront the accursed Gehenna! Far from the

rayless, pathless outlook with which they bid farewell to mortal life to the dire reality of their dreaded doom they are launched forth, “wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” Such are trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots! Such are raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame! “God deliver us from their character and their conduct, lest we reap the consequence that is sure to close their career!” Now to draw a fresh lesson, let me remind you of—

II. THE UTTER USELESSNESS OF OUTWARD PRIVILEGES UNLESS THERE IS INWARD PURITY.

Never was a city more richly endowed or more highly privileged than was Jerusalem of old. As we have already said, it was the city of the great king. There all the festivals were held. Her priests were her pride. The anointed ministers of the altar thronged her streets, numerous as the flowers which bedeck the meadows in spring. There you might have heard the voice of sacred song every hour in the day! Within her gates the ritual of religion was observed with almost perpetual celebrations. All that was comely, sacred and holy seemed to have an exclusive abode within her precincts. Yet for all that, these people were not a whit the better. They had a baneful monopoly that they shamefully coveted—a monopoly of killing the Prophets and of stoning those whom God sent to them! The means of Grace were evidently not blessed to them.

How plainly this shows the possibility of retaining sin, unsubdued and unchecked, notwithstanding all the righteousness that is taught in precepts, and all the Divine Grace that is exhibited in ordinances! Are there not regular attendants here who, though they mingle with the Church, join in the hymns of praise and listen to the words of exhortation, are as corrupt in their character and their conversation as if they went nowhere? Sit there not in these pews those who are as covetous, as bad tempered and, in some cases, as licentious as if they never entered a place worship at all? For them our most earnest rebukes, invitations and warnings are ineffective as the roaring of the wild waves of the sea, or the ringing of bells in a church tower—they produce no sort of moral or spiritual result! I speak solemnly of individuals, not censoriously of systems, when I affirm, without particularizing any denomination, because the same is true among ourselves! I know there are thousands who go to church and believe because they have conformed, more or less, to religious customs and observed the sacraments, all seems well with them—but neither Doctrine nor discipline of Christians exert the slightest influence upon their hearts or their lives! Their temper is as fiery or as morose. Their greed for the world just as inordinate. Their vanity and fondness of display quite as unseemly and the petty vices of a degraded mind as freely indulged as if they ranked themselves among the profane! They

have all the outward signs of religion, but they have not a particle of vital godliness!

I remember a time when people wore rings round their fingers to cure their bones of rheumatism. It may have done them some good, though I doubt it! But that outward forms of religion can be of any use to purge the heart, or sanctify the soul, I utterly disbelieve! What does it matter whether you go to church or not? Whether you use a prayer book or a hymnal or not, or whether you bend your knee morning and evening or not, if these things have no effect upon you—if you walk after the flesh and not after the Spirit? You may as well leave off these religious fashions, though it may seem rather bold to say so. I would rather you put off every sham because then you would know where and what you are! Religious pretence only deceives others and fools yourselves. We always talk about England as a Christian country. We are wrong! It is not a Christian, it is a heathen country! There are some Christians in it, thank God! But the country is not a Christian country. The Metropolis is not Christian. London, herself, is a heathen city. Vice and violence, lewdness and licentiousness are as ripe in her as they are in Paris or Vienna, Calcutta or Bombay! You need not go far afield—take the nearest court, or the blind alley that leads out of the main street, or go into some of the great houses at the West End and you will see in them such awful abominations as might convince you that their frequenters say, in their heart, there is no God, or, if they worshipped a deity, it was Buddha or Vishnu! Count the churches, count the chapels, take account of the mission stations—sum up all the outward privileges and mark the condition! In the teeth of them all, we may say sin is growing more rampant! The more religion, the more sin, if it is a religion of outward rites without the power of godliness! Jerusalem was the worst of cities and yet the most religious. It was the most profane because it was the most sanctimonious—its piety being a mere empty profession. In no other city was there so much lip-service, cringing and bowing. In offering oblations and burning incense, she was pre-eminent! Still, no other city had such a reputation for stoning the Prophets!

And it may be that your real character may be as little in keeping with your pretensions. You may have prayers every morning and Bible readings every day. You may resort to sacraments, practice genuflections, observe festivals and make pilgrimages—all to no purpose! Your seeming sanctity may be only a mask, covering up folly and vice. The balance is on the wrong side. Your creed has aggravated your crimes! Your religion has precipitated your ruin. The tag-raggery of vestments and ceremonies are but the histrionics of religion in which amateurs delight! All their mystery and pomp are mere stage play. No benefit whatever can you derive from such principles or such performances. All the trust you put in

them must entail miserable disappointments—it may involve you in desperate consequences! No lies can be harmless! Self-deception must be deadly! Lend me your eyes and I will show you the worst man in Jerusalem. What? Do you think that I am going to point out that tax-gatherer? By no means! He is a scoundrel, I admit. He exacted three times as much as he ought of that poor widow, and drained her resources. No doubt he is a real bad fellow, but I know a worse. Go knock at the door of yon affluent rabbi—you cannot be admitted just yet. Ask the servant where his master is. He will tell you that he is at prayers. He will not be at liberty for three-quarters of an hour at least. You must wait, I suppose, until this gentleman has finished his devotions. After a while he condescends to put in an appearance. You look at him with surprise. Whatever is that remarkable feature on his forehead? You might fancy he must have fallen down and bruised himself, and put a piece of plaster on his forehead. Oh, no—that little box on his forehead is inscribed with texts of Scripture! A Bible precept supplies him with a bold pretext—“You shall bind them for a frontal between your eyes.” So, like a fool, taking the sound and leaving the sense, he has inserted a series of texts into a box and tied it on to his head! And, oh, what a deep fringe he has to his robe! It is half as long as his robe. What is that for? Because he is told to have a border to his garment and so he has it broad—half an inch would have done, but he has it seven inches at least! He cannot do anything in moderation as it should be done. He must carry everything to an extreme. If you wish to speak to this gentleman, you find he really cannot attend to you because he is just going up to the Temple—he has a little account to pay there. He shows it to you. Of course, he says he likes to show it. You can see how precise he is. It is a farthing—and an eighth part of it is for mint he has been using. He is very careful about tiny matters. Before he goes to pay that, he tells the servant to mind and strain out all the gnats, lest he should swallow any unclean animal when he drinks his wine. Follow him up to the Temple and you will observe him standing by himself. He is saying, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are.” It is rude, perhaps, to pry into his private doings, but as he is gone out, just let us take a look into this little sanctum and see his accounts. We begin to look at them and we must be quick, for fear he should come and catch us. Look at this entry, “Half a dozen widows’ houses devoured last week.” Go on and you will see all sorts of bad things that he has been doing. He would not have been such an atrocious villain had it not been for his religion! He wraps that about him as a cloak and it prevents his seeing what a great sinner he is. Perhaps if he did not practice so much piety, he might be shocked at his lack of morality. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say you see—therefore, your sin remains.”

This man pretends to be a saint, but he proves to be a devil! His soaring profession aggravates his heartless infamy. Surely, I think, this example falls fairly within the scope of my text. Jerusalem, as a locality, the center of devoutness, became the cesspool of corruption! If you have the cherubim without the Shekinah. If you have the sacred symbols without the sanctifying Spirit. If you have the sound creed without the lively faith. If you have Gospel in the pulpit without Grace in the heart. If you have Protestant Christianity without a precious Christ, then the decadence of your religion will lead to the demoralizing of your character! The mere possession of the outward means of Grace may have no better effect than that of making men worse. Yet it entails a very solemn responsibility. No man can sin after he has received the Light of God from above, so cheaply as he does who commits his transgressions in the dark. When you are warned, and entreated, and begged to turn from the error of your ways—should you still pursue them, “Being often warned, and hardening your neck,” the sentence is, “you shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.” I believe some hyper-Calvinists raise an objection to the responsibility of man while hearing the Gospel. And there are several other things to which they likewise object, but I hope we shall always accept the testimony of God’s Word without distorting it, whether it is agreeable or distasteful to us. As for me, I have braved the sneer of men because I feared the frown of my Lord. But now they are dead that troubled me and it is not likely that I shall cease to speak of unbelief as other than a grievous sin, a capital crime and an aggravation of all other transgressions! The Gospel is either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death to everyone of you who hears it. If it is not a stone of help, it will become a stone of stumbling. You will either fall upon it and be broken, or it will fall upon you and grind you to powder! Beware, you that hear the Gospel and trifle with it, lest it be said unto you, “Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish.”

I believe that throughout eternity the punishment of the guilty will be aggravated forever by the privileges against which they have persisted in sinning. To sink into perdition from the shadow of the Gospel is possible. To go down with warnings of judgment and wooing of mercy sounding in one’s ears is suicidal! To leap into the Pit headfirst and to find out the deepest depths of dire despair is dreadful beyond description! To think of it conjures up thoughts from which we recoil. Oh, call it not a fatal mistake, for it is a foul crime! The heathen, who never heard of Christ, cannot accuse themselves of having wasted Sabbaths and rejected a Savior. But Sabbath after Sabbath you who have had the Gospel delivered in your hearing—you will have to bear a reproach like this, “You knew the Gospel, but loved it not!” This shall be the perpetual worm that shall never die. There was a time when God called. He himself said it, “I called,

but you refused; I stretched out My hand, and no man regarded it; therefore, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes." In like manner Jesus says, "Woe unto you, Chorazin; woe unto you, Bethsaida; it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you." The privilege in each instance clenches the responsibility. Oh, may this solemn Truth of God abide with each of us!

Now let me, in closing, give a slightly different tone to our meditation. We have seen that Jerusalem had a monopoly of one sin—she killed the Prophets.

III. THERE ARE SINS WHICH GOD'S PEOPLE, HIS REAL PEOPLE, TRUE AND GENUINE SAINTS, MAY BE CHARGED WITH—no, of which they may accuse themselves, as exclusively their own! Possibly the very mention of them may lead us to repent and bring us back, again, humbly and penitently to the foot of the Cross that we may accept with the more gratitude the full Atonement which our Savior made. You and I are, dear Friends, the children of God in a sense in which other men are not—we are part of His great family. Being regenerated and adopted, we have received the nature of children and been put into their status. Other men are but subjects under His Law—we are sons and daughters. No servant can sin as a child can. A servant and a son may both be guilty of the same offense, but there is a difference in the degree of guilt, because of the relationship. A father may well say, "My servant ought not to have done this—he has offended me. But as for you, my own child, my beloved, you have grieved me to my heart, for you have sinned against a father's love as well as against a father's authority. You are bound to me by ties so close that you ought to have been more scrupulous. I can understand a servant injuring my property or my reputation, but to my child, both of these should be very dear." There seems to me to be a baseness about the ingratitude of a child with which the unkindness of a friend will not compare. Sharper than an adder's tooth is the conduct of a thankless child, because he is a child. I do not think it is possible for anyone not related to break and wound a mother's heart as her own child can. You Christians can easily apply this reflection to yourselves. There is a peculiar wickedness about your sin. In the judgment of others it is the same, but in your own judgment, if you think of your heavenly Father and your nearness to Him, it will seem to be far worse. Dear Friend, remember you are not only a child, but sometimes you rejoice to think that you are Christ's spouse! Now, one's spouse lies very near one's heart. Another person may say something against me, and I might pass it over. A remark which, coming from a stranger, or even from a friend, we might slight, but did it come from one's own spouse, it would cut deep into the very soul! You would say, "It was not an enemy. Then I

could have borne it. But it was you—you who rests in my bosom and enjoys my perfect confidence—you have lifted up your heel against me.” Say, then, child of God, do you not see that your sins may have a peculiar heinousness about them? Them may be a stoning of Prophets, and a crucifying of Christ in your misdeeds! Although still favored as a bride, never to be divorced, your crime is bitter and to be repented of bitterly.

There is one sin which has often oppressed my heart, and I dare say it has yours. *We grow cold in love to our Savior.* Some of you do not love your Savior with the same warmth and devotedness you did at first. There may be those among you who plead not guilty. I wish most of you could, but, alas, how many of you have to look back upon former days and say, “O that it were with me as in the days that are past!” More cause you have for loving Him—more coals have been put on the fire, but yet it is less hot and burns less brightly! More stones have been thrown on the marker and yet it is smaller than it was at first! Oh, strange it is—we sometimes even almost wonder to see it—that some who since they first came to Christ and rested only on Him, have had many gifts and Graces vouchsafed to them—have almost put them in the place of Him who gave them! Master Brookes says, “Suppose a loving husband were to hang his wife’s ears with earrings, and put jewels about her neck, and rings upon her fingers—and she got so fond of all these pretty things that she forgot her husband? It would be a sad thing if love tokens should make us forget the hand that gave them.” This case is just like ours—we begin looking at our own good works and Graces and get to be so pleased that we forget from whom they came—and look upon them as our own! Whereas there is no luster in them except that which is reflected—and we shall soon lose even the reflection if we get contented with them. We must look to Christ, and Him alone! Shame on us Christians that we should be thus remiss and negligent of our deepest, most tender obligations! This is a vice to which even the heathen are not prone.

Do you ever hear of a nation forsaking its gods? Well might the Prophet expostulate, since no other nation forsook its gods, yet Israel forsook hers! Worldly men do not forsake their pursuits with the indifference that you forsake yours. They grow more and more enamored of the flaunting charms of that woman Jezebel, the world, while our hearts, alas, are often forgetful of our fair, infinitely fair, Lord Jesus, and go rambling abroad with some other love! This is a sin which none but Christians commit! And what shall I say of the *doubts we cast upon the faithfulness of God*, after having proved it so conspicuously? No unconverted person can have proved it as we have done. There are promises of which anyone, especially the stranger within our gates, might have availed himself. The world, however, discredits sheer worth. But some of you have gone to the Throne of Grace with pleas based on promises not once only—perhaps if

I should say you have gone hundreds and thousands of times, I should not exceed the number of proofs you have made of the Divine faithfulness! Fifty years have transpired since some of you came to the Lord, and you never found Him slack. He never dishonored His own Word—He has been faithful and true in the midst of all that was fleeting and transient. Yet your heart flutters and your lips murmur when a fresh trial arises. How can you be so distrustful, so provoking? Airy says, “If there is a God, if prayer can prevail, if there is any kind of piety that is not a baseless presumption—all these are moot questions with the men of this generation.” But you know there is a God! You know He hears prayer! You know He honors obedience and fulfils every tittle He has spoken! Why should you ever harbor a doubt, or cherish a misgiving? Is it not monstrous? Doubt, *now*? What fresh pledge, what further guarantee can you require? Do strive earnestly. Do pray constantly that this accursed unbelief may be cast out of you! Are you not heirs of Heaven? Are you not looking for and waiting for the coming of the Son of God? Shall your faith be steadfast as to the goal, and yet in suspense as to the journey?

With such seed thoughts have I ruminated on my text, “It cannot be that a Prophet should perish out of Jerusalem.” Jerusalem! Your name suggests to me all that is beautiful for situation, and all that is precious for privileges—and yet I tremble at your history, for it is a record of mischief and misery! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Rather had I sung your praise than rehearsed your crimes! But, O God, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be alike acceptable to You! May such warnings be as fruitful as any wooing in drawing reluctant hearts to right allegiance. This is my last word—Believe and live! Amen.

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

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

ALL THINGS ARE READY, COME

NO. 1354

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 13, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Come, for all things are now ready.”
Luke 14:17.***

THIS invitation was first of all made to the Jews, but it seems to me to have a peculiar appropriateness to ourselves. It is later in the day than when first the Lord was here and, therefore, the supper time is evidently closer at hand. The shadows lengthen, the sun of the present dispensation is nearing its setting—by nearly 1,900 years has its day been shortened since first the Lord sent forth His servants at supper time. The fullness of time for the marriage supper of the Lamb must speedily arrive and, therefore, it behooves us to be more than ever earnest in delivering the message to the invited guests. And if all things could be said to be ready, even in our Savior's day, we may say it with still greater emphasis now, for when He delivered this parable, the Holy Spirit was not yet given.

But Pentecost has now passed and the Spirit of God abides with us to accompany the Word, to fill it with power and to bless our souls as we feed upon His Truth. Very emphatically, then, at this time all things are now ready and the supper awaits the guests! I pray you do not begin to make excuses, but be prepared to follow us when we bid you come, to go with us when we seek to bring you in, or at least to yield to our entreaties when, with all the sacred violence of love, we would compel you to come in. We will not grudge the use of all the three increasing modes of persuasion so long as you are but led to “Come, for all things are now ready.”

There are two things clearly in the text and these have a close relation to one another. A plain invitation—“Come,” and then a forcible argument—“for all things are ready.” The argument is fetched from the Divine preparations, gathered from among the dainty provisions of the royal feast. “My oxen and My fatlings are killed, come to the supper.” The readiness of everything on God's part is the argument why men should come and partake of His Grace—and that is the point upon which we will dwell at this time—the readiness of the feast of mercy is the reason why men should come to it at once.

I. We will begin our meditation by laying down the first statement which shall make our first division of discourse, namely that IT IS GOD'S HABIT TO HAVE ALL THINGS READY, whether for His guests or His creatures. You never discover Him to be behind in anything. When the guests come, there is not a scramble to get the table arranged and the food pre-

pared, but the Lord has great forethought and every little point of detail is well arranged. "All things are ready." It was so in creation.

He did not create a single blade of grass upon the face of the earth until the soil and the atmosphere had been prepared for it and until the kindly sun had learned to look down upon the earth. Imagine vegetation without a sun, or without the alternation of day and night! But the air was full of light, the firmament upheld the clouds and the dry land had appeared from out of the sea—and then all things were ready for herbs and plants and trees. Nor did God prepare one single creature that has life, nor fowl that flies in the midst of Heaven, nor fish that swim the seas, nor beast that moves on the dry land until He had prepared its habitat and made ready its appointed food.

There were no cattle before there were meadows for their grazing. There were no birds till there were trees for their nests, no, nor even a creeping insect till its portion of meat had been provided. No creature had to wait in a hungry mood while its food was growing—all things were ready—ready, first, for vegetation, and then afterwards for animal life. As for Adam, when God came to make Him as His last and noblest work of creation, all things were ready. The garden was laid out upon the banks of flowing streams and planted with all kinds of trees. The fruits were ripe for his diet and the flowers in bloom for his delight.

He did not come to an unfurnished house, but he entered into a home which his Father had made pleasant and agreeable for his dwelling. The world was first fitted up and then the man who was to govern that world was placed in it. "All things are ready," the Lord seems to say, "Spring up, O herbs yielding seed." And then, "All things are ready, come forth you roes and hinds of the field!" And then, "All things are ready, stand forth, O man, made in My own image!" In later times we may gather illustrations of the same Truth of God from the ways of God with men. The Ark was first of all built and the various creatures were gathered into it, with all their necessary food for that strange voyage which they were about to take. And then the Lord said to Noah, "Come you and all your house into the Ark." "All things are ready, come," was His voice to the chosen eight as they entered into the Ark. There was no need to tarry any longer. Every preparation was made and, therefore, God shut them in. Everything is done with punctuality and exactness by the only wise God. The same day that a thing is needed, it is prepared.

Take another event in Providence, such as the going down of Israel into Egypt. God had determined that Jacob and his seed should sojourn, awhile, in the land of Ham, but how wisely He prepared the whole matter. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, and Joseph was there upon the throne of Egypt clothed with power to nourish them through the famine. He had been there years before, all in good time to store the wheat while the seven years of plenty lasted, that they might be well fed during the seven years of famine.

Goshen, also, was at the disposal of Joseph, so that the flocks and herds of Israel might dwell in that fat land. Not into Egypt shall God's Israel go till all things are ready! And when all things are ready they will come out again with a high hand and an outstretched arm! So it was when the tribes migrated into Canaan itself. God took them not to the promised land until all things were ready. They were made to wait for the exact time, for the Lord said, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Not till the inhabitants of the land had passed the bounds of mercy and were condemned to die, were the Israelites brought upon the scene to be, at once, their executioners and successors!

And when the tribes came to the river Jordan, God had prepared everything for them, for He had sent the hornet before them to drive out the people and a pestilence, also, for the spies said, "It is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof." The Lord God had gone before them to fight their battles before they came and to prepare a place for them, so that when they entered they dwelt in houses which they had not built and they gathered the fruit of olives which they had not planted. They came to a land that flowed with milk and honey, a land in a fine cultivated condition and not a wilderness which must be reclaimed with hard labor. Israel came to a country which was as the garden of the Lord, whose fruit might at once be enjoyed, for they ate of the old corn of the land almost as soon as they passed the Jordan. So you see, "All things are ready," is a proclamation which the Lord has often, in spirit, made to those whom He chooses to bless.

Now the fact that in the great Gospel supper all things are ready teaches us, first, that God's thoughts go before men's comings. "Come, for all things are ready." Not, "If you come, all things will be ready," but, "they are ready and, therefore, come." Grace is first, and man at his best follows its footsteps. Long before we ever thought of God, He thought of us! Yes, before we had a being and time, itself, began, in the bosom of the Eternal there were thoughts of love towards those for whom the table of His mercy is now spread!

He had planned and arranged everything in His august mind from of old. He had, indeed, foreknown and predestinated all the provisions and all the guests of His supper! All things were settled in His eternal Covenant and purpose before the earth was! Never think, oh Sinner, that you can outstrip the love of God! It is at the end of the race before you are at the beginning! God has completed before you have begun. His thoughts are before ours and so are His acts, for He does not say, "All things are planned and arranged," but, "All things are *ready*." Jesus, the great Sacrifice, is slain! The Fountain for our cleansing is filled with blood! The Holy Spirit has been given. The Word by which we are to be instructed is in our hands and the light which will illuminate that sacred page is promised us through the Holy Spirit.

Things promised ought to encourage us to come to Christ, but things *already given* ought to be irresistible attractions. All things are already

completed by the sacred Trinity before we come to cry for mercy. This should make us very hopeful and eager in our approaches to the Lord. Come, Sinner! Come at once! This ought to encourage you, since all that God has to do in your salvation is done before you have a *thought* of Him or turn one foot towards His abode. All things are ready. Come!

This, also, proves how welcome those are who come. If you are invited to see a friend and when you reach the place, you find the door locked and, after knocking many times no one answers, for there is no one at home, you reckon that there is some mistake, or that the invitation was not a sincere one. Even if your host should come to the door and let you in, but should evidently be embarrassed, for there is no meal provided and he has made no arrangements for your rest, you soon detect it and like a wise man you quickly move off somewhere else, for if you had been welcome, things would have been prepared for you. But oh, poor Soul, if you come to God, all things are ready for your entertainment—

**“Spread for you the festive board,
With His richest dainties stored.”**

The couch of rest and quietness is prepared for you. All things are ready! How freely does Jehovah welcome you, how genuine is the invitation, how sincere the desire that you should come to feast with Him!

So much upon our first remark. It is the habit of the Lord to have all things ready for His guests.

II. Our second statement is that THIS READINESS SHOULD BE AN ARGUMENT THAT HIS SAINTS SHOULD COME continually to Him and find Grace to help in every time of need. O children of God, I will lift the parable away from the immediate use which the Savior made of it to employ it for your good. You know, Beloved, that whenever the Lord Jesus Christ invites His people to come to Him and to taste of His bounty, all things are ready.

It was a beautiful scene by the sea of Tiberias when the Lord spoke to those who had been toiling on the lake at fishing and said to them, “Come and dine.” They were willing enough to dine, but they were busy dragging to the shore those great fishes. Remember, when they did land, they found the invitation to be no vain one, for it is written, “They saw a fire of coals there and fish laid thereon, and bread.” How the coals came there and the fish, and the bread, the Evangelist does not tell us, but our Lord would not have asked them to dinner if He had not been able to give them a warm reception. There were the fire of coals and the fish and bread laid on them.

Whenever, therefore, your Lord and Master, by His blessed Spirit, calls you to come near to Him, you may be quite sure that all things are ready for your immediate enjoyment. You need never pause or hesitate, but approach Him without delay. I want to caution you against replying, “But, Lord, I do not *feel* ready.” That is most true, but that is not an argument which you should use to excuse yourself in holding back. It is *His readi-*

ness that is the main thing, not yours, and as all things are ready, come whether you feel ready or not!

I have heard of some Christians who have said, "I do not feel in a proper frame of mind to pray." My Brothers and Sisters, pray till you do! Some have said, "I do not think I shall go up to the house of God today. I feel so unhappy, so cast down." When should you go so much as then, in order that you may find comfort? "Still," says one, "you would not have me sing a hymn when of heavy heart, would you?" Yes, I would, I would, indeed! I would have you sing yourself up from the depths of the sea when all God's billows have gone over you. David full often did so. When he began a Psalm in the deeps, he gradually rose and rose, and rose till he was in a perfect rapture of delight before the Psalm was over! All things are ready with your Lord, therefore come whether you happen to be ready or not!

Note the times when this Truth of God ought to have power with you. All things are ready, therefore come to the storehouse of Divine promises. Are you in spiritual poverty? Come and take what God has provided for you, for all things are yours and all the blessings of the everlasting hills belong to all the people of God. Are you needing strength? There is a promise, "As your days so shall your strength be." It is ready, come and take it! Are you needing consolation? Do you not know that all things are ready for your comfort, that two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, are already set before you? Come and take your solace! Yes, remember that all that God has promised belongs to all those who believe the promise and that you may, therefore, come at all times, however deep your need. And if you have but faith you shall find the special supply for the special need. All things are ready, therefore come with holy confidence and take what is ripe enough to gather, ripe for you.

Come next to the Mercy Seat in prayer, all things are ready there. The Mercy Seat is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ. The veil, also, is torn in two, and from between the cherubim Jehovah's Glory now shines forth with mildest radiance. Let us, therefore, come with boldness unto the Throne of the heavenly Grace, because everything there is ready for the pleading suppliant. You have no need to bring anything with you. You have no need of making preparations other than the Holy Spirit waits to give you in the form of groans which cannot be uttered! Come, child of God, notwithstanding your carelessness and indifference, or whatever it may be you have to complain of, for though you are unready, the Throne of Grace is ready and, therefore, draw near to it and find the Grace you need.

If at this time we feel strong promptings towards communion with Christ, what a blessing it is that Christ is always ready to commune with His people. "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door and knock." We think that *we* stand at the door and knock, but it is scarcely so. The greater Truth, with regard to His people, is that Jesus asks for fellowship with us and tells us that if we open the door—and that is all He bids His people

do—He will enter in and sup with them and they with Him. Suppose there is no supper, He will provide it—He has all things ready. The Master says, “Where is the guest chamber?” He does not say, “Where is the feast?” If Your heart will be the guest chamber, He will provide the supper and you shall sup with Him and He with you.

At whose door did Christ knock according to the Scriptures? It was at the door of the *Laodicean Church*, at the door of the very *Church* concerning which He had said, “Because you are neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.” Therefore you poor Laodicean Believers that are here this morning, if you have any promptings towards Christ, arise, for all things are ready and before you are aware, your soul shall be as the chariots of Amminadab! He is ready to receive us to His heart of hearts! How sweetly this ought to constrain us to fly into the arms of Jesus. I think the same thought ought to cross our minds with regard to every daily duty. We wake up in the morning, but we do not know exactly what lies before us, for God’s Providence has constantly new revelations.

But I like to think, in the morning, that all things are ready for my pathway through the day. That if I will go out to serve God in my ministry, He has prepared some ear into which I am to drop a gracious word and some heart in the furrows of which I shall effectually sow some blessed seed! Behold, all Providence with its mighty wheels is co-working with the servant of the living God! Only go forward in zeal and confidence, my Brother, and you shall find that every step of your way is ready for you! Your Master has trod the road and marked out for you the houses of refreshment where you are to tarry till you shall come to the Celestial City, itself, and the hallowed spots where you shall bring glory to His blessed name! For a useful life all things are ready for us.

Yes, and if beyond the daily service of life we should feel a prompting to aspire to a higher degree of holiness—if we want to grow in Grace and reach the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus—all things are ready for us! No Christian can have a sacred ambition after holiness which the Lord is not prepared to fulfill. You that wish to be like Your Master, you that desire to make a self-sacrifice that will show the power of His Grace in you—the Holy Spirit waits to help you—all things shall work for you, for all things are ready! Come, therefore, without fear.

One of these days it may be that you and I shall either be grown very old, or else disease will lay hold upon us and we shall lie upon the sick bed watching and waiting for our Master’s coming. Then there shall suddenly appear a messenger from Him who will bring us this word, “All things are ready, come unto the supper,” and closing our eyes on earth we shall open them in Heaven and see what He has done who so sweetly said, “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

Oh, it will be a joyous moment when we shall hear the summons, “All things are ready, quit your house of clay, your farm, your merchandise

and even her who lies in your bosom, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and you must be there! Therefore, rise up, My love, My fair one and come away. The winter is over and past, the time of the singing of birds is come for you, all things are ready, come!”

I feel tempted to linger here, but I must tear myself away from this point to pass on to the next.

III. THE PERFECT READINESS OF THE FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY IS EVIDENTLY INTENDED TO BE A STRONG ARGUMENT WITH SINNERS WHY THEY SHOULD COME AT ONCE. To the sinner, then, do I address myself. Soul, do you desire eternal life? Is there within your spirit a hungering and a thirsting after such things as may satisfy Your spirit and make you live forever? Then hearken while the Master’s servant gives you the invitation. “Come, for all things are ready”—all, not some—but all! There is nothing that you can need between here and Heaven but what is provided in Jesus Christ—in His Person and in His work.

All things are ready—life for your death, forgiveness for your sin, cleansing for your filth, clothing for your nakedness, joy for your sorrow, strength for your weakness—yes, more than all that you can ever need is stored up in the boundless Nature and work of Christ. You must not say, “I cannot come because I have not this, or have not that.” Are *you* to prepare the feast? Are *you* to provide *anything*? Are *you* the purveyor of even so much as the salt or the water? You know not your true condition or you would not dream of such a thing! The great Master of the house, Himself, has provided the whole of the feast—you have *nothing* to do with the provision but to partake of it! If you lack, come and take what you lack!

The greater your need, the greater reason why you should come where all things that your needs can possibly lack will at once be supplied! If you are so needy that you have nothing good at all about you, all things are ready. What would you provide when God has provided all things? Superfluity of naughtiness would it be if you were to think of adding to His, “all things.” It would be but a presumptuous competing with the provisions of the great King—and this He will not tolerate. All that you need—I can but repeat the words—between the gates of Hell, where you now lie, and the gates of Heaven, to which Grace will bring you if you believe—all is provided and prepared in Jesus Christ the Savior!

And all things are ready, dwell on that. The oxen and the fatlings were killed. What is more, they were prepared to be eaten, they were ready to be feasted on, they smoked on the board. It is something when the king gives orders for the slaughter of so many bullocks for the feast, but the feast is not ready. And when, beneath the poleax, the victims fall and they are stripped and hung up ready for the fire, there is something done, but they are not ready. It is when the meat is served hot and steaming upon the table and all that is needed is brought forth and laid in proper order for the banquet— it is *then* that all things are ready!

And this is the case now. At this very moment you will find the feast to be in the best possible condition. It was never better and never can be bet-

ter than it is now. All things are ready, just in the exact condition that you need them to be, just in such condition as shall be best for your soul's comfort and enjoyment. All things are ready! Nothing needs to be further mellowed or sweetened. Everything is at the best that eternal love can make it. But notice the word, "now." "All things are now ready"—just now—at this moment! At feasts, you know, the good housewife is often troubled if the guests come late. She would be sorry if they came half-an-hour too soon, but half-an-hour too late spoils everything! And in what a state of fret and worry is she if, when all things are now ready, her friends still delay.

Leave food on the fire, awhile, and it does not seem to be, "now ready," but something *more* than ready and even spoiled. So does the great Master of the house lay stress upon this, "all things are now ready," therefore come at once. He does not say that if you will tarry for another seven years, all things will, then, be ready—God grant that long before *that* space of time, you may have got beyond the needs of persuasion by having become a taster of the feast—but He says that all things are ready *now*, just now. Just now that your heart is so heavy and your mind is so careless. Just now that your spirit is so wandering—all things are ready *now!*

They are all ready just now though you have never thought of these things before and dropped in this morning to see this large assembly with no motive whatever as to your own salvation, yet all things are ready now. Though your sins are as the stars of Heaven and your soul trembles under an awful foreboding of coming judgment, yet, "all things are now ready." After all your rejections of Christ. After the many invitations that have been thrown away upon you, come to the supper! And if they are ready now, the argument is come, now, while still all things are ready. While the Spirit lingers and still strives with men. While mercy's gates still stand wide open that, "whoever will, may come." While life and health and reason still are spared to you and the ministering voice that bids you come can still be heard, come now, come at once—all things are ready—come! Delay is as unreasonable as it is wicked, now that all things are ready.

Notice that all things were ready for those who were bid. They did not come, but they were not mocked when they were bid to come. The fact of all things being ready proved that the invitation was a sincere one, although it was a rejected one. There are some who will not have us give an invitation to any but to those whom we believe are *sure* to come, no, in a measure *have* come. That is to say, they make a minister to be a mere superfluity. Why need he come and invite those who have already begun to come?

But we believe it to be our duty and our privilege to invite the whole mass of mankind! And even those who will not come—if we knew they would not come we should not, therefore, exempt them from the bidding—for the servant was sent to bid them to the wedding who, nevertheless, "all with one consent began to make excuse." They were invited and earnestly

invited, and all things were ready, though they came not. O my dear Hearers, if you do not come to Christ you will perish! But you will never be able to say you were not invited and that there was nothing ready for you! No, there stands the feast all spread and you are sincerely and honestly bid to come. God grant that you may come and come at once!

IV. Now I am going to pass on to my fourth and last point, which may God bless to the comfort of some seeking soul. THIS TEXT DISPOSES OF A GREAT DEAL OF TALK ABOUT THE SINNER'S READINESS OR UNREADINESS, because, if the reason why a sinner is to come is because all things are ready, then it is idle for him to say, "But I am not ready." It is clear that all the readiness required on man's part is a *willingness* to come and receive the blessing which God had provided. There is nothing else necessary. If men are *willing* to come, they may come. They will come when the Lord has been pleased to touch their wills so that man has a desire towards Christ. Where the heart really hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that is all the readiness which is needed.

All the fitness He requires is that first you feel your need of Him, (and that He *gives* you), and that secondly, in feeling your need of Him, you are *willing* to come to Him. Willingness to come is everything! A readiness to believe in Jesus, a willingness to cast the soul on Him, a preparedness to accept Him just as He is, because you feel that He is just the Savior that you need—that is all. There was no other readiness. There could have been none in the case of those who were poor and blind, and crippled and maimed, yet came to the feast. The text does not say, "You are ready, therefore come." That is a legal way of putting the Gospel. No, the Gospel says, "All things are ready, the Gospel is ready, therefore you are to come." As for *your* readiness, all the readiness that is possibly needed is a readiness which the Spirit *gives* us, namely, willingness to come to Jesus.

Now notice that the unreadiness of those who were bid arose out of their possessions and out of their abilities. One would not come because he had bought a piece of land. What a great heap Satan casts up between the soul and the Savior! What with worldly possessions and good deeds, he builds an earthwork of huge dimensions between the sinner and his Lord. Some gentlemen have too many acres to ever come to Christ! They think too much of the world to think much of Him. Many have too many fields of good works in which there are growing crops in which they pride themselves and these cause them to feel that they are persons of great importance. Many a man cannot come to Christ for all things because he has so much already!

Others of them could not come because they had so much to do and could do it well—one had bought five yoke of oxen. He was going to test them. A strong man, quite able for plowing, did not come because he had so much ability. Thousands are kept away from Grace by what they have and by what they can do. Emptiness is more preparatory to a feast than fullness. How often does it happen that poverty and even inability help to lead the soul to Christ? When a man thinks himself to be rich he will not

come to the Savior. When a man dreams that he is able to repent and believe at any time and to do everything for himself that is needed, he is not likely to come and by a simple faith repose in Christ. It is not what you have not, but what you have that keeps many of you from Christ! Sinful self is a devil, but righteous self is seven devils! The man who feels himself guilty may, for a while, be kept away by his guilt. But the man who is self-righteous will never come! Until the Lord has taken his pride away from him, he will still refuse the feast of Free Grace. The possession of abilities and honors and riches keep men from coming to the Redeemer.

But on the other hand, personal condition does not constitute an unfitness for coming to Christ, for the sad condition of those who became guests did not debar them from the supper. Some were poor and doubtless wretched and ragged—they had not a penny to bless themselves with, as we say. Their garments were tattered, perhaps worse. They were filthy. They were not fit to be near respectable people—they would certainly be no credit to my Lord's table—but those who went to bring them in did not search their pockets, nor look at their coats—they fetched them in. They were poor, but the messengers were told to bring in the poor and, therefore, brought them. Their poverty did not prevent their being ready and oh, poor Soul, if you are literally poor, or spiritually poor, neither sort of poverty can constitute an unfitness for Divine mercy!—

“The poorer the wretch the more welcome here.”

If you are brought to your last penny, yes, if that is *spent*. And if you have pawned all and are left in debt over your head and think that there is nothing for you but to be laid by the heels in prison forever, nevertheless you may come, poverty and all! Another class of them were maimed and so were not very comely in appearance—an arm had been lopped off, or an eye had been gouged out. One had lost a nose and another a leg. They were in all stages and shapes of dismemberment. Sometimes we turn our heads away and feel that we would rather give *anything* than look upon beggars who show their wounds and describe how they were maimed. But it did not matter how badly they were disfigured—they were brought in and not one of them was repulsed because of the ugly cuts he had received!

So, poor Soul, however Satan may have torn and lopped you, and into whatever condition he may have brought you, so that you feel ashamed to live, nevertheless this is no unfitness for coming! Just as you are, you may come to His table of Grace. Moral disfigurements are soon rectified when Jesus takes the character in hand. Come to Him, however sadly you are injured by sin. There were others who were halt, that is to say, they had lost a leg, or it was of no use to them, and they could not come except they had a crutch and crawled or hopped upon it. But nevertheless that was no reason why they were not welcome.

Ah, if you find it difficult to believe, it is no reason why you should not come and receive the grand absolution which Jesus Christ is ready to bestow upon you! Lame with doubts and distrust? Nevertheless come to the

supper and say, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief." Others were blind people and when they were told to come they could not see the way, but in that case the messenger was not told to tell them to come—he was commanded to bring them—and a blind man can come if he is brought. All that was needed was willingness to be led by the hand in the right direction. Now, you that cannot fully understand the Gospel as you desire to do. You that are puzzled and muddled, give your hand to Jesus and be willing to be led—be willing to believe what you cannot comprehend and to grasp in confidence that which you are not able yet to measure with your understanding. The blind, however ignorant or uninstructed they are, shall not be kept away because of that.

Then there were the men in the highways. I suppose they were beggars. And the men in the hedges. I suppose they were hiding and were probably thieves. But nevertheless they were told to come and though they were highwaymen and hedge-birds, even *that* did not prevent their coming and finding welcome! Though outcasts, off casts, spiritual gypsies—people that nobody cared for, yet, whatever they might be, that was not the question—they were to come because all things were ready! They could come in rags, come in filth, come maimed, come covered with sores, come in all sorts of filthiness and abomination, yet because all things are ready they were to be brought or to be compelled to come in.

Now, lastly, I think it was the very thing which, in any one of these people, looked like *unfitness*, was a help to them. It is a great truth that what we regard as unfitness is often our truest fitness. I want you to notice these poor, blind and lame people. Some of those who were invited would not come because they had bought some land, or five yoke of oxen. But when the messenger went up to the poor man in rags and said, "Come to the supper," it is quite clear he would not say he had bought a field, or oxen, for he could not do it. He had not a penny to do the thing with, so that he was clean delivered from that temptation.

And when a man is invited to come to Christ and he says, "I do not need Him, I have a righteousness of my own," he will stay away. But when the Lord Jesus came along to me, I never was tempted in that way, because I had no righteousness of my own and could not have made any if I had tried! I know some here who could not patch up a garment of righteousness if they were to put all their rags together—and this is a great help to their receiving the Lord Jesus. What a blessing it is to have such a sense of soul poverty that you will never stay away from Christ because of what you possess!

Then, next, some could not come because they had married a wife. Now, I think it is very likely that these people who were maimed and cut about were so injured that they had no wife and perhaps could not get anybody to have them. Well then, they had not that temptation to stay away. They were too maimed to attract the eye of anybody who was looking for beauty and, therefore, they were not tempted that way. But they found at the ever-blessed supper of the Lamb an everlasting wedlock

which was infinitely better! Thus do souls lose earthly joys and comforts and, by the loss, they gain supremely—they are thus made willing to close in with Christ and find a higher comfort and a higher joy! That maiming which looked like unfitness turned out to be fitness!

One excuse made was, “I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to test them.” The lame could not do that. When the messenger touched the lame man on the shoulder and said, “Come,” he could not say, “I am going out tonight to plow with my new teams.” He had never been over the clods ever since he had lost his leg, poor soul, so that he could not make such an excuse. The blind man could not say, “I have bought a piece of land and I must go see it.” He was free from all the lusts of the eyes and so far was all the more ready to be led to the supper! When a soul feels its own sinfulness, wretchedness and lost estate, it thinks itself unfit to come to Christ—but this is an assistance to it—since it prevents its looking to anything else but Christ! It kills its excuses and makes it free to accept salvation by Grace.

But what about the men that were in the highway? Well, it seems to me that they were already on the road and at least out of their houses, if they had any. If they were out there begging, they were the more ready to accept an invitation to a meal of good food, for it was that they were singing for. A man who is out of the house of his own self-righteousness, though he is a great sinner, is in a more favorable position and more likely to come to Christ than he who prides himself in his supposed self-righteousness.

As for those who were under the hedges, well, they had no house of their own and so they were all the more likely to come and fill God’s House. Men do not take to hedges to sleep under them as long as they have, even, a hovel where they may rest their head. But oh, poor soul, when you are driven to such distress that you would gladly hide under any hedge--when you have nothing left but a fearful looking for of judgment! When you think yourself to be an outlaw and an outcast before God, left to wander like Cain, a waif and stray, lost to all good, you, I say, are the very man to come to Christ! Come out of your hedges, then!

I am looking for you. Though you hide yourselves away, yet God’s own Spirit will discover you and bring you, I trust, this very morning, to feed on Divine Love! Trust Jesus Christ, that is all, just as you are, with all your unfitness and unreadiness! Take what God has made ready for you, the precious blood to cleanse you, a robe of righteousness to cover you, eternal joy to be your portion! Receive the Grace of God in Christ Jesus! Oh receive it now! God grant you may for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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A BAD EXCUSE IS WORSE THAN NONE

NO. 578

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 3, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT BAYSWATER.

“And they all with one consent began to make excuses.”
Luke 14:18.

THE provisions of the Gospel of Christ may well be compared to a supper, provided as they were, in the evening of the world—“in these last days.” The description, “a great supper,” is well borne out if we consider the greatness of the provision—how much love and mercy God has displayed towards the sons of men in the Person of Christ Jesus—how much power and gracious working He has shown by His Holy Spirit. A great supper it is if we think of the richness and sweetness of the provision—it is a feast worthy of the great King. The flesh of Jesus is our spiritual meat and His blood our choicest wine. Our souls are satisfied with Covenant mercies, most fitly set forth as “A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”

A great supper it is, moreover, when we consider the number of guests invited. “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” The call of the Gospel comes to every man and woman within hearing of the ministers of God—

***“None are excluded there, but those
Who do themselves exclude!
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.”***

No other king ever sent out an invitation so broad as this! Wisdom “cries at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call. And my voice is to the sons of man.” Is it not strange that when the householder made so great a supper—when he offered it without money and without price—that all his neighbors should with one consent begin to make excuse?

He did not call them to prison or to misery! How, then, came they to be so unwilling to obey the summons? Why this unanimity in the rejection? We find good men differing as to how it is that evil men can hold together so well. What? Not *one* who has respect enough to his generous friend to sit at his table and receive his bounty? Not one. Truly, here, Brethren, we have a picture of the universal depravity of man! All men are thus vile and refuse the mercy of God. We never know how bad man is till the Gospel is preached to him. The Gospel acts as a white background to set forth the blackness of man’s heart.

Here human nature reaches to the greatest height of sin’s enormity! Spitting forth his venom against the Lord of Infinite Love, man proves himself truly to be of the serpent’s brood. The Gospel is preached to thousands and do all make excuse? So the parable has it and truly so the fact proves it. What? Is there not one whose free will is inclined towards Christ? Is there not one of so good a natural disposition that he will come

to Jesus? No, the text says, not one—"They all with one consent began to make excuses." How thoroughly has father Adam ruined our understandings! What fools, as well as rebels, we are to refuse to partake of the banquet of love! We are altogether become unprofitable. There is not one who seeks after God!

You will, perhaps, remind me that there were other men besides those who made excuses. Most true. But these were in the highways and hedges, or in the streets and lanes of the city. And so those who do not hear the Gospel and therefore are not guilty of rejecting it, yet nevertheless are far off from God by wicked works and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. Thus, taking the two characters to represent all mankind, we find *all* to be enemies of God. Those in the highways need to be "compelled" to come in—they had a natural reluctance to feast at the good man's table. And so all sorts of men are averse to the Gospel. They are perfectly willing to sin—content even to perish in sin! But to come to Christ, to accept the great Atonement, to put their trust in Jesus—this is a thing they care not for and with one consent, when they hear the Gospel—they begin to make excuses.

We fear that there are many in this meeting house this morning who have been blessed with hearing the Gospel for years but up to now the only treatment they have given to the gracious message is to make excuses about it. I hope to deal with such very simply and very affectionately—earnestly desiring that they make their last excuse this morning and that it may meet with its death blow. O that they may come to the feast which they have long rejected and rejoice in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus!

Why did they make excuses? Let us, first, try to *account* for their conduct. Secondly, what excuses did they make?—let us *recount* them. And thirdly, how foolish thus to make excuses!—here let us *encounter* them.

I. Let us try to ACCOUNT for the fact, the sad fact, that men are so ready to make excuses rather than to receive the Word of God. We account for it in the first place by the fact that they had no heart at all to accept the feast. Had they spoken the truth plainly, they would have said, "We do not wish to come, nor do we intend to do so." If man's heart were not so deceitful, it would not make excuses, but it would say outright, "We will not have this Man to reign over us. We do not feel our sinfulness. We will not, therefore, accept pardon. We believe that we can work out our own salvation with our own doings.

"Or, if not, we are content to take our chance. If it shall go ill with us, it will go ill with a great many people. We will run all risks—we do not need salvation—we choose rather to have our full swing of carnal delights. Your religion involves too much self-sacrifice. It is altogether contrary to the lusting of our minds and therefore we decline it." This is at the bottom of it. Some of you, my Hearers, have often been impressed and partially convinced of sin but you have put off Christ with excuses. Will you bear with me while I solemnly assure you that at its core your heart is at enmity to God? Your excuse may look very pretty but it is as flimsy as it is fair. If you were honest with your own soul you would say at once, "I do not love Christ. I do not need His salvation."

Your put offs, your false promises, your excuses are worthless. Anyone with half an eye can see through them, they are so transparent. You are an enemy of God! You are unreconciled and you are content to be so. This truth may be unpalatable but it is nevertheless most certain. May God help you to feel this and may it humble you before His Presence. Still, if they would not come to the good man's feast, why did they not say so? If the real secret of it was that they hated him and despised his provisions, is it not melancholy that they were not honest enough to give him a "no" at once? Well, they certainly were not and one reason might be because they wished to be upon good terms with their conscience. They felt they ought to go. He was one who had a claim upon their courtesy, if not their gratitude, and therefore feeling that they ought to go and yet not intending to go, they sought to compromise by an excuse.

Conscience is a very unamiable neighbor to men who live in sin. It is said of David, "David's heart struck him," and it is a very hard blow which the heart is able to give. In order to parry the blow men hold up a shield of excuses. You cannot quite extinguish your conscience, which is the candle of the Lord and therefore you put it under the bushel of an excuse. The thief fears the watchdog and therefore throws him a bone to keep him quiet—that bone is made of excuses. John Bunyan tells us that Mr. Recorder Conscience, when the town of Mansoul was in the keeping of Diabolus, used sometimes to cry out at such a rate that he made all the inhabitants afraid and so they put him in a very dark place and tried to put a gag in his mouth to keep him quiet. But for all that, sometimes when his fits came on he made the town feel very uneasy.

I know what conscience tells some of you—it says to you, "How is it you can forget Divine things? How can you trifle with the world to come? How can you live as if you never meant to die? What will you do when you come to die without an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ?" And so that conscience may be quiet awhile, you make an excuse and persevere in refusing to come to the feast. It may be that you make this excuse to satisfy custom. It is not the custom of this present age to fly immediately in the face of Christ. There are not many men of your acquaintance or mine who ostensibly oppose religion.

Your father fears God. Your mother is a woman of great devotion. Your friends go to the House of God and speak experimentally of Divine things—you do not like, therefore, to say to them, "I will never be a Christian! I dislike the ways of God! I do not choose the plan of Sovereign Grace," and therefore to spare their feelings you make an excuse. You do not want to grieve dear friends—you are afraid if you spoke out honestly what your soul feels it might bring your mother with gray hairs to the grave, or make your father's heart break—and so you make an excuse. And you think that they may entertain a comfortable hope whereas, while you make excuses, there is no hope for you at all.

For my part I would rather you speak outright and say what you mean! I would that you would say, "I am an enemy of Christ. I do not believe His Gospel. I will not serve Him!" This might sound very badly but it would show, at least, that there was some sincerity in you and we would hope

that before long you might be bowed to the will of Christ. Excuses are curses and when you have no excuses left there will be hope for you!

It may be you make these excuses because you have had convictions which so haunt you at times that you dare not oppose Christ to His face. You have gone home from the services to weep. That little chamber of yours is a witness that you cannot live altogether without prayer. The other day when you went to a funeral you came home with your mind very solemn and you thought, then, that certainly you would yield to the commands of Jesus. When you were sick and had that week or two upstairs alone—then you vowed and resolved—but your resolves melted into thin air.

The tear starts in your eyes—you are almost persuaded to be a Christian—you breathe a prayer! But ah, some ill companion tempts you the next morning and there you are, according to the old proverb, “The dog has returned to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” Ah, how many times did I have convictions of sin and terrible ones, too, and yet I said, like Felix to Paul, “Go your way for this time. When I have a convenient season, I will call for you”?

But I could not quench these convictions by downright opposition to Christ. I knew too much and felt too much to do that, and so I tried to patch up a truce between my soul and my convictions. Satan is always ready to help men with excuses. This is a trade of which there is no end. It certainly commenced very early, for after our first parents had sinned one of the first occupations upon which they entered was to make themselves aprons of fig leaves to hide their nakedness! Read the Scriptures through and you will find that excuse-making has been a habit in all ages and among all classes of people.

And till the last sinner shall be saved by Sovereign Grace, I suppose men will still be setting up their vain excuses in the temple of God! If you will fire the gun, Satan will always keep you supplied with ammunition. When he thinks that a Truth is about to come home to you, if you cannot frame an excuse he will do it for you. He will run between you and the cannon shot of God’s Word to prevent your being wounded by it. If the preacher’s sword should be too sharp for you and make your conscience bleed, the Evil One has a Satanic plaster with which he very soon binds up the wound! The natural self-righteousness of man prompts him to frame apologies. We are all the best men in the world according to our own gauge and measure. If we could sit as judges upon *ourselves*, the verdict would always be “Not guilty.”

Sin, which would be very shocking in another, is very venial in us. No, what would be abominable in other men becomes almost commendable in ourselves so partially do we judge our own case. The sinner cannot think it quite right for himself to be an unbeliever in Christ—and since his enlightened conscience will not let him say that he is quite safe while he refuses to fly to the wounds of Jesus—he runs to excuses in order that he may still say, “I am rich and increased in goods,” and not be driven to the unhappy necessity of crying, “I am naked and poor and miserable.”

Sinful self is hard to conquer, but *righteous* self is the worst enemy of the two. When we can make men plead guilty, then God pronounces abso-

lution upon them. But while men will interpose their extenuations there is little or no hope for them. O great God our Master, tear away the excuses from every sinner here and make him stand guilty before Your bar in his own consciousness, that he may cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and find pardon through the blood of Jesus Christ! Take heed, O you ungodly ones, lest you go on excusing and excusing and excusing, until you excuse yourselves down to the pit of Hell! Know this—you will never be able to excuse yourselves out again.

II. We come to RECOUNT these excuses. Many will not come to the great supper—will not Christians be on the same ground as those in the parable? They are too busy. They have a large family and it takes all their time to earn bread and cheese for those little mouths. They have a very large business—many servants in their employ—and from the first thing in the morning to the last thing at night, if they do not see after business, their affairs would go wrong. Or else, if they have no business, yet they have so many pleasures and these require so much time—their butterfly visits during the morning take up so many hours—the dropping of their small pieces of pasteboard at other people's doors occupy all their leisure and they really have no opportunity to think about matters so unpalatable as death and eternity.

This excuse scarcely needs a word from me to answer it because every man knows that it is grossly false. Nobody goes starving because he has not time to eat. Now, if God has given time for us to support our natural frame, much more has He given us time to feed the soul. I do not find my friends in the street half dressed. But I find some of them spend many a half-hour over that other pin and that other ribbon. Now surely if they have time to dress the body, they must have had time given them in which to put on the robe of righteousness and array the soul!

If you have not the time, God gave it to you and you must have mis-spent it. God gives you time as a steward and if you say to your Master, "I have it not," He will reply to you, "I entrusted it to you. You must have spent it on yourself. You have robbed God." A little earlier rising, a little less time at the table—either of these might give you time enough. You know you have the time and when you say you have it not, the lie is too thin—you can see through it. O Soul! O Soul! When holy men can find hours for prayer—when such a man as Martin Luther, when he was very busy, used to say—"I must have three hours prayer today at least, or else I cannot get through my business"—do not tell me that you have not time to seek the Lord!

Besides, it is not an affair of *time*. Salvation may be worked in an *instant*! There is life in a *look* at the Crucified One. There is life at this moment for you. And between now and the time when this service shall have gone, there is time enough for you to have laid hold upon eternal life and to have received Christ Jesus to your soul's salvation. That excuse will not do. But then they fly to another. They are too *good*. When I have preached Free Grace and a full Christ, I have heard some say, "That is a good sermon for the crowd in a theater—for ignorant, low-lived people. But we respectable people do not require such salvation. To offer a free salvation to men who are neither drunkards nor swearers—why the thing is ridicu-

lous! The sermon was very good for Magdalenes, for thieves and such like—but not for *us*.”

No, you are too good to be saved! You need not a physician because you are whole. Your own table has enough upon it. You do not need to come to this feast. But think, I pray you, whether this is not all a mistake! In what are you better than other men, after all? What if you do not indulge in open sins—does not your heart often go a-lusting towards evil? Does your tongue always speak that which is right and true? If you cannot remember sins of commission, what about the sins of omission? Have you fed the hungry? Have you clothed the naked? Have you taught the ignorant? Have you loved God with all your heart and soul and strength? Have you given Him all that He demands of you? Why you cannot say this!

Now the perfection, the holiness which God demands in order to salvation must be like a perfect alabaster vase—if there is a single crack or spot on it—all is spoiled. You may say, “Well, it is not much broken. We have not seriously damaged it.” No, but God requires it to be *perfect* and no matter how slight the damage it may have sustained, you cannot enter Heaven upon the footing of your good works—you are cast out forever! Hear these words, “By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” And, “As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse.” God save you from that false excuse!

Another class says, “We are too *bad* to be saved. The Gospel cries, ‘Believe in Jesus Christ and live,’ but it cannot mean *me*. I have been too gross an offender. When I was but young I went into evil and since then I have gone from bad to worse. O Sir, I have cursed God to His face! I have sinned against light and knowledge, against a mother’s prayers and tears. I have spoken evil of God’s Word! I have laughed at the very name of His Son Jesus Christ! I am too evil to be saved.” Here is another bad excuse. You know, Sinner, if you have been a hearer of the Gospel, that this is not true! For bad as you are, no man is excluded from Christ on account of his vileness. “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.”

The invitations of the Gospel do not stop at a certain point of sin. On the contrary, they seem to select the worst sinners first. What did the Savior say? “Begin at Jerusalem.” But, Lord, the men who crucified You live there! “Begin at Jerusalem.” But, Lord, it was in Jerusalem that they shed Your blood and thrust out the tongue and laughed at You and made a mockery of Your prayers! “Begin at Jerusalem”—the worst first—just as the surgeon in a battle is apt to look to the worst cases first. Here is a man who has lost his finger. Ah, well, let him bide awhile, we will see to that. But here is another who has lost a limb and he is bleeding fast and if the blood is not stopped, his life will ooze out. The surgeon sees him first.

O you great sinners, you who feel yourselves to have been notorious offenders, I pray you are not so guilty as to make this an excuse for not coming to Christ! On the contrary, use it as a reason why you *should* fly to Him at once. The more filth, the more need of washing. The more sick, the more need of a physician. The more hungry, the more welcome to the

table. Come to Jesus just as you are, with all your sins—"Though they are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." No form of sin imaginable or unimaginable can by any possibility be a bar to any man's salvation if he will but believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!

Then comes another excuse, "Sir, I would trust Christ with my soul this morning, but I do not feel in any state to trust Christ. I have not that sense of sin which I think to be a fit preparation for coming to Christ—

**" 'If anything is felt, 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.' "**

Ah, my dear Hearer, this is an excuse which looks like a very good one, but it has no truth in it! There is no *fitness* needed before you may trust in Christ! Whatever may be your present condition, if you trust Jesus Christ with your soul you are saved on the spot! Your sins are forgiven you! You are made a child of God! You are accepted in the Beloved! Where do you read of *fitness* for Christ in the Scriptures? Do you think the dead whom Jesus restored were *fit* to be raised? Why, Martha said of her brother, "Lord, by this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days"! Was there any *fitness* in Lazarus for a resurrection? And yet Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth!" Does the Gospel say, "He who is in a certain state, and then believes, shall be saved"? No, but, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved."

How am I bid to preach to you? Am I to say, "Whoever *feels* this is to come"? No, but, "Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." Are you willing to have Christ? Then you may have Him, for Christ is as free to every needy sinner as the drinking fountain in the street is free to every thirsty passer-by. Trust Jesus, even if your heart is hard as granite—He can soften it! Trust Him though conscience is asleep—though all the mental faculties are perverted! Trust Him! It is His business to make you holy, not your business—trust Him to do it all! He is called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins!

Trust Him to overcome your corruptions, to kill your evil temper, to subdue your will, to soften your heart, to enlighten your conscience, to inflame your love—trust Him to do it ALL! O, be not so foolish as to say, "I am too ill to send for a doctor—when I get better, when I feel better, then I will send for him." Do not say, "I am so dirty. If I felt more clean, I would wash." No—wash because you are dirty! Wash because you have nothing but filth about you! Send for the Great Physician because there is no health in you! There is nothing in you but wounds, bruises and putrefying sores. Therefore let your faith entrust your healing entirely to Him.

Here comes another: "O Sir, I would trust Christ with my soul, but it seems too good to be true that God should save me on the spot, this morning. You little know where I was last night, or what I did yesterday. You cannot tell who I am nor how bad I have been and you tell me that if I trust Jesus Christ, I shall be saved. Sir, it is too good to be true! I cannot imagine it." My dear Friend, do you measure God's corn with your bushel? Because the thing seems an amazing thing to you, should it therefore be amazing unto Him? What if His thoughts should be as high above your thoughts as the heavens are above the earth? Is not this just what He has

said in Scripture? I know you find it hard to forgive your fellow man, but my Father, my God, can readily forgive you!—

***“Crimes of such horror to forgive,
Such guilty daring worms to spare—
This is Your grand prerogative
And none shall in the honor share.”***

He creates like a God! He does not make a few insects, or here and there a star! This great world He fashioned and He scattered the starry orbs about with both His hands. So when the Lord comes to pardon, He does not pardon some small offenses and wink at trifles—but the whole mass of sin He cleans away in a moment and all manner of sin and blasphemy, in an instant He casts behind His back. Believe that God is God and not such a one as you are! Believe that He is capable of doing greater things than you can dream of! Trust Him! Trust Him NOW and however good the things are you shall find them true! However great, they shall be yours! I think I hear one say, “It is too soon for me to come. Let me have a little look at the world first. I am scarcely fifteen or sixteen. There is plenty of time for me.”

Have you been to the graveyard? Are there not there the records of those who have found fifteen or sixteen none too soon, for lo, at that age they were taken away to their last account? Too soon? Is it ever too soon to be happy? If religion made you miserable I might advise you to put it off to the last, but inasmuch as to be in Christ is to be happy, you cannot be in Him too soon! I have sat by many deathbeds and heard many regrets, but never did I hear a Christian regret that he was converted too soon! I have received many young converts into Church fellowship, but I never heard any one of them say they were sorry to be called by Grace so early!

If I were condemned to die and anyone should bring me a pardon, I should not think I received it too soon! The wrath of God abides on you—can it be too soon to escape from it? You are the subject of daily temptations and you daily add to your sins—can it be too soon to have a new heart and a right spirit? Others will row in the opposite direction, pleading, “Alas, it is too late!” The devil first puts the clock back and tells you it is too soon—and when this does not serve his turn—he puts it on and says, “The hour is passed, the day of Grace is over! Mercy’s gate is bolted, you can never enter it!”

Let us answer this at once. It is never too late for a man to believe in Jesus while he is out of his grave. While the lamp of life continues to burn, the vilest sinner who returns shall find Christ ready to receive him. There have been men converted at a hundred years of age—we have instances on record of persons who have even passed the century and become children of Christ Jesus! How old are you? Are you in the sere and yellow leaf of eighty? Ah, you have many sins, but what a triumph of Grace it will be when eighty years of sin shall all be washed away in a moment! I tell you that if you were as old as Methuselah and in every year of that long life you had as many sins as you have already committed in the whole eighty years, yet the Grace of Jesus Christ is sufficient to put all this away!

Your sins may mount up like mountains, but the love of Christ, like Noah’s flood, can go twenty cubits upwards and the tops of the mountains

shall be covered. It is not too soon! It is not too late! Neither of these reasons are of any value though they delude many. “Well,” says another, “I would believe in Christ but I do not know whether I am one of God’s elect or not. Sir, that doctrine of election troubles me and staggers me. If I knew I was one of the elect, I would trust Christ.”

That is—if God will show you His secrets then you will do God’s will. And so the Almighty is to bend to *your* conditions and then you will do as He bids you? You will come to feast at the man’s table if he will take you into his secret closet and show you all his treasure! He will do nothing of the kind! How foolish this talk is about election! The doctrine of election is a great and precious Truth of God, but it never can be a valid reason for a man’s *not* believing in Christ! You are ill today and the doctor comes, “There,” says he, “there is the medicine, I will guarantee if you take it, it will heal you.” You say, “Sir, I would take it at once, but I do not know whether I am predestinated to get over this fever. If I am predestinated to live, why then, Sir, I will take the medicine, but I must know first.” “Ah,” says the doctor, “I tell you what. If you do not take it you are predestinated to *die*.”

And I will tell you this—if you will not believe in Jesus Christ you will be damned, be you who you may—but you will not be able to lay it at predestination’s door! It will be at your own. A man has fallen overboard. A rope is thrown to him, but he says, “I should like to grasp that rope only I do not know whether I am predestinated to be drowned.” Fool! He will go down to the bottom with a lie in his mouth! We do not say, “I would sit down to dinner today, but I will not eat because I do not know whether I am predestinated to have any dinner today.” We do not talk so foolishly in common things! Why, then, do we so in religion? When men are hard up for an excuse they are glad to run to the mysteries of God to use them as a veil to cover their faces. O my dear Friends, you must know that though God has a chosen people—yet when He commands *you* to believe in Christ—His having a chosen people, or not having a chosen people cannot excuse you from *obedience* to the Divine Command—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

I could not attempt to go through all the excuses and therefore after handling two more, I will have done. “Well,” says one, “if I were to believe in Christ I should be as bad, after a short time, as I used to be. I might be a little better for a time, but I should go back again—so it is of no use trusting Christ.” That is to say, dear Friend, Jesus Christ says if you trust Him, He will save you—but *you* say if you trust Him, He will *not* save you! That is what it comes to. Jesus Christ promises that if you trust Him, He will save you from your sins. You say, “No, I should go back to my sins and be as bad as before.”

Which am I to believe—your excuse, or His promise? Why, Christ’s promise, surely! “But I tried once before,” says one. Very likely *you* did, but *Christ* never tried! If He had tried He would have succeeded. “Well, but, I did hold on a certain length of time.” I dare say you did—*you* held on. But if *Christ* had hold of you, He would never have let you go. When you get hold of Christ you may soon drop Him—but when Jesus gets hold of *you*, He says, “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never

perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” If you had greatly trusted Christ He would not have suffered you to become what you used to be. “Well,” says one, “I cannot trust Christ, I cannot believe Him.”

You talk Latin, Brother! You talk Latin. “No,” you say, “I do not talk Latin.” Yes, you do. I will translate that word into the English for you. It means, “I *will not*.” When you say, “I *cannot*,” it means, “I *will not*.” And understand, whenever the *minister* says, “You cannot,” he means, “you will not,” for he does not mean that you have any natural inability, but that you have a *moral inability* caused by your love of sin—a willful inability. “I cannot,” is the Latin, but “I will not,” is the English of it. A man once sent his servant to a certain town to fetch some goods. And he came back without them. “Well, Sir, why did you not go there?” Well, when I got to a certain place, I came to a river, Sir, a very deep river—I cannot swim and I had no boat—so I could not get over.”

A good excuse, was it not? It looked so. But it happened to be a very bad one, for the master said, “Is there not a ferry there?” “Yes, Sir.” “Did you ask the man to take you over?” “No, Sir.” Surely the excuse was a mere fiction! So there are many things with regard to our salvation which we cannot do. Granted, but there is a ferry there! There is the Holy Spirit who is able to do all things and you remember the text, “If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?” It is true you cannot make yourself a new heart, but did you ask for a new heart with sincerity and truth? Did you seek Christ? If you say, “Yes, I did sincerely seek Christ and Christ would not save me,” why then you are excused.

But there never was a soul who could, in truth, say that! There never was a sinner yet who perished seeking Christ and there never will be! And if your heart’s sincere desire is after the salvation which is treasured in Christ Jesus, then Heaven and earth may pass away but Christ will never cast you out while His own Word stands, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Still,” you say, “I cannot trust Christ.” Now, I am at issue with you here—I am at issue with every awakened sinner. I agree with you if you will let me give my own translation of the word “cannot”—that you *will not*—but if it is to stand as the word is generally used, I am at issue with you.

Suppose that you believe me to be an honest man. Would it be fair after that, to say, “Sir, I *cannot* believe you”? Now, if you believe me to be a liar, I can very well understand that you cannot trust me. But if you take it for granted that I am incapable of telling a falsehood and yet do not believe what I tell you, *you* are a liar! Now, you believe that Christ is incapable of falsehood—you are not like those who are ignorant of the Character of Christ and therefore you know Him to be incapable of untruthfulness. And then you say you cannot believe Him? Seeing that Jesus Christ cannot but speak Truth, it cannot be a difficult thing for any man to believe what He speaks! If you have sufficient light given you by the Holy Spirit to know that Christ is the Truth, I believe you have sufficient power from the same source to believe what Christ says.

I trace this to God's *gift*, but I pray you to exercise the power which you certainly have. Tell Christ you cannot believe Him? Will you tell Him that to His face when He sits upon the Judgment Seat at last? Will you dare to say this when His eyes of fire shall look you through and through? "Most holy Christ, I could not trust You! Most truthful Savior, I could not believe You! I suspected You. I doubted You!" "Why did you doubt Me? What cause had I ever given you? Why did you think Me a liar? In what had I ever broken My promises, or when did I err from the Truth?" "He that believes not," says John, "has made God a liar, because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." O, think of this and never make that excuse again! Instead of saying, "I cannot believe," say, "I cannot make God a liar, I must therefore believe, for I know God is no liar—I must therefore trust His Son Jesus Christ!"

I have recounted a few of the excuses. Perhaps you will make another batch before the evening comes on—you who determine not to be saved. It is only the mighty Spirit of God who can sweetly constrain your will to yield to Christ and so I close with these two or three words, upon the third point.

III. HOW FOOLISH THUS TO MAKE EXCUSES! For first remember with *Whom* it is you are dealing. You are not making excuses before a man who may be duped by them—you make these excuses before the heart-searching God! My dear Hearers, let me speak very solemnly and push this point closely home. You know that God can see through all this—why, then, do you hang up such thin veils? Confess before Him now your folly—"Lord, I have been an enemy to You. Lord, I have been averse to Your Son, Jesus Christ, and therefore have I dreamed up these excuses—forgive me. I see how foolish I have been. Grant that I may do so no more."

Remember again, *what* it is you are trifling with. It is your own soul, the soul which can never die! You are trifling with a Heaven which you will never see if you keep on with these excuses. You are trifling, Sinner, with that Hell which must be your never-ending portion if you continue as you are. Can you play with Hell-fire? O, can you make sport of Heaven? Can you laugh at the blood of Jesus? You are really doing so while you are thus halting between two opinions. If you must play the fool, find something cheaper to play with than this! O Sirs, if you must have mirth, I pray you have it out of something else than this.

To be saved! Listen to Heaven's music! To be lost! Listen to Hell's groans! Neither of these things are matters for you to play with. Say, as now you are sitting here—I pray God help you to say it before you leave this building—"Lord, I have been trifling with eternity. I have been making frivolous excuses rather than I would accept Your love in Christ. I have trifled with Heaven and Hell—grant, Lord, that this may be brought to an end—that I may love and trust You this day."

Remember, again, that these excuses will look very different soon. How will you make excuses when you come to die, as die you must? When death gets the grip of you and the strong man fails. When they wipe the death sweat from your fevered brow. When the glaze of death's night is coming over your eyeballs—what will you think of these excuses then? It may be you will rave with very fury at yourselves that you could have

played with your souls to such an extent. What will you do with your excuses when you stand at the bar of Judgment? The trumpet rings, you have awakened from your grave, you stand amidst the myriads to be judged. The books are opened and Christ proclaims your doom—"Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire." Will excuses comfort you then? Will you be able to say, then, "Lord, it was too soon! Lord, it was too late! Lord, I was too great a sinner to believe in Jesus! Lord I did not need a Savior"?

No, when the trumpet peals and the heavens are in a blaze. When the sun is turned into sackcloth and the moon into blood and the stars fall like fig leaves from the tree, you will find other work to do than excuse-making! You will weep and wail because of sin and when you are cast into Hell what will you make, then, of your excuses? Written in letters of fire you shall see in one tremendous arch above your heads, "You knew your duty, but you did it not! You heard the Gospel, but you made excuses!" Thundering more tremendous than the trump of resurrection shall come these words to you, "Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded, I, also, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes. When your fear comes as desolation and your destruction comes as a whirlwind. When distress and anguish come upon you."

O, the Lord have mercy upon you, excuse-makers, and bring you to look to Jesus now! Now, I say, for the Scripture says, "Today is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation." The only way to end your excuses is not by praying nor resolving, but by *looking to Christ*. There hangs the bleeding Savior on the Cross. He dies—the Just for the unjust—to bring us to God! He suffers there that sin may be forgiven! Look to Him! Trust Him and you shall be saved! My Hearer, I give you now in God's name this invitation, this *command*—trust your soul to Jesus, the Son of God, who suffered for sin—and you shall be saved!

But mind you, I may never meet you all this side the grave but I will meet you all at God's Great Day and if you receive not Christ and trust in Him, I am clear of your blood. Upon my garments your doom cannot fall. You have heard the Gospel! You have been told to trust Jesus as you are! You have been assured that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to Him! You have been bid to come and now on your own heads be your soul's ruin if you come not!

May the Spirit of God take these things and apply them to your souls. May He be as a fire and as a hammer in your souls—as a fire to melt, or as a hammer to break. And may you, today, with brokenness of heart take Christ to be your Savior, both now and forever. Amen.

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“YET THERE IS ROOM”

NO. 3221

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1910,

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 21, 1862.**

**“And yet there is room.”
Luke 14:22.**

I REMINDED YOU, this morning, [See Sermon #485, Volume 8—NO ROOM FOR CHRIST IN THE INN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] that there was no room for Christ and His parents in the inn at Bethlehem—and also that there were then other places where, although there was no room for Christ, far inferior persons found a welcome and entertainment. I need, this evening, to convince you that although there are still many sinners who seem to have no room for Christ in their hearts and lives, yet there is plenty of room for sinners in the heart and love of Christ! And I am going to give them an earnest, tender, affectionate invitation to come to Christ while “yet there is room.” You who have hitherto been strangers to the Grace of God. You who, as yet, have never feasted at the Gospel Banquet, you who have, until now, been content with this world’s frothy dainties and have never tasted that which is substantial and satisfying for time and for eternity—to you, even to you—comes the message of our text, “yet there is room.”

I. My first question concerning the text is, WHERE IS THERE ROOM? And the answer is, there is room in the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness! There is room for you to be washed and to be made clean. Vast multitudes have gone into that Fountain black as the thickest night—and they have come up from the washing “whiter than snow.” Innumerable offenses have there been washed away, but the Fountain has lost none of its cleansing power, nor will it until the last elect soul has been washed therein, as Cowper so confidently and so truly sings—

**“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more!”**

It is our joy to be able to assure you that in that blessed bath of cleansing, “yet there is room!”

There is room, too, in that chariot of love which carries the washed ones all the way to Heaven—that chariot of which Solomon’s was a type and of which we read, “he made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.” In this chariot there is room for millions more—and if you are washed in His precious blood, He who is

greater than Solomon will take you up and carry you on and over the rough and rugged road of this wilderness world—and conduct you safely to His Father’s House above. You shall travel joyously in the best of company, so enter while there is room, Sinner, and there is room now!

There is room, too, in the Father’s great family. He has adopted an innumerable multitude of those who once were children of wrath and servants of Satan! He has selected some of the vilest of the sons and daughters of Adam, but they are washed, they are cleansed, they are regenerate and they have received the seal of their adoption into the family of God and are joyously crying, “Abba, Father!” But there is room for millions more in that great family! Earthly fathers, as a general rule, have no room for strangers in their home—the house is already crowded with their own boys and girls—so they cannot receive other people’s children into their family. But there is still room in the great Father’s heart for all who will come unto Him by Jesus Christ, His Son. All whom He has chosen unto eternal life have not yet believed in Jesus and been “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” All whom He intends to save have not yet been brought to recognize Him as their Father and their God, so again I say that there is still room in the great Father’s heart for all who will come unto Him by Jesus Christ, His Son!

There is room, too, in the visible Church here below. We gladly welcome every new convert and we say to each one—

***“Come in, you blessed of the Lord,
Stranger nor foe are thou!
We welcome you with warm accord,
Our friend, our Brother now.”***

“The Lord knows them that are His,” but all that are the Lord’s are not yet added to His visible Church. Thousands of them stray in the paths of sin—millions of them are as yet like jewels hidden away in the mire, or pearls lying many fathoms deep in the caverns of the sea! There is still room for more stars in the diadem that adorn the brows of the Church on earth! There is still room for more golden candlesticks to give her light. She still has room for many more children to be dandled on her knees and to suck at her breasts—use whatever metaphor we may, we can still say, in the words of our text—“yet there is room.”

There is room, too, in the ordinances of God’s House. There is room for you, Christian Brother or Sister, in the liquid tomb which is the emblem of your Savior’s grave! You may be buried with Him by Baptism into death and rise from the baptistery in the likeness of His Resurrection, therefore to walk with Him in newness of life! There is room for you, too, at that Communion Table where, in eating bread and drinking wine, we spiritually eat Christ’s flesh and drink His blood and so prove that He dwells in us and we dwell in Him.

There is room for you at the children’s table—you will not overcrowd us! We are not like the elder brother who was jealous because the prodigal was welcomed back to his father’s house and his father’s table. We

shall have none the less enjoyment, but all the more, if you will come and join us at the feast of love—there is abundant room for you there.

Better, still, and more to your soul’s solace, *there is room for you in Heaven!* The long procession has been streaming through the gates of pearl from the day when Abel, the protomartyr, entered the heavenly city, until this very moment, as I am speaking to you! The last emancipated soul has just flapped its wings for joy, left its mortal cage behind and entered into everlasting liberty! The redeemed from among men have been taking their appointed places before the Throne of God, waving their palms, wearing their crowns, playing their golden harps and singing their songs of victory! But there is still room in Heaven for many more! There are crowns there without heads to wear them and harps without hands to play them—and mansions without tenants to inhabit them and streets of gold that shall have something lacking until *you* have trodden them—if you are one of the Lord’s own people. There is room for multitudes whom God has chosen—to come to swell the hallelujah chorus of the skies! It is very sweet even now, but it has not yet reached its full force and grandeur—it needs to have ten thousand times ten thousand voices added to the already mighty choir—and then the glorious chorus shall roll up to the Throne of God louder than the noise of many waters and as the voice of a great thunder, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! And He shall reign forever and ever!”

What a dreary message I would have to deliver if I had to tell you that there was no room! Let me give you one or two illustrations. In passing over some of the more difficult passes of the Alps, the traveler sees small habitations by the side of the road, marked “Refuge No. 1,” “Refuge No. 2,” and so on, up to the hospice on the summit, and then down the other side more refuges similarly marked. When a storm comes on and the wind and snow beat into a man’s face so that he cannot see his way, and he sinks more than knee-deep in the drifts—it is a happy circumstance for him that, perhaps a little way ahead, there is a refuge where he and others in the same plight may find shelter till hospitable monks come and take them to the hospice, or send them on their way! Imagine that one dark night the snow is pouring down, the flakes fall so thickly that you cannot see a star, the wind howls among the Alps and the poor traveler, nearly blinded, staggers up to the door of the refuge—but he sees outside of it a dozen or two other travelers all clustered together, nearly frozen to death, and they say to him—“The refuge is crammed! We can’t get in, so we must perish, though we have reached the door of the refuge but there is no room for us inside.” Ah, but I have no such bad news as that to bring to you tonight! Crowded as you are here, this great building has scarcely room enough to hold you—but the love of Christ is not so cramped that I need say to you, “There is no room here.” “Yet there is room.” All who are inside the refuge are but a small number compared with those who are yet to come for, in later and brighter ages, of which this is but the dawn, we believe that conversion work will go on far more

rapidly and that the Lord’s elect will be brought to Him in much greater numbers than in these days! Whether it will be so or not, it is our joy to tell you that “yet there is room” in the great Gospel Refuge which the Lord of the Way has so graciously provided for all who will enter it!

Here is another picture. There has been a wreck out there upon the coast. The ship has struck upon the rocks and she is fast going to pieces. Some of the poor mariners are clinging to the mast—they have been hanging there for hours. Heavy seas have broken over them and they can hardly retain their hold. Some of the crew have already become exhausted and have fallen off into the deep—and the others who are clinging for dear life are almost frozen with cold! But look there—a rocket goes up—they believe that they have been spotted and, after a while, they see that a lifeboat is coming to their rescue! Perhaps the brave men give a cheer as they row with all their might to let the poor shipwrecked sailors know that there is help at hand. As the lifeboat comes nearer, its captain cries, “Oh, what a lot of men! What can we do with so many? We will take as many of you as we can, but there is not room for all.” The men are helped off the wreck, one after the other, until they seem to fill the boat. Each man’s place has two crammed into it, but at last the captain says, “It’s no use. We can’t take any more. Our boat is so full that she’ll go down if we put in another man.” It’s all over with those poor souls that must be left behind, for before the gallant boat can make another trip, they must all have fallen into the waves of the sea and been lost.

But I have no such sad tale to tell you tonight, for my Master’s Gospel Lifeboat has thus far taken in but few compared with those she will yet take! I know not how many she will hold, but this I do know, that a multitude which no man can number shall be found within her and, amid songs of everlasting joy, they shall all be safely landed on the blessed shore where rocks and tempests will never again trouble them! The lifeboat is not yet full—there is still room in her for all who will trust in Jesus! Poor Mariner, give up clinging to that wreck on the rocks! Poor Sinner, give up clinging to your works and to your sins! There is room in the Gospel Lifeboat for you and all who will put themselves under the care of the great Captain of Salvation, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

II. Now we will change our view of the subject by asking and answering a second question, WHEN IS THERE ROOM? Lay the emphasis upon the word, “yet,” in the text. “Yet there is room.” “Yet!” Ages have marched along with solemn tramp, generations have followed generations and all have yielded their quota to the great Church of Jesus Christ—but, “yet there is room” for millions more! There have been multitudes passing through the valley of repentance up to the Cross of Calvary! Multitudes beyond all human calculation have found peace and pardon in Christ! But, for all that, “yet there is room!” A few years ago the Churches of our land, and especially the Churches of Ireland, had a visitation of Divine Grace when many were converted to God. And in this Church we have had a revival that has lasted all the years of our pastorate. We have had no special season of revival—there has been a continual revival, practi-

cally all the time, at New Park Street, at Exeter Hall, at the Surrey Gardens and here in this Tabernacle. The blessed work of conversion goes on, never slowly, but quite as fast as we can keep pace with it! The Lord is constantly adding to our numbers! Sometimes, as on the last occasion, 74 in a single month! On another occasion, a hundred! But we can still say, “yet there is room,” and if all the Churches in London and throughout the whole kingdom were to be multiplied exceedingly, we feel that we could still come to our pulpits as revival years passed over us and say, “yet there is room.”

Besides, Sinner, you are getting old now. Those gray hairs tell a tale of years that have passed. Your youth fled long ago and your early manhood is now over—God knows how you have spent it—but you are here, tonight, like an old barren tree, almost ready for the everlasting burning unless Sovereign Grace shall save you even now! And I am here to tell you that “yet there is room!” How old are you? Are you sixty? Are you past seventy? Can you look back over 80 years? Are you getting close to ninety? Well, even then, “yet there is room,” for you and if you had outnumbered the years of Moses, yes, and if you had lived as long as Methuselah lived, I would still say to you, “yet there is room!”

Think, too, of the many times that you have rejected Christ. Again and again the invitations of the great Giver of the Gospel Feast have been sent to you, but you have refused them all! Before I was born, some of you old people had many loving warnings and entreaties from godly ministers who have long since gone Home. You were not altogether unmoved by your mother’s prayers and your father’s supplications, and now, in these latter times, it has pleased God to speak to you by one who is so much younger than you—in words that would burn if they could, coming as they do, red-hot from a heart that is all on fire with love to your souls! My words have often reached your ears and have sometimes reached your consciences, too, yet the Lord knows how many vows have been made in this House and broken at the door—how many impressions have been made during the sermon—and obliterated before you have reached your homes! There are some of you who will find in me a swift witness against you at the bar of God! If you should say that you never heard the Gospel, I will testify that you have heard it plainly and faithfully declared time after time. I have not preached as I wish I could, but you have always been able to understand my message! I have not sought to find gaudy words and polished periods with which I might tickle your ears, but in God’s name, I have told you that unless you repent and believe, you shall surely perish! And I have preached to you the love of Jesus and pointed you to His wounds and bid you look unto Him and live. Yet you have rejected every warning and every invitation that I have given you up till now. But, notwithstanding that, I am still sent to say to you, “Yet there is room—yet there is room.”

It may be that some of you have been adding sin to sin till you have now got to such a pitch as you never dreamed that you would reach.

There is that young man over there in the gallery, who used to be at every Prayer Meeting and used to attend one of the Bible classes and all the services. *You* know, young man, to whom I am referring—that young man did run well, but he first went astray just a little bit and then still more—then he went from bad to worse and now he has gone to the worst of all! Let it never be told where it may reach his father’s ears, what sin he has committed only this week! Ah, young man, if you had been told, even a little while ago, that you would sin thus, you would have said, as Hazael said to Elisha, “But what? Is your servant a dog that he should do this great thing?” You would not have believed yourself capable of falling so low as to commit the offense in which you have now indulged! And I venture to prophesy that although you think you have repented of it, you will return to it as the dog turns to his own vomit and as the sow that was washed returns to her wallowing in the mire! There are some sinners who never seem to be satisfied till they have gone to the full limit of their tether. They are like the waves of the sea that must keep on advancing until they have reached their flood tide and can go no further. Yet Sinner, though all this is so terribly true of you, though you have gone as far as you can go in sin, “yet there is room” even for you in that cleansing Fountain of which I spoke a few minutes ago!

Probably I am addressing some who will never see another year roll over their heads. No, I may say that it is an absolute certainty concerning not merely one or two, but concerning many here present! I do not know how many out of the six or seven thousand persons now present will, according to the ordinary rate of mortality, die within a year from this night, but certainly a considerable number will. Therefore I am not talking fanatical nonsense, but solid truth! There are some persons here who will not even see another month on earth—and very many who will never see another year. And there may be at least one here who will not see even another day! How near this makes us feel to the unseen world, how close to death! I have known many such cases as this. One of the officers or members of the Church meets me as I am coming in, and says to me, “Do you remember So-and-So?” “Yes, I think I do. Where does he sit?” “Well, there is his seat.” “Oh, yes!” I reply, “I remember him well. What about him?” “Why,” says the friend, “last Sunday morning, as he was walking home after the service here, he was taken ill, went straight to bed and died.” Some of you know the Brother to whom I am referring. Not long ago, another friend said to me, “Do you know Mr. So-and-So?” “Oh, yes!” I answered, “why do you ask?” “Well, dear Pastor,” he said, “the Lord has been pleased to call her to Himself quite suddenly.” It is often thus—the stroke falls where it was least expected and God, in a moment, calls one and another of our friends to meet their final doom. We cannot say to any of those who have been called away from our midst, “yet there is room,” but we can say it to you who are here!

III. I think I have dwelt long enough on that word, “yet.” I want in closing to ask another question, **WHY IS THERE ROOM?**

How do we know that there is still room? Well, our text is enough to make us sure, even if we had nothing else, but we have other reasons for knowing, “yet there is room.” And the first reason is because the decree of election is vast and wide. Those individuals who try to caricature our doctrinal sentiments are in the habit of saying that we teach that God has chosen a few to be saved and left the great majority of mankind to perish. They know that we have never said any such thing! And they also know that no man of any standing in our denomination has ever said any such a thing! On the contrary, we believe that God has ordained a countless host, so numerous that no man can number it, who shall be everlastingly saved! And we think we have some warrant for believing that the number of the saved will vastly exceed the number of the lost, that in all things Christ may have the preeminence. Certainly, whatever may be our opinion upon that matter, we rejoice that the lines of Divine Election are not narrow, that the chosen people of God are not a mere handful—and we believe that when the time comes for the great King to make up His jewels, it shall be found that the case contains such multitudes of them that they shall be beyond all human calculation! It is our joy to know that God has chosen a great host to be saved and, as they have not all been saved yet, it is clearly proved that, “yet there is room!”

Again, we believe that Christ *offered an Infinite Sacrifice for the redemption of His people*. We cannot look at His blessed Person as the God-Man, Christ Jesus, without believing that the sufferings of such a Substitute for sinners must have had an infinite value—so we are fully persuaded that no limit can be set to the merit of Christ’s death—although we also believe that Christ had a definite purpose in His death which cannot be frustrated—and that this purpose was the salvation, not of all men—but of as many as His Father had given Him, according to His own words, “I lay down My life for the sheep.” And according to Paul’s words, “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.” Yet so great a Sacrifice as that of Christ could not have been offered without a great objective in view! In fact, He told His disciples that “the Son of Man came...to give His life a ransom for many.” We therefore believe that in the great fold wherein the Good Shepherd preserves His blood-bought sheep, there is yet room for many more to enter!

Further, we come to the same conclusion by considering *the great design of God in the whole of His Providential arrangements*—in the permission of the Fall and in the wondrous plan by which the Fall, itself, is made to minister to God’s Glory by being a foil, a dark background, to set forth the brightness of the Divine Grace which delivers sinners from eternal ruin! We believe that the objective of the Covenant of Grace and of the plan of Redemption so amazing as that which is revealed in the Scriptures could not have been a small one! It must be a great multitude of redeemed souls that will satisfy Christ for the terrible travail of soul that He endured—it cannot be an insignificant company that will be won by His almighty hands and His holy arms, but a mighty host who shall

be the fulfillment of the Lord’s eternal design and bring to Him due honor and glory forever and ever! Therefore, also for this reason we are persuaded that “yet there is room.”

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, when we consider *the prevalence of Jesus’ plea and the Omnipotence of the Holy Spirit’s agency*. When we see the daily preparation which God makes for sending out fresh ministers of the Gospel. When we understand that the earth is to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea—and because we believe that the millennial reign of Christ will certainly begin at the time that God has appointed—we are persuaded that there are unnumbered millions yet to come to the Gospel Feast and, therefore, we still cry, “yet there is room!” At that great banquet there shall not be one seat that shall be empty at the last! God has made provision for just as many as will come and it shall be found that the provision is sufficient for all the guests who accept the King’s invitation—that the great eternal decision of God was not frustrated and that even the perversity of man’s wicked will, which keep him from coming to God, shall be made, somehow or other, to reflect honor on the great Giver of the feast! Not a chair shall be vacant at that feast and not one of the redeemed shall be missing when the role is called at that day! We have not yet reached that period, so we can still say, “yet there is room.”

Well, Sinner, as it is true that “yet there is room,” we have a word of warning to say to you. There is room in the precious blood of Christ, there is room at the Gospel Feast, there is room in the Church on earth, there is room in Heaven—but if you will not occupy this room, I must solemnly tell you that there is room for you elsewhere! Alas, *there is room in Hell!* There may hardly be prisons enough for all the criminals on earth, but there is room for them in Hell! There are “nations that forget God.” There are myriads that hate Him, there are millions more that neglect His great Salvation, but there is room for them all in Hell if they will not repent and believe the Gospel! Blasphemer, there is room in Hell for you! Despiser of God’s Day and of God’s Word, there is room in Hell for you! And for some of you it may be that there are only a few more weeks or days—and then you will enter upon your terrible heritage! Grow on, you tares, till you ripen, and then, when you are bound up in bundles to be burned, let the bundles be ever so big, there is room for them all in Hell! Proud boasters, you may speak what Jude calls, “great swelling words,” now, declaring that you will fight the matter out with God, but you will find that in Hell there is room to humble you and room to destroy you there to all eternity! Is it not enough to make a man’s heart break even to think of such a terrible doom? Then what will it be to have to endure it without any hope of release forever? I remind you again that some of you will be there before long unless you repent! Oh, by the living God, in whose name I speak to you, I do entreat you, if you love yourselves, consider these things! For if you will not have Christ as your Savior, you will have His wrath remaining upon you forever and ever! If the message of God is despised by you, how shall you escape if you neglect so great a

Salvation? Sinner, are you resolved to make your bed in Hell? Soul, have you set your heart on it? Will you tonight give your hand to Satan and promise to be his slave forever? Stop, Man! This may be the last time that your conscience will ever be alarmed, so I plead with you to trust in Christ before I send you away to your homes. Think seven times before you do reject Him this once more, lest the slighted, grieved, almighty Spirit should depart from you and never strive with you again!

My last thought which I pass on to every unconverted sinner, is this—as there is room in the blood of Christ, as there is room in Heaven, *why not for me?* Will not each sinner here also say, *why not for me?* Soul, what does God say to you tonight? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” So this is what you have to do—obey the gracious message and believe in Christ! To believe on Christ is to trust Him and I am sure that He deserves your trust. He is God, able to save you—and He is Man, willing to save you. He would not have died if He had not loved sinners. He stands pleading with you tonight, blessed be His name, and though it has been with stern words that He has spoken to your conscience, now He asks you to trust Him and He says that if you do, you shall be saved! Soul, will you trust Him now? I hope the Spirit of God will lead you to say, “Yes, I will trust Jesus tonight. I feel utterly unworthy, but then He died to save the unworthy. My heart is very hard, but I know that He can soften it. I do not feel my need of Him as I should feel it, but He did not tell me I was to feel my need and make that my qualification. He said, ‘Let him that is thirsty, come. And whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.’ I will venture to come to Him while yet there is room.”

Perhaps the black doubt comes to you, “*Is there room for me?*” My answer to that question is this—you are *commanded* to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! It is impossible for you to do that and yet be lost! You shall find that there is room for you, room which no one but yourself can occupy, room in that Kingdom of which Christ says that it was ordained for you before the foundation of the world! Your business, Sinner, is to trust Christ just as you are, now, and just where you are! O my Hearers, you whose souls are committed to my trust, I feel that I must have your souls for my Master! He knows that I care for no wages but your immortal souls! He knows that if He denies me your souls, I shall feel that I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing. This year God has blessed the Word to many, many hearts! Hardly a day has passed without someone being blessed and not a sermon have I preached in this Tabernacle without hearing afterwards of conversions through it—and I sincerely trust that it may continue. Lord, speak to hearts that have resisted You until now! Sovereign Grace, there is nothing that can stand against You—Your goings forth are mighty and Irresistible! You speak, and it is done, You command and it stands fast forever! Speak, Lord, and Your servants shall hear and this night they shall say, “We will come unto You while yet there is room.”

May God grant that many shall come to Jesus this very moment, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 14:7-24.**

Verse 7. *And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms. This parable was by far the best part of the entertainment of the day!*

7-9. *Saying unto them, When you are bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest place lest a more honorable man than you is bidden of him; and he that bade you and him comes and says to you, Give this man place; and you begin with shame to take the lowest place. For, of course, the next room is full, and the next, and the only vacant seat, when the feast has begun, will probably be in the very lowest room of the house.*

10. *But when you are bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place, that when he that bade you come, he may say unto you, Friend, go up higher. Then shall you have worship in the presence of them that sit at the meal with you.* Note that our Savior was not just then talking to His disciples, or else He would have given more spiritual reasons for His advice. But, speaking to the people who were gathered as guests at the Pharisee's house, He appealed to them with an argument suitable to themselves. We may, however, extract the marrow from this bone! Let us not covet the highest place. Let us not desire honor among men. In the Church of God the way upward is downward. He that will do the lowest work shall have the highest honor. Our Master washed His disciples' feet and we are never more honored than when we are permitted to imitate His example.

11. *For whoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* There is a conspiracy of Heaven and earth and Hell to put down proud men, neither good nor bad—the highest nor the lowest can endure those who are self-exalted! But if you are willing to take your right place, which is probably the lowest, you shall soon find honor in the midst of your brethren!

12. *Then said He also to him that bade Him, When you make a dinner or a supper, call not your friends nor your brethren, neither your kinsmen, nor your rich neighbor lest they also bid you again, and a recompense is made you.* Our Savior, you see, keeps to one line of instruction. It was a feast, so He used the feast to teach another lesson. It is always well, when men's minds are running in a certain direction, to make use of that particular current. When a feast is uppermost in the minds of men, it is no use starting another subject. So the Savior rides upon the back of the banquet, making it to be His steed! Note His advice to His host—"Try to avoid doing that for which you will be recompensed. If you are rewarded for it, the transaction is over. But if not, then it stands recorded in the Book of God and it will be recompensed to you in the Great Day of Account."

13, 14. *But when you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and you shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense you: for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* It should be your ambition to have something set down to your credit “at the resurrection of the just.” If you do someone a kindness with a view to gaining gratitude, you will probably be disappointed. And even if you should succeed, what is the gratitude worth? You have burned your firewood, you have seen the brief blaze, and there is an end of it. But if you get no present return for your holy charity, so much the better for you!

15, 16. *And when one of them that sat at the meal with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God. Then said He unto him.* As if to prove what a privilege it is to be permitted to “eat bread,” there, but that the persons who appear most likely to do so will never taste of it—and that the most unlikely persons will be brought into it. Jesus “said unto him.”

16, 17. *A certain man made a great supper and bade many: and sent his servants at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.* [See Sermon #1354, Volume 23—ALL THINGS ARE READY, COME—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] They had accepted the invitation, so they were pledged to be present but, in the meantime, they had changed their minds with regard to their intended host—and they were unwilling to grace his feast.

18. *And they all with one consent began to make excuses. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it: I pray you have me excused.* Yet it was supper time and people do not generally go to see pieces of ground at night! And if the man had bought the land, he ought to have seen it before he bought it! People do not generally buy land without looking at it. A bad excuse is worse than none. [See Sermon #578, Volume 10—A BAD EXCUSE IS WORSE THAN NONE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] and this is one of those excuses which will not hold water for a minute!

19. *And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to inspect them: I pray you have me excused.* He pretended that he had bought five yoke of oxen without inspecting them and that he wanted to inspect them after he had bought them, when, of course, he could not cancel the bargain! A likely story! But, when men want to make an excuse, and they have no truth to serve as the raw material, they can always make one out of a lie!

20. *And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.* [See Sermon #2122, Volume 36—A STRAIGHT TALK—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This man did not ask to be excused—he had married a wife, so that settled the matter! Of course he could not go to the feast.

21. *So that servant came and told his lord these things.* Every true servant of Christ should go to his Lord and tell him what reception his Master’s message has had. After service, we sometimes have an enquirers’ meeting, but after every sermon there ought to be a meeting of the ser-

vant with his Lord to tell the result of the errand on which he has been sent. Sometimes, as in this case, it will be a very painful meeting as the servant tells how his Master’s message has been despised and His invitation rejected.

21. *Then the master of the house being angry.* Notice what the Lord does even when He is angry—He invents some new way of showing mercy to men! “The master of the house being angry.”

21. *Said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.* Happy anger that explodes in blessing! The justly angry master turns away from the bidden ones who had insulted him and sends for those who had not hitherto been bidden, that they might come to the feast!

22. *And the servant said, Lord, it is done as you have commanded, and yet there is room.* They fetched in all the poor people, the maimed, the halt and the blind whom they could find—it was a great gathering and a strange gathering—yet there was still room for more guests at the banquet!

23. *And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.* [See Sermon #227, Volume 5—COMPEL THEM TO COME IN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “Bring in highwaymen and hedge-birds, those that have no place where to lay their heads—fetch them in by force if necessary, ‘that my house may be filled.’”

24. *For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.* They were invited, yet they would not come. But others shall come and fill the tables and the great feast shall be furnished with guests! No provisions of mercy will ever be wasted. If you who are the sons and daughters of godly parents, or you who are the regular hearers of the Word will not have Christ, then others shall! If you hear, but hear in vain, then the rank outsiders shall be brought in and they shall feed upon the blessed provisions of the Infinite Mercy of God and God shall be glorified! But terrible will be your doom when the great Giver of the Gospel Feast says concerning you and those like you, “None of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper.”

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

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

A STRAIGHT TALK

NO. 2122

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 12, 1890.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 19, 1889.**

***"I cannot come."
Luke 14:20.***

THERE are different ways of replying to the invitation of the Gospel when you mean to refuse it. They are all, at best, bad, and they may all be classed under one head, for, "they all with one consent began to make excuses." But yet some are more decently worded than others and have a greater show of reason about them. The first two sets of people who were invited to the supper said to the servant, apologetically, with some appearance of courtesy, "I pray you have me excused." But the third man did not beat about the bush at all, or pray to be excused—he said tersely, bluntly, sharply—"I cannot come." This was a final reply. He did not intend, nor wish to come to the supper. "I cannot come," was a snappish reply but as he had married a wife, he thought the idea of his coming was utterly unreasonable and he needed no sort of excuse.

Now, what did that mean? Well, it meant that he thought very lightly of the giver of the feast. He had no respect for this "certain man," who had made a great supper. He had an opportunity of slighting him by refusing his invitation and he did so outspokenly, saying, "I cannot come." It also showed that he had a very low opinion of the supper itself. It might be a respectable meal, but he did not need it—he could have quite as good a supper at home. He was better off than those people in the streets. Those hedge birds might be glad enough to get a supper for nothing, but he was not dependent upon anybody and he could do very well for himself.

Do you not know many in this world who have no opinion of Christ, no love to God? Religion is to them mere nonsense—an unpractical, dreamy matter about which they have no time to concern themselves. It is a pitiful thing that they will not even *think* of the God whom angels worship! And the Christ who is the loveliest of the lovely—in Him they see no beauty! And the priceless provisions of mercy, the pardon of sin, the salvation of the soul, Heaven of God—they neglect these things as if they did not need them—or could get them whenever they please. Thousands are proudly independent of the free Grace of God—they are good enough and virtuous enough—they need not cry for mercy as the wicked and profane.

In their own judgment they are quite able to fight their own way to Heaven. They need not the charities of the Gospel. Contempt of the great Feast-Maker and contempt of the feast itself—these two pieces of proud disdain induce a man to say, "I cannot come." But there was more than

common pride in this brief, gruff speech, for this man had, at the first, made a promise *to come*. He had been invited to come and it is implied in the parable that he had, at that time, accepted the invitation. He had accepted the cards of invitation to the supper and, though he had done so, he now flies in the face of himself and says, "I cannot come."

I think that I am addressing some here who have pledged themselves many a time to come to Christ. If I remember rightly you asked the prayers of friends and promised that you would be in real earnest. You looked your wife in the face and said, "I hope that it will not be long before I am with you in the Church of God and shall no longer have to go away and leave you alone at the Lord's Table." You asked some of your Christian friends to make a point of praying for you—but you have never carried out your intention of becoming a true Christian. Your resolutions may be still read in God's eternal book of record—but they are there as *witnesses* to your falseness and changeableness. The counterfoils are there but there is no fulfillment of any of the resolutions.

God remembers them although you have forgotten to carry them out. You accepted the invitation on the spur of the moment but when worldliness got the upper hand with you, you went back to your old obstinacy and said, "I cannot come." Perhaps you have not said it in quite as sharp a tone as I used just now, but it has come to the same thing, for you have not come to the Gospel Supper. It matters little whether you say it angrily or quietly—if you do not come, the practical result is the same. I think I hear some of you, even now, say, "Do not ask me so often. I cannot come! It is of no use to worry me about it. I do not wish to be uncivil or unkind. Though I said I would come, I retract my words! I cannot come."

In saying, "I cannot come," the man intended, as it were, to dismiss the matter. He wished to be understood as having made up his mind and he was no longer open to argument. He did not parley. He did not talk. He just said, matter-of-factly, "I need no more persuading! I cannot come and that settles it." Certain of our hearers have come to such a condition of heart that they would gladly silence our Gospel expostulations—with a kind but determined tone they would say—"I cannot come. Do not trouble me anymore."

I suppose that this man, after he had made that positive declaration, felt that there was truth in what he had stated. He said, "*Therefore* I cannot come." He had a *reason* to support him in what he said and he went home, sat down and enjoyed himself. He felt that he was a righteous man, quite as good as those who had gone to the supper and perhaps rather better. He could not blame himself, for when a man cannot do it, why, of course, he cannot do it! And why should he be censured for an impossibility? "I cannot come"—how can I help that? So he sat down with a cool indifference to eat his own supper. It was nothing to him whether the great giver of the feast was grieved or not—whether his oxen and fatlings were wasted or not. He had said it to his conscience so often that he half believed it—"I cannot come, and there is no disputing it."

I have no doubt that many who have never come to Christ have made themselves content to be without Him by the belief that they cannot come.

Although the impossibility, if it did exist, would involve the greatest of all calamities, yet they speak of it with very little concern. Practically, they say, "I cannot be saved. I must remain an unbeliever." What an awful thing for any mortal to say! Yet you have said it till you almost believe it and you wish us, now, to leave you quite alone for this dreadful reason. You do not want to be troubled tonight. The text already begins to startle you a little and you do not like it. You are almost sorry that you are here.

If the Lord helps me, I will trouble you far more before you go out of this place! I have heavy tidings from the Lord for you! I shall endeavor, if I can, to pull away those downy pillows from your sleepy head and wake you up to immediate anxiety lest you perish in your sins! With kindly importunity I will plead with you and try to show you that this little speech of yours, "*I cannot come*," is a wretched speech! You must throw it to the winds and prove that you *can* come by coming at once and receiving of the great feast of love and honoring Him that spreads it for hungry souls.

Two or three things I would like to say about this case, for *it is very serious*. It was bad enough for this man to say, "I cannot come," but it is far worse for *you* to say, "I cannot come to Christ." Remember, if the invited guests did not come, and come at once, they could never come for there was only that one supper and not a series of banquets. The great man who made the feast did not intend to prepare another. A very grave offense would be committed by their not coming to the one supper.

My dear Hearers, there is only one time of Divine Grace for you and if that is ended you will not have a second opportunity! There is only one Christ Jesus—there is no more sacrifice for sin. There is only one way of eternal love and mercy—do not forsake it. I pray you, do not turn away from the one door of life, the one way of salvation! If it is slighted now and the feast is over—as it will be when you die—then you will have lost the great privilege and you will have been guilty of a gross neglect, from the consequences of which you never will be able to escape! Note this and beware!

Besides, it is not merely a supper that you will lose when you say, "I cannot come." To lose a supper would be little and might soon be set right when breakfast came round. But you lose *eternal life* and that lost in time can never be found in eternity! You lose the pardon of sin, reconciliation to God, adoption into the family of love—those are heavy losses! You lose the joy of faith for life and you lose comfort in death—who can estimate this damage? Lose not your immortal soul! Oh, lose not *that*! For if you gain the whole world it will not recompense you for such a loss! Lose what you will, but lose not your *soul*, I pray you! Seek that salvation without which it had been better for you that you had never been born.

Besides, once more, if you do not come to Christ it will imply the greatest insult that you can put upon your Maker. You have already grieved Him by breaking His Laws—but what will be His indignation when you refuse His mercy? When you turn your back on His Son? When you refuse not only your God, but your crucified Savior hanging there with outstretched arms, bleeding His life away, that He may save you? Do not turn your back on your own redemption! No blood was ever sprinkled on the

threshold of an Israelite's house for he must not trample on it—that would be ruinous, indeed. The blood was on the lintel and on the two side posts, but never underfoot. Trample not upon the blood of Christ! And you will do so if you refuse His great salvation. If you will not come to Him to be saved, you have as good as said that you will be damned rather than be loved by God—that you will be damned rather than be saved through Jesus Christ His Son. It will prove a costly insult to you, as well as a grievous affront to your Lord.

Having said so much by way of preface, I am now going to take those words, "*I cannot come*," and handle them a little with the hope that you may grow ashamed of them.

I. First, this man declared, "I cannot come because," he said, "I HAVE MARRIED A WIFE." He had promised to come to the supper and he was bound to fulfill his promise. Why did he want to get married just then? Surely he had not been compelled to marry all in a hurry so that he could not keep engagements already made! He was bound to keep his promise to the maker of the feast and that promise was claimed of him by the messenger.

He could not say that his wife would not let him come. Such a declaration might be true in England but in the East the men are always masters of the situation and women seldom bear rule in the family! No Oriental would say that his wife would not let him come! Nor in these Western regions, where the woman more nearly gains her rights, can any man truthfully say that his wife will not allow him to be a Christian. I do not believe that any of you will be able to say, when you come to die, that your wife was responsible for your not being a Christian.

Most men would be angry if we told them that they were hen-pecked and could not call their souls their own. He must be a fool, indeed, who would let a woman lead him down to Hell against his will! The fact is, a man is a mean creature when he tries to throw the blame of his sin upon his wife. I know that Father Adam set us a bad example in that respect, but the fact that this was a part of the sin which caused the ruin of our race should act as a beacon to us. You certainly, as a man, ought not to demean yourself so much as to say, "I cannot come, for my wife will not let me."

If one of you, however, continues to whine, "My wife is my ruin. I am unable to be a Christian because of my wife," I must ask you a question or two before I believe your pitiable story. Do you let her rule you in everything else? Does she keep you at home each evening? Does she pick all your companions for you? Why, my dear Man, if I am not much mistaken, you are a self-willed, cross-grained, pig-headed animal about everything else! And then, when it comes to the matter of religion, you turn round and whine about being governed by your wife? I have no patience with you!

It is more than probable that the very best thing that could happen to you would be to have your wife on the throne of England for the next few years. Upon such a solemn matter as this do not talk nonsense. You know that the blame lies with yourself alone—if you wished to seek the best

things—the little woman at home would be no hindrance to you. This man said, “*I cannot come.*” Why? Because he had a wife! Strange plea! For surely that was a reason why he should come and bring her with him!

If any man, unhappily, has a wife opposed to the things of God, instead of saying, “I cannot be a Christian, for I have an unconverted wife,” he should seek for double Grace that he may win his wife to Christ. If a woman laments that she has an unconverted husband, let her live nearer to God that she may save her husband. If a servant has an unconverted master, let him labor with double diligence to glorify God that he may win his master. Thus you see there are two reasons why you should come to the Gospel banquet—not only for your own sake, but for the sake of your unconverted relatives.

My neighbor’s candle is blown out—is that a reason why I must not light mine? No, but that is a reason why I should be all the more careful to keep mine burning, that I may light my neighbor’s candle, too. It is a pity that my wife should be lost, but I cannot help her by being lost myself. No, but I may help her if I take my stand and follow Christ the more resolutely because my wife opposes me. Good Man, do not allow your wife to draw you aside! Good Woman, do not let your husband hinder you! Do not say, “I cannot attend the house of God, nor be a Christian while I have such a husband as I have.” No, that is the reason why you *should* take your stand the more bravely in the name of God that, by your example, those whom you love may be rescued from destruction.

How do you know, O Wife, but that you may save your unbelieving husband? How do you know, O Servant, but that you may save your unbelieving master? I remember hearing Mr. Jay tell a story about a Nonconformist servant girl who went to live in a family of worldly people who attended the Church of England. Although they were not real Believers—they were outside buttresses of the Church but they had very little to do with the inside of it—and outsiders are generally the most bigoted.

They were very angry with their servant for going to the little Meeting House and threatened to discharge her if she went again. But she went all the same and very kindly but firmly assured them that she must continue to do so. At last she received notice to go—they could not, as good Church people—have a Dissenter living with them! She took their rough treatment very patiently and it came to pass that the day before she was to leave her situation a conversation took place somewhat of this sort. The master said, “It is a pity, after all, that Jane should go. We never had such a good girl. She is very industrious, truthful, and attentive.”

The wife said, “Well, I have thought that it is hardly the thing to send her away for going to her Chapel. You always speak up for religious liberty and it does not look quite like religious liberty to turn our girl away for worshipping God according to her conscience. I am sure she is a deal more careful about her religion than we are about ours.” So they talked it over and they decided, “She has never answered us pertly, nor found fault with us about our going to Church. Her religion is a greater comfort to her than ours is to us. We had better let her stay with us, and go where she likes.”

“Yes,” said the husband, “and I think we had better go and hear the minister that she goes to hear. Evidently she has got something that we have not got. Instead of sending her away for going to Chapel, we will go with her next Sunday and judge the matter for ourselves.” And they did, and it was not long before the master and mistress were members of that same Church!

Do not say, therefore, “I cannot come because my master and mistress object to it.” Do not make idle excuses out of painful facts which are reasons why you should be more determined than ever, even if you have to go to Heaven alone, that you will be a follower of Christ. Keep to your resolve and you may entertain the hope and belief that you will, by His Grace, lead others to the Savior’s feet.

II. A second reason is even more common. It is not everybody who can say, “I have married a wife,” but *everywhere* you can meet with a person who pleads, “I HAVE NO TIME.” You say, “Sir, I cannot attend to religion, for I have no time.” I remember hearing an old lady say to a man who said that he had no time, “Well, you have got all the time there is.” I thought that it was a very conclusive answer. You have *had* the time and you still have all the time there is—why do you not use it?

Nobody has more than 24 hours in a day and you have no less. You have no time? That is very singular! What have you done with it—you certainly have had it! Time flies with you, I know, but so does it with me and with everybody. What do you do with it? “Oh, I have no time,” says one. I say again, you have had the time and that time was due, in part, to a solemn consideration of the things of God. You have robbed God of that part of time which was due to Him and you have given up to some inferior thing what your great Lord and Master could rightly claim for the highest purposes.

You have time enough for common things. See here, I never meet any of you in the middle of the day in the street in your shirtsleeves. I do not find you going up and down Cheapside half-dressed. “Oh, no, of course not! We have time to put on our clothes.” You have time to dress your bodies and no time to dress your souls with the robe of Christ’s righteousness? Do not tell me that! I do not meet any one of our friends saying, towards evening, “I am ready to faint, for I have had nothing to eat since I got up. I have had no time to get a morsel of meat.” No, no! They have had their breakfast and they have had their dinner, and so on.

“Oh, yes, we have time to eat,” says one. Do you tell me that you have time to feed your bodies and that God has not given you time in which to feed your souls? Why, it is not commonsense! Such statements will not hold water for a moment! You must have time to feed your souls if you have time to feed your bodies! People find time to look in the mirror and wash their faces and brush their hair. Have you no time whatever to look at yourself, to see your spiritual spots and to wash in the fountain that is open for sin and for uncleanness? O dear Sirs, you have time for common things and you must certainly have time for those much more serious and important matters which concern your souls and immortality!

You have no time? How is this, when you waste a good deal? How much do many of us spend in silly talk? How much time do certain persons spend in frivolous amusements? I have heard people say that they have no time whom I am sure I do not know what they can have to occupy themselves! Are there not many people about who, if they were tied in a knot and thrown into the Bay of Biscay, would be missed by nobody for they do no good to any mortal being? They are living without an object—purposeless, aimless lives—and yet they talk about not having time!

Such pretences will not do. When you plead with God, say something that looks like commonsense. You have no time and yet you undertake more *secular* work? You keep a shop, do you not? “Yes, I have a large shop.” You are going to enlarge it, are you not? Will you have time, do you think, to attend to it when the business grows? “Oh, yes, I dare say that I shall find time—at any rate, I must *make* time, somehow or other.”

You are going to take a second shop, are you not? How will you manage it? “Oh, I shall find time.” Yes, my dear Sirs, you can find time for all those enlargements and speculations and engagements! Now let me be frank with you and say that you could find time for thought about your *soul* if you had a mind to do so. To plead that you have no time for religion is a fraud! It will not do! It is lying to God to say that you have no time! When a man wants to do a thing, if he has no time, he *makes* time. I beg the idle man not to go on deceiving himself with the notion that he has no time.

“Where there’s a will there’s a way.” Where there is a heart to religion there is plenty of time for it. Blame your unwilling minds and not your scanty hours! You will have time enough when your hearts are once turned in the right direction. Besides, time is not the great matter. Did the Lord demand of you a month’s retirement from business? Did we command you to spend two days a week in prayer? Did we tell you that you could not be saved unless you shut yourself up an hour every morning for meditation? I would to God you could have an hour for meditation! But, if you cannot, who has demanded it of you?

The command is that you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and forsake your sin—and this is a matter which will not interfere with your daily work. A man can turn the potter’s wheel and pray. A man can lay bricks and pray. A man can drive the carriage and pray. A man can walk behind a plow and yet he can be walking with God. A woman can scrub a floor and commune with God. A man can be riding on horseback and yet he can still be in communion with the Most High. A woman can be sewing dresses and growing in Divine Grace. It is not a matter in which *time* comes in so much as to interfere with any of the ordinary duties of life.

Therefore throw away that excuse and do not say any longer, “I cannot come because I have no time.” At once repent of your sin and believe in the Lord Jesus—and then all your time will be free for the service of the Lord and yet you will have not a moment less for the needful duties of your calling.

III. There is a third form of this excuse and a very common one—“I HAVE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO.” Now, come on! I will have you

by the throat over that. I shall contradict you daily. *You have nothing more important to do.* That would be utterly impossible! Nothing under Heaven can be of one-hundredth part of the importance of your being reconciled to God and saved through Jesus Christ! What is that more important business? To make money? Where is the importance of that? You may get a pile of it and the net result will be greater care and the more to leave when you die!

But you tell me you must have an opportunity for study. Well, that is better, but what are you going to study? Science? Art? Politics? Are these important compared with the saving of your soul? Why, if you have an educated mind and it is lost, it will be as bad to lose it in culture and learning as to lose it in ignorance. Your first duty is to be right with your God who made you! Put nothing before your God. Has Christ redeemed you? Rest not till you know the truth of that redemption by being reconciled to God through the death of His Son. Nothing can be so important to a man as to be obedient to his Maker and enjoy his Maker's love. Nothing, therefore, can be so important to a man as to be pardoned through the Savior and changed by the power of the Holy Spirit from an enemy of God into a friend of God.

"Oh!" you say, "But my business occupies so much of my time." Yes, but do you not know that very likely your business would go on better if you were right with God? Many a time a business goes wrong because the man is wrong—and sometimes it is even incumbent upon God to be at cross-purposes with a man because a man is at cross-purposes with Him. If you walk disobediently towards Him, He will walk contrary to you—but when you are obedient to Him, He can make other things subservient to you.

In a little church on the Italian mountains I saw, among many absurd paintings, one picture which struck me. There was a plowman who had turned aside at a certain hour to pray. The rustic artist drew him upon his knees before the opened heavens and, lest there should be any waste of time occasioned by his devotion, an angel was going on with the plowing for him! I like the idea. I do not think an angel ever did go on with a man's plowing while he was praying, but I think that the same result often comes to pass and that when we give our hearts to God and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things are added unto us.

If religion does not make you richer, which it may not do, it will make you more content with what you have. The blessing of God with a dinner of herbs will make it better than a stalled ox without that benediction. He that would make the best of this world and have the greatest enjoyment here of the truest and best kind will do well to give his first attention to his Savior—and his whole heart to faith in Him—and diligence in His service. You have no more important business, I am quite sure, that the business which concerns God and eternity.

IV. I have heard some use the excuse "I CANNOT AFFORD TO BE A CHRISTIAN." Well, my Friend, let us have a talk about *that*. Cost you more than you can afford? What do you mean? What cost? Cost you

money? It need not. It will cost you no more than you like to spend upon it with a glad heart. God will give you a generous spirit which will make you love to support His cause and to help the poor and contribute your share to all Christian mission work. But in the Kingdom of Christ there is no taxation!

Giving becomes a gratification, liberality a luxury! Nothing will be dragged from you by force. Surely our God abhors money that comes into His treasury by anything but the freewill offerings of loving hearts. It will not cost you much in that way, I am sure, for you are only to give as God has prospered you. Suppose man should say, "Well, I must take a seat in the chapel if I would comfortably hear the Gospel." Very well. Will it be unjust that you bear your proportion of necessary expenses in supporting the man who gives all his time, thought and ability to you? Will you pay as much in a year to hear the Gospel as many pay for one night at the play?

Yes, and do not many at a horserace spend a hundred times more than they ever gave throughout their whole existence either to the poor or to the Church of God? What you save by holy, gracious, thrifty habits will render this no loss to you, but a gain! "Oh, but I meant that I could not afford it, for I should have to lose several friends." Is that friend worth keeping who is an enemy to God? The woman who would lead you away from God or the man who would keep you out of Heaven—are friends of that sort worth having? Be brave and end a connection which will otherwise endlessly connect you with the bottomless pit.

"Oh," says one, "but I mean that I should lose so much in trade." Ah, well, I will not ask you to explain what you mean by *that*—for there is an ugly look about that statement. You know more about your trade than I do. No doubt there are trades which pander to the vices of men and become all the more profitable in proportion to the growth of drunkenness and impurity. These must be given up! Moreover, there are traders who live by puffery and lying and cheating—and I do not recommend you to profess to be a Christian if *that* is *your* line of things. It is better to give up all profession of religion when you go in for unrighteous gain. What? Did I hear a hint about adulteration? Did I also hear that you do not give full weight and true measure? Ah, my dear Fellow, give up that game at once, whether you become a Christian or not! But certainly, if that is what you mean, the loss of dishonest profits will be a great *gain* to you—both for this life and the next.

"Well," says one, "I should have to give up a good many pleasures." Pleasures which block the road to Heaven ought to be given up at once! You may think me a very melancholy sort of person but I fancy that I am about as happy as any man in England. I appreciate a merry thought and a cheerful speech as much as anybody. I can laugh and I can enjoy good, clean, humorous remarks as well as most people. And having now served the Lord for nearly 40 years I bear my witness that I have never had to relinquish a single pleasure for which I have felt a deliberate desire. As soon as you are renewed in heart, you are changed in your pleasures—and that which might have been a pleasure to you, once, would then be a misery.

If I had to sit in some people's company and hear what some people talk about, it would be Hell to me! One night, having to preach up in the North of England, this unfortunate circumstance occurred to me. When I got down to the railway, I was put into a first-class carriage with five racing gentlemen who were going to the Doncaster races. Happily they did not know me but from the beginning to the end the conversation of these gentlemen was garnished with expressions which tortured me. And at last they fell upon a subject which was unutterably loathsome. I pray God that I may not be condemned to dwell with such people forever, for it would be Hell to me!

Ladies and Gentlemen, you need not think that I rob myself of any pleasure when I do not go to racetrack, or associate with the licentious! It is my pleasure to keep far off from the pleasures of those men of pleasure, in whose company I was forced to spend that evening. The pleasures of this world are so full of dust, dirt and grit that he who has once washed his mouth clean of them, declines another meal of such bunk. You will lose no pleasure if you come to Christ!

V. I hear one other person say, "I cannot come." Why not? "Well, Sir, I do not mean that I shall not come one of these days, but IT WOULD NOT BE CONVENIENT JUST NOW. I could not yield my heart to the Lord tonight." No. I know. You have an engagement tomorrow which must be attended to and it would not be quite the thing for a Christian. Just so. It would not be convenient tonight, nor on Monday, nor will it be on Tuesday, depend upon it—your anxious thoughts will have gone by then.

It will not be convenient to be saved? You want to see a little "life," do you not? "Life" in London means death. "Oh, but just now I am only an apprentice!" Then at once be bound apprentice to Christ! "But I am a journeyman. When I get a little business of my own, then will be the time." Will it? Oh that you would become a journeyman to Christ! "But I have associations just now that render it difficult." That is to say God must wait *your* convenience. Is that the way the poor treat the doctors who receive patients gratis? Do they say, "Doctor, it is not convenient for me to call upon you before 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning. It is not convenient for me to come to your house. I shall be glad to see you if you come to my house about half-past 11 in the evening."

Would you send a message to a physician in the West End that you will be pleased for him to attend to you for nothing if he will come at your time? "Oh," you say, "I should not think of insulting a doctor like that, if he is kind enough to attend to me for nothing." And yet you will insult your God! You mean that *God* is not worthy of your strength and health now—but when you are old and worn out—*then* you mean to sneak into Heaven and cheat the devil! It is dirt mean of you! I can say no better.

Though the Lord is exceedingly gracious and merciful, yet when men make up their minds to it that they will only give Him the worst end of life—it is small wonder that they die in their sins! What must God think of such treatment? Do not say, "I cannot come." Come at once. The Lord help you to come!

VI. I have heard people say, “I cannot come, Sir, for I CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT. I am a poor man. I never had any education.” What is it that you cannot understand? Can you not understand that you have broken God’s Law and that the just God must punish you for it? You can understand that! Can you not understand that if you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is certain that He took your sin and bore it in His own body on the Cross and put your sin away, for His name is the “Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world”?

Can you not understand that if you trust in Him you have Him to stand in your place—for the Scripture says, “He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”? You can understand it if you wish to do so. There is nothing in the Gospel which the poorest and the least educated cannot understand if their minds are made willing to know and receive the Truth of God. If the Spirit of God will come upon them, they cannot only understand the Gospel, but grasp it and enjoy it and begin to teach it to others, too—for the Lord makes the babes to have knowledge and discretion in His ways—while the wise and learned in scientific matters often miss the way to the eternal kingdom.

I have done. The sound of the bell tells me that my time has fled. Another bell will one day warn *you* that you have done and that your life is over, even as my sermon is over. But I need to say just this. If there is any man here who says, “I cannot come,” I beg him to express himself properly and speak out the sad fact as it ought to be spoken. Here is the style—“Unhappy wretch, I cannot come to Christ! Millions in Heaven have come but I cannot come! My mother died in a good hope, but, ‘Mother, I cannot come.’ My father has gone home to be with Jesus but I cannot come.”

I thank God that this statement is not true, but if you say it and believe it, you ought never to rest anymore, for if you cannot come to Christ you are the unhappiest person in the world! Is there any woman that cries, “I cannot come,” or any man that pleads, “I cannot come”? Wherever you are sitting or standing, let the bell that told out the death of the last hour warn you of your *spiritual* death! For if you cannot come to Christ and eat of His supper, you cannot be saved! You cannot escape from the wrath to come—you are doomed forever!

May I ask you to do another thing? If you still intend to say, “I cannot come,” will you speak the truth now? Will you alter a word and get nearer the truth? Say, “I *will* not come.” “I cannot come,” is Greek, or double Dutch—but the plain English is, “I WILL NOT COME.” I wish you would say *that* rather than the other because the recoil of saying, “I will not come; I will not believe in Jesus; I will not repent of sin; I will not turn from my wicked ways”—the recoil, I say, from that might be blessed by God to you to make you see your desperate state. I wish you would then cry, “I cannot sit down and make my own damnation sure by saying that I will not come to Christ.”

Will you now, instead of refusing to come, resolve to come at once? Say, “I will come to Jesus. Tell me how.” You can only come to Christ by trusting Him. Trust yourself with Him and He will save you! Never did anyone

trust Jesus in vain! Trust has a powerful influence over the Lord Jesus. He comes to the rescue of a soul that leans wholly upon Him. He will do all things for you—He will change your nature as well as forgive your sin! And your nature being changed, you shall lead a new life from this time forth and grow in Divine Grace until you become like He in whom you trust!

And then He will take you to be forever with Him. Washed in the blood of the Lamb, you shall walk with Him in white amidst the glorified! Thus I have talked tonight in a very homely way. I pray the Lord to bless words which are intended to be faithful, plain and impressive. May we meet in Heaven! There are very many strangers here tonight—may you not be strangers to the Lord Jesus! Many of our friends are away and some of you have come out although it is a nasty wet evening—I take this as a token for good.

God bless you! I pray that you may get the double blessing and may remember this gloomy, dark, December-like evening in May by the blessing that God shall put upon you through Jesus Christ His Son. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 14.*
HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—501, 560, 550.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—I hope this sermon may touch the consciences of the careless. It should be widely scattered if such is found to be the case. I have earnestly sought that it may be so by the power of the Holy Spirit. Please unite with me in this. I do not find myself quite recovered. We have wet weather and my old enemy tries me. I hope to shake it all off soon and to return to work in good condition but this may need a little longer delay. If this rest sets me going for all the remainder of this year it will be a very good investment. Remembering my readers in my prayers, I am your servant for Christ's sake,

Mentone, Jan. 3, 1890.

C. H. SPURGEON

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

MORE ROOM FOR MORE PEOPLE

NO. 3529

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1916.

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

*“It is done as you have commanded, and still there is room.”
Luke 14:22.*

How delightful it is to observe that the wrath of man becomes tributary to the Glory of God! See an illustration in the parable of the marriage supper. Those persons who were first bid would not come. In order to do the good man of the house a despite, they declined his invitation, they refused to grace his board. Instead of causing his honor to be tarnished, they were, against their own will, the means of increasing his reputation! Had they come, it would only have been said that he made a great feast for his good friends. As they did not avail themselves of his hospitality, he brought in the beggars from the streets and swept the hedges and the byways to find the poorest of the poor—to all of whom he gave a hearty welcome! So it became the common talk all over the land, and tens of thousands extolled the generosity of the host who had given such a sumptuous banquet to such strange guests. Let not the haughty, the arrogant, or the scornful of the children of men imagine that their paltry conceit can thwart God’s Covenant purpose or bring discredit on the riches of His mercy! Oh, Sinner, if you reject a Savior, it shall be your own loss, not His! If you live and die without faith in Christ, upon your own head the fearful recompense will fall! When the self-righteous reject Him, it only causes Jesus to say, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” When the rich men and the rulers refuse the Gospel, then, “the poor have the Gospel preached to them.” When the wise and prudent put it aside, then it is graciously revealed unto babes! Thus God is glorified, though the temper of men is ever so turbulent. Let us, my Brothers and Sisters, always be patient of heart when we see the rage of men awakened against the Gospel of Christ. They can do it no hurt! His purpose shall stand—He will do all His pleasure. The bit is in their mouths, the hook is in their nostrils. Let them roar as they may, they cannot resist the force by which they are driven as chaff before the wind! He will surely perform His work and His name shall be glorious!

Not less delightful is it to observe how the anger of God, instead of venting itself in rashness, vindicates His goodness. In reading the parable to you just now, I noticed to you that because the man who made the feast was angry, he said, “Go out quickly into the highways and hedges, and bring in the blind, and the crippled and the lame to the supper.” So

kindly disposed was he, that his very anger impelled him to an extraordinary deed of kindness! The Lord was angry with the Jews, and His Apostles turned to the Gentiles. The natural branches of the olive were put away in His wrath—but what then? Why, He took us who were of the wild olive and grafted us in who were heretofore wild and alien, so that even His anger towards Israel turned to the benefit of the Gentiles—and we get reconciliation out of their rejection! May we not regard this as a rule of His government? When a congregation hears the Word and tramples it under foot, what marvel if God takes the candlestick out of the place in His anger? But does He break the candlestick? No, He moves it to another place! Others get the benefit of the Light which those despised had it aforetime. Great God of Wonders, we bless You that even when Your anger burns, Your mercy brightly shines. Amidst the thunder and the storm, soft showers are rained in silver drops to make glad the earth!

Our text tells us that the servant said, “It is done as you have commanded, and still there is room.”

I think I see here *a satisfactory announcement*—“It is done as You have commanded.” A *remarkable statement*—“still there is room.” And *an implied consummation*—that the room will eventually be filled. First, then—

I. A DESIRABLE ANNOUNCEMENT.

He said, “*It is done* as you have commanded.” Those who serve God best, have generally the least to say about it. When I hear people boast of their religious attainments, I am apt to seriously suspect their deficiencies. A boastful Christian I knew something of, when talking to an earnest man, met with very curt replies. “And pray” said the one, “have not you any Grace?” “Yes,” said the other, “but I never had any to boast of.” Disciples who are fullest of Divine Grace will be slowest to vaunt. Humility befits a servant. “It is done,” sounds better than, “I have done as you have commanded.” In like manner the man who gained five pounds in one of the parables did not come and say, “Lord, I have gained five pounds”—he said, “Your pound has gained five pounds” That was the more delicate way to put it—not as an affectation of speech, but with a becoming modesty. So, too, with the Church of God, when she has done as Christ commands her, she will always feel desirous to wait upon Him as a humble servant, accounting this no more than her duty. Besides, the declaration appears to have been made in a waiting attitude, with an expectancy of having something more to do. “It is done as you have commanded, and still there is room,” so that the servant seems to stand ready to do something more to fill the vacant places at the feast. And thus we ought always to stand as Christians when we have done our best—waiting for fresh directions, never saying, “I have done enough, and now I can retire from service.” Rather let God be thanked for what we have been enabled to do, but, strengthened and encouraged by success, let us resolve to do more and entreat Him to show us what still remains to be done, and what more we can have the pleasure of doing! “Oh, my Lord, I have grown gray in Your service! Fulfill to me Your promise, ‘You

shall bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright.' Do not put me away from your loved employ. Honor me with some other task. Delight my willing soul with some fresh command. Bid me do or suffer your will, but pass me not by, leave me not to be a laggard, not honored and uninterested in fulfilling my Lord's requests." So let the Church of God always feel that she has never come to the place where she can say, "Rest and be thankful." "Higher, higher, higher, higher," must still be her motto! If her missions have conquered one continent, they must invade another! If half the world has been converted, there would be no rest to us till the other half were converted likewise. "It is done as You have commanded, and still there is room—room for more work, because there is room for more guests at Your feast."

Did I not say that this was a desirable announcement? I am afraid these servants said what we would, some of us, hesitate to affirm. "It is done *as You have commanded*." Alas, how few churches could say this! And where the church might collectively affirm it, many members of the church would shrink from professing individually to have done as the host commanded! For what was that your Lord enjoined? "Go out quickly." How little there has been of going out after sinners! We have been content to preach to those who came to hear us! Of course, if the people will come to hear us in such numbers, and throng this Tabernacle so constantly, we have no reason to go away from them. But, alas, there are places of worship which I could indicate without difficulty that are not filled, that never were filled, that never will be filled, where there are, probably, as many spiders as there are persons under ordinary circumstance where there are certainly more pews than sitters! And yet it does not seem to have ever occurred to the preacher that he should go out after the people! Small congregations will continue to worship in places not one-fourth occupied, when they might go across to the theater or the music hall, or to some other large building into which the people might come, and where they might be met with! It would be a strange thing for the supply of fish, if our fishermen only sat at the window and caught what came beneath it—but never went forth to sea after the fish! There would be little game, I guarantee you, upon his lordship's table if he sat at the drawing room window to shoot only that which came there to be shot! But it does not come that way. The moors must be trod and the covers must be beaten! So if we are to have many sinners saved, we must go out of our own quiet haunts and go forth into frequented places. We must preach in the street, or at the market, or on the village green! We must take the Word to the people, if they will not come to the Word. "Go out, go out," says the Savior. This is a word that should ring loudly in the ears of many Christians. You have almost heard enough sermons—go out and teach yourself! While you have been eating the fat and drinking the sweet, multitudes are perishing for lack of the heavenly bread. Go out and break it to them! Oh, that there might come a holy impulse upon many here present to begin some good work for Christ! Break up some

soil up to now uncultivated! Make an eruption and an invasion into Satan's territory! There is no land that yields so well as that which is newly broken up. The virgin soil that has long been given up to the forest, the brier and the thorn—let but the plow go through this and there shall be sevenfold harvests! No preaching is half as successful as that which carries the Gospel to the dissolute classes—those who have never been hardened by hearing and rejecting the tidings of mercy—those who, albeit they may have their faces stained with immorality, certainly have not any affectation in their manner! To these it comes like a new thing—it strikes them as sweet music and, hearing the joyful sound, they full often turn to God and live! To this day is it true, as our Savior said in His day, that publicans and harlots enter into the Kingdom of Heaven before Pharisees! This is a sphere of labor that remunerates the laborer. The lowest of the low, when hearing the Word, often accept what the so-called respectable despise. Go out, therefore, go out!

Know this, likewise, that *the matter is urgent*, for the Master said, “go out quickly.” Here, again, I am afraid we cannot say we have done this. “Go out quickly”—go out in haste, go out with the utmost speed—go out as one who runs on an errand, anxious to fulfill his mission! Go out, not listlessly, as if you had to wait for an opportunity, but eagerly, knowing that this is the opportune time! Hurry yourself to have it done at once. Go out quickly. The world goes by steam, nowadays, while the Church still jogs on by the broad-wheeled wagon! I know some churches that crawl like a snail upon a small leaf, making much ado to accomplish nothing! If half a dozen converts are added in 12 months, they think it is rather too many to be safe, and they are half afraid that they cannot be all genuine Christians! They would gladly “summer them and winter them,” as they say, and try them in half a dozen modes. In fact, it seems to them as if God never sent a new-born convert into their church except for them to worry it—not for them to accept it as a blessing from Heaven and to train it, and nurse it—but to worry it! This will never do! We are to look after something more rapidly than the progress which these churches will ever make. Go out quickly! Men are dying. There is no time for us to be quibbling among ourselves! It behoves us to show our zeal rather than waste our energies. Men are perishing! We must preach the Gospel to them now—tell them that it is “now or never” with some of them—make known to them a present Savior, and cry to them, “If God is God, serve Him! If Baal is God, serve him! How long will you decide between two opinions, for the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice’”? There needs to be promptness, quickness, speed, eagerness after souls in the preachers of the Gospel. “Go out quickly.”

And have we not failed in another point? “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and *bring in the blind, and the crippled, and the maimed*, and compel them to come in.” There are certain missions now established for which we have reason to bless God greatly. There are works going on in London which are to the glory of Christendom. God

speed them all! Such beloved friends as Miss MacPherson, Dr. Bernardo, our brother Orsman and many others deserve our love and esteem, for they have given themselves up to work among the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low, bearing a great deal which some of us might shrink from, rejoicing to show their diligence among a people much neglected—and reaping a good harvest of comfort to themselves in the salvation of souls! But, dear Friends, where there is one of such works, there ought to be 50—and with this population of London, verging now upon four millions, when we have added all these works of faith and labors of love together, we might well say of them, “What are they among so many?” May God touch many of your hearts, my Brothers and Sisters, and make you feel the soft touch of sympathy for the perishing, while you hear the Master’s words spoken to you, “Go out yourselves quickly, and lay hold on the blind, and the crippled, and the maimed and bring them in to the supper” Yes, bring them to Jesus! You cannot do it of yourself, but His Spirit dwells in you. Do not forget that! You are not an ordinary man. You are not an ordinary woman. “Know you not that your bodies are the Temples of the Holy Spirit?” God dwells in you! And with God in you, what can you not do? Have but faith in the indwelling Deity and attempt difficulties—no, attempt what some think impossibilities—and you shall find that with God all things are possible! Weak as you are, yet, through His strength, you shall perform all things! I pray God for this Church, that she may not be found guilty at the coming of Christ of not having gone out after the poor. Encourage them to come to this house at all times, whenever you can. I do not know where we are to put any more, but there is Thursday evening, and there is Monday evening, and there is room then. Oh, bring in whomever you can, for perhaps when the Gospel is preached, God may bless it to them. Let us not be deficient in this. In the next place we proposed to draw your attention to—

II. A REMARKABLE STATEMENT.

They had fished up all the poor people in the city and they had brought in the four characters—the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind—and after that it was alleged “still there is room.”

Well, well, that is a very encouraging piece of information for ungodly people here! For those who have not come to Jesus, this is welcome information! “Still there is room.” Now we know there is still room for sinners, from several considerations.

We may infer it, to begin with, from the Doctrine of Election. God has chosen unto Himself a people. We are told that their number is a number that no man can number. Well now, those who are saved are not so very many. They are a great many more than some bigots would like to believe, but they are a great many fewer than some enthusiasts would imagine! I am sure God has not yet saved enough to accomplish the number that He has proposed to save, by a very long way. It is my own belief, as it is my earnest hope, that in all things Christ will have the preeminence. As in other things, so also in this, He will have more souls than

Satan, that He may have the preeminence over the old serpent. It does not look to me that there should likely be at the last, more lost than saved. We cannot answer the question to a certainty, but surely the Lord's mercy will triumph over human sin and God will get to Himself the victory! A good Divine used to say that he hoped and thought that, at the last, there would be no more persons lost, in proportion, than there might be found of persons in prison, in any well-ordered State, in proportion to the number of those who were citizens at large. I only trust it may be so. But the lines of God's election do not encompass a mere handful. There is a great and vast number chosen by Him—and there is no such great and vast number gathered in yet. Therefore, we are persuaded that there is still room.

Next, *the efficacy of the Atonement leads us to believe this*. The Atonement that Christ offered on the Cross was no small matter. It was the sacrifice of Himself as an Infinite Being—as God and as Man—and I dare set no limit to it in its efficacy, itself considered. The death of so august a Person, in circumstances of such dishonor, amid agonies so inconceivable, must have about it an amount of virtue utterly beyond all reckoning! Jesus Christ is to see of the travail of His soul and to be satisfied—and the travail of His soul does not mean the few Christian people that are now in the world or have been—and His satisfaction will not be consummated by the few millions that have up to now been saved. Why, it does not satisfy us yet, and our hearts are narrow compared with His! He will not be satisfied unless myriads are His. The jewels of His crown must be countless as the stars of Heaven by night, and as the sands upon the seashore by day! By that bottomless, fathomless Atonement, I believe that there still is and must be, room—

***“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never Lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more.”***

The end has not been reached! The virtue of the blood has not been stayed. The ransomed Church has not been all gathered in. So there is still room!

Again, when I consider *the greatness of the adorable Persons who entered into Covenant* to devise the wondrous plan and accomplish the mighty work of salvation, I feel persuaded that there is still room. Who is it that saves me? It is God who made Heaven and earth! He devised the magnificent purpose according to the good counsel of His will. Do you think that the Architect of yonder heavens has designed a little Church for the display of His Glory? Do you think that He who spread the stars abroad in all their countless hosts to adorn His universe has limited the number, with causeless thrift, of brilliant diadems who shall celebrate the everlasting song of His praise? We think not! It was Jesus who worked salvation and do you think that such a Savior, of such unrivalled dignity, came to effect a petty salvation for a petty few whom you might

count upon your fingers? Incredible! Impossible! God forbid! And what shall I say of the Holy Spirit, whose majesty awes us, whose mystery baffles us, whose mercy enlivens us—the Spirit of God who works in us that salvation which the Christ of God has worked for us—do you think that He has come to dwell on earth with any small or insignificant intent? What small sect will contribute to His satisfaction? No, Glory be to His name, He brought three thousand in on the Pentecostal day, and He will yet cause nations to be born in a day, and the Church shall cry, “Who has begotten me these? These—from where did they come?” If I go to Gethsemane and see the bloody sweat, I expect a wondrous harvest from that matchless sowing! If I stand on Calvary and mark the flowing wounds, I expect a marvelous reward for those tremendous griefs! If we are not to be pitifully disappointed, there must be something greater yet in reserve than the world has ever seen! The history of Christendom is far more grand than any chapter that has yet been written. There is room! There must be room for the feast of mercy—much room still to be occupied! It is not yet half filled! Scant at present is the array of guests, compared with the complement of those who must be brought in!

“Still there is room.” With a mysterious spiritual consciousness, with an eager, sympathetic anxiety, *the Church feels and knows that there is room*. The individual yearnings of our Lord’s disciples attest it. Do I not myself daily feel as if there were room—places that need peopling, as well as people that needed placing at the feast? Brothers, our Churches prove that the fresh converts introduced into their fellowship are like fresh blood poured into their veins. A Church cannot long be happy and healthy without recruiting, renewing, reviving—and we are always needing fresh workers with the dew of the morning upon their souls! We are needing preachers powerfully impressed with their own call to proclaim the Gospel. Many pulpits need them! We need Evangelists—men who have just welcomed the news, the good news, the heavenly tidings, and hasten to tell it at the corners of the streets, to the passengers along our thoroughfares! Lovers of souls, seekers of souls, oh, how much we need them! Many a Sunday school needs teachers. Many a Ragged School needs self-denying assistants! Everywhere there is a need—a real need—for more helpers in the Church, for more laborers in the harvest! So there must be room to store the fruits they need to reap!

As the benches of the feast seem to groan for guests, so does the Church long after fresh access to her community. Were you here sometimes at the Monday night Prayer Meeting, you would feel there was room! Some of our Brethren pray as if they had room in their hearts for hundreds and thousands that must be reclaimed! When the Church gets into the spirit of prayer, her cries and groans give proof of secret tears and private wrestling. Her earnest members, by the instant entreaties made to God, prove that the Church feels that the guest chamber is not yet full. Her tent is not filled with children—she is crying out, like Rachel of old—“Give me children or I die.” She needs to see her converts multip-

lied, she longs to stretch forth the curtains of her habitations. There is—there must be room! Judging by my own experience, I say that the minister can generally feel when God is saving the souls of his hearers. The efforts and anxieties of his labor are accompanied with such pangs and throes within his own soul that he is well content with the pain and travail for the joy he has in prospect! When last week I had some conversation with the candidates for Church fellowship, my heart rejoiced as I found out how many of you had lately found the Savior. After being half-dubious whether a blessing had attended the sermons I recently preached, as I listened to the stories of conversion that so many told me, it made my heart leap for joy! The fact was no tidings had come to me of the expectations I had fostered. There is an interval between the sowing time and the reaping time. But I am encouraged. No doubt there are more of you coming. All but decided now, you will be altogether decided soon. God is at work with you—He means to bring you in, that His Grace may have honor. Well, those desires and prayers, those longings and hopes, those wishes and expectations of the Church all show that she does not feel thorough satisfaction with present results—and certainly she feels no misgiving as to the accommodation ready for all comers.

“Still there is room.” Yes, God be praised, there is! That mother says, “Ah, that my child were brought in!” Blessed be God, there is room for him! And the father says, “Oh, that my sons were saved!” Well, there is room for them! There have been thousands who have gone to Heaven of late, but still there is room! There are thousands who have come to Christ of late, but still there is room! Prophets, Apostles, martyrs, confessors, saints have gone into Glory, but still there is room! In this Church hundreds have pressed in to know the Lord, but still there is room! There is room! There is room! And there is room for you! Blessed be God for that! Oh, that you may occupy that room! My third point is this, that there is implied in the text—

III. A MOST BLESSED CONSUMMATION that the room will be filled.

It is an old saying of the natural philosopher that nature abhors a vacuum. It is true, I doubt not. But here is another axiom—Grace abhors a vacuum. The good man of the house could not bear to see a vacant seat at his table. All things were ready, but there were empty places and he did not like it. The glory of the feast is to be found not merely in the provisions, but in the guests, so he must have the chairs occupied as well as the table covered. With reverence let it be said, the Glory of Christ lies not only in His Sacrifice, but in the sinners that that Sacrifice saves! A king is no king who has not any subjects. A head is no head if it has not a body. And so Jesus Christ would be a King without subjects if there were none saved. He would be a Head without members—and that is a ghastly thought! He must have a people and, what is more, He must have all His people. In our natural bodies, if but a little finger is missing, the body is not perfect. So also in Christ—if all His members are not saved, there would not be a perfect Christ! The Apostle tells us that the Church

is the fullness of Christ. Hence if a part of the Church were lost, a part of Christ's fullness would be lost. Therefore He must cause all to come in the unity of the faith unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, for Grace abhors a vacuum! When at last the end shall come, and the dispensation of Grace shall be wound up, it will be seen that at the Table of Mercy here below, there was not a seat left empty! "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. And whom He did predestinate, them He also called." So it shall be. Satan shall not be able to point to a single empty place and say, "There should a certain soul have been seated. God appointed it, but I frustrated His purpose!" That cannot, shall not be! The wedding must and shall be furnished with guests!

In like manner the Table of Glory, like the Table of Grace, while the board is richly spread, the seats shall be amply filled. There at that Table, blessed be God, there is a place for me, and none of you can occupy it. It will be only occupied by him for whom it was designed. If you believe in Christ, dear Friend, there is a place for you, a freehold, a vested right of which you cannot be deprived! There is a crown that will fit no other head than yours. There is a harp that will yield music to no other hands than yours. There is a mansion among the many, many mansions in our Father's House for your residence. There will be no mansions in Heaven at last untenanted. In some streets of London, "To let" is written on half the houses. Cheerless is the lookout. But when at last the King shall bring His children Home, there will not be one prepared mansion that has lost its prepared tenant! The reserved inheritance shall revert to the reserved people—the purchased inheritance shall inherit the purchased possession! This gives me hope in preaching! It convinces me that I do not preach in vain. There must and there shall be some saved. God has declared it! God has made ready for it on earth and He has made ready in Heaven for it. Therefore, they shall be brought in! His preparation shall not be in vain. His wedding shall be furnished with guests. This certainty fortifies me against an apparent contingency. It inspires me with hope about some of you, my dear Hearers, who look hesitant, that you, before long, will be resolute. If you come to God, there are preparations made to receive, to welcome you, to lodge you, to feed you, to supply all your needs. Do you desire to come? You shall not be cast away. Why should not you wear one of these crowns? Why should not you tenant one of those mansions? "Still there is room."

But who will help to fill that room? Who out of this dense throng of people will help to fill the vacant places at the Gospel Supper? I cannot call you one by one, as I would like to, but I do call to you with all my heart, Come to Jesus! Should you say, "How shall I come?" Well, it is not a motion of the body—it is a motion of the mind. "What sort of motion of the mind?" do you ask. It is trust—trust—simple conviction and unquestioning faith! If you commit your case to Him, He will be concerned for

you. Follow Christ—you shall have fellowship with Him. Your resolution will be evidence of your Redemption! Your plea will procure a sense of His pardon! By your acquiescence you will learn that you are “accepted in the Beloved.” May God incline you, by the mighty operation of His Spirit, to come to Jesus! So shall my prayers be answered! So shall your souls be blessed forever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 8:41-56.**

Verses 41, 42. *And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought Him that He would come into his house: For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay dying. But as He went the people thronged Him.* Notice the word, “behold,” for this was a wonder that a man so high in position to come to Christ at all, especially one who was in an ecclesiastical position, for he “was a ruler of the synagogue.” Usually those who had to do with the synagogue were great despisers of our Lord Jesus! God works great wonders, however, and sometimes the camel does go through the eye of the needle! This man’s name was Jairus, a common Jewish name, and you will find it was the name of one of the judges recorded in the Book of Judges. Note this man’s humility, “He fell down at Jesus’ feet.” The greatest of men must humble themselves before they can obtain mercy. Jesus Christ is always ready to receive, to accept and bless all those who fall down at His feet, but those who lift up themselves shall find Him to be their sure and swift enemy—and the day shall come when He shall abase them to the dust. “He besought Him that He would come into his house, for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay dying.” She seems to have been not only the darling of the house, but of all the neighbors, too, for we find that all the neighbors came together to weep and to lament her. You find Matthew says that this daughter was already dead. It seems that some delay arose, so that the child died, but the father, with triumphant faith, still besought Him to come and raise her, even from the very jaws of death.

43, 44. *And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him and touched the border of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stopped.* This disease laughs at the physicians, and whenever a cure has been effected it has always been a slow one. Hence the supernatural character of this cure, “Immediately her issue of blood stopped.” This is the glory of our blessed religion, that it heals sin-sick souls at once and upon the spot! The moment a man believes in Jesus, his nature is changed! He becomes a new creature—in that moment all his sins are gone! In that same hour he becomes heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ. “Immediately.”

45. *And Jesus said, Who touched Me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng You and press You, and do You ask, Who touched Me? What impudence on their part! Doubtless there are many things we say of our Lord, and even to Him in prayer, that are very far from such words as He should have from His disciples. There were many who touched Him out of curiosity, and doubtless some out of lack of respect to His Person came too close to Him, but there was only one who touched Him with the finger of faith, which was the only true touch!*

46-48. *And Jesus said, Somebody has touched Me, for I perceive that virtue has gone out of Me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling and, falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole; go in peace. Faith crowns Christ and, therefore, Christ takes the crown off His own head and puts it upon the head of faith. "Your faith has saved you." Christ's virtue would not have saved her without her faith—and certainly her faith could not have saved her without Christ's virtue! We ought to note how vital faith is to true salvation, and what a high degree of importance is attached to it. Let us, therefore, if we have some degree of faith, pray for more, "Lord, increase our faith, for if a little of it may heal, what may not a great faith do?"*

49. *While He yet spoke, there came one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Your daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. Be resigned, and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away," and expect not the blessing back again. Do as David did, who, while the child was yet alive, fasted and prayed, saying, "Perhaps God will spare him," but when he was dead, fasted no more. Your daughter is dead—trouble not the Master." Ah, but this man knew that He who can stay the soul at the gates of death can also bring it back from the gates of death if He wills. He that can get it from the paw of the lion can get it from the jaw of the bear! He can deliver His people at all times and at all seasons, and even Death is a conquered foe!*

50. *But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. "Believe only." What a depth lies in those two words! Believe only! Ah, Lord, it ought to be the easiest thing in the world to believe You, for You are so truthful! You keep every promise to us, and yet sometimes when we are in the dark, and when circumstances go contrary to us, it is hard to believe—but is it not the hardness in our own hearts? Believe only! Christian, what is your trouble this morning, what is your trial? Believe only, and let your humble faith cast your burdens upon your God! "Believe only, and she shall be made whole."*

51, 52. *And when He came into the house, He allowed no man to go in except Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the*

maiden. And all wept, and bewailed her: but He said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleeps. They were so sure she was dead that they had actually hired the minstrels for her funeral—so Mark tells us—and the pipers and the women that made those strange, Oriental lamentations were there, ready to bury her.

53, 54. *And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them out, and took her by the hand, and called saying, Little girl, arise.* But Christ put them all out. They laughed Him to scorn and, therefore, He would not work the miracle in their presence. It is not meet to cast pearls before swine!

55. *And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and He commanded to give her food.* Do note here the word, “straightway.” Just now we had the word, *immediately*, and now we have, *straightway*. It is one of the distinguishing features of the Gospel, both of Mark and of Luke, that both Evangelists use the word “*eutheos*,” “*straightway*.” Christ’s miracles do not take a long time to do—they are done straightway! If there is a distressed soul here, now, your salvation need not take months and years—it may be done today, and in a moment you may be able to rejoice that your sins are forgiven, and that you are a child of God! “She arose straightway, and He commanded to give her food.” There are no unnecessary miracles. It needed a miracle to give her life, but food could sustain it and, therefore, there is no further miracle performed.

56. *And her parents were astonished: but He charged them that they should tell no man what was done.* But we know from another Evangelist that the same thereof went abroad everywhere and, indeed, the healing of a soul is not a thing to be kept secret—but when any are raised from the dead the world must know it!

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

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

COMPEL THEM TO COME IN NO. 227

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 5, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Compel them to come in.”
Luke 14:23.***

I FEEL in such a haste to go out and obey this commandment this morning, by compelling those to come in who are now tarrying in the highways and hedges, that I cannot wait for an introduction, but must at once set about my business.

Hear then, O you that are strangers to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus—hear then the message that I have to bring you. You have fallen, fallen in your father Adam. You have fallen also in yourselves, by your daily sin and your constant iniquity. You have provoked the anger of the Most High. And as assuredly as you have sinned, so certainly must God punish you if you persevere in your iniquity, for the Lord is a God of justice and will by no means spare the guilty. But have you not heard, has it not long been spoken in your ears, that God, in His infinite mercy, has devised a way whereby, without any infringement upon His honor, He can have mercy upon you, the guilty and the undeserving? To you I speak. And my voice is unto you, O sons of men. Jesus Christ, very God of very God, has descended from Heaven and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Begotten of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary. He lived in this world a life of exemplary holiness and of the deepest suffering, till at last He gave Himself up to die for our sins, “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.”

And now the plan of salvation is simply declared unto you—“Whosoever believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” For you who have violated all the precepts of God and have disdained His mercy and dared His vengeance, there is yet mercy proclaimed, for “whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “For this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” “Whosoever comes unto Him He will in no wise cast out, for He is able also to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for us.”

Now all that God asks of you—and this He gives you—is that you will simply look at His bleeding, dying Son and trust your souls in the hands of Him whose name alone can save from death and Hell. Is it not a marvelous thing that the proclamation of this Gospel does not receive the

unanimous consent of men? One would think that as soon as ever this was preached, "That whosoever believes shall have eternal life," everyone of you, "casting away every man his sins and his iniquities," would lay hold on Jesus Christ and look alone to His Cross. But alas, such is the desperate evil of our nature, such the pernicious depravity of our character that this message is despised—the invitation to the Gospel feast is rejected—and there are many of you who are this day enemies of God by wicked works. You are enemies to the God who preaches Christ to you today, enemies to Him who sent His Son to give His life a ransom for many.

Strange, I say, it is that it should be so, yet nevertheless it is the fact and hence the necessity for the command of the text—"Compel them to come in." Children of God, you who have believed, I shall have little or nothing to say to you this morning. I am going straight to my business—I am going after those that will not come—those that are in the byways and hedges and God going with me, it is my duty now to fulfill this command, "Compel them to come in."

First, I must, find you out. Secondly, I will go to work to compel you to come in.

I. First, I must FIND YOU OUT. If you read the verses that precede the text, you will find an amplification of this command—"Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind." And then, afterwards, "Go out into the highways," bring in the vagrants, the highwaymen, "and into the hedges," bring in those that have no resting place for their heads and are lying under the hedges to rest, bring them in also and "compel them to come in." Yes, I see you this morning, you that are poor. I am to compel you to come in. You are poor in circumstances, but this is no barrier to the kingdom of Heaven, for God has not exempted from His Grace the man that shivers in rags and who is destitute of bread. In fact, if there is any distinction made, the distinction is on your side and for your benefit—"Unto you is the word of salvation sent." "For the poor have the Gospel preached unto them."

But especially I must speak to you who are poor *spiritually*. You have no faith, you have no virtue, you have no good work, you have no grace and what is worse still, you have no hope. Ah, my Master has sent you a gracious invitation. Come and welcome to the marriage feast of His love. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely." Come, I must lay hold upon you, though you are defiled with the foulest filth and though you have nothing but rags upon your back. Though your own righteousness has become as filthy clouts, yet must I lay hold upon you and invite you, first, and even compel you to come in.

And now I see you again. You are not only poor, but you are maimed. There was a time when you thought you could work out your own salvation without God's help, when you could perform good works, attend to

ceremonies and get to Heaven by yourselves. But now you are maimed, the sword of the Law has cut off your hands and now you can work no longer. You say, with bitter sorrow—

***“The best performance of my hands,
Dares not appear before Your Throne.”***

You have lost all power now to obey the Law. You feel that when you would do good, evil is present with you. You are maimed. You have given up, as a forlorn hope, all attempt to save yourself, because you are maimed and your arms are gone. But you are worse off than that, for if you could not work your way to Heaven, you could walk your way there along the road by faith.

But you are maimed in the feet as well as in the hands. You feel that you cannot believe, that you cannot repent, that you cannot obey the stipulations of the Gospel. You feel that you are utterly undone, powerless in every respect to do anything that can be pleasing to God. In fact, you are crying out—

***“Oh, could I but believe,
Then all would easy be,
I would, but cannot, Lord relieve,
My help must come from You.”***

To you am I sent also. Before you am I to lift up the blood-stained banner of the Cross. To you am I to preach this Gospel, “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” And unto you am I to cry, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.”

There is yet another class. You are undecided. You are wavering between two opinions. You are sometimes seriously inclined and at another time worldly gaiety calls you away. What little progress you make in religion is but a limp. You have a little strength, but that is so little that you make but painful progress. Ah, limping brother, to you also is the word of this salvation sent. Though you halt between two opinions, the Master sends me to you with this message—“How long halt you between two opinions? If God is God, serve Him. If Baal is God, serve him.” Consider your ways—set your house in order, for you shall die and not live. Because I will do this, prepare to meet your God, O Israel! Halt no longer, but decide for God and His Truth.

And yet I see another class—the blind. Yes, you that cannot see yourselves—that think yourselves good when you are full of evil, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness. To you am I sent. You, blind souls that cannot see your lost estate, that do not believe that sin is so exceedingly sinful as it is and who will not be persuaded to think that God is a just and righteous God—to you am I sent. To you, too, that cannot see the Savior, that see no beauty in Him that you should desire Him. To you who see no excellence in virtue, no glories in religion, no happiness in serving God, no delight in being His children. To you, also, am I sent. Yes, to whom am I not sent if I take my

text? For it goes further than this—it not only gives a particular description, so that each individual case may be met, but afterwards it makes a general sweep and says, “Go into the highways and hedges.”

Here we bring in all ranks and conditions of men—my lord upon his horse in the highway and the woman trudging about her business. The thief waylaying the traveler—all these are in the highway and they are all to be compelled to come in. And there in the hedges—there lie some poor souls whose refuges of lies are swept away—and who are seeking to find some little shelter for their weary heads. To you, also, are we sent this morning. This is the universal command—compel them to come in.

Now, I pause after having described the character. I pause to look at the Herculean labor that lies before me. Well did Melancthon say, “Old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon.” As well might a little child seek to compel a Samson, as I seek to lead a sinner to the Cross of Christ. And yet my Master sends me about the errand. Lo, I see the great mountain before me of human depravity and stolid indifference, but by faith I cry, “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.” Does my Master say, compel them to come in? Then, though the sinner is like Samson and I a child, I shall lead him with a thread. If God said do it, if I attempt it in faith it shall be done. And if with a groaning, struggling and weeping heart, I so seek this day to compel sinners to come to Christ, the sweet compulsions of the Holy Spirit shall go with every word and some, indeed, shall be compelled to come in.

II. And now to the work—directly to the work. Unconverted, unreconciled, unregenerate men and women, I am to COMPEL YOU TO COME IN. Permit me first of all to accost you in the highways of sin and tell you over again my errand. The King of Heaven this morning sends a gracious invitation to you. He says, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” “Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.” Dear Brothers and Sisters, it makes my heart rejoice to think that I should have such good news to tell you and yet I confess my soul is heavy because I see you do not think it good news—but turn away from it and do not give it due regard.

Permit me to tell you what the King has done for you. He knew your guilt, He foresaw that you would ruin yourself. He knew that His justice would demand your blood and in order that this difficulty might be escaped—that His justice might have its full due and that you might yet be saved—Jesus Christ has died. Will you, just for a moment, glance at this picture? You see that man there on His knees in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood? You see this next—you see that miserable Sufferer tied to a pillar and lashed with terrible scourges, till the shoulder bones are seen like white islands in the midst of a sea of blood?

Again look at this third picture. It is the same Man hanging on the Cross with hands extended and with feet nailed fast, dying, groaning, bleeding. I thought the picture spoke and said, "It is finished." Now all this has Jesus Christ of Nazareth done, in order that God might consistently with His justice pardon sin. And the message to you this morning is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." That is trust Him, renounce your works and your ways and set your heart alone on this Man, who gave Himself for sinners.

Well Brothers and Sisters, I have told you the message, what do you say? Do you turn away? You tell me it is nothing to you. You cannot listen to it—you will hear me by-and-by. But you will go your way this day and attend to your farm and merchandize. Stop, Brothers and Sisters, I was not told merely to tell you and then go about my business. No. I am told to *compel* you to come in. And permit me to observe to you before I further go, that there is one thing I can say—and to which God is my witness this morning—that I am in earnest with you in my desire that you should comply with this command of God. You may despise your own salvation, but I do not despise it. You may go away and forget what you shall hear, but you will please to remember that the things I now say cost me many a groan before I came here to utter them. My inmost soul is speaking out to you, my poor Brothers and Sisters, when I beseech you by Him that lives and was dead and is alive for evermore. Consider my Master's message which he bids me now address to you.

But do you spurn it? Do you still refuse it? Then I must change my tone a minute. I will not merely tell you the message and invite you as I do with all earnestness and sincere affection—I will go further. Sinner, in God's name I command you to repent and believe. Do you ask me from where is my authority? I am an ambassador of Heaven. My credentials—some of them secret and in my own heart. And others of them open before you this day in the seals of my ministry, sitting and standing in this hall, where God has given me many souls for my hire. As God the everlasting One has given me a commission to preach His Gospel, I command you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not on my own authority, but on the authority of Him who said, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And then annexed this solemn sanction, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned."

Reject my message and remember, "He that despised Moses' Law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses—of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God." An ambassador is not to stand below the man with whom he deals, for we stand higher. If the minister chooses to take his proper rank, girded with the omnipotence of God and anointed with his

holy unction, he is to command men and speak with all authority compelling them to come in—"command, exhort, rebuke with all long-suffering."

But do you turn away and say you will not be commanded? Then again will I change my note. If that avails not, all other means shall be tried. My Brothers and Sisters, I come to you simple of speech and I exhort you to flee to Christ. O my Brothers and Sisters, do you know what a loving Christ He is? Let me tell you from my own soul what I know of Him. I, too, once despised Him. He knocked at the door of my heart and I refused to open it. He came to me, times without number, morning by morning and night by night. He checked me in my conscience and spoke to me by His Spirit and when, at last, the thunders of the Law prevailed in my conscience, I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind.

O I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of Him! But what a loving reception did I have when I went to Him. I thought He would smite me, but His hand was not clenched in anger but opened wide in mercy. I thought full sure that His eyes would dart lightning flashes of wrath upon me. But, instead, they were full of tears. He fell upon my neck and kissed me. He took off my rags and did clothe me with His righteousness and caused my soul to sing aloud for joy—while in the house of my heart and in the house of His Church there was music and dancing—because His son that He had lost was found and he that was dead was made alive. I exhort you, then, to look to Jesus Christ and to be lightened.

Sinner, you will never regret it—I will be bondsman for my Master that you will never regret it—you will have no sigh to go back to your state of condemnation. You shall go out of Egypt and shall go into the promised land and shall find it flowing with milk and honey. The trials of Christian life you shall find heavy, but you will be given Grace to make them light. And as for the joys and delights of being a child of God, if I lie this day you shall charge me with it in days to come. If you will taste and see that the Lord is good, I am not afraid but that you shall find that He is not only good, but better than human lips ever can describe. I know not what arguments to use with you. I appeal to your own self-interests. Oh my poor Friend, would it not be better for you to be reconciled to the God of Heaven, than to be His enemy? What are you getting by opposing God? Are you the happier for being His enemy?

Answer, pleasure seeker; have you found delights in that cup? Answer me, self-righteous man—have you found rest for the soles of your feet in all your works? Oh you that go about to establish your own righteousness, I charge you let conscience speak. Have you found it to be a happy path? Ah, my Friend, "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not. Hearken diligently unto Me and eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness." I exhort you by everything that is sacred and solemn, everything that is im-

portant and eternal, flee for your lives! Look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, stay not until you have proved and found an interest in the blood of Jesus Christ—that blood which cleans us from all sin.

Are you still cold and indifferent? Will not the blind man permit me to lead him to the feast? Will not my maimed Brother put his hand upon my shoulder and permit me to assist him to the banquet? Will not the poor man allow me to walk side-by-side with him? Must I use some stronger words? Must I use some other compulsion to compel you to come in? Sinners, this one thing I am resolved upon this morning—if you are not saved you shall be without excuse. You, from the gray-headed down to the tender age of childhood—if you this day lay not hold on Christ, your blood shall be on your own head. If there is power in man to bring his fellow, (as there is when man is *helped* by the Holy Spirit) that power shall be exercised this morning, God helping me.

Come, I am not to be put off by your rebuffs. If my exhortation fails, I must come to something else. My Brothers and Sisters, I entreat you, I entreat you stop and consider. Do you know what it is you are rejecting this morning? You are rejecting *Christ*, your only Savior. “Other foundation can no man lay.” “There is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved.” My Brothers and Sisters, I cannot bear that you should do this, for I remember what you are forgetting—the day is coming when you will want a Savior. It is not long before weary months shall have ended and your strength begins to decline. Your pulse shall fail you, your strength shall depart and you and the grim monster—DEATH— must face each other. What will you do in the swellings of Jordan without a Savior? Deathbeds are stony things without the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is an awful thing to die anyhow. He that has the best hope and the most triumphant faith finds that death is not a thing to laugh at. It is a terrible thing to pass from the seen to the unseen, from the mortal to the immortal, from time to eternity. And you will find it hard to go through the iron gates of death without the sweet wings of angels to conduct you to the portals of the skies. It will be a hard thing to die without Christ. I cannot help thinking of you. I see you acting the suicide this morning and I picture myself standing at your bedside and hearing your cries and knowing that you are dying without hope. I cannot bear that. I think I am standing by your coffin now and looking into your clay-cold face and saying, “This man despised Christ and neglected the great salvation.” I think what bitter tears I shall weep then, if I think that I have been unfaithful to you and how those eyes fast closed in death, shall seem to chide me and say, “Minister, I attended the Music Hall, but you were not in earnest with me. You amused me, you preached to me, but you did not *plead* with me. You did not know what Paul meant when he said, ‘As though God did beseech you by us we pray you in Christ’s stead, be you reconciled to God.’”

I entreat you let this message enter your heart for another reason. I picture myself standing at the bar of God. As the Lord lives, the day of judgment is coming. You believe that? You are not an infidel. Your conscience would not permit you to doubt the Scripture. Perhaps you may have pretended to do so, but you cannot. You feel there must be a day when God shall judge the world in righteousness. I see you standing in the midst of that throng and the eye of God is fixed on *you*. It seems to you that He is not looking anywhere else, but only upon you and He summons you before Him. And He reads your sins and He cries, "Depart you cursed into everlasting fire in Hell!"

My Hearer, I cannot bear to think of you in that position. It seems as if every hair on my head must stand on end to think of any hearer of mine being damned. Will you picture yourselves in that position? The word has gone forth, "Depart, you cursed." Do you see the pit as it opens to swallow you up? Do you listen to the shrieks and the yells of those who have preceded you to that eternal lake of torment? Instead of picturing the scene, I turn to you with the words of the inspired Prophet and I say, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I cannot let you put away religion thus. No, I think of what is to come after death. I should be destitute of all humanity if I should see a person about to poison himself and did not dash away the cup. Or if I saw another about to plunge from London Bridge, if I did not assist in preventing him from doing so. And I should be worse than a fiend if I did not now, with all love and kindness and earnestness, beseech you to "lay hold on eternal life," "to labor not for the meat that perishes, but for the meat that endures unto everlasting life."

Some hyper-Calvinists would tell me I am wrong in so doing. I cannot help it. I must do it. As I must stand before my Judge at last, I feel that I shall not make full proof of my ministry unless I entreat with many tears that you would be saved, that you would look unto Jesus Christ and receive His glorious salvation. But does even this avail? Are all my entreaties lost upon you—do you turn a deaf ear? Then again I change my note. Sinner, I have pleaded with you as a man pleads with his friend and were it for my own life I could not speak more earnestly this morning than I do speak concerning yours. I did feel earnest about my own soul, but not a whit more than I do about the souls of my congregation this morning. And therefore, if you put away these entreaties I have something else—I must *threaten* you.

You shall not always have such warnings as these. A day is coming, when hushed shall be the voice of every Gospel minister, at least for you. For your ear shall be cold in death. It shall not be any more threat. It shall be the fulfillment of the threat. There shall be no promise, no proclamations of pardon and of mercy—no peace-speaking blood. But you shall be

in the land where the Sabbath is all swallowed up in everlasting nights of misery and where the preaching of the Gospel is forbidden because they would be unavailing. I charge you then, listen to this voice that now addresses your conscience. For if not, God shall speak to you in His wrath and say unto you in His hot displeasure, "I called and you refused. I stretched out my hand and no man regarded. Therefore will I mock at your calamity. I will laugh when your fear comes." Sinner, I threaten you again. Remember, it is but a short time that you may have to hear these warnings. You imagine that your life will be long, but do you know how short it is? Have you ever tried to think how frail you are? Did you ever see a body when it has been cut in pieces by the anatomist? Did you ever see such a marvelous thing as the human frame?—

***"Strange, a harp of a thousand strings,
Should keep in tune so long."***

Let but one of those cords be twisted, let but a mouthful of food go in the wrong direction and you may die. The slightest chance, as we have it, may send you swiftly to death, when God wills it. Strong men have been killed by the smallest and slightest accident and so may you. In the Chapel, in the House of God, men have dropped down dead. How often do we hear of men falling in our streets—rolling out of time into eternity, by some sudden stroke? And are you sure that heart of yours is quite sound? Is the blood circulating with all accuracy? Are you quite sure of that? And if it is so, how long shall it be?

O, perhaps there are some of you here that shall never see Christmas Day. It may be the mandate has gone forth already, "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." Out of this vast congregation, I might with accuracy tell how many will be dead in a year. Certain it is that the whole of us shall never meet together again in any one assembly. Some out of this vast crowd, perhaps some two or three, shall depart before the new year shall be ushered in. I remind you, then, my Brothers and Sisters, that either the gate of salvation may be shut, or else you may be out of the place where the gate of mercy stands. Come, then, let the threat have power with you. I do not threaten because I would alarm without cause, but in hopes that a friend's threat may drive you to the place where God has prepared the feast of the Gospel.

And now, must I turn hopelessly away? Have I exhausted all that I can say? No, I will come to you again. Tell me what it is, my Brothers and Sisters, that keeps you from Christ. I hear one say, "Oh, Sir, it is because I feel myself too guilty." That cannot be, my Friend, that cannot be. "But, Sir, I am the chief of sinners." Friend, you are not. The chief of sinners died and went to Heaven many years ago. His name was Saul of Tarsus, afterwards called Paul the Apostle. *He* was the chief of sinners, I know he spoke the Truth of God. "No," but you say still, "I am too vile." You cannot be viler than the chief of sinners. You must, at least, be second worst.

Even supposing you are the worst now alive, you are second worst, for he was chief. But suppose you *are* the worst, is not that the very reason why you should come to Christ? The worse a man is, the more reason he should go to the hospital or physician. The more poor you are, the more reason you should accept the charity of another. Now, Christ does not want any merits of yours. He gives freely. The worse you are, the more welcome you are.

But let me ask you a question—Do you think you will ever get better by staying away from Christ? If so, you know very little as yet of the way of salvation at all. No, Sir, the longer you stay, the worse you will grow. Your hope will grow weaker, your despair will become stronger. The nail with which Satan has fastened you down will be more firmly clenched and you will be less hopeful than ever. Come, I beseech you, remember there is nothing to be gained by delay, but by delay everything may be lost. “But,” cries another, “I feel I cannot believe.” No, my Friend and you never will believe if you look first at *your believing*. Remember, I am not come to invite you to *faith*, but am come to invite you to *Christ*. But you say, “What is the difference?” Why, just this, if you first of all say, “I want to believe a thing,” you never do it. But your first inquiry must be, “What is this thing that I am to believe?” Then will faith come as the consequence of that search.

Our first business has not to do with faith, but with Christ. Come, I beseech you, on Calvary’s mount and see the Cross. Behold the Son of God—He who made the heavens and the earth—dying for your sins. Look to Him, is there not power in Him to save? Look at His face so full of pity. Is there not love in His heart to prove Him willing to save? Surely Sinner, the sight of Christ will help you to believe. Do not believe first and then go to Christ, or else your faith will be a worthless thing. Go to Christ without any faith and cast yourself upon Him, sink or swim. But I hear another cry, “Oh Sir, you do not know how often I have been invited, how long I have rejected the Lord.” I do not know and I do not want to know. All I know is that my Master has sent me to compel you to come in—so come along with you now. You may have rejected a thousand invitations—don’t make this the thousandth-and-one.

You have been up to the House of God and you have only been Gospel-hardened. But do I not see a tear in your eye? Come, my Brother, don’t be hardened by this morning’s sermon. O, Spirit of the living God, come and melt this heart for it has never been melted and compel him to come in! I cannot let you go on such idle excuses as that—if you have lived so many years slighting Christ—there are so many reasons why now you should *not* slight Him. Did I hear you whisper that this was not a convenient time? Then what must I say to you? When will that convenient time come? Shall it come when you are in Hell? Will that time be convenient? Shall it come when you are on your dying bed and the death throttle is in your

throat—shall it come then? Or when the burning sweat is scalding your brow—and then again, when the cold clammy sweat is there—shall those be convenient times?

When pains are racking you and you are on the borders of the tomb? No, Sir, this morning is the convenient time. May God make it so. Remember, I have no authority to ask you to come to Christ tomorrow. The Master has given you no invitation to come to Him next Tuesday. The invitation is, “To-day if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation,” for the Spirit says, “today.” “Come now and let us reason together”—why should you put it off? It may be the last warning you shall ever have! Put it off and you may never weep again in Chapel. You may never have so earnest a discourse addressed to you. You may not be pleaded with as I would plead with you now. You may go away and God may say, “He is given unto idols, let him alone.” He shall throw the reins upon your neck—and then, mark—your course is sure, but it is sure *damnation* and swift destruction.

And now again, is it all in vain? Will you not now come to Christ? Then what more can I do? I have but one more resort and that shall be tried. I can be permitted to weep for you. I can be allowed to pray for you. You shall scorn the address if you like—you can laugh at the preacher—you shall call him fanatic if you will. He will not chide you, he will bring no accusation against you to the great Judge. Your offense, so far as he is concerned, is forgiven before it is committed. But you will remember that the message that you are rejecting this morning is a message from one who loves you and it is given to you also by the lips of one who loves you. You will recollect that you may play your soul away with the devil, that you may listlessly think it a matter of no importance—but there lives at least one who is in earnest about your soul and one who before he came here wrestled with his God for strength to preach to you and who when he has gone from this place will not forget his hearers of this morning.

I say again, when words fail us we can give tears—for words and tears are the arms with which Gospel ministers compel men to come in. You do not know and I suppose could not believe, how anxious a man whom God has called to the ministry feels about his congregation and especially about some of them. I heard but the other day of a young man who attended here a long time and his father’s hope was that he would be brought to Christ. He became acquainted, however, with an infidel. And now he neglects his business and lives in a daily course of sin. I saw his father’s poor wan face. I did not ask him to tell me the story himself, for I felt it was raking up a trouble and opening a sore. I fear, sometimes, that good man’s gray hairs may be brought with sorrow to the grave.

Young men, you do not pray for yourselves, but your mothers wrestle for you. You will not think of your own souls, but your fathers anxiety is exercised for you. I have been at Prayer Meetings, when I have heard children of God pray there and they could not have prayed with more earnestness and more intensity of anguish if they had been each of them seeking their own soul’s salvation. And is it not strange that we should be ready to move

Heaven and earth for your salvation and that still you should have no thought for yourselves, no regard to eternal things?

Now I turn for one moment to some here. There are some of you here—members of Christian Churches—who make a profession of religion. But unless I am mistaken in you—and I shall be happy if I am—your profession is a lie. You do not live up to it, you dishonor it. You live in the perpetual practice of absenting yourselves from God’s House, if not in sins worse than that. Now I ask such of you who do not adorn the doctrine of God your Savior, do you imagine that you can call me your pastor and yet that my soul cannot tremble over you and in secret weep for you? Again, I say it may be but little concern to you how you defile the garments of your Christianity, but it is a great concern to God’s hidden ones, who sigh and cry and groan for the iniquities of the professors of Zion.

Now does anything else remain to the minister besides weeping and prayer? Yes, there is one thing else. God has given to His servants not the power of regeneration, but He has given them something akin to it. It is impossible for any man to regenerate his neighbor. And yet how are men born to God? Does not the Apostle say of such an one that he was begotten by him in his bonds? Now the minister has a power given him of God, to be considered both the father and the mother of those born to God, for the Apostle said he travailed in birth for souls till Christ was formed in them. What can we do then? We can now appeal to the Spirit. I know I have preached the Gospel, that I have preached it earnestly. I challenge my Master to honor His own promise. He has said it shall not return unto Him void and it shall not. It is in His hands, not mine. I cannot compel you, but You, O Spirit of God, who has the key of the heart, You can compel.

Did you ever notice in that chapter of the Revelation, where it says, “Behold I stand at the door and knock,” a few verses before, the same Person is described as He who has the key of David. So that if knocking will not avail, He has the key and *can* and *will* come in. Now if the knocking of an earnest minister prevails not with you this morning, there remains still that secret opening of the heart by the Spirit, so that you *shall be* compelled. I thought it my duty to labor with you as though I must do it. Now I throw it into my Master’s hands. It cannot be His will that we should travail in birth and yet not bring forth spiritual children. It is with Him. He is master of the heart and the day shall declare it—that some of you constrained by Sovereign Grace have become the willing captives of the all-conquering Jesus and have bowed your hearts to Him through the sermon of this morning.

[Mr. Spurgeon concluded with a very interesting anecdote, but as its insertion would make the sermon too long for a penny number, the publishers have decided to print it as one of the “New Park Street Tracts.”]

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CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES NO. 2650

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 16, 1882.

*“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother,
wife and children, brothers and sisters,
yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple.”
Luke 14:26.*

*“Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed Him, If you
continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”
John 8:31.*

*“By this all will know that you are My disciples,
if you have love for one another.”
John 13:35.*

*“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit;
so you will be My disciples.”
John 15:8.*

This morning, [Sermon #1669, Volume 28—*Teaching for the Outer and Inner Circles*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] I preached upon one of the privileges of the disciples of Christ—“When they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.” They formed the inner circle and they had the privilege of hearing the expositions and explanations which our Lord gave only to His disciples. As I was speaking, I think the question must have arisen in the hearts of many of my hearers, “What is a disciple of Christ?” and also the further enquiry, “Am I one of His disciples?” It is very important for us who are preachers to know what a disciple is, for we are bidden to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. What is involved in the making of a disciple? We cannot fully answer that question until we know what a disciple is!

In order to help you, dear Friends, to ascertain whether you are truly disciples of Christ, I am going to call your attention to four texts in which the Lord Jesus mentions some of the things which are essential to true discipleship—and without which a man cannot be His disciple. I pray the Holy Spirit to make those who are disciples to rejoice in their discipleship and to count it the highest honor of their lives to have the Son of God for their Teacher and Leader. And I also pray that those who fear that they are not His disciples may be brought to Him even while I am speaking. May they, by His Grace, resolve that they, also, will be His disciples, and

may the Divine Spirit conduct them into the School of Christ, that they may sit at His feet and receive His Word from this time forth!

I. The first mark of discipleship to which I am going to call your attention is mentioned in the Gospel according to Luke, the 14th Chapter, and the 26th verse. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple" These words prove that the first requisite of a disciple of Christ is WHOLEHEARTEDNESS.

The meaning of this passage is that Christ's disciple must so love his Lord that, in comparison with the love he bears to Christ, all other love shall burn but dimly and be scarcely worthy of even being named! This verse has puzzled a great many people because they have supposed that Christ really wished them to hate their father, mother, wife and so on. The slightest possible thought ought to have convinced them that He could *never* have wished them to do anything of the kind! If you take Christ's Words without seeking to find their meaning, you can make mischief out of them, for, sometimes, He speaks very boldly—I might almost have said, with the utmost reverence, very *boldly*—in order to make His point clear. He speaks in a manner which, in others, would be foolishness. He goes beyond what He means us to understand literally, because He knows that this is the only way in which He can bring His teaching home to some minds. There was really no reason why anybody should have made such a mistake and understood these words just as they stand in our version. It is not possible for a man to be a disciple of Christ if he hates *anybody*, for the religion of Christ is a religion of love—and hatred must be expelled from the bosom of those who receive it. It is utterly inconceivable that anybody who hated his father could be a disciple of Christ—that would be a violation of the First Commandment with promise, which bids us honor our father and mother. Certainly Jesus never taught anything contrary to the Commandments of His Father! He who hated his own mother would be a monster—not a disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus who cared for His mother amid His agony on the Cross. Does not nature, itself, teach us that our love should certainly flow out to those who were the authors of our being and who so kindly cared for us when we were unable to take care of ourselves? I am not afraid that any of you, dear Friends, will err in that respect and then fancy that you have the warrant of Christ for hating your father and mother!

Then, should not a man love his wife? Yes, that he should, for the Apostle says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." I have heard of one who was said to love his wife too much, but I did not believe it, because the model for a husband's love is, "even as Christ also loved the church," and who could go beyond *that*? A man may be excessively submissive or devoted which, in some cases, may have been carried to such excess as to become folly and idolatry, but from this evil I hope that we have escaped. But a man could *not* be a disciple of Christ if he *literally* hated his wife. He would be unworthy of the society even of the moral, much more of the society of the gracious, if he so

acted. Neither can we imagine Christ bidding anybody hate his own children. Nature itself dictates that we should love them and we do—we cannot help it, nor do we wish to help it. We should be traitors to Christ if we tried to expel an affection which He, Himself, has implanted within us. No man can hate his children and yet be a Christian! It would be a clear proof that he had nothing of Christianity about him, just as the Apostle says, of another matter, “if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.” So, we are not to hate our children—nor are we to hate our brothers and sisters. It is only in a comparative sense and not *literally*, that the term can possibly be used. And to make this very clear, Christ said that we are to *hate our own life*. The next step to that would be suicide and the Savior could never have meant any of His followers to commit that terrible sin! What He did mean was that He is to have the first place in our hearts and all who are dear to us are to be second. Yes, and we ourselves are to be second, too, and are to be prepared to break every earthly tie rather than the tie which binds us to Christ Jesus our Lord.

The teaching of the text is that *Christ is to be loved more than all our relations*. It may be that we shall never have to endure the test of choosing between Christ and our loved ones, but some have had to do that. You have, perhaps, heard the story of the martyr who was going out to be burned for Christ. And as his enemies had failed to move him from his steadfastness, they made one more attempt to do so as the good man was on his way to the stake. They brought out his wife and his 11 children to meet him and they were all weeping and kneeling down before him, begging him to recant. His wife pleaded, “My Husband, be not so willful! Do not go to the stake,” and each of the children had been taught to lay hold of the father and to say to him, “Father, live for my sake,” “and for mine, Father.” This was a trial which the good man had not expected and as he stood there, surrounded by his loved ones, he said, “God knows how dearly I love you all, and how gladly, for your sakes, I would do anything that I may do, with a clear conscience, to make you happy. But, compared with Christ and His Gospel, which I love with all my heart and soul, I must give you all up and treat you as if I had no love for you. I must go and yield up my body to be burned for the Truth of Christ. Therefore, do not weep and break my heart.” It was grandly done on his part and you can probably get a better idea of the meaning of my text from that incident than I could possibly convey to you by any words that I might use.

Well, dear Friends, though your faith may never be subjected to that supreme test, a matter of life or death, yet you may have to be tested to see whether you love Christ more than you love your relatives. There was a certain godly bishop who had a brother who came and asked him to ordain him and to give him a living, for his trade did not prosper as he wished. The good bishop loved his brother and he would have done anything that was right to help him. But he said, “My dear Brother, you are not called of God to undertake such work, so I cannot ordain you, or give

you a living. I will gladly give you money to help you in your business, but I cannot make use of my position in the church to put you into a place for which you are not qualified. Had you been a fit and proper person for this holy service, I would have been delighted to carry out your wish. But as you are not, I cannot use my influence on your behalf in this way." I wish that every bishop would act in the same way—they have not always done so. Yet there was the crucial point in which the good man felt that he must rather regard the welfare of the church than the benefit of his relative and he must treat him just as though he had been a stranger. That is how we should deal with anyone who comes to us for a similar purpose—if he is a suitable person, let him be encouraged to enter upon the work for which he is qualified. But if he is not, let him go back to his forge, or to his plow, or to his awl, or to his plane, or let him engage in some business in which he will be earning a livelihood and doing no mischief to his fellow men, as he would do if he were put to work for which he is not fitted.

Have not some of you, dear Friends, met with cases in which the same difficulty has arisen? You must either do a wrong to Christ and to His people, or else you must appear to be hard and unkind towards some relative or friend. Well, you cannot be Christ's disciple if you hesitate a minute about what course you shall adopt! Brothers, sisters, wife, children, father, mother must never be allowed for a moment to be put in competition with Christ! I remember one who, when quite a youth, felt that he must be baptized on profession of his faith in Christ, but those who were nearest and dearest to him did not agree with him upon that matter. He had not one relative who thought as he did concerning it. He laid his case before them and, being so young, he asked that he might have permission to carry out his conscientious convictions, but, at the same time, he said, "If the permission does not come, I shall obey My Lord's command, for, in this case, I acknowledge no father or mother, but simply do as my Savior bids me." In matters of religion, Christ alone is our Leader—and our conscience can never obey any supremacy but that of our Lord Jesus Christ. This decision is to be announced very gently, without any bitterness of spirit, with much humility—and prayer for wisdom and guidance—but there must be no question about your action! You are to put your foot down, and say, "In everything which concerns Christ and my soul, I call no man, 'father,' upon earth, but, at all costs, I must follow my Lord wherever He leads me." I think you can now see the drift of the Savior's Words. The rule for you who are His disciples must be—Christ first and everybody else as far down as you like. Everybody treated with kindness and due consideration, but *nobody* permitted to usurp the Throne of the great King. So, in the first place, we must love Christ more than all our relatives.

And, next, *we must love Christ more than life*. You know that there have been many who have not loved their lives as much as they have loved their Lord, for they have freely yielded them up for the sake of Him who laid down His life for them. Christians, in past ages, have known what was involved in being faithful to Christ. You may have read that let-

ter which Pliny wrote, concerning the early Christians, in which he said that he knew not what to do with them, for they were men of good character, but they had this one peculiarity that they must in everything follow Christ. They actually came with calm confidence, even to the Roman judgment seat, well knowing that if they were convicted of being Christians, they would be put to death—and they seemed as if they were eager to die—so anxious were they to put their love to Christ before any thought of freedom from pain or escape from death! What the torments were, to which they were put, under their many persecutors, I scarcely dare to tell you. Think of one of them forced to sit in a red-hot iron chair. And of others dragged at the heels of wild horses, or tossed to and fro by bulls, or torn in pieces by savage beasts. Everything that could add ignominy and pain to death was invented in those times—but did the martyrs flinch or turn back? No. They stood fast for Christ's sake and threw their lives away as if they were worth nothing at all, rather than be found traitors to Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior!

We are to be prepared to do the same as they did, if necessary. Only, in our case, probably it will never come to that point in this country where, thank God, we have so much civil and religious liberty. Yet, often, a similar test may be applied to us in a modified way. There may be, for instance, some loss of business through doing what we know to be right! There are some persons who have been in the habit of carrying on their trade on the Sabbath—but when they have become Christ's disciples, they have shut up their shop on that day, and people have said to them, "You will be ruined, you will never earn a living. You know, we must live." I have often heard that last little sentence, but I do not believe it. I do not see any necessity for us to live. There is a necessity for us to be true to Christ, but not for us to continue to live! It is a great deal better that we should die than that we should do a wrong thing. And we should be prepared at any time to say, "If necessary, we will let our trade go and we will be poor. But we will keep a clear conscience." And he who has that little bird in his bosom will never lack for music! And though he has scarcely a penny in his pocket, yet if he wears the flower called heart-sense in his buttonhole, he need never envy the richest man in the world!

It may happen to you, in your business, that there will be an opportunity of getting money by being thieves in a respectable kind of way—there are plenty of such thieves about. But if you are a Christian, you will say, "No, money gained by dishonesty will carry a curse with it. I cannot touch it any more than I would handle blood-money. If it comes by any wrong method, I must leave it alone, for pelf and wealth shall not come to me if they cannot come honestly. I must and will serve the Lord Jesus Christ first and foremost."

Sometimes you know that for Christ's sake, our Brothers and Sisters go as missionaries to India or China, and some go to the Congo or to other stations in Africa where it is almost certain that, in a short time, they will be cut down by the fever. But how brave it is on their part! How truly a disciple of Christ is such a man or such a woman, who, knowing all that may be expected, nevertheless says, "My Lord calls me to serve

Him in Africa. And if He sends me to a mangrove swamp and to a fever, I will as readily go there for Him as if He summoned me to sit upon a throne.”

To sum up the teaching of this first text, it means that *Christ is to be loved more than anything*. If this were the choice set before us—the whole world, or Christ—thank God there are many of us who would not wait a minute for the decision! And if this were the choice—shame in the eyes of men, or else the far greater shame of deserting the Savior, oh, I hope we would not hesitate even for an instant! “No,” says the Christian, “Christ is my All-in-All. If I have all things, I will try to find Him in them and if I have nothing, I will find all things in Him.” So the meaning of this text is that Christ must have wholehearted servants and if you come to Him to be His disciples, you must bring your whole being with you. Christ will never be King over a divided manhood. There was a time when this island was a heptarch and seven little kings ruled over it. But now we have but one sovereign and in this united realm we never shall have but one supreme ruler. So should it be in man’s heart. The devil is quite willing to share the kingdom with Christ. “Oh,” he says, “let Christ reign and let *me* reign, too! We shall make an excellent pair to rule over men.” But Christ will not have it so. If we are to be His subjects, He will rule over us from the crown of our head to the soles of our feet, and He will not permit Satan to have a single stronghold within us that he can call his own. Out you must go, you vile usurper, for He has come who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The crown sits upon His brow, nor will He allow a rival even for an hour! Come, then, Beloved, what do you say? Are you wholehearted for Christ? If not, you are not His disciples. Listen while I read our first text again, and as I do, you read into it the true and full meaning of the words and feel their force. “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple.”

II. The second requisite for being a disciple of Christ is found in the 8th Chapter of the Gospel according to John, at the 31st verse—“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed.” So CONTINUANCE is the next trait in the character of a true disciple of Christ.

There are a great many persons who, like those Jews, profess to believe in Jesus Christ for a time. When opposition and persecution came, they deserted Him and so proved that they were not really His disciples. I do not know much about the merits of the question, which is often discussed in the papers, with regard to enlistment for a short or a long term of service in the Queen’s army, but I know that my Lord and Master will not accept any of you unless you enter His army for life—no, more—for all eternity! In Christ’s true Church there is no profession of faith merely for a time. Once you have made it, you have made it *forever*. The very way of confessing Christ, which is by Baptism, signifies this, for the man who is rightly immersed into the name of the Sacred Trinity is first buried and then he rises again—and that burial, having once taken place, can never be cancelled—whatever happens, it is an accomplished fact.

Then, again, the act of immersion can never cease to be a fact. Marks made in the flesh may be removed, but when the watermark has been put upon the whole body, it can never be removed. He who has been buried with Christ may have been a hypocrite and a deceiver, but, notwithstanding his hypocrisy and deception, he has passed through the outward form of the ordinance and he can never clear himself from the responsibility of it. It will be to his everlasting disgrace if he is a baptized reprobate! At the Day of Judgment it shall be conclusive evidence of his guilt that he either tried to deceive himself, or deceived God's people and made a mockery of the ordinances of Christ. But in the case of a true believer in Christ, continuance in the right road proves him to be a Christian.

First, we are to *continue believing Christ's words*. Whatever new doctrinal errors may spring up, we are to take no notice of them, but just continue in the faith of Christ. Then shall we be His disciples indeed! In these evil days, some new heresy appears nearly every week. There are some people who seem to spend all their time in inventing lies and these, joined to the old errors that are continually being vamped up, puzzle those who are not well established in the faith so that they scarcely know what is orthodox doctrine and what is heterodox. But he who keeps close to his Master, sits at His feet and learns of Him—when he is taught of the Spirit—and holds fast what he has received. Mr. Whitefield used to say that in his day there were some persons for whom it was impossible to make a creed. He said, "You might as well try to make a suit of clothes for the moon, for they change as frequently as she does." And we have many people of the same sort in our day! They are "everything by starts, and nothing long." But that is not a characteristic of Christian discipleship! A man is not Christ's disciple if he is "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," allowing anybody to put an oar into his boat and turn and twist him wherever the intruder pleases. No, the Master's message to His followers is, "If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed."

But we must *also continue in obedience*. It is the part of a true disciple of Christ to do his Lord's will in the teeth of every temptation that may assail him. You will not be obedient to Him very long without being pulled by the coat, first this way, and then that. But the true disciple of Christ says, "If all the kingdoms of this world were to be given me on condition that I would fall down and worship the god of this world, I would not, for an instant, *think* of doing so, for I am enlisted in the army of the Cross. I serve the Lord Christ and Him alone."

And we are also to continue in Christ's word *when we are in affliction*. There are, alas, some who, if God seems to treat them roughly, grow mightily offended with Him. A dear child is taken away from their family circle and they say that they will never forgive God. They have trouble upon trouble and straightway they complain that God behaves evilly to them—and they are ready to turn back at the first crossroad that they come to in their pilgrimage. But this will not do for those who would be "disciples indeed." We must hold on, come fair or come foul, and this

must be our motto, one that I have often quoted to you and one that I love to think of myself—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." We have committed ourselves to Him as unto a faithful Creator. We have lifted our hand in token of our allegiance to Him, and we cannot go back!

Dear Friends who have just lately been converted to Christ, let me exhort you to be steadfast and immovable! You cannot be Christ's disciples unless you are firm and decided. A Christian soldier who had to sleep in a tent with some ungodly comrades, knelt down at night to pray and every time he did so, he was assailed by all sorts of missiles. He consulted the chaplain as to what he had better do and that time-serving individual said he thought, perhaps, it was not necessary for the soldier to kneel down publicly before he retired to rest. The soldier tried the cowardly plan for one night, but he was very unhappy and his conscience was troubled about it. He had failed to bear testimony for Christ, so, the next night, he knelt down as he had done before and it pleased God that, by degrees, the opposition ceased and, more than that, the influence of his brave example and the words he spoke at different times, brought *all the other men in the tent* to kneel down, too, before they went to rest! Whether they were all converted or not, I cannot tell, but, at any rate, there was at least the form of prayer in that way. When the soldier saw the chaplain, again, and told him what had happened, the chaplain commended him, and then the soldier asked him, "Don't you think it is better for us always to keep our colors flying?"

That is a good watchword for you, Beloved—Always keep your colors flying! There are some professors who say, "We can carry our flag wrapped up in a waterproof case and when there is a favorable opportunity, we can let it fly in the breeze." No, no! It is best to keep your colors always flying. There may be danger and difficulty through flying the flag, but a hundred times worse danger comes from rolling it up and putting it away out of sight. Never be ashamed of what there is no reason to be ashamed of! If any man is ashamed of being a Christian, surely Christ has cause to be ashamed of him! Let it not be so with you, dear Friend, but rather let each one say—

***"Ashamed of Jesus? That dear Friend
On whom my hopes of Heaven depend?
No! When I blush, be this my shame—
That I no more revere His name."***

But, as to blushing when I acknowledge that I am His servant, may never such a crimson token of shame come onto my cheek! So stand fast in the faith, Beloved, for thus shall you prove that you are, indeed, Christ's disciples.

III. I must now pass on to a third mark of a genuine disciple of Christ, that is, BROTHERLY LOVE. Kindly look at the 13th Chapter of John's Gospel, and the 35th verse—"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

This is to be a mark of discipleship which all men can see. Whenever there is genuine love among Christian people, everybody knows at once that they are Christ's disciples. Good men and bad men—the most ignorant and the most foolish men cannot help seeing that love is, as it were,

a sign hung out as a mark of the business done within. That disciple whom Jesus loved, wrote, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God, for God is love."

Now, Brothers and Sisters, how are we to love our brethren so as to let all men know that we are Christ's disciples? One ready way is *by considering their needs and doing the best that we can to help them out of their difficulties*. If we say to the cold and the hungry, "Be you warmed and be you filled," and yet do nothing practically to help them, how dwells the love of God in us? What kind of Christianity is that which is liberal only in *words*? Dear Friends, there are many poor people among us who are struggling to get a livelihood and, alas, there are many others who cannot find any employment at all. And it is incumbent upon any who are being prospered by God to help their poor brothers as far as they can. Very often a man can truly help his fellow, even though he has no money to spare. I read a pretty story of a Cornish miner who was getting rather old and the captain of the mine said, "John, I think that I can put you into an easier berth than the one you now hold. You will get more money and you will have to be an overseer of others rather than to do much yourself. I know that I can confide in you, so I will put you into that place next month." The miner said, in reply, "Captain, do you know our brother Tregony?" "Yes," answered the captain. "You know that he is older than I am," said the miner. "He cannot do a day's work, now, and I am afraid that he will have to give up altogether. I wish you would let him have that berth because, though I am getting old, I think that I can keep on for another year or two. So let old Tregony have the overseer's position."

The captain did so and that is true Christian love when a man is willing to make a sacrifice because he feels that he is not quite as much in need as another. I remember saying to a poor widow who came one morning to the Orphanage with her child, "There is another woman outside. You have been talking to her, have you not, while you were waiting to come in?" "Yes, Sir," she answered. I said, "She has nine children and we can only take one. How many have you?" "Three," replied the woman. "Well, now," I asked, "which of those three shall we take?" "Oh, Sir!" she said, "there is not a minute needed to deliberate about it! You take one of that other poor woman's children. I will try to do the best I can, though it is a hard pinch for me, but that woman has a heavier burden to carry than I have, poor thing." I was pleased to see such a spirit of self-sacrifice and I am always glad when Christian people feel that kind of sympathy and love for one another. How often might rough roads be made more smooth if all acted like that! This is just what we must be constantly doing, for we cannot be Christ's disciples unless we have love for one another.

Beside that, we can show our love to our brethren *by bearing their faults*. It is a grand thing to be able to put up with a good deal. There are some people who seem to think that they have come into the world that other people may put up with them—and they certainly do play their

part, for they give other people plenty to put up with! And if anybody should in the least resent it, they say, "So-and-So is out of temper with me." I was going to say that an angel might be out of temper with some people, but I do not suppose that he would. Still, I wish that these people would remember the provocations they often give as well as the sharp retorts they sometimes get. "Oh," says one, "I do not believe that there is any love among Christians." Brother, you are measuring *our* corn with *your* bushel! You see that you have not any love in your heart, for, if you had, there would be some love in your eyes and you would perceive some, also, in others. But when it is clean gone out of your own soul, you suppose it must also have departed from others.

Of course, you do not admit that it has gone out of you and you imagine that you see outside of you what is really inside, so, when you say that there is no love anywhere, it is because you are looking at yourself in the mirror, that is all. But we who love the Lord can, I trust, bear with one another. I sometimes try to think which is the greater wonder—that you, dear Friends, have put up with me so long, or that I have put up with you! There are some of you who are the best people in the whole world and there are others of you who are not the best, but rather the reverse, and some of you do cause us trouble sometimes. Well, may God give all of us great patience and may we believe in one another! That is half the battle in all the difficulties that arise among Christians—that we should not impute wrong motives to our fellows, and not be ready to bring accusations against one another—but just believe that each of our fellow members is a child of God and if there is something which he has done, and which looks wrong, say, "It must have been misrepresented or misreported. I am sure it must—he cannot have done such a thing. I will stand up for him. He is my Brother-in-Christ, so I will defend him."

There is one other point in which some of you may exercise love for one another and that is, *in rejoicing in each other's happiness*. This is a point which is far too often forgotten. You know the tendency among men—here is a man who is rising in the world, so there are many who say, "Ah, humph!" They do not say anything more, but they shrug their shoulders and they look full of unutterable things. Or there is a Brother who has done well in the Church and he is referred to in terms of approbation. Then at once somebody begins to try to pull him down and says, "Ah, yes! I could have done what he has done." Then why did you not do it? "Oh, but he had such great advantages!" Yes, perhaps he had, and you also have had opportunities of doing something or other, but you have not made the best use of them. Now, instead of being jealous of our Brother's success, ought we not rather to be rejoicing in one another? If a man is poor, let him rejoice that everybody is not as poor as he is! If he is troubled about his worldly circumstances and he meets with a Brother who has no cause for such sorrow, let him say, "I am glad he is better off than I am. I do not want him to have anything to worry him as my troubles perplex me. I praise God for his prosperity, I bless the Lord for his happiness." Then when we see an especially gracious and gifted man coming into the Church and serving God, let us welcome him heartily

and say to one another, "Here is a true comrade for us and we are glad that God has sent us such a man to help us in His work."

I wish that we were all of the mind of that noble Spartan who wished to be a magistrate, but another man opposed him and received twice as many votes as he did. What did the Spartan say? "I am grateful that the country has better men than myself and I am glad to see that it knows where to find them when it needs them." So, dear Friends, be glad when God provides better men than you are to do His work. Let the preacher rejoice when another preacher excels him. That is the point to which we must all bring ourselves. Let the Sunday school teacher praise the Lord when she finds another teacher who altogether eclipses her. What a blessed thing it is for the Bible class teacher who has a large company around him, to find another Brother raised up who gets a better class than his has ever been! Bless God when it is so, dear Friends. This is one of those points that is often difficult, but it ought to be easy—and it *would be easy* if we had love for one another! And if we have not such love, we are not Christ's disciples.

IV. I must close now with just a few remarks about the last characteristic of a disciple of Christ. It is mentioned in the 15th Chapter of John's Gospel, at the 8th verse—"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." So the last mark of a disciple is that of FRUIT-BEARING.

What is bearing fruit in this sense? Well, first, it is *doing service for Christ*. He said to His disciples, "He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing," plainly implying that the fruit which is to come from abiding *in* Him will be seen by our doing something *for* Him. Christian men and women, the Lord Jesus Christ does not want to have any followers who never foil or fight for Him! He does not wish to have with Him shepherds who never feed His flock—merely nominal Christians who never do anything for Him. Does this touch any of you? Some of you come in here, Sunday after Sunday, and you sit and enjoy my ministry, but you do not help in the Sunday school, you do not distribute tracts, you do not preach, you do not do anything! How can you be Christ's disciples? I suppose you are like some officers of whom I have read, who draw large salaries because they are such distinguished ornaments to the service. It is a great honor to have these people in the army, though they never saw a sword drawn except on review days. So, no doubt, it is a very fine thing to have a number of Church members who are simply ornamental persons—they swell our numbers when they are counted with us and people say, "They are so very respectable that they help to make us all respectable."

Well, now, to tell you the truth, we do not care an atom about your respectability! We think that the most respectable person in the world—that is, the person who most deserves *to be respected*—is the one who is *doing something*! He who does nothing deserves to be starved, even as the Apostle Paul said, "This we commanded you, that if any will not work, neither shall he eat," which is much the same thing as letting him

starve. Let us try to be fruit-bearing disciples by doing all that we can for Christ, because, if we do not bear fruit, we cannot be His disciples.

Next, *fruit-bearing will be proved by our prayers*. Notice the words of our Lord—"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit." Prayer, then, is a blessed fruit of Divine Grace—prayer for others, prayer for Christ's Church, the prayer that brings down unnumbered blessings from above. Many a sick, bed-ridden saint who cannot speak and who can scarcely lift her hands, can lie there and do great things in prayer! Joan of Arc was not half so mighty as that poor invalid! She is the King's true warrior! While she lies there apparently helpless, she is commanding the legions of Heaven by her invincible petitions! See, then, dear Friends, that you bear much fruit in earnest, prevailing prayer!

Another method of fruit-bearing is by a holy character. O Beloved, I implore you to be holy men and women! Seek after close conformity to the likeness of Christ. Nothing does more good for a Church than for its members to live the Gospel in all their concerns at home and abroad.

But I think that we shall not bear fruit as we should unless we *endeavor to bring converts to Jesus*. Dear mistress, seek to win the soul of your little maid! Good master, employing so many hands, get them together, sometimes, and talk to them about your Savior—and pray that He may be *their* Savior, too. Can you do it? There ought not to be one barren member of this Church. Everyone ought to be able to feel that when he comes before God at the last, he shall be able to say, "Here am I and the children You have given me." For this let us live! For this let us labor! If we do not, we cannot be Christ's disciples.

I remember one who never did anything for Christ and when somebody spoke to him about his lack of fruit-bearing, he said that he bore *inside* fruit. I never heard that idea before, so I turned it over in my mind and, the next time I met him, I said to him, "Are you still bearing inside fruit?" He answered, "Yes." "Well," I said, "we shall never get at it till you are cut down." Fruit is evidently intended to be an *outside* thing that is borne for the benefit of others! So, in this respect, Brothers and Sisters, see to it that you are fruitful by rendering all possible service to our Lord and Master.

The real application of my four texts is this—Are you, dear Friends, Christ's disciples? Let that question be passed around and let these four marks help us to judge ourselves—are we distinguished from those who are not Christ's disciples by our wholeheartedness, continuance, brotherly love and fruit-bearing? May all these things be in us and abound. And if we have none of them, may we apply to Christ for them! Lie at His feet. Confess your sin and then look up, believe in Him and live forevermore! The Lord bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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*“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first,
and counts the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it?
Lest haply, after he has laid
the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it
begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build,
and was not able to finish.”
Luke 14:28-30.*

THIS passage is peculiar to Luke. He tells us that at the time when our Lord uttered it, great multitudes followed Him. It is observable that when our Lord was forsaken by the crowd, He was not depressed, and when His ministry became popular He was not elated. He was calm and wise in the midst of the excitement of the thronging multitudes. This passage is sufficient evidence of that fact. On this occasion our Lord spoke with a view to the winnowing of the great heap of nominal discipleship which lay before Him, that the chaff might be driven away and only the precious corn might remain.

The discourse before us reminds us of Gideon's process of diminishing that vast but motley host of which the Lord said, "The people are too many for Me." After having bid the faint-hearted go, He next brought down the remaining thousands to the river and bade them drink. And then He only kept for Himself those who lapped in a certain peculiar manner, which indicated their zeal, their speed, their energy and their experience. Our Lord tested His followers that He might have only those remaining who would be fit for the conquest of the world. To carry His precious treasure He would select vessels whom Divine Grace had made fit for His use—the rest He could dispense with.

Our Lord Jesus was far too wise to pride Himself upon the number of His converts. He cared, rather, for quality than quantity. He rejoiced over one sinner that repented, but 10,000 sinners who merely professed to have repented would have given Him no joy whatever. His heart longed after the *real*. He loathed the counterfeit. He panted after the substance—the shadow could not content Him. His fan was in His hand with which to thoroughly purge His floor and His axe was laid to the root of the trees to hew down the fruitless. He was anxious to leave a living Church like good seed-corn in the land—as free as possible from all admixture.

Therefore in this particular instance one might even think that He was *repelling* men rather than attracting them to His leadership. But, indeed, He was doing nothing of the kind! He understood right well that men, to be truly won, must be won by truth—that the truest love is always honest, and that the best disciple is not he who joins the class of the great Master

in a hurry, and then afterwards discovers that the learning is not such as he expected—but one who comes sighing after just such knowledge as the teacher is prepared to give. Moreover, our Lord knew what sometimes we may forget—that there is no heartbreak in the world to the godly worker like that which comes of disappointed hopes.

When those who have said, “Lord, I will follow You where ever You go,” turn back unto their evil ways. And when the hot breath which shouted, “Hosanna!” turns into the cruel, cold-blooded cry, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him,” nothing is more injurious to a Church than a large dilution with half-hearted members—and nothing more dangerous to the persons themselves than to allow them to put on an untrue profession. Therefore did the Master take most care at the time when that care was most needed, that none should follow Him under misapprehension, but should be made fully aware of what was meant by being His disciples, so that they should not say afterwards, “We have been misled. We have been beguiled into a service which disappoints us.”

Unlike the enlisting sergeant, who sets forth all the glories of military service in glowing colors in order to gain a recruit, the great Captain of our salvation would have His followers take all things into consideration before they cast in their lot with Him. This morning our text may be equally suitable and its warning may be as necessary and as salutary as when first the Master pronounced it, for great multitudes are just now following Christ—a revival has come and stirred the mass of you. Among the would-be disciples (blessed be God!) are many whom the Lord Himself has called, for every one of whom we give most hearty thanks!

But with them, necessarily, (for when was it ever different?), there are others who are not called of God at all. They are moved by the natural impulse of imitating others and stirred by feelings which are, none the less, fleeting because just now they are intense. And therefore, in Christ’s name, it is ours to address you even as He did, and warn you in His own words—“If any man comes to Me, and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brother, and sisters, yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and counts the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”

To assist our memories, we will divide our meditation into three parts. The first will be headed in this manner—*true religion is a costly thing*. The second shall bear this motto—*Wisdom suggests that before we enter upon it we should estimate the cost*. And the third shall bear this inscription—*Cost what it may, it is worth what it costs*.

I. First, then, it is clear from our text that TRUE RELIGION IS COSTLY. Far be it from us to create any confusion of thought here! The gifts of God’s Grace cost us nothing, neither could His salvation be purchased with money, nor with merit, nor by vows and penances. “If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be con-

demned.” The Gospel motto is, “without money and without price.” We are “justified freely by His Grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

Yet, for all that, if a man will be a Christian it will cost him something. Consider a moment. Here is a blind man sitting by the wayside begging. He asks to have his eyes opened. Will it cost him anything? No, the Savior would not accept all the gold in the world for the cure! He will freely open his eyes. But when they are opened it will cost that blind man something! Obtaining his sight, he will be called upon to discharge the duties of one who has eyes. He will not be allowed, any longer, to sit there and beg, or, if he tries to do so, he will lose the sympathy which is bestowed upon blindness. Now that his eyes are opened he must *use* them, and *earn* his own bread. It will cost him something, for he will now be conscious of the darkness of the night which he knew nothing of before!

And there are sad sights which now he must look upon which never grieved him before, for often what the eyes do not see, the heart does not know. A man cannot gain a faculty except at some expense. He that increases knowledge or the means of gaining it, increases both sorrow and duty. Take another case. A poor man is suddenly made a prince—it will cost him the giving up of his former manners—and will involve him in new duties and cares. A man is set on the road to Heaven as a pilgrim—does he pay anything to enter by the wicket gate? He does not. Free Grace admits him to the sacred way.

But when that man is put on the road to Heaven it will cost him something. It will cost him earnestness to knock at the wicket gate and sweat to climb the Hill Difficulty. It will cost him tears to find his roll again when he has lost it in the Arbor of Ease. It will cost him great care in going down the Valley of Humiliation. It will cost him resistance unto blood when he stands foot to foot with Apollyon in conflict. It will cost him many fears when he has to traverse the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It may cost him his life when he comes to Vanity Fair, if, like Faithful, he is called to bear testimony at the stake!

True religion is the gift of God and there is nothing we can do to purchase it. But at the same time, if we receive it, certain consequences will flow from it—and we ought to consider whether we shall be able to put up with them. You may be sure that the cost must be great, since our Lord compares it to the building of a tower. The word here used for, “tower,” has often been employed to signify a turreted house, a villa, or country mansion. “Which of you,” says He to the people, “intending to build for himself a mansion in which to reside at your ease, would not first of all count the cost?” The building is to be a costly one!

Doddridge is wrong in the supposition that a *temporary* tower is here intended. That it would cost a considerable sum is clear from the Savior’s saying that the wise man sits down and counts the cost. He does not merely stand up and pass his hand over his brow and say, “This tower will cost me so many hundred pounds.” Since it is to be an elaborate construction, an almost palatial edifice, he *sits down*, like a merchant at his desk, and thoughtfully considers the undertaking. He consults the archi-

tect and the mason, and calculates what will be the expense of the outer walls, of the roof, of the interior fittings and the like. And he does not make a *rough* estimate, but counts the cost as men count their gold.

It is evidently a matter of consequence with him, and so is true religion—it is no trifle, but an all-important business. He who thinks that a careless, hit-or-miss, headlong venture will suffice for his *eternal* interests is the reverse of wise! True godliness is the building up of a character which will endure the Day of Judgment. It begins in laying deep the foundations in faith, love and a renewed heart. It is carried on by the putting patiently and carefully, and often painfully, stone upon stone, the materials of the fair edifice, diligently adding, “to your faith courage, and to courage knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.”

Our lifework consists in “building up ourselves in our most holy faith.” Don’t you see that it is a glorious palace to which the Christian character is likened? But, lest we should *still* think the expense small, our Lord compares it to a *war*! He speaks of the number of troops engaged in that war, showing that it is no petty skirmish of two insignificant tribes. He likens it to a war in which, upon one side there is an array of 10,000, and on the other a host of twenty thousand. Now, warfare is *always* expensive work—besides the cost for accoutrements and ammunition, there is the cost of human life and blood.

There is the removal of strong arms from work at home and the direr risks of defeat, captivity and devastation. The Lord compares religion, then, in its *externals*, to a battle between the gracious man and the evils rampant in the outside world. The disciple of Jesus has to defend himself against a gigantic foe and he has within himself a power which, so far as he is concerned, is not sufficient for the contest. The odds are fearful—10,000 against twenty thousand! Well does the Savior say in the latter case that it is well to sit down to consult. The king with the smaller army consults, asks his sage senators, takes counsel from experience, calls in good advisers and debates whether the thing can be done or not.

So should we consider the matter of our *souls*, for religion is a costly thing and not to be entered on, as the Frenchman said, “with a light heart.” That light heart cost his nation dearly and so it will, ourselves, if we indulge it. We might have inferred this, I think, from some other considerations—namely from the fact that true religion is a lasting thing. It lasts for life. False religion comes and goes. True regeneration is never repeated and it is the commencement of a life which will loom no end, either in time or in eternity.

Now anything which is to last must be expensive! You shall get your glass colored, if you will, cheaply, but the sun will soon remove all its beauty. If you would obtain a glass which shall retain its color for centuries, every single step in the process of its manufacture will be costly, involving much labor and great care. So is it with true religion. You may get it cheap if you will—it will look quite as well as the real thing and for a little while it will bring you almost all the comfort and respect which the

genuine article would have brought you—but it will not last. Soon will its color fly and the beauty, the excellence which were there but in pretence, will soon have gone. You need, dear Friend, (I am sure you do), you need a godliness which will last you till you die! Well, then, it must cost you something, you can be sure of that.

Remember, also, that true religion will have to bear a strain, for it is certain to be opposed. This tower will not be built without opposition! It is like the wall of Jerusalem. Sanballat and Tobias will be sure to hinder the building. True religion must be able to endure hardness—if it cannot do that it is good for nothing. The old Toledo blade cost the warrior much at first hand, but when he has once procured it, he knows that it will cut through joint and marrow in the day of battle. Therefore he is not afraid to dash into the thick of the fray, trusting to its unrivalled temper and keen edge.

Could he not find a cheaper sword? I think he could have found it easily enough, and with small expense of gold. But then, in the moment when his sword smote upon his enemy's helmet, instead of cleaving through the skull, it would snap in the warrior's hand and cost him his life! Such is the cheap religion with which so many take up. There is no self-denial in it, no forsaking of the world, no giving up of carnal amusements—they are just the same as the world—their religion costs them nothing and at last, when they need it, it will fail them—it will snap like the ill-made sword in the day of battle and leave them defenseless!

Oh, if you want that which will endure the conflict, you must pay a cost for it! Jesus Christ knew that the persons to whom He spoke would not be able to bear the tests which awaited His disciples. They did not know that He would be crucified, for just then He was popular, and they hoped that He was to be the King of Israel. But the Savior knew that there would come dark days in which the King of the Jews would be hanged upon a tree and His disciples, even His *true* ones, would forsake Him for the moment and would flee. And therefore He, in effect, said to them, "You must be prepared for cross-bearing. You must be prepared to follow Me amid derision and shame and reproach. And if you are not ready for this, your discipleship is a mistake!

In their case it did not stand the test. These people were nowhere to be found when the time of trial came. And remember, dear Friends—and I dwell with great emphasis upon this point—we need a religion which will abide the inspection of the Great Judge at the Last Day. Now, there are things in the world which will endure for a while, but if they are closely looked at, and especially if they are placed under a microscope, they will be seen to have many flaws. No microscopic examination can, for a moment, be compared with the glance of Jehovah! He will read us through and through. Oh, what a withering will there be for fair professions in the day when His fiery eyes shall gaze upon them! Never does the grass dry up under the hot dry wind one-half as swiftly as the fair plains of pretended Christianity will wither beneath the Divine glance in the Last Tremendous Day!

He will look upon what men call Christendom and it will almost, if not altogether, vanish for, “when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith upon the earth?” Will it not, then, be evidently true that “many are called, and but few are chosen”? “Strive to enter in at the strait gate,” is still the voice of Christ to all of us, “for many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able.” If our religion is to be weighed in the balances, and may, perhaps, be found wanting, it is well for us to see to it and to know that it must be sincere, genuine and costly if it is to pass that ordeal. What, then, is the expense? What is the cost of building this tower or fighting this war?

The answer is given by our Savior, not by me! I should not have dared to invent such tests as He has ordained! It is for me to be the echo of His voice and no more. What does He say? Why, first, that if you would be His and have His salvation, you must love Him beyond every other person in this world. Is not that the meaning of this expression, “If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother”? Dear names! Dear names! “Father and mother!” Lives there a man with soul so dead that he can pronounce either of these words without emotion—and especially the last—“mother”? Brothers and Sisters, this is a dear and tender name to us—it touches a chord which thrills our being! Yet far more powerful is the name of *Savior*, the name of *Jesus*!

Father and mother must be less loved than Jesus Christ! The Lord demands precedence, also, of the best beloved “wife.” Here he touches another set of heart-strings. Dear is that word, “wife,” partner of our being, comfort of our sorrow, delight of our eyes—“wife!” Yet, Wife, you must not take the chief place. You must sit at Jesus’ feet, or else you are an idol, and Jesus will not allow your rivalry. And “children,” the dear babes that nestle in your bosom and clamber to your knee and pronounce your name in accents of music—they must not be our chief love—they must not come in between us and the Savior. Nor, for their sakes, to give them pleasure or to promote their worldly advantage, must we grieve our Lord.

Many a son is master of his father. Many a daughter has been mistress to the mother. But if it is for evil, this must be ended at once! If they tempt us to evil they must be treated as if we hated them—yes, the evil in them must be hated for Christ’s sake! If you are Christ’s disciples your Lord must be first, *then* mother, father, wife, children, brothers, and sisters will follow in due rank and order. I am afraid that many professors are not prepared for this. They would be Christians if their family would approve, but they must consult their brother, father, or wife. They would make a stand against worldly pleasures if others would, but they cannot bear to appear singular, or to oppose the views of relatives.

They say, “My father wishes it and I dare not tell him that it is wrong” “My mother says that we must not be too strait-laced and therefore, though my conscience tells me it is wrong, yet will I do it.” Or else they say, “My girls are growing up and must have amusement. My boys must be allowed their pleasures and therefore I must wink at sin.” Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, this must not be if you are, indeed, Christ’s disciples! You must put them all aside—the dearest must go sooner than Je-

sus be forsaken! Does He not say in the Psalms, “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father’s house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for he is your Lord; and worship you Him”?

Mark you, you will best prove your love to your relatives by being decided for the right, since you will be the more likely to win their souls. Love them too much to indulge the wrong in them! Love them so truly that you hate that in them which would injure you and ruin them! You must be prepared to suffer from those who are bound to you by the dearest ties. Sin must not be tolerated whatever may happen. We cannot yield in the point of sin—our determination is invincible—come hate or come love, we *must* follow Christ!

The next item of cost is this—*self* must be hated. I am afraid there are some who would sooner hate father or wife than hate their own life. Yet such is the command. It means this—that when my own pleasure, or my own gain, or my own reputation, or even my own *life* shall come in the way of Christ’s Glory, I am too little to make any account of myself—that I must even hate *myself* if self shall stand in the way of Christ! I am to look upon father, mother, brother, sister and myself, also, as foes, so far as they are opposed to the Lord Jesus and His holy will! I am to love them and desire their good as I also desire good for myself, but I am not to desire any good for them or for myself at the cost of sinning and robbing the Lord Jesus of His Glory. As for myself, if I see anything in myself opposed to Jesus I must do away with it. I must mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, denying myself anything and everything which would grieve the Savior, or would prevent my realizing perfect conformity to Him.

Next, the Savior goes on to say that if we would follow Him we must bear our cross—“Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” Sometimes that cross comes in the shape of confessing our faith before gainsayers. “Ah,” says the timid heart, “if I do so I shall have all my friends against me.” Take up your cross! It is a part of the cost of true discipleship. “I shall scarcely be able to bear myself in the house if I avow my religion.” Take up your cross! My Brother, unless you do, you cannot be Christ’s disciple. “Well, but it will involve a change even in my daily life.” Make the change, my Brother, or you cannot be the Lord’s disciple.

“But I know there is one very dear whom I have looked upon as likely to be my future companion—and he will leave me if I forsake the ways of the world.” Then, heavy as the loss may be, let him go, my Sister, if it is so that you cannot follow Christ and unite with Him. You must follow Jesus, or be lost forever! What trying words these are! What detectors of the hypocrisy of many professing Christians! Did they ever separate from the world? No, not they—they fell in with its fashions as the dead fish floats with the current! Have they any cross to bear? Does anybody reproach them with being too rigid, and too puritanical? Oh, no! For theirs is the religion which the world praises and consequently the religion which God abhors! If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him—and he who has the smile of the ungodly must look for the *frown* of God!

But, more than this, the Savior, as another item of cost, requires that His disciple should take up his cross and *come after Him*, that is to say, he must act as Christ acted. If we are not prepared to make Christ our *example*, yes, if it is not our highest ambition to live as *He* lived, to give ourselves up to act as He did, we cannot be His disciples. Last of all, we must make an unreserved surrender of all to Jesus. Listen to these words: "Whoever he is of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be My disciple." It may yet come to this, that persecution may arise and you may actually have to give up all! You must be prepared for the event. You may not have to give up *anything*, but the surrender must be just as real in your *heart* as if it had to be carried out in act and deed. No man has truly given himself to Christ unless he has also said, "My Lord, I give to You this day my body, my soul, my powers, my talents, my goods, my house, my children and all that I have. Henceforth I will hold them at Your will, as a steward under You. Yours they are—as for me, I have nothing—I have surrendered all to You."

You cannot be Christ's disciples at any less expense than this—if you possess a farthing that is your own and not your Master's, Christ is not your Master! It must be all His, every single jot and tittle—and your life, also—or you cannot be His. These are very searching words, but I would remind you, once again, that they are not mine. If, in expounding them I have erred, I am grieved that it should be so. But I am persuaded I have not erred on the side of too much severity. I confess I may have spoken too *leniently*. The words of the text lay the axe to the root and are sweeping to the last degree.

Oh, count, then, the cost! And if any of you have taken up a religion which costs you nothing, put it down and flee from it, for it will be your curse and your ruin! Is there any getting to Heaven without this cost? No! But may we not be Christians without these sacrifices? You may be counterfeits, you may be hypocrites, you may be brothers and sisters of Judas, but you cannot be real Christians! This cost is unavoidable, it cannot be bated one solitary mite. God grant that you may be enabled to submit to it.

II. The second head is this, WISDOM SUGGESTS THAT WE SHOULD COUNT THE COST. You feel you would like to be a Christian. Dear Friend, give me your hand. I am glad you have such a desire. But as I grasp your hand and would gladly draw you towards Christ, I look you in the face and say, "Do you know what you desire?" Are you sure you desire it? There are men lying on beds of sickness who cry for help, but when they recover and have to go out and battle with the world, the time may come when they will say, "I would just as soon be on the bed of sickness again." I should not like a time to come when any one of you shall say, "I joined the Church, but it was a mistake. I did not weigh the matter rightly. I am now in for it, and I am sorry I am, for I ought not to be where I am."

If honest, you ought to give up your profession, if such is the case. If you have no Divine Grace, I hope you will have enough of common honesty not to stick to a practical falsehood. I should grieve, indeed, if that

should happen, and therefore this morning, I pray you, count the cost! For mark, if you do *not* count the cost, you will not be able to carry out your resolves. It is a great building. It is a great war! No mistake can be greater than the notion that in order to be a Christian there is only needed a measure of emotion during a few days—and the belief of some *one* decisive hour! If I preached such doctrines I should be deceiving your souls!

Faith and repentance are not the work of a week or two, they are a life-work! As long as the Christian is on earth he must repent. And as for faith, it is not saying, “I believe in Jesus, and therefore I am saved,” but it is a daily Grace, the trust of a *lifetime*. The Christian continues, still, to believe and repent until he commences to triumph in eternal Glory. Moreover, faith is continually productive of sanctifying results upon the life of the Believer, or otherwise he is not possessed of the right faith. He who believes in Jesus Christ is saved—but if there were such a thing as a *temporary* faith there would be such a thing as a *temporary* salvation. He who truly repents of sin is a renewed man, but if repentance of sin were only a transient thing and were soon over, the life which it indicated would be over, too. You must not be content with false and fleeting religion! You are beginning to build a tower of which the top stone will never be laid till you are taken up to Heaven—and you are commencing a war which will never end till you exchange the sword for the palm branch.

Remember, also, that to fail in this great enterprise will involve terrible defeat, for what does our Lord say? He says that not to be able to finish will expose you to ridicule. I beg you to notice the form of that ridicule. “All that pass by will begin to mock him, saying one to the other (for that is the force of the expression) this man began to build but was not able to finish.” Our Lord does not represent them as saying to the foolish builder, “You began to build and were not able to finish,” but as speaking about him as a third person—“This man.” Now, half-hearted Christians, half-hearted religious men may not be scoffed at in the public streets to their faces, but they are common butts of ridicule behind their backs. You false professors are *universally* despised! Worldlings laughingly say, “Ah, these are pretty specimens of Church members!”

The world looks upon a worldly church with utter disdain, and for my part, little do I regret that such derision is poured upon an object which so well deserves it! To be a mere *pretender* to Christian discipleship is to become an object of scorn in time and in eternity. And such will be the false professor’s fate. Sir, if you mean to be a Christian, resolve that it shall be the right thing, thorough and decided—for then, though men will not go about and praise you to your face, they will honor you—and even those who hate you will know your value. But if you are only half a Christian and not thorough, they may not come to your face and show their contempt, but as they pass by they will sneer and will have more respect for a downright worldling than for you—because he is what he says he is, and makes no pretence of being anything else! But as for *you*, you began to build and *could not* finish.

What a wretched object is a sham Christian! We have sometimes seen great buildings which have been commenced and deserted by over-

speculative persons. The neighbors have called them “Smithy’s Folly,” or “Brown’s Folly,” or “Robinson’s Folly,” or the like. These are but fleeting causes of derision. But the *pretender*, the man who, in appearance, commenced to be a Christian and then broke down at it, will be pointed at even by the lost in Hell! The drunkard will cry, “And you? Have *you*, also, come here? You who were so eloquent about sobriety, and so ready to rebuke the tippler.” “Aha!” cries another, “*you* are the man who lived down our street and made so much show of your *religion*! You told me I was very wicked, but are you better off than I am?”

Behold, I see the openly profane raise themselves up from their racks of remorse to exclaim, “Have *you* become like one of *us*? You Church-member, are you, too, in Hell? Is the taste of the sacramental wine still upon your lips? Why, then, do you demand a drop of water to cool your tongue? That sacramental bread which you did swallow so readily, does it not even now stick in your hypocritical throat? You liar before God and man! It is meet and right that you are cast out even as we.” Oh, if you must be lost, be lost as anything but hypocrites! If you must perish, perish rather outside the Church than in it! Do not mock the Lord of Glory! I know of no worse act than to mimic the excellences of the Savior with bold imitation of His Graces! What worse offense can you render to the Majesty of His sacred virtue than to travesty His holiness and mock His perfection?

III. The last word shall be this, that COST WHATEVER IT MAY, TRUE RELIGION IS WORTH THE COST. We are like a man with the black pest upon him who knows that he is dying and yet yonder is a drug which will heal him. “Physician,” says he, “you ask so great a price that each drop costs me a diamond! You are demanding more than its weight in choicest pearls, but it does not matter, I must have it! If I do not, I am a dead man—and then what will it profit me that I have kept my gold?” It is the case of every one of us here present—we must have Christ or perish forever—and it will be better for us to cut off our right arm and pluck out our right eye than that we should be cast into Hell fire!

Mark you, Brothers and Sisters, the present blessings of true religion are worth all the cost. What if I have to rend some fond connection? Jesus, You are better to me than husband, wife, or child. If it must be so that she who lies in my bosom shall count me for her enemy, You shall be in my heart, my Savior, better than a Rachel, or a Rebekah. Yes, if it must be so that my father shall say, “You shall never darken my doors again if you follow Christ,” he must say it, for when father and mother forsake me the Lord will take me up. The immediate joy will recompense for the immediate loss. Yes, doubtless you may count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord and yet remain a gainer.

And again, what recompense comes for all cost in the consolation afforded by true godliness in the article of death? To lie a-dying—why it will give no pain to be able to say, then, “I was cast out of any family for Jesus.” It will be no sorrow to remember, “I was ridiculed for Christ.” It will cause us no pangs to say, “I was counted too precise and too much of a

Puritan.” No, my Brothers and Sisters, those are not the things which put thorns into death pillows. Oh, no! There we shall see how sweet it was to have borne any part of Jesus’ Cross—a sliver of His Cross will be worth a king’s ransom on a dying day! Moreover, at the Judgment, when the trumpet rings out and the dead are rising, we shall not say, “I suffered too much for Christ.”

When to the right His chosen go, and we among them, we shall not look back with regret to the fact that we lost caste in society and position among the refined for Jesus’ sake! We shall not lament that we attended a despised conventicle and worshipped among the poor of this world out of love to Jesus, and fidelity to His Gospel. Oh, no! I guarantee you in that day he shall shine brightest who was most beclouded for his Lord’s sake! Midst the bright ones, doubly bright shall be the martyr band of whom the world was not worthy—who were accounted as the offscouring of all things! And while each one of the disciples shall receive a hundredfold for all he may have given up for his Lord’s cause, these shall have the fairest portion.

Moreover, let me remind you, Beloved, that Christ asks you to give up nothing that will injure you. If you must hate father and mother it is only in this sense—that you will not yield to their wrong requests, nor will you leave Christ for them. If you must give up any pleasure it is because it is not a fitting pleasure for you—it is poisonous sugar of lead—and not true sweetness. Christ will give you greater enjoyments by far. I remember that our Redeemer does not ask any one of us to do what He has not done Himself. That thought pierces me to the quick—I wish it might affect you, also. Master, do You say, give up my father? Did You not leave Your Father? Do You bid me even leave my father’s house if it must be for Your sake?

Did You not leave the glorious mansions of Heaven? What if I am called to bear reproach? They called the Master of the house Beelzebub! What if I am cast out? They also cast You out. When we think of the scourging, the shame and the spitting which the Lord endured, what are our griefs? And if, for His sake, we should even be condemned to death we know how He hung on the Cross, stripped of His all, that He might save us from the wrath to come! O Believer, can you follow your Lord where ever He goes? Soldiers of the Cross, can you follow Him? Is the path smooth enough for those dear feet and too rough for *you*? There He is in the center of the battle where the blows fall fastest—will you follow Him? Dare you follow Him, or do you pine for the tents of ease and the soft couches of the cowards, yonder, who are shrinking back and deserting to the enemy?

Oh, by everything that is good, if you are, indeed, His followers, I charge you, cry, “Where He is, there let His servant be! As He fares, so let His servant fare—in this world let His humiliation be ours so that in the world to come we may be partakers of His Glory.” This is strong preaching, you tell me, but the Savior meant all that I have said. His was a testing discourse, but there are Truths of God to be remembered which may console us while hearing them. It is true that you cannot build the tower—Joshua said to the people in his time—“You cannot serve the

Lord.” If you have counted the cost, you know, by this time, that you cannot wage the war. Ten thousand cannot stand against twenty thousand. But yet it must be done, inevitable necessity drives on behind—whatever may be in front—we dare not turn back.

Remember Lot’s wife. What, then, must we do? Hear the Lord’s words, “With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Are you *willing*? Then the Spirit of God will help you! You shall give up the world and the flesh without a sigh! You shall fight against your lusts and you shall overcome them through the blood of the Lamb! The tower shall be built and the Lord shall inhabit it! Cast yourselves on Jesus by a simple faith—rest in *His* power—and from day to day believe in *His* strength, and He will bear you safely through!

Do you notice the verse which follows this passage? I wonder whether anything like it will follow my sermon. It is astonishing that though Jesus thundered out as from the top of Sinai and His words seemed harsh, yet it is written, “Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him,” as if they said to themselves, “This man tells us the Truth of God, therefore we will hear Him.” And then He began to tell them the precious Truths of His Free Grace, acting just as the farmer does who puts in the plow and turns up the soil—when he sees the clods breaking in the furrow, *then* he scatters the golden seed—but not till then.

Listen, every one of you who would have Christ! Come, and have Him! You who would have salvation, accept it as the *gift* of His Sovereign Grace! But do not receive it under misapprehension—understand what is meant by it. Salvation is not deliverance from Hell, alone—it is deliverance from *sin*! It is not the rescue of men, merely from eternal pain—it is their redemption from this world’s vain and wicked ways! It cannot be divided! It is a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout. If you would have justification, you must have sanctification! If you would have pardon, you must have holiness! If you would be one with Christ, you must be separate from sinners. If you would walk the streets of gold above, you must walk the road of holiness below! God grant you His Holy Spirit to enable you to do so and His shall be the praise forever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Psalm 103; Luke 14:25-35.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—906, 671, 596**

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CONSIDER BEFORE YOU FIGHT

NO. 632

**A SERMON PREACHED
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“What king, going to make war against another king, sits not down first and consults whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and desires conditions of peace.”
Luke 14:31, 32.***

EVERY sensible man endeavors to adapt his purposes to his strengths. He does not begin to build a house which he will not be able to finish, nor commence a war which he cannot hope to fight through. The religion of Christ is the most reasonable one in the world and Jesus Christ never desires to have any disciples who shall blindly follow Him without counting the cost. We always esteem it to be a happy thing when we can get men to sit down and consider. The most of you are so full of other thoughts and so occupied with the world—ever running here and there about your ordinary business—that we cannot get you to think, or calmly sit down and soberly look at things in the light of eternity and weigh them deliberately as you ought.

And yet it is only reasonable that the Master should ask you to do for Him, with regard to your spiritual matters, what you will admit that every sensible man does continually in his business! You are poor traders if you never count your stock. You are likely to be, before long, in bankruptcy court if there is no periodical examination of accounts. And so Christ would have you sit down, sometimes, and take stock as to where you are, and what you are. And then figure up by some sort of arithmetic by which you may come to a truthful calculation, what you are able to do and not to do. And what, therefore, it is reasonable and unreasonable for you to undertake and where your position ought and where it ought not to be.

I especially invite, this evening, those who are unconverted in this assembly to some few thoughts upon the war in which they are engaged with God. I am hoping that perhaps if they consider a little upon it, they will send a delegation and desire peace. When I have spoken upon that, there will be some, perhaps, who will be running away with the idea that they will at once be at peace with God and make war with Satan. But I shall want to pin them down a moment and make them estimate their chances of victory in such a war as that and see whether they are able to meet the Black Prince of Darkness in their own strength.

We will try, if we can, to make it tonight the subject of a little homely talk about our souls and a little earnest personal consideration about our future.

I. First, then, THERE ARE SOME HERE WHO ARE NOT THE FRIENDS OF GOD, and in this case he that is not with Him is against Him. If you cannot look up to God and say, "My Father," and feel that your heart beats true to Him, then remember it is a fact that you are His enemy. If you could have what you wish there would be no God. If it were in your power you would never trouble yourself again with thoughts of Him. You would like to live, you say, as you wish, and I know how you would wish to live. It would be anyway but as God commands.

Now, as you are engaged in antagonism with Him, just think awhile—Can you expect to succeed? Are you likely to win the day? You have entered into a conflict with His Law—you do not intend to keep it. With His day, you do not regard it. You are thus at war with God! Now, is it likely that you will be successful? Is there a chance for you? If there is, why then, perhaps, it may be as well to go on. If you can conquer *GOD*, if the battlements of Glory may yet see the flag of sin waved triumphant there, why, Man, then try it!

There will be at least an ambition worthy of Satan who desired sooner to reign in Hell than to be ruled by Heaven! But is there any hope for *you*? Let me put a few things before you which may, perhaps, make you think the conflict too unequal and thus lead you to abandon the thought at once. Think of God's stupendous power! What is there which He cannot do? We see but little of God's power comparatively in our land. Now and then there comes a crash of thunder in a storm and we look up with amazement when He sets the heavens on blaze with His lightning.

But go and do business on the deep waters. Let your vessel fly before the howling hurricane! Mark how every staunch timber seems to crack as though it were but match board and the steady mast goes by the board and snaps and is broken to shivers. Mark what God does when He stirs up the great deep and seems to bring Heaven down and lift the earth up till the elements mingle in a common mass of tempest!

Then go to the Alps and listen to the thunder of the avalanche. Stand amazed as you look down some grim precipice, or peer with awe-struck wonder into the blue mysteries of a crevasse! See the leaping waterfalls and mark those frozen seas, the glaciers, as they come sweeping down the mountain side. Stay awhile till a storm shall gather there and Alp shall talk to Alp and those white prophetic heads shall seem to bow while the wings of tempest cover them! There you may learn something of the power of God amidst the crash of Nature.

If you could have stood by the side of Dr. Woolfe, when rising early one morning, he went out of Aleppo and upon turning his head saw that Aleppo was no more! It had been, in a single moment, swallowed up by an earthquake! Then again you might see what God can do. But why need I feebly recapitulate what you all know so well? Think of what that Book records of His deeds of prowess when He unloosed the depths and bade the fountains of the great deep be broken up—and the whole world that then was—was covered with water!

Think of what He did at the Red Sea when the depths stood upright as an heap for a time while His people went through and when afterwards,

with eager joy, the floods clasped their hands and buried His enemies in the deep, never to rise again! Let such names as Og, king of Bashan, Sihon, king of the Amorites and Sennacherib, the mighty, rise before your recollection and mark what God has done! Who has ever dashed upon the bosses of His buckler without being wounded? What iron has He not broken? What spear has He not shivered?

Millions came against Him, but by the blast of the breath of His nostrils they fell, or they flew like the chaff before the wind! Let the sea roar but the rocks stand still and hurl off the waves in flakes of foam—and so does God when His foes are most enraged and passionate. He that sits in the heavens does laugh. The Lord does have them in derision. And He breaks them in pieces *without* a stroke of His hand or even the glance of His eyes. Think, Sinner! Think of Him with whom you contend!

Have you an arm like God's? Can you thunder with a voice like His? Can you stamp with your foot and shake the mountains? Can you touch the hills and make them smoke? Can you say to the sea, "Be stirred to your depths," or can you call to the winds and bid the steeds of tempest be unloosed? If you cannot, then think of the battle! Attempt to do no more but get back to your bed and there commune with your heart and make your peace with Him against whom you can not hope to contend successfully.

Think, again, O rebellious Man—you have to deal not only with almighty, but with an ever encompassing power! Please think how much you are in God's power tonight as it regards your temporal position. You are prospering in business—but the tide of prosperity may be turned in a way unknown to you. God has a thousand ways of stripping those whom He before seemed to clothe most lavishly. You dote upon that wife of yours—she may be struck before your eyes and waste with consumption or decline, or, more rapidly still, she may be taken from you at a stroke! And then where is your joy?

Those children, those happy prattlers who make your hearth glad — could you hold them for a moment if God should call back their spirits? If He said, "Return, children of men," your prayers, the physician, your love—what could all these avail you? You have but to buy the coffin and the shroud and the grave and bury your dead out of your sight. God can sweep away all if He wills, and leave you penniless, childless, a widower, without comfort in the world. I would not contend with Him who has so many ways to wound me! I am vulnerable at so many points and He knows how to pierce me to the quick in them all.

I will, therefore, make Him my friend rather than my foe. I had better not fight with Him who has the key of the castle and of the front gate and of the iron gate and who can storm every position along my bastion whenever He shall please. Think, again, how much you are personally in His hands! You are strong, you say—you will do a day's work with any man. There are few can lift a load more readily than you can, perhaps, and yet one second would be enough to paralyze every limb!

Your faculties are clear. You can write with clearness—no one can see through an intricate account more rapidly than you can, or find out a se-

cret more speedily. And yet one tick of that clock is time enough to reduce either you or me to a driveling idiot, or to a raving madman. A mysterious hand falls on that brain and cools it so that there is no longer the light of intellect within it—or else an awful breath fans its flame till it burns like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace and the soul walks within it a martyr—doomed to live in the midst of fire!

Think of this—not many yards from here there stands in Bedlam an awful proof of what the Providence of God can do in one moment with those who seemed the most sane, the most witty, and the most able of men. And you have not to go far in either direction, before, at the gate of some hospital, you will find how soon the body may become very, very low, even to the dust, if God but wills it. I would not, O Sinner, I would not have God other than my friend, while I am thus helplessly in His control!

If the moth is in my hand and I can crush it at my will and pleasure, surely if that moth had wit and sense, it would not provoke me to anger nor seek to bring down my plagues upon it! But, if it could, it would seek to nestle near my heart, that I, so able to crush it, might use my power for its *protection* and might make what wit I have to be its wisdom for its shelter and defense. It is well, also, to remember the mighty army of the Lord of Hosts and that you live amidst the creatures of God who are all ready to do His bidding.

As the children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness, they were preserved by God from many foes and innumerable dangers which lurked around waiting to destroy them. Once God gave the fiery serpents permission to assault the host and what death and terror immediately filled the camp! They must have seen, then, that it was no small thing to be at variance with God, when He had so many allies waiting to do His bidding. How clearly this was shown in the plagues of Egypt, when frogs, locusts and lice, hail and fire, plague and death flooded the ill-fated land—but only when beckoned on by the uplifted finger of God!

He can still call to His help the forces of creation. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera and God can still make all things work for *evil* as well as good if He is pleased to command them. When Herod fought with God he was consumed by worms and died—and God has still a countless army of servants who do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word. You had better wait awhile and think how you can meet them. Are your friends as numerous? Can you muster an army like God's? Is the muster roll of your hosts like His?

Consider the heavens, for He marshals yon starry multitude and calls them all by name! Because He is great in strength, not one fails. Be wise and enter into covenant with Him through blood and rush not on to certain defeat by seeking to outrival God. Remember, moreover, what is the extent of God's wisdom and that His foolishness is greater than your highest knowledge. A good general is worth more than a regiment of men. When Stonewall Jackson was killed, his enemies and friends alike felt that his death was more than the loss of ten thousand men.

Our Iron Duke, when alive, was a strength to our army beyond all calculation. Now mark the skill and infinite wisdom of the God who leads the army of the skies. All light and knowledge are His. He is the Ancient of Days and His experience runs back to all eternity. You are but of yesterday and know nothing. His plans are beyond your conception, and He knows the way you take. He is far above your thoughts and ever out of your sight—but He can see you through and through and knows you better than you know yourself. Do not show your folly by weighing your wisdom against His in the scales, or by expecting to outshine Him so as to triumph over Him. Poor moth rushing into the flame, you will be consumed amidst the pity of good men and the derision of evil ones.

Yet there is another matter I want you to remember—you that are the enemies of God—you have a *conscience*. You have not got rid of it yet. You have a thief in that candle of the Lord, it is true, but still it is a light. It is not put out. And God has ways of making it to become a terrible plague to you, if you do not accept it as a friend. Conscience is meant to be man's armor bearer, beneath whose shield he may fight the battles of the right. But if you make it your *enemy*, then conscience often places a sword in such a way as to cut and wound you severely.

You have a conscience and that is a very awkward thing for a man to have who is an enemy of God. If I were God's enemy I should prefer having no monitor to call my attention to the holy Character and righteous Law of the Most High. I should be glad to get rid of every particle of moral sense. But you have consciences and most of you are not yet dead to all feeling of guilt and shame. You cannot, therefore, sin so cheaply as others. And if you do for the present manage to put Mr. Conscience down, yet since he is still in you, the time will come when you will find his voice grow louder! And there will be a terror in that voice which will make it a terror for you to sleep and hard for you to go about your daily business with your accustomed regularity.

Those men who serve God most faithfully find that their conscience, when it can accuse them of anything wrong—though it is their best friend—is no very pleasant companion. It is said that David's heart smote him. I would sooner have anybody smite me than my own *heart*, for it strikes with so hard a blow and hits the place where one may most tenderly feel it. And it will be so with you unless you get your "conscience seared with a hot iron." I am afraid there will come a time when you will not rest in your beds nor be able to find peace or satisfaction anywhere. I think therefore, if I had a friend of God inside my heart, I would not like to fight with God so long as he continued within me. Oh, that you would be at peace with Him, "and thereby good shall come unto you."

One other reflection—for I must not keep you thinking on this point long—it is this. Remember you must die, and therefore it is a pity to be at enmity with God. You may put it off and say, "I shall not die yet." But you do not know. How can you tell? It is possible that you may die tomorrow. But suppose that you live for the next twenty or thirty years? What is that? I am only thirty years of age and yet I confess that I never thought time so short as I feel it to be now. When we were children we thought

twelve months was a great length of time. When we were twenty, a year seemed to be a very respectable period.

But now it flies and some of my friends here whose hair is turning grey will tell you that whether it is fifty, sixty, or seventy years, it all seems but a mere dream—a snap of the fingers—it is gone so soon! Well, just push through a little interval of time, then you must die. My dear Friend, will it not be a very dreadful thing to die when you are at war with God? If you could fight this out forever under such circumstances as those in which you now are, I could not then commend the struggle. But since it must come to such an awful pause! Since there must be that death rattle in your throat! Since there must be that clammy sweat upon your brow—O you will need some better business than to be carrying arms against the God of Heaven in your dying moments!

They that have God for their friend yet find death no very pleasant task. But what will you find it, who will have to strike *yourselves* in every blow that you are aiming against the Most High, whom you have made and continue to make your enemy? Here is this, too, to think of—there is a future state. When you die, you have to live again! We know very little about that next state and I do not intend to say much about it tonight. You are launched without your body, an unclothed spirit, into a world which you have never seen. Will you find companions there, or will you be alone? Where will it be? What sort of place will it be like?

I should not choose to enter upon the realm of spirits without having God to be my friend. It would be a dreadful thing to get into that mysterious unknown country having nothing to take with me across its boundary except this—an inveterate enmity to the King that reigns supreme in it! If I must cross the border and go into a land I have never trod, I would like, at least, to carry a passport with me—or to be able to say, “I am a friend of the King that reigns here.” But to go there as God’s *enemy*—how terrible it must be!

Besides, let me say, you cannot hope to succeed—all experience is against you. There never was one yet that either in this state or the next has fought with God and conquered. And you will not be the first, for they who contend with God all come to this one conclusion—“He comes forth in His strength and His enemies are given like stubble to the fire and like wax to the flame. He lifts up His voice and they melt away. He looks at them and that one flash of fire withers them forever. And out of the bottomless pit of despair they weep and wail the piteous but useless regret that their harvest is past and their summer is ended and they are not saved. For they have spent their strength against their God and so have brought themselves where ruin is eternal and hope can never come.”

Oh that you would send a delegation and be at peace! I think I hear some say, “Well, we wish to give up the contest—but what is to be done so as to be at peace with God?” I ask, Have you got an ambassador to go to God for you? That is the first thing. He cannot look at *you*. Jesus Christ is the Ambassador between God and man—can you commit your case into His hands? Will you do so? If so, your case will go well. God cannot deny Him any request. He has a right to all He ever asks the Father to give and

the Father is always well-pleased in Him and delights to grant Him whatever He desires.

That Savior is willing to plead your cause. He waits to be gracious. I am sent to tell you the good news of His love and mercy—to warn you of the certain doom which awaits all who turn from Christ—and to bid you and every sin-sick rebel to come at once, just as you are, to the footstool of mercy. And I can pledge the honor of God, (as being Christ's ambassador for this purpose), that if you come, He will in no wise cast you out. And the terms of peace are very brief. They are these—give up the traitors. There can be no peace between you and God while you harbor sin. Give them up and be willing to renounce every sin of every sort and kind, for one harbored traitor will prevent God concluding peace with you.

Sinner, what do you say? Is it hard to give up your sin? Does that condition strike you as unreasonable? Out with the knife, man, and cut the throat of every iniquity! Why, there is no sin for which it is worth your while to be damned! A little rioting and chambering and wantonness—is that worth Hell fire forever? What? To have your giddy amusements for an hour or two—is this a due recompense for an eternity of fire unmitigated by a drop of water? I pray you, be reasonable. Barter not away your soul for trifles! Pawn not eternity for the mere fictions of an instant. God give you Grace, Sinner, to not kick at that condition, but at once cast out your enemies and gods and then lay hold on Christ, on Jesus Christ alone and let Him stand as Ambassador for you. You can not fight it out. Let peace be made. Oh may it be made tonight, through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son.

Then next, confess that you deserve the King's wrath. Bow that head—put the rope about your neck as though you felt you deserved that the executioner should lead you forth. Pray to God for pardon and cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" And then cling to the skirts of that appointed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who on yonder bloody tree made expiation for the sins of God's enemies that they might thereby become God's friends. God demands of you a confession of your guilt. He will be honored by your humbling yourself before Him. Your sin has aimed at His Glory and now He will glorify Himself by your repentance.

It were only just on His part if He spurned you away and cast you out into the pit which has no bottom. But He has said that whoever confesses his sin shall obtain forgiveness. Go, therefore, in the spirit of the publican—smite upon your breast and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Confess that you deserve Hell but ask for Heaven and you shall not plead in vain. Only honor God's justice and appeal to His mercy through the Lord Jesus Christ. This, surely, is not much for God to expect at your hands!

If you will not submit, what can you say when God shall crush you? You refuse to bend the knee and to bow the head—what will you do when God shall trample on you in His fury and tread on you in His hot displeasure? You must, therefore, now in the accepted time, while it is still the day of mercy, seek His face and with weeping and supplication, "take

with you words and turn unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon you. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

II. And now we turn the subject so as to look at THE SECOND CONTEST, IN WHICH I TRUST MANY ARE ANXIOUS TO BE ENGAGED. Some young spirit that has been touched with a sense of its own condition, and somewhat aroused, may be saying, “I will be God’s enemy no longer—I will be His friend.” Bowing the knee, that heart cries, “Oh God, reconcile me unto Yourself by the death of Your dear Son. I throw down all my weapons. I confess my guilt. I plead for mercy. For Jesus’ sake vouchsafe it to me.” “But,” says that soul, “if I am the friend of God, I must be the foe of Satan and from this day I pledge myself to fight forever with Satan till I get the victory and am free from sin.”

My dear Friend, I want you to stop. I do not wish you to make *peace* with the Evil One, but I want you to consider what you are doing. There are a few things I would whisper in your ear, and one is that sin is sweet. The uppermost drops of sin’s cup glitter and sparkle. There is pleasure in sin of a certain sort and for a certain season. It is a *poisoned* sweet—it is but a temporary delusion—but still the world does promise fair things. Its gingerbread is gilt and though it wears nothing but tinsel and a little gold-leaf now and then, yet it does look very much like gold.

Can you? Can you resist sin, when it seems so charming? The next time the cup is brought to you—you know the flavor of it—oh, it is rich! Can you turn away? Are you certain that you will be able to dash it from your lips? Ah, Man, you will find it different, when the trial comes, to what it is now that you are sitting in the Tabernacle and resolving to get rid of the temptation and that you will do right!

Remember, again, you may be enticed by friends who will be very persuasive. You can give up sin just now, but you do not know who may be the tempter at some future time. If she should allure you, who has tempted so well before! If she—she should speak! She! The very word has awakened your recollection—if she should speak as she alone can speak and look as only she can look—can you then resist and stand back? That witching voice, that fascinating eye! Oh how many souls have been damned for what men call love! Oh that they had but a little true love of themselves and others, and would not thus pander to the Prince of Hell!

But alas, alas, while the cup itself looks sweet, there is to be added to it the hand that holds it out. It is not so easy to contend with Satan when he employs the service of someone whom you esteem highly and love with all your heart. Remember the case of Solomon whose wisdom was marvelous, but who was enticed by his wives and fell a prey into the hands of the Evil One. It needs a spirit like the Master’s to be able to say, “Get you behind me, Satan,” to the tempter, when he has the appearance of one of your best loved friends.

The devil is a crafty being and if he cannot force the door, he will try and get the key which fits the lock and, by the means of our most tender love and affections, will make a way for himself into our hearts! You will find it no easy task, therefore, to contend with him. Then again, remember, Man, there is *habit*. Can you, all of a sudden, give up your sins and

fight Satan? Do not tell me that you can! Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well.

If you had never sinned as you have sinned, there were not this difficulty with you. But he that has gone day after day and year after year into sin is not so easily turned from it. As well hope to make Niagara leap up instead of down as make human nature flow back to virtue instead of going downward to sin! You do not know yourself. Habit is an iron bond and he that is once enveloped in it may pull and strain but he will tear away his flesh sooner than break the links of that dread chain.

We have seen men who, convinced of the error of their ways, have sought to turn from them without asking the help of God. For a time they have made some little progress in appearance, but it has only been like the retreating of the waves at the rising of the tide. Their evil habits have returned upon them with a rush and have covered them deeper than before. Read the parable of our Lord concerning the unclean spirit which went out of the man and roamed through dry places, seeking rest but finding none. Finally it said, "I will return to the place from where I went out." It came back and found it swept and garnished and then took to it seven other evil spirits, more wicked than itself. So the last end of that man was worse than the first.

Thus it is with those who enter upon the work of saving themselves without looking up by faith to God for His needed help. Satan will triumph over you. You are like the fly in the coils of the spider's web—the more it struggles, the more it will be encompassed. You must cry for help as you are quite unable of yourself to escape from the snares of the Wicked One. He has you bound fast, hand and foot—and you will never break his cords nor be able to cast his bands from you. You have not seven locks of strength like Samson! You will certainly be overcome.

Again, you think you will give up sin, but ridicule is very unpleasant and when the finger comes to be pointed at you and they say, "Ah, so you have set up for a saint, I see!" When they put it as only they can put it, in such a sharp, cutting, grating manner! When it is wrapped up so wittily in an epigram that is told all round the shop against you! And when, moreover, there is some weakness of yours, some giddy weakness—and they know how to hook your attempt at saintship to your weakness—and they bandy that all round and there are fifty laughing faces at you, can you stand that?

Yes, it is a very pretty thing for you to come here on Sundays and say what you will do—but it is different to do it on Mondays. To be laughed at is not really, to a sensible man, anything very terrible. I think you have only to get used to it and then you will just as much expect to hear people laugh at you as to hear birds singing when you walk out in the morning! But at first it is a very sharp trial—a trial of "cruel mocking." And many who have been going to fight Satan have drawn back, for they found they could not stand it.

When the Jews were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem after their return from captivity, one of the most severe tests of their zeal and devotion was

the laughter of their enemies who came and looked on and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Even that which they build, if a fox goes up it, he shall break down their stone wall." The words of their foes were more cutting than swords and keenly did they feel in their spirits the derision of the scoffers. It is as painful now for the sensitive spirit as it was of old, but you must not be daunted. Heaven is worth buying, even though it should cost a life heaped full of stinging words and malicious sayings from a deriding and taunting world.

Did not Christ Himself show us how to endure this trial? See His foes gathered around Him when He hung dying on the Cross. They laugh at Him even there—"He saved others, Himself He cannot save," they said as they wagged their heads and mocked alike His dignity and His woe. "If You are the Christ, come down from the Cross and we will believe on You." These sayings must have been more bitter to His spirit than the wormwood mingled with gall was to His lips. You must follow Christ here, also, if you would contend, as He did, with Satan.

Then count the cost. Can you drink His cup and be baptized with His baptism? And yet further, let me say to you, you that are for going to Heaven so zealously—gain is a very pretty thing, a very pleasant affair. Who does not like to make money? You know if you can be religious and grow rich at the same time, that will just suit some of you! Oh yes, the two going together—that will be admirable! You will kill two birds with one stone. Mr. By-Ends said, "Now, if a man, by being religious can get a good wife who has a considerable sum of money. And if by being religious he gets a good shop and many customers, why," says he, "then religion is a good thing! To get a good wife is a good thing and to get customers—that is another good thing, and so," he says, "the whole is a good thing put together."

But he that knows Mr. By-Ends knows that he is an old rogue, notwithstanding that he puts it prettily. I have known him. He is a member of this Church, I am sorry to say. I never went into a Church where he was not a member. I have tried to turn him out and did once, but there was another one of the family left inside and however many you may expel there are sure to be more of that breed remaining. But there sometimes comes a pinch with Mr. By-Ends. Now if you should find that shutting up your shop on Sundays should ruin your business, well, what then? Could you stand it?

Now there are some of you that try it every now and then when you get spasmodically godly, but it does not pay you, you find. And so you begin once more to open shop on the Lord's Day. Some of you Sunday traders discover that it gets a little hot and strong for you when you come to the Tabernacle occasionally and you shut up for a season, but soon you say, "Well, people must live." Yes, and people must die and people must be damned, too, if they try to live by breaking God's Laws!

Remember that it will not pay to be religious, some people fancy. We have heard of a man saying, "I cannot afford to keep a conscience—it is too expensive an article for me." Ah, but keep in mind the saying of the Lord, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his

own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" There is such a thing as being, "Penny wise and pound foolish." And there is such a thing, also, as being, "worldly wise and eternally foolish." Think of this, then, for the trial will come to you in the shape of yellow gold and it will be hard to keep yourself from the glittering bait which the god of this world will lay before you.

I am putting these things to you so that you may calculate whether you can carry on the war against the devil with all these fearful odds against you. If I were a recruiting sergeant I should not do this. He puts the shilling into the country lad's hand and the lad may say fifty things. "Oh never mind," says the gallant soldier, "you know, it is all glory, nothing but glory. There, I will just tie these ribbons round your hat. There are some long strips of glory to begin with and then all your days it will be just glory, glory forever. And you will die a general and be buried at Westminster Abbey and they will play the 'Dead March in Saul,' and all that kind of thing."

Now I cannot thus deceive or try to cheat men to enlist under the banner of the Cross. I do not desire to raise objections to it. All I want of you is to count the cost, lest you should be like he who began to build without being able to finish. That is the misery of so many. I advise you, if you are about to declare war with Satan, to see whether you are able to carry it out and win the victory. "Well," says one, "it is hard to be saved." Nobody ever thought it was not, I hope. What does Peter say? "If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

"It is hard to be saved," you say. Whoever said it was not? But it is *not* hard to be saved if a man is willing to be received according to the plan which God has appointed. If Christ undertakes it, then it is done! My counsel to those of you who are considering making war with Satan is to remember that it is too much for *you*, and therefore do not attempt it in your own strength.

Beware of this. I know Satan will tempt you, first of all, to believe that you need no Savior. Then if you are not convinced of this but are disquieted because of sin, he suggests that you can save yourself. He speaks of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus which flow close by your own door. He says, "Wash in these home streams and be clean. Stay where you are and help yourself." But if you listen to the words of the seducer of souls you are lost and undone forever! Can the man born blind see to operate upon his own scale-covered eyes so as to give himself sight? Can the crippled man run away from his lameness and outrun the feebleness of his feet? Can the dead man exert himself to make the life-tide flow once more in his veins and flush his cheek anew with the glow of health?

Can he call back his departed spirit from the shades of the unseen world and make it reoccupy its decaying habitation and bid the marks of the mighty consumer be gone and leave no trace of Death's conquest behind to remind the returning inhabitant that the palace had been occupied by the ruthless spoiler? We answer, no. A mighty finger must touch and open the eyes. An Omnipotent arm must lift up the paralyzed and impotent man into strength and power. And most evidently, if life is to be

secured, the voice of God alone can speak the word which shall make the dead live.

On this point we wish to be clearly understood. You will never, of yourself, successfully resist sin so as to escape its thralldom—much less can you remove its guilt! The cancer is in your blood and you can never get it out. The black deed is done and it is written, “The soul that sins shall die.” Oh, then at once ask help of Him who alone can save you from the wrath to come! Remember, poor feeble one, nothing is too hard for God and therefore ask almighty strength to come to your rescue.

It is true you cannot contend with your besetting sins—your passions, your corruptions of whatever sort they may be—are much too strong for you! Old Adam is too mighty for you with your best intentions. But there is a strong One, whose hand, once pierced, is always ready and at the service of every sinner who would have Satan cast out. There is One “mighty to save” who can come to the rescue and do for you what you cannot do for yourself! Oh that you had Christ tonight, so that at once you might cry to Him, “Jesus, save me! I see the fight is too great for me, I cannot drive out my sins, I cannot fight my way to Heaven! Come and help me, Lord Jesus! I put myself into Your hands! Wash me in Your blood! Fill me with Your Spirit! Save me with Your great salvation, and let me be with You where You are!”

“No man can save himself,” says one. Yet the case is very much like that of the master who sent his Negro servant with a letter. The Negro was rather lazy and came back with it. “Why did you not deliver it?” “I could not.” “Could not deliver it?” “No, Master.” “Why not?” “A deep river, Sir, very deep river, I could not get across.” “A deep river?” he said. “Yes.” “Is not there a ferryman there?” “Do not know, Sir. If there was, he was on the other side.” “Did you call across, ‘Boat, ahoy!’ ” “No, Sir.” “Why then, you rascal,” said he, “ what does it matter? It is no excuse. It is true, you could not get across the river, but then there was one there who could take you and you never cried to him.”

And so it is in your case. You say, “I cannot save myself.” Quite true. But there is One who can, and you have never cried to Him. Mark you—if you cry to Him—if your heart says, “Oh, Savior, come and save me!” And if your spirit rests in Him—deep as that river of your sin certainly is, He knows how to bear you safely through it and land you on the other shore. May He do that with each of you. With God all things are possible, though with man it is impossible. May the blessing of the Most High rest upon us this night for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE APPROACHABLENESS OF JESUS

NO. 809

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 3, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.”
Luke 15:1.*

THE MOST depraved and despised classes of society formed an inner ring of hearers around our Lord. I gather from this that He was a most approachable Person, that He was not of repulsive manners, but that He courted human confidence and was willing that men should commune with Him. Upon that one thought I shall enlarge, this evening, and may the Holy Spirit make it a loadstone to draw many hearts to Jesus.

Eastern monarchs affected great seclusion and were liable to surround themselves with impassable barriers of State. It was very difficult for even their most loyal subjects to approach them. You remember the case of Esther, who, though the monarch was her *husband*, yet went with her life in her hands when she ventured to present herself before the king Ahasuerus, for there was a commandment that none should come unto the king except they were called—at peril of their lives.

It is not so with the King of kings! His court is far more splendid! His Person is far more worshipful—but you may draw near to Him at all times without hindrance. He has set no men-at-arms around His palace gate. The door of His house of mercy is set wide open. Over the lintel of His palace gate is written, “For everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” Even in our own days great men are not readily to be come at. There are so many back stairs to be climbed before you can reach the official who might have helped you, so many subordinates to be parleyed with and servants to be passed by that there is no coming at your object.

The good men may be affable enough, themselves, but they remind us of the old Russian fable of the hospitable householder in a village who was willing enough to help all the poor who came to his door—but he kept so many big dogs loose in his yard that nobody was able to get up to the threshold—and therefore his personal affability was of no service to the wanderers.

It is not so with our Master. Though He is greater than the greatest and higher than the highest, He has been pleased to put out of the way everything which might keep the sinner from entering into His halls of gracious entertainment. From His lips we hear no threats against intrusion, but hundreds of invitations to the nearest and dearest intimacy. Jesus is to be approached, not now and then, but at *all times*, and not by some favored few, but by all in whose hearts His Holy Spirit has enkindled the desire to enter into His secret Presence.

The philosophical teachers of our Lord's day affected very great seclusion. They considered their teachings to be so profound and eclectic that they were not to be uttered in the hearing of the common multitude. "Far hence, you profane," was their scornful motto. Like Simon Stylites, they stood upon a lofty pillar of their fancied self-conceit and dropped down, now and then, a stray thought upon the vulgar herd beneath. But they did not condescend to talk familiarly with them, considering it to be a dishonor to their philosophy to communicate it to the multitude. One of the greatest philosophers wrote over his door, "Let no one who is ignorant of geometry enter here."

But our Lord, compared with whom all the wise men are but *fools*, who is, in fact, the Wisdom of God, never drove away a sinner because of his ignorance! He never refused a seeker because he was not yet initiated and had not any thirsty spirit to be chased away from the crystal spring of Divine Truth. His every word was a diamond and His lips dropped pearls—but He was never more at home than when speaking to the common people and teaching them concerning the Kingdom of God.

You may thus contrast and compare our Lord's gentle manners with those of kings, and nobles, and sages—but you shall find none to equal Him in condescending tenderness. To this attractive quality of our Lord I intend, this evening, as God shall help me, to ask your earnest attention. First, let us prove it. Secondly, illustrate it. And, thirdly, enforce or improve it.

I. First, let us PROVE THE APPROACHABLENESS OF CHRIST, though it really needs no proof, for it is a fact which lies upon the surface of His life.

1. You may see it conspicuously in His offices. Those offices are too many for us to take them all tonight. We will just cull a handful, say three. Our Lord Jesus is said to be the Mediator between God and man. Now, observe, that the office of Mediator implies at once that He should be approachable. A daysman, as Job says, is one who can put his hand upon both—but if Jesus will not familiarly put His hand on man, certainly He is no daysman between God and man! A mediator is not a mediator of *one*—he must be akin to both the parties between whom he mediates. If Jesus Christ shall be a perfect Mediator between God and man, He must be able to come to God so near that God shall call Him His Fellow and then He must approach to man so closely that He shall not be ashamed to call him Brother.

This is precisely the case with our Lord. Do think about this, you who are afraid of Jesus. He is a Mediator, and as a Mediator you may come to Him. Jacob's ladder reached from earth to Heaven, but if he had cut away half-a-dozen of the bottom rungs, what would have been the good of it? Who could ascend by it into the hill of the Lord? Jesus Christ is the great conjunction between earth and Heaven but if He will not touch the poor mortal man who comes to Him, why then, of what service is He to the sons of men?

You need a Mediator between your soul and God—you must not think of coming to God without a Mediator—but you do not need *any* mediator

between yourselves and *Christ*. There is a preparation for coming to God—you must not come to God without a perfect righteousness. But you may come to Jesus without any preparation and without any righteousness, because as Mediator He has in Himself all the righteousness and fitness that you require—and is ready to bestow them upon you! You may come boldly to Him even *now*—He waits to reconcile you unto God by His blood.

Another of His offices is that of Priest. That word “priest” has come to smell very badly nowadays, but, for all that, it is a very sweet word as we find it in Holy Scripture. The word “priest” does not mean a gaudily-dressed pretender who stands apart from other worshippers within the gate, two steps higher than the rest of the people, and professes to have power to dispense pardon for human sin, and I know not what beside! The true priest was truly the brother of all the people. There was no man in the whole camp so brotherly as Aaron. So much were Aaron and the priests who succeeded him the first points of contact with men, on God’s behalf, that when a leper had become too unclean for anybody else to draw near to him, the last man who touched him was the priest.

The house might be leprous, but the priest talked with him and examined him—the last of Israel’s tribes who might be familiar with the wretched outcast. And if afterwards that diseased man was cured, the first person who touched him must be a priest. “Go, show yourself to the priest,” was the command to every recovering leper. And until the priest had entered into fellowship with him and had given him a certificate of health, he could not be received into the Jewish camp. The priest was the true brother of the people. He was chosen from among themselves. He was at all times to be approached. He lived in their midst, in the very center of the camp, ready to make intercession for the sinful and the sorrowful.

So is it with our Lord. I read just now, in your hearing, that He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities and that He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Surely you will never doubt that if Jesus perfectly sustains the office of Priest, as He certainly does, He must be the most approachable of beings—approachable by the poor sinner who has given himself up to despair—whom only a Sacrifice can save. He must be approachable by the foul harlot who is put outside the camp, whom only the blood can cleanse. He must be approachable by the miserable thief who has to suffer the punishment of his crimes, whom only the great High Priest can absolve. No other man may care to touch you, O trembling Outcast, but Jesus will! You may be separated from all of humankind, justly and righteously by your iniquities, but you are not separated from that great Friend of sinners who at this very time is willing that publicans and sinners should draw near unto Him.

As a third office let me mention that the Lord Jesus is our Savior, but I see not how He can be a Savior unless He can be approached by those who need to be saved. The priest and the Levite passed by on the other side when the bleeding man lay in the road to Jericho. They were not saviors, therefore, and could not be. But he was the savior who came to know where the man was, stooped over him, and took wine and oil and poured

them into the gaping fissures of his wounds. He was the savior who lifted him up with tender love and set him on his own beast and led him to the inn. He was the true savior, and, O Sinner, Jesus Christ will come just where you are—and your wounds of sin, even though they are putrid—shall not drive Him away from you! His love shall overcome the nauseating offensiveness of your iniquity for He is able and willing to save such as you are!

I might mention many other of the offices of Christ, but these three will suffice. Certainly if the Spirit blesses them, you will be led to see that Jesus is not hard to reach.

2. Consider a few of His names and titles. Frequently Jesus is called the “Lamb.” Blessed name! I do not suppose there is anyone here who was ever afraid of a lamb! That little girl yonder, if she saw a lamb, would not be frightened. Every child seems almost instinctively to long to put its hand on the head of a lamb. O that you might come and put *your* hand on the head of Christ, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world—

***“Oh see how Jesus trusts Himself
Unto our childish love,
As though by His free ways with us
Our earnestness to prove!
His sacred name a common word
On earth He loves to hear;
There is no majesty in Him
Which love may not come near.”***

Again, you find Him called a Shepherd—no one is afraid of a shepherd. If you were traveling in the East, and you saw Bedouins or Turkish soldiery in the distance, you might be alarmed. But if someone said, “Oh, it is only a few shepherds,” you would not be afraid of them. The sheep are not at all timid when near the shepherd. O poor wandering Sheep, you, perhaps, have come to be afraid of Christ, but there is no reason why you should be, for this heavenly Shepherd says, “I will seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.”—

***“See Israel’s gentle Shepherd stands
With all engaging charms.”***

Timid, foolish, and wandering though you may be, there is nothing in the Good Shepherd to drive you away from Him, but everything to entice you to come to Him.

Then, again, He is called our Brother, and one always feels that he may approach his brother! I have no thought of trouble or distress which I would hesitate to communicate to my brother, here, for he is so good and kind. I do not think I could be in any trouble which I should not expect him to do his best to help me out of. I never feel that there is any distance between him and me, nor do you, I hope, feel so with regard to your brothers. Even so is it with this Brother born for adversity. Believer, how is it that you are sometimes so backward and so cold towards Jesus? Christ is approachable—

***“The light of love is round His feet,
His paths are never dim;***

***And He comes near to us when we
Dare not come near to Him."***

You need not think that your troubles are too trifling to bring to Him. He has an open ear for the little daily vexations of life. Brothers and Sisters, you can come to the good elder Brother at all hours—and when He blames you for coming, let me know.

He is called, too, a Friend. But He would be a very unfriendly Friend who could not be approached by those He professed to love. If my friend puts a hedge around himself and holds himself so very dignified that I may not speak with him, I would rather be without his friendship! But if he is a genuine friend, and I stand at his door knocking, he will say, "Come in, and welcome; what can I do for you?" Such a friend is Jesus Christ. He is to be met with by all needy, seeking hearts.

3. There is room enough for enlargement here, but I have no time to say more, therefore I will give you another plea. Remember His Person. The Person of our Lord Jesus Christ proclaims this truth with a trumpet voice. I say His *Person*, because He is Man, born of woman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ is God, but if He were God only, you might well stand at a distance and shudder at the splendor of His majesty. But He is *Man* as well as God, and so it comes to pass, as Dr. Watts puts it—

***"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins."***

When I see Christ in the manger where the horned ox fed, or hanging on a woman's breast, or obedient to His parents, or "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," a poor Man without a place where to lay His head, then I feel that I can freely come to Him.

Think of Him as being precisely such as *you* are, in all and everything except *sin* and then you will never have a thought that He will chide you for drawing near, or drive you away when you venture to supplicate Him. But I want especially to say to you that if you could but see my Master's Person as He was when here on earth, you would have henceforth and forever the thought that you might not come to Him expelled from your mind. I know not what may have been His beauties, or what may have been the appearance of His lovely Countenance—but of this I am persuaded—that if He could but come here tonight and I could vacate this platform for Him whose shoelace I am not worthy to unloose, you who groan under a sense of unworthiness would not run away!

If Moses stood here with his flaming countenance, you would shade your eyes, and ask that if you must look upon him he might wear a veil. But if Christ were here, oh, how you longing, seeking ones would gaze upon Him! There would be no drooping of the eyelids, no covering of the face, no alarm, no anguish—His face is too sweet for that! And if the Mas-

ter should walk down the aisles, the most timid of you would long to touch the hem of His garment and to kiss the floor where He had set His feet. I know you would not fear to look into that face! And then that voice! How you would be charmed, you poor trembling Seekers, if you heard Him say, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me."

You would discover such meekness and lowliness in Him that you would not *think* of starting back. Oh, if your eyes could but see Him I feel persuaded that, graciously drawn by His charms, your hearts would hasten to Him! Well, Believer, come to Him, come to Him! Come close to Him! Come with your troubles and tell Him all about them. Come with your sins and ask to have them washed away anew—

***"Let us be simple with Him, then,
Not backward, stiff, or cold,
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old."***

And you, poor trembling Sinner, come to Him! Come to Him *now*, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Oh, if your eyes were opened to behold Him, you would perceive that the glory of His Person lies not in the splendor which *repels*, but in the majesty which Divinely *attracts*!

4. If this suffices not, let me here remind you of the *language* of Christ. He proclaims His approachability in such words as these, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You rough-handed sons of toil, you smiths and carpenters, you plowers and diggers, come unto Me, yes, come all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And again, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." He *invites* men to come! He *pleads* with them to come!

And when they will not come He gently upbraids them with such words as these, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." And, again, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not." It is not "*I would not*," but, "*you would not*." Why, the whole of Scripture in its invitations may be said to be the language of Christ, and there you find loving, pleading words of this kind, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

All our blessed Lord's sermons were so many loving calls to poor aching hearts to come and find what they needed in Him. I pray that the Holy Spirit may give an effectual call to many of you tonight. It would gladden the heart of the Redeemer in the skies if you would come to Him for salvation! You may come since there is no barrier between you and the Savior of men. What is it that keeps you back? I repeat it with tears, what is it that keeps you back? The old proverb truly says that, "actions speak louder than words," and therefore let us review the general ways and manners of the Redeemer.

You may gather that He is the most approachable of persons from the actions of His life. He was always very busy, and busy about the most important of matters, and yet He never shut the door in the face of any applicant. Her Majesty's cabinet have to discuss most important *political* matters just now, but compared with the work which filled the Savior's hands and heart, their discussions are mere trifles. Our Master might well have claimed seclusion but He did not. He *sought* it but He found none, save only at midnight, when He watched and prayed. No sort of appeal for audience did Jesus frown upon.

There were certain mothers in the land, poor simple-minded women, and they took it into their heads one day that they would like to have the Master's hands put upon the heads of their little ones. So they came, bringing their boys and girls. But some of the disciples said, "The Master must not be disturbed by children. Go your ways, and take your children back." But what said Jesus? How different from His followers! He rebuked their harshness, and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." You see, He is a *child's* Friend. Dear young people, think of that! Jesus does not drive you away! Though He is so great and glorious that all the angels of God worship Him, yet He stoops to hear the prayers and praises of little children! Seek Him now, for those who seek Him early shall find Him.

Let me tell you another story. There was a woman in the city who was a sinner. You know the meaning, the dark sad meaning of that title in her case. I need not explain that. Poor Soul! Her sin had caused her to be despised and shunned by everyone, but she had been forgiven! And in gratitude she poured the precious ointment on her beloved Savior's feet, and then wiped them with the hairs of her head. And when the Pharisee Simon would have had her rebuked, the loving Master said, "She loves much because she has had much forgiven." He is approachable by all, then, even by the worst! Even the harlot need not fear to draw near to Him—His touch can make her pure.

I have noted one thing in Christ's life, and noted it with delight. Our Lord was always *preaching*, and He often grew weary, as we do. And therefore He needed a little retirement, but the multitude came breaking in upon His solitude, following Him on foot when He had sailed away to escape them. This was troublesome, and to us it would have been irritating, yet He never uttered an angry, fretful syllable. There was no rest for Him because of the eager crowd—but did He ever say, "How these people tease Me. How they worry Me"? No, never! His big heart made Him forget Himself. He was approachable to all at all hours—even his meals were disturbed, but he was gentle towards those thoughtless intruders. Not once was He harsh and repulsive. His whole life proves the truth of the prophecy, "The bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench." He graciously receives the weak and the feeble ones who come to Him, and sends none away empty.

6. But, if you want the crowning argument, look yonder. The Man who has lived a life of service at last dies a felon's death! Look upon His head girt with the crown of thorns! Mark well His cheeks from where they have

plucked off the hair! See the spit from those scornful mouths staining His marred countenance! Mark the crimson rivers which are flowing from His back where they have scourged Him! See His hands and His feet which are pierced with the nails, and from which rivers of blood are flowing! Look to that face so full of anguish! Listen to His cry, "I thirst, I thirst"! And as you see Him there expiring, can you think that He will spurn the seeker?

As you see Him turn His head and say to the dying thief by His side, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise," you dare not belie Him so much as to deem that *you* may not come to Him! You will outrage your reason if you start back from Jesus Crucified! The Cross of Christ should be the hope, the anchor of faith! You may come, Sinner, black, vile, hellish sinner—you may come and have life even as the dying thief had it when he said, "Lord, remember me."—

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One."

Surely you need not be afraid to come to Him who went to Calvary for sinners. Why linger? Why hesitate? Why those blushes, sobs, and tears?—

***"Why are you afraid to come,
And tell Him all your case?
He will not pronounce your doom,
Nor frown you from your face.
Will you fear Immanuel?
Or dread the Lamb of God,
Who, to save your soul from Hell,
Has shed His precious blood?"***

Did I hear a whisper? Did anybody say that Christ is now in Heaven, and that He may have changed? Ah, groundless insinuation! Do you know what He is doing in Heaven at this moment? He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. What a help that is to those who are coming to Him! This repentance is the greatest need of coming sinners and He from the skies supplies it! Moreover, "He ever lives to make intercession for us." His occupation in the skies is to plead for those sinners whom He redeemed with His blood, and therefore He is able to save them unto the uttermost. Since He is the Intercessor for souls, there is no reason why you should start back, but every reason why you should boldly come to the Throne of the heavenly Grace, because you have a High Priest who is passed into the heavens—

***"Compelled by bleeding love,
You wandering sheep draw near!
Christ calls you from above—
His charming accents hear!
Let whoever will, now come,
In mercy's breast there still is room."***

Here I leave this part of the subject. Some of you little know how heavily this sermon is hanging on my mind. I preach my very soul to you this night! I wish I knew how to preach so as to win some of you for my Lord this evening. I should be glad to go even to the school of affliction if I might learn to preach more successfully. But I can do no more. May the Eternal Spirit, in answer to the prayers of His people, which I hope are going up now, be pleased to make you feel the sweet attractions of the Cross

of Christ, and may you come to Him so that it may be said again tonight, "Then drew near unto Him publicans and sinners."

II. I now shall proceed, with as great brevity as I can command, TO ILLUSTRATE THIS GREAT TRUTH. I illustrate it, in the first place, by the way which Christ opens up for sinners to Himself. What is the way for a sinner to come to Christ? It is simply this—the sinner, feeling his need of a Savior—trusts himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the perplexity of my boyhood, but it is so simple now.

When I was told to go to Christ, I thought, "Yes, if I knew where He was, I would go to Him—no matter how I wearied myself I would trudge on till I found Him." I never could understand how I could get to Christ till I understood that it is a *mental* coming, a *spiritual* coming, a coming with the *mind*. The coming to Jesus which saves the soul is a simple *reliance* upon Him, and if, tonight, being sensible of your guilt, you will rely upon the atoning blood of Jesus, you have come to Him and you are saved! Is He not, then, approachable, indeed, if there is so simple a way of coming?

There are no good works, ceremonies, or experiences demanded—a child-like faith is the royal road to Jesus!

This Truth of God is further illustrated by the help which He gives to coming sinners in order to bring them near to Himself. He it is who first makes them coming sinners. It is His Eternal Spirit who draws them unto Himself. They would not come to Him of themselves. They are without desires towards Him, but it is His work to cast secret silken cords around their hearts which He draws with His strong hands and brings them near to Himself. Depend upon it, He will never refuse those whom He Himself draws by His Spirit!

Rest assured He will never shut the door in the face of any soul that comes to feed at the Gospel banquet, moved to approach by the power of His love. He said once, "Compel them to come in," but He never said, "Shut the door in their faces and bolt them out." I might further illustrate this to the children of God, by reminding you of the way in which you now commune with your Lord. How easy it is for you to reach His ear and His heart! A prayer, a sigh, a tear, a groan will admit you into the King's chambers. You may be in a very sad frame of mind, but when you come to Him, how soon He makes your soul like the chariots of Amminadab.

Dark may be your midnight, but as soon as you draw near to Him your night is over. "He gives liberally, and upbraids not." While He acts thus with you, the sinner may very well believe that He will receive him, too. The approachableness of Christ may also be seen in the fact of His receiving the poor offerings of His people. The very holiest deeds which you and I can do for Christ are poor and faulty at the best. As I sat studying at my table last night, there was before me a little withered flower—a sprig of wallflower—which has been lying for some weeks on my table. It comes from a very, very poor child of God, many miles away, who gets a blessing from reading my sermons. She has nothing in the world besides to give me, but she sends me this flower, and I value it because it is a token of Christian affection and gratitude.

So is it with our Master. The very best sermons that we preach, and the largest contributions we give to His treasury are only just like that poor little withered wallflower. But the Master puts our service in His bosom and keeps it there, and thinks much of it because He loves us. Does not that prove how generous, how condescending, how tender He must be? Believe Him to be so, you fearful souls, and come to Him. The ordinances wear upon their forefront the impress of an ever approachable Savior. Baptism in outward type sets forth our fellowship with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection—what can be nearer than this?

The Lord's Supper in visible *symbol* invites us to eat His flesh and drink His blood—this reveals to us most clearly how welcome we are to the most intimate communion with Jesus. The Heaven of heavens shall afford us yet another illustration. There are tens of thousands now in the skies who came to Jesus just as they were, in all the filth and carelessness of the lost estate—and He received every one of them into His heart of love and arms of power. There are many thousands on earth—there are some thousands now in this Tabernacle—who can testify that they have found Jesus to be a very tender and generous Friend.

Now, if He has received us, why should He not receive you? Be encouraged to believe that inasmuch as He has received others He has open arms for you, also. Let me joyfully remind you that Jesus never has rejected a seeking sinner. There is not to be found in all the kingdoms of the universe a single instance of a sincere seeker after Christ being cast away, and there never shall be, for He has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face in vain," but He has said, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." Beloved, if there had been a single soul cast away we should have known of it by now! It is 1868 years now, and if a solitary penitent had been rejected, we should have heard of it before now, for I will tell you of one who would have spread it abroad, and that is Satan!

If he could get a single instance of a soul who had repented and trusted Christ but found that Christ would have nothing to do with him, it would be a standing scandal against the Cross which Satan would delight to publish! I know, poor Sinners, what the devil will tell you when you are coming to Christ—he will describe Jesus as a hard master, but you tell him he is a liar from the beginning, and a murderer, and that he is trying to murder your soul by making you swallow his poisonous lies.

III. In the third place, we come TO ENFORCE THIS TRUTH, or, as the old Puritans used to say, *improve* it. The first enforcement I give is this—let those of us who are working for the Master in soul-winning, try to be like Christ in this matter, and not be, as some are apt to be—proud, stuck-up, distant, or formal. Oh, dear, dear! The lofty ministerial airs that one has seen assumed by men who ought to have been meek and lowly! What a grand set of men some of the preachers of the past age thought themselves to be! I trust those who played the archbishop have nearly all gone to Heaven, but a few linger among us who use little grace and much starch.

The grand divines never shook hands with anybody, except, indeed, with the deacons and a little knot of evidently superior persons. Among

Dissenters it was almost as bad as it is in most Church congregations where you feel that the good man, by his manner, is always saying, "I hope you know who I am, Sir. I am the rector of the parish." Now, all that kind of stuck-upishness is altogether wrong. No man can do good in that way—and no good at all comes of assuming superiority and distance. The best teacher for boys is the man who can make himself a boy. And the best teacher for girls is the woman who can make herself a girl among girls.

I often regret that I have so large a congregation. You will say, "Why?" Why, when I had a smaller congregation at Park Street, there were too many even then, but I did get a shake of the hand sometimes. But now there are so many of you that I scarcely know you, good memory as I have, and I seldom have the pleasure of shaking hands with you—I wish I did. If there is anybody in the wide world whose good I wish to promote, it is yours! Therefore I wish to be at home with you. And if ever I should affect the airs of a great man, and set myself above you all—and separate myself by proud manners from your sympathy—I hope the Lord will take me down and make me right again. We may expect souls to be saved when we do as Christ did, namely, get *publicans* and *sinner*s to draw near to us.

Now, that is a practical point which, though you have smiled about it, will not, I hope, be forgotten by you. There is this to be said to you who are unconverted—if Jesus Christ is so approachable, oh, how I wish—how I wish that you would approach Him! There are no bolts upon His doors, no barred iron gates to pass, no big dogs to keep you back. If Christ is so approachable by all needy ones, then needy One, come, and welcome! Come just now! What is it that keeps you back?

You think that you do not *feel* your need enough, or that you are not *fit* to come—both of which suspicions are self-righteousness in different shapes. O that you did but know your need of Jesus—in order to be able, even—to do so much as *feel* your need! You are a poor, miserable bankrupt before God, and Christ alone can enrich you! Do not talk of fitness—there is no such thing—

***"All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him:
This He gives you;
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."***

Come, then! There is such mercy to be had! There is such a Hell to be escaped from! There is such a Heaven to be opened for you! Delay not, but believe at once. Come, come, come!—

***"Come, and welcome!
Come, and welcome,
Sinner, come!"***

I stand at Mercy's door tonight and say to every passerby in the name of the Master, "My oxen and fatlings are killed. Come, come, come to the supper!" O that you would come this very night! Some of us are coming to the Lord's Table to celebrate His love because we have first come to Himself. I do not ask you who are not saved to come to that table—you ought *not* to come. You must first come to *Jesus*—and then you may come to

this ordinance. Meanwhile, the best thing you can do is to come to Christ. And let me ask you to remember this, that in proportion as Christ is accessible, so your guilt will be increased if you do not come to Him! If it is easy to come to Him, what excuse can there be for you if you refuse to accept Him?

I have tried to tell you what the way of salvation is. If I knew how to use better language, or even coarser language, if that would suit you, it should be alike to me if I might but touch your consciences, break your hearts, and bring you to Christ. But I protest before you that if you will not come to my Master I can do no more. I shall be clear of your blood at the last, and in the Day of Judgment your ruin must be upon your own heads. But let it not be so! Jesus bids you come! O you needy ones—let your need impel you to come at once that you may find eternal life in Him!

The last word is—if Jesus is such a Savior as we have described Him, let saints and sinners join to praise Him! How marvelous that our dear Lord should be so condescending to us unworthy ones as to come all the way from Heaven to earth for us! Oh, matchless love that made Him stoop to grief and death! Oh, unspeakable condescension, to come thus to poor sinners' hearts bearing mercies in both His hands, and freely giving them to undeserving rebels! For this unspeakable Grace let us praise Him!

You who are coming to His table, draw near with praises in your mouths! Come praising the condescending love in which you have participated and which has saved you from eternal death! Even you who sit as spectators, I do trust will have your minds filled with grateful thoughts—

***“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill
He receives poor sinners still.”***

Blessed be His name, world without end! Amen.

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CHRIST AND HIS HEARERS

NO. 3410

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“Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him, and the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”
Luke 15:1, 2.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS always seeks to blame others and to whitewash itself. The group that stood nearest to Christ in preaching was composed of two classes of persons—the publicans, or tax-gatherers and the open sinners. Now the Pharisee, when he came to speak of these two classes, called them by one name, lumping them all under one description and calling them all sinners. Now, although the publicans, or tax-gatherers, were very generally taken from the lowest class of Jews, and their calling of tax-gathering, never in itself, too popular, was in their particular case very objectionable, yet we have no reason to believe that all tax-gatherers were necessarily profane, or licentious, or dishonest. There were bad and good among those Jewish tax-gatherers, as well as among all other classes of mankind! Yet, because they were looked upon as being of the lowest class, the Pharisee spoke of them as if they were all “sinners.” This is a common habit, I am afraid, with the Too-Goods—with those who have never felt their own sinfulness, to always use the worst names they can and to put as bad a color as they can upon the characters of other men. I wish we had learned to do the very reverse, namely, to try to see all the good we can in our fellow creatures, which were far more like Christ, rather than to condemn them wholesale, and impute the faults of some to a whole class. The Holy Spirit here speaks of “publicans *and* sinners”—the evil spirit in the Pharisee calls them all sinners. Let us imitate the Spirit of God and not the spirit of pride.

But I said that self-righteousness tries to whitewash itself, for did not these Pharisees, when they murmured that Christ received sinners, intend to say that as He did receive *them*, they were *not* sinners? No, they would not have blushed, for they were rather honest in their self-righteousness—perhaps more honest than we are—they would not have blushed to have said, “We have thanked God that we are not as the publicans, and not as the sinners.” They did not reckon themselves as belonging to the class of offenders and breakers of the Law of God. They were holy! They were the separated ones! They were a peculiar people,

zealous for good works after their own estimation, though not in the sight of God. Alas, how easy it is for us to try to make ourselves appear to be better than we really are! We are full of sin—our nature is deceitful and vile, and yet we try to draw up a good balance sheet, if we can, of our spiritual trading! We represent that to be sound which is rotten, and that to be accepted which is dishonored. Oh that we could but see ourselves as God sees us! We would never again, then, dare even to *think* a good thought of ourselves out of Christ, but abhorring ourselves in dust and ashes, we would wrap His righteousness about us! We would plunge into the crimson fountain of His blood and never hope to be accepted except in the Beloved! May God grant us Grace to beware of the least touch of self-righteousness, for it is evil, only evil and that continually! May we always be as timid as the publican who stood afar off and dared not even lift up his eyes to Heaven, rather than be as censorious and presumptuous as the Pharisee, whose sole prayer consisted in flattering himself that he was better than others.

Having thus introduced to you the Pharisees, the publicans and the sinners, let us now come to the text, itself, and observe that publicans and sinners were attracted to the ministry of Christ. The first question at this time shall be—*what attracted them?* Then secondly, *what in the Gospel should attract us?* And thirdly, *what came of their being attracted, and what comes to us, also, of our being attracted by the Gospel?*

First, then, it seems that when Christ preached, He was surrounded by a number of persons of very loose character, and others of the lowest calling who pressed to Him to hear Him.

I. WHY DID CHRIST'S HEARERS COME?

They were genuine hearers—it was a *bona fide* audience. I mean by that, that they were not like the crowds who followed Christ up the mountain—who followed not to hear Him, but to eat of the loaves and the fishes. These publicans and sinners were not thinking of the loaves and fishes. They were none of those who, like the old people in some parishes, go to Church in order to get the loaf of bread on the Sunday morning. They were real, *bona fide* hearers, who really went to hear. They were a genuine, earnest, and honest audience—and they pressed around Him to listen to Him. Why did they do this?

I will tell you why they did *not*. *They certainly were not attracted to Christ by any ceremonialism which Christ used, or any kind of pomp or show of priestcraft in His dress.* It is said that the working classes do not attend places of worship because we do not dress ourselves in white, and blue, and green, and I do not know what other colors besides—in other words, because we do not make fools of ourselves! It is said that people will not come to hear us because of this, but our Lord Jesus Christ never put on anything like a priestly vestment in His life! The common dress in which He robed Himself was “a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout,” or rather, the usual dress of the East. There was nothing whatever in His garb that was distinctive. John the Baptist, it is true,

put on prophetic robes—the rough robe of hair-skin and some have used that same rough garment to deceive, but Christ was perfectly a Man among men. I may venture to say that whoever else was a clergyman, Jesus Christ was not, and whoever else was a priest, as one of a priestly caste set apart from the people, He was none. He was just a Man among men. He ate as they ate, and drank as they drank. He toiled as other carpenters have done in the carpenter's shop, and when He came to speak in public, He spoke like one of the people. His authority was not derived from His robes! He had not to step into the vestry and put on His garments to get His dignity. His dignity was in the Man, Himself, in the Spirit that filled the Man. That which attracted people to Him was certainly nothing external and had nothing to do with milliner's shops, but was something far other than that.

Again, the publicans and sinners certainly did not come to Christ to hear Him *because of His laborious reasoning*. The working classes of London, we are told, if they are ever to be brought to places of worship, need that we should argue with them, and prove to them the existence of God, the Divinity of Christ, the truth of the Bible and all such things—and they are not led by our dogmatism! That is the statement that is made. I believe it to be as false as those who say it is impertinent. I do not find our Savior ever trying to prove that there is a God. I do not find Him standing up and continually apologizing! His mode of address is, in the strongest sense, and I grant you in a sense far above what you and I could claim to adopt, dogmatic! “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” That is His argument. “I testify what I do know, and what I have seen of the Father,” and He bears witness to the Truths of God with a full, down-right certainty which does not admit of a doubt! True, He has an answer for the Sadducees, but it is curt, sharp and decisive. And He goes on His way to preach His own Gospel, which is evidently His delight and His forte. No, if publicans and sinners came to Christ, they did not come to Him to be amazed with the display of intellect or to be dazzled with the remarkably judicious manner in which He would handle a debate! They came for some other reason than that.

Again, if they came to Jesus Christ, they certainly did not come *because of His trimming Doctrines*. He was not one who excused sin, or who made it out to be a weakness, incidental to human nature. No, He denounced sin in the most burning terms! They did not come to Him because He was one who preached smooth things with regard to the punishment of sin. No, my Brothers and Sisters, of all the preachers that ever lived, none ever preached on the wrath of God in such terrible terms as Jesus Christ, Himself! Though He was full of tenderness and full of love, yet you hear Him speak of the worm that never dies, and of the fire that never shall be quenched! He loved men's souls too well to make them think that sin was a trifle! He loved them too well to let them run the risk of everlasting woe without warning them of it in the plainest

terms. No, if any sat at Jesus' feet to learn of Him, it was not because their conscience remained unmolested and they were lulled by siren strains into a deadly sleep! His spirit-stirring words must often have sent bolts right through and through their consciences! They did not, therefore, go because He used fair speech and so amused the people, and lulled them to sleep in sin!

Once more, if the publicans and sinners listened to Christ in crowds, *it was not because of His vehement gesticulation or His declamation.* He was not a preacher who was at all given to the stamping of the foot. "He shall not strive, nor cry, nor His voice be heard in the streets." The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench. He opened His mouth and spoke, and He spoke with matchless oratory, for "never man spoke like that Man." But it was all simple and plain. You see no traces of logic. There are no signs of rhetoric. You do not catch Him for a moment, as it were, seeking so to awaken the emotions as to ignore the intellect, and so to stir the passions as if men were only children to the frightened or to be cajoled. He speaks to them as men! He appeals to their entire nature and while the Truths He utters are full of pathos that stir the very depths of the soul, yet are they gentle and quiet, and His speech distils as the dew and drops as the rain. Let none think that they can win a congregation by the mere force of gesticulation. Jesus did not so.

What then, was it that attracted these people? They were not generally sermon-hearers. Look at that fellow, there with his ink bottle. He will look up the Jew that has forgotten to pay his tribute to Caesar. He is very quick about that, but he is not a man who is at all likely to attend theological discussions. Do you see that villain, there, with the low forehead? Why, I do believe he is the very man who was tried and who only escaped with his life upon a doubtful point at the last Passover! And there is that woman—oh, yes, there can be no doubt about *her* character! You know her, and what she is. Do you see them there? They are all listening, not with their ears, only, but with their very eyes and mouths they are drinking in every word that Man is saying as He talks to them about the lost sheep and the lost son. What is it that enralls them? What are the golden chains that come from His mouth and hold these by their ears? What can the secret be? I think it lay partly in this, *that He was a Man awfully in earnest.* As they looked up to Him, they all felt that He was a real Man. The Pharisees were starched with decorum and full of affectation. These people were too simpleminded, though wicked, to believe in the Scribes and Pharisees—and so they went their way to their own haunts and never regarded their teaching. But with half an eye, they could see standing there a Man unaffected, sincere and in earnest, who was speaking of something which He, Himself, believed, and speaking it with power and force because He felt it in His soul! Oh, never was there such an earnest preacher as the Master! No idle word has He to give account of! No words to recollect that lack results because they came not

fresh from the Speaker's heart! All He speaks is to the point and all of it came deep from His heart's inmost self. This drew the people to Him.

They were attracted, too, no doubt, *because He honestly touched their consciences*. It would be supposed, my Brothers and Sisters, that the very intelligent, wise, rational and seemly Doctrine of Unitarianism, as we are commonly told it is, would everywhere be attended by crowds—but there are scarcely any places in which that Doctrine is preached in which you might not catch any number of spiders, and study the whole science of entomology as far as these interesting creatures are concerned! How is this? Why, as one said, once, “The people know in their hearts somehow or other, I cannot tell how, that this that you preach is not true. Although it looks so well and so rational, and seems to flatter them so much, yet they do not come to hear it, for in their hearts they know it is not true.” It is a strange thing that if the old evangelical Doctrines should appear for one moment to be beaten in a debate, they always conquer in results. I shall defy any man to maintain a Church prosperously, or to keep up a denomination which is built upon unsound Doctrine with anything like prosperity during a term of years. The bubble shines and glitters, but it is too thin to last, and it goes. Now, after all, the worst men like to hear a preacher who will dash at their consciences, who will tell them what they, in their inner selves, know to be true! And as Jesus Christ never flinched from this, but told them just what was fact, the people delighted to gather round Him and to listen to His speech.

Moreover, and I doubt not that this was the great charm *they perceived—that He intensely loved them*, that He did not preach the Truths of God merely that it might cause philosophic speculation and because He was highly pleased to teach it, but because He wanted that Truth to raise, to bless, to comfort, to save them and to make them happy. The Pharisee, if he ever spoke to a publican or a sinner, would do it with a long space between them, gathering up his robes for fear of contagion, looking down upon the sinner as though the teacher were so much above the taught. But Christ came right among them, and was one of them—and He looked as if He would do anything for them if He might but deliver them from their sins. They knew this, and it was this mighty charm that embraced them and made them linger till the voice had done, and then carry away the echoes of those loving tones in their memories for many a day afterwards.

Besides that, I doubt not that another charm of Christ's preaching lay in this, *that He always preached Doctrine that was hopeful to them*. While He said, “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees,” He had loving words for weary and heavy-laden ones. While He denounced self-righteousness, He would turn round and say, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” If He ever had a frown upon His brow, it was for the hypocrite and the proud man, but He had tears for sinners, He had loving

invitations for penitent ones. Like a good physician, He sought out morally sick folk and sought to restore them to spiritual health. This it was, also, that helped to attract them to Christ.

Now, my dear Hearers, I believe that if you would tell me your characters, I could tell you whether, if Jesus Christ were here now, you would be likely, habitually, to hear Him or not. If you are a very excellent person who never did anything wrong. If you feel yourself a deal above most people. If you have a proper sense of your own dignity, and if you are much impressed with your own importance, I believe that you would have murmured at Christ. And I am quite sure that you would not have been in the throng that drew near to hear Him. But if you are sensible that you have been guilty. If you confess that you have broken God's Law. If you are anxious to be forgiven, or if you are conscious that you *are* forgiven, but still need to be daily washed, to be daily kept, to be daily dealt with in tenderness and love—oh, you are the men and women who would have made a bodyguard about that Prince of Preachers, for as surely as His Doctrine was meant for you as the rain comes down upon the mown grass, so was your state of mind meant for the Gospel! And you and the Savior would be quite sure to stand in near and proper relationship to one another!

But we cannot linger, and must pass on, now, to the second point—

II. WHAT IS THERE IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST THAT DOES NOT ATTRACT SOME OF US, BUT OUGHT TO ATTRACT US ALL?

Very briefly, there is this in the Gospel that attracts my soul and I will speak for others. Ever since we fell out with God through sin, the thought of God has been dreadful to us. We have been afraid of Him. But Jesus Christ is God and He has taken upon Himself our manhood. And now He tells us *that we may come to God through Him*—in fact, that if we come to Him, when we have seen Him, we have seen the Father! Now, as I want to be one with God, and yet shudder at the thought of coming to Him, my soul burns with fervent affection towards Christ! And when I see that I can come to God so safely and so sweetly by coming through Him, that attracts me.

Next, ever since we were awakened to a sense of what sin is, sin has been a great burden to us. We have offended against God, and we know it. Oh, that this offense could be blotted out! Now, Jesus Christ comes and shows that, altogether without a violation of justice, *God can put away all our sins as if they had never been!* The Gospel tells us that Christ becomes a Substitute for us, that He was punished instead of all those who believe in Him, so that the Law takes effect, Justice is satisfied and yet God is gracious. I know when I first learned that Truth of God, my heart was ravished with it. I have read books, sometimes, that have kept me up at night to read them, or I have got hold of ideas that have almost made me dance when I have got them—but that old idea of Substitution—oh, Sirs, it was the brightest day I ever lived when I learned that—that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all! You know, an

awakened conscience cannot play with sin as some of you do and imagine that God can easily forgive sin—but when the conscience is awakened, it feels that God cannot forgive sin without exacting the punishment that is due to sin! Then there comes in to meet this difficulty the fact that Christ is punished in the place of the Believer—that God is just, and yet the Justifier of him that believes. Here is another precious Truth that has attracted many of us to Christ. I pray God that it may attract many others to Him. Here is the way of pardoned sin and here is the way of access to God!

Brothers and Sisters, we feel in ourselves so many inabilities, we cannot do anything right! We feel that we cannot pray. There are times when, if we gave a world for it, we cannot shed a tear, when we cannot make our hard hearts melt, cannot get repentance out of these dry souls! Oh, but then this attracts me to Christ, *to find that He can give me all Grace*—that in Him all fullness dwells, that His Spirit helps our infirmities and that just as I am—wounded, broken, sin-sick, hard, cold and dead—Christ comes and meets my case! Oh, how this ought to attract us to Christ!

And then oftentimes the fear comes up to every awakened man—“Shall I hold on? If I begin to be a Christian, shall I hold out to the end? Will not temptation yet lead me astray?” Then Christ comes in and says, “*Because I live, you shall live also. I give unto My sheep, eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands.*” Oh, Savior, this is a silken bond to draw us to Yourself! Was there ever a greater attraction than this—all safe in Christ! The lambs of the flock, the weakest ones, all safe! The man of imperious passions, the man with once imperious lusts—all safe when once they put themselves in the hands of Christ! Then can we all say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day.” But the thought comes over us sometimes, “Ah, but what will it be to die?” That hour of death—how grim it looks! And, indeed, it never is child’s play to die—to pass into the unknown and the invisible! The naked spirit—to leave the body behind—is to become food for worms. The bravest man may well turn pale here! But oh, the attraction of Christ is, “*He that believes in Me shall never die. Though he were dead, yet shall he live.*” Oh, the thought of resurrection! The thought that death is changed, no longer to be a penal sentence, but to be merely an entrance into Heaven! The thought that—

***“Jesus will make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast we lean our head
And breathe our life out sweetly there.”***

The thought that He will come and meet us, and that our spirits, side by side with His, shall pass through the iron gate with a song upon our lips, and fear no terror as we pass by the gates of the grave! My Brothers and Sisters, this woos us to Christ! This holds us to Christ! This charms and

fascinates us! This is a faith that well sustains us, that blots out the past, that brightens the present and lights up the future with the expectation of the glory to be revealed!

My Hearer, if you have never had Christ, do you not desire Him? Man, if Christ is yours, Heaven is yours. Man, if you believe in Christ, this night, your transgressions shall be forgiven you! You shall become a child of God, an heir of immortality! Do you not need a Savior? Will you not ask for one? Oh, yield you, yield you now to Him who was given for you, who round you now, the cords of His love would cast, binding you fast to His altar! God grant in His Infinite Mercy that the attractions of the Gospel may be known to us all! And now, in the last place—

III. WHAT CAME OF IT?

Those who were attracted first to hear were, according to the second verse, still further blessed. The Pharisees said, not—“This Man preaches to sinners,” but, “*This Man receives sinners and eats with them.*” It is a great blessing when the Gospel is preached to sinners, but oh, it is a far greater blessing when sinners are received, when sinners come to eat with Christ. The Pharisees left out what they ought to have mentioned, that when Christ received sinners, He did not leave them sinners. It is no disgrace to say of a certain doctor in London, “Why, it is said that that doctor has had some of the most horrible cases in London. I saw one man, there, with a dreadful cancer. Another was taken in that was subject to epilepsy. I saw one with a leprosy taken into that physician’s house.” Is that any disgrace to the physician? Why, Sir, the thing is how did they come out? What were they after his skill had been exerted upon them? What they were when they went into the hospital is no disgrace to the hospital—it may even reflect honor upon the wisdom of those who exercised their skill within it. So that Christ receives sinners is true, but He first makes them penitent sinners! He makes them believing sinners! He changes their nature! He turns the lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove—and then when He has done this, when He has washed away their sins and changed their natures—He receives them to be His friends! None are so near to Christ as blood-washed sinners! He receives them to be His disciples! None could sit at His feet but those who first have been washed in His blood. Then He receives them as His servants. None can serve Him who have not first been served by Him. Then He receives these sinners to be His advocates. He sends them out to preach His Gospel, but He never sends any out to preach the Gospel unless, first of all, they have received Him into their hearts as the Gospel of their salvation. “This Man receives sinners.”

Oh, I wish that tonight the Lord would find the biggest sinner in the Tabernacle! I might say, if there were such a person present, one commonly known to be the biggest blackguard in the parish, I wish the Lord would light on just such an one, for the raw material for a great saint is often a great sinner! When the devil wanted to make the biggest sinner that ever lived, he took an Apostle to be the raw material, namely, Judas,

and made him the son of perdition. But when Christ wanted the greatest of preachers, and the best of all the Apostles, He went right into the devil's camp and laid hold of Saul of Tarsus—and made him become Paul, the mighty winner of souls! "This Man receives sinners." The thief, the drunkard, the harlot—He still receives them! He washes them, changes them, takes them into His society, lifts them up—takes the beggar from the dunghill and makes him sit among princes. Oh, mighty Master, do this deed of Grace again and though the Pharisees will murmur and the proud may still slander Your name, we who are sinners, too, will clap our hands for very joy and bless Your love and adore Your Grace, world without end! "This Man receives sinners."

And then they said, "*And eats with them.*" Yes, in a mystical sense you will see that done again tonight, for here is the TABLE, the Lord's Table, peculiarly so, and to that Table let no man come who has never been a sinner, for he will not be welcome! Let no man come who has not felt himself to be a sinner, for he will not be welcome. If there is a man that is rich in good things and that is full of good things, let him not come, for, "He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty." If there is a handmaiden here of low estate and humble mind, let her come, for He has remembered the low estate of His handmaiden. But if there are any that are great and mighty, and exalted in their own estimation, let them stand aside and hear Him say, "He has put down the mighty from their seat, and He has exalted them of low degree." Here is a Table spread for sinners, sinners blood-washed, but still sinners. I often feel, my Brothers and Sisters, as if I could not come to the Cross anyway but as a sinner. I think I told you this parable once. Once there was a great king who used to have a table spread every day, and there were two sorts of persons who had a right to come there. All round the king, on his right and left, sat the princes of the blood and the nobles of the highest rank. They came in their robes of state and there they sat, and they were welcome. At the other end of the table, the king in his bounty had bidden his chamberlain every day spread many dainty dishes for beggars, and if there were any in the city at any time who were foot sore, who were houseless and homeless, ragged and hungry, the notice was given that anyone who could plead abject poverty might come to the king's table. Now, it so happened once on a time that a prince of the blood had lost, as he thought, the deeds of his estate. Moreover, he had lost the register of his birth and he was afraid that all that he had ever possessed had never been rightly his own. Perhaps he was some changeling child, he said, for such things had been. Perhaps his estates were not his own, and as the time came round for the feast, he felt as if he did not dare put on his robes lest he should be shown to be an impostor. But then it flashed across his mind, "If I have been an impostor up till now, and I am not the son of my reputed father. If the estates and the rich gems I have, are not mine, then I am a poor beggar and I have not any-

thing.” So he took off his fine garments and found some common dress that had been laid aside. “I must sit at the king’s table somewhere,” he said, “and if I cannot go as a prince, I will go as a beggar and so, one way or the other I will eat of his banquet.” Brothers and Sisters, I have often had to do that, and I would advise you to do it whenever your doubts and fears come across you. If Jesus Christ cannot receive you and you cannot come to Him as a saint or as a child of God, remember, that “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” Come with all your sins! Come, I say, and you cannot be cast out!

Many years ago the shaft of a mine was blocked up by some falling earth, and there was no chance of the miners’ escape. They gathered themselves together and held a Prayer Meeting in expectation of a speedy death, for it did not seem probable that they would ever be able to get out by the shaft, which was so thoroughly destroyed. While they were in prayer, a happy thought struck one of the older miners. He had heard that there was an old shaft which led into another mine, which had been given up, and he said he would go first and perhaps they might be able, by going through some old passages, to come out into the old mine. He knew from what he had heard his father say, that much of it was very low, and water dripped into it, and that in some places they would have to keep on all fours. But for all that, he said, it would not matter so long as they could but get to the daylight again. They could not go up the regular shaft, but away they went, creeping down the back ways, all through the mire, mud, and filth, and dirt and darkness—but they came to the light at last and all came up safe to their homes again.

Now, sometimes when I can look straight up to my Lord, I know that I am His child. I do tonight, and I can rejoice to go up and down the shaft straight ahead. But, Brothers and Sisters, if ever you cannot do that, there is an old working, there is an old way, the way that all the saints have gone. You will have to go on your hands and knees. You will have to go on all fours. You will find it flooded with tears of repentance, but never mind, the devil himself cannot block up that way. If you cannot come as a saint, come as a sinner! If you have got no Grace, you can get Grace. If you cannot come with a tender heart, come *for* a tender heart. If you cannot come with faith, come to get faith, for “this Man receives sinners and eats with them.” May this Blessed Man come and eat with us tonight!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15:11-32.**

Verses 11-13. *And He said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. It was an act*

of ingratitude to leave his father at all—an act of extreme folly to turn his father's goods to ill-account.

14. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in need.* And the sinner's greatest all will be spent one day! The pleasures of sin are but for a season. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will one day crack. The flowers that grow in man's garden will one day fade—man may think he has an eternity of pleasure before him, but if he is looking to the flesh for it, it shall be but for an hour.

15. *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country. And he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* At the very best, the comforts of this world are ignominious to a man. They degrade him—as it was a very degrading employment for a Jew to feed swine—so the comfort the world can give to a man does but degrade his noble spirit.

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, but no man gave unto him.* The prodigal cannot be brought any lower! He is made to herd with the swine, and he envies even them because they are satisfied with the husks! He cannot eat of the same and, therefore, he envies even the brutes! Surely, when a sinner becomes fully convinced of sin, he may well envy even the sparrows or the serpents because they have not sinned!

17-20. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose, and went to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.* Remember Matthew Henry's paraphrase?—Here were eyes of mercy.

20. *And had compassion*—Here was a heart of mercy.

20. *And ran*—Here were legs of mercy.

20. *And fell on his neck*—Here were deeds of mercy.

20. *And kissed him*—And here were lips of mercy.

21-22. *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in your sight and am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants*—Here were words of mercy, wonders of mercy and, indeed, it is all mercy throughout!

22-25. *Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring here the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: For this, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field.* That is where these over-good elder sons always are—they are out at work—they are not at home in communion with God! They are in the field! Do not ask who the elder brother was—he is here tonight—there is many an envious moralist—yes, and an envious professor, too, who feels it hard that profligate offenders should be pardoned!

25-27. *And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Your brother is come; and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry.* He did not want the fatted calf killed! If this reprobate brother were allowed to come in at the back door and to eat with the servants, he thought that quite good enough, but for this rebel to be put upon an equality with himself—he could not bear that!

28. *And would not go in: therefore came his father out and entreated him.* See the tenderness of this father? The same arms which embraced the sinning one, were also ready to clasp the self-righteous one! I always feel great pity and great admiration for this dear, dear father. What with a bad son and a good son, he had two bad sons, for this good son, you see, had got in a pet just as I have seen some real Christians get into a very un-Christian frame of mind! Well, they do not like, somehow, receiving into their company the women who have gone astray—the men who have lost their reputation. He was angry and would not go in—and now his father crowned his love. He ran to meet one son and now he comes out to reason with another who is unnaturally and ungraciously angry with him.

29. *And he, answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.* I know the brother. He says, “I have been a consistent Christian. I have been diligent in the service of God. I have abounded in prayer and yet all the daylong have I been plagued and chastened every morning. I do not get much joy—I have such a sight and sense of temptation and sin that I am generally low spirited. I seldom get a drop of full assurance. I never get a kid given me, that I might make merry with my friends.” Those who are under the Law never do make merry. You never knew a man yet that was trying to save himself by keeping the Commandments of God that could dare to make merry. No, they have to draw long faces, and well they may, for they have a long task before them! They put on a garb of sadness, being of a sad countenance, as the hypocrites are!

31, 32 *But as soon as this, your son, was come, who has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf. And he said, to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for this, your brother, was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found.* And so, dear Friends, there is more joy over the prodigal when he returns, than over the man who thinks he never has been astray!

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

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

THE SYMPATHY OF THE TWO WORLDS

NO. 203

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 4, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.
AT THE MUSIC HALL ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.”
Luke 15:10.***

MAN’S heart is never big enough to hold either its joys or its sorrows. You never heard of a man whose heart was exactly full of sorrow. For no sooner is it full, than it overflows. The first prompting of the soul is to tell its sorrow to another. The reason is that our heart is not large enough to hold our grief. And we need to have another heart to receive a portion thereof. It is even so with our joy. When the heart is full of joy, it always allows its joy to escape. It is like the fountain in the marketplace—whenever it is full it runs away in streams and so soon as it ceases to overflow, you may be quite sure that it has ceased to be full. The only full heart is the overflowing heart.

You know this, Beloved—you have proved it to be true. For when your soul has been full of joy, you have first called together your own kindred and friends and you have communicated to them the cause of your gladness. And when those vessels have been full even to the brim, you have been like the woman who borrowed empty vessels of her neighbors, for you have asked each of them to become partakers in your joy and when the hearts of all your neighbors have been full, you have felt as if they were not large enough and the whole world has been called upon to join in your praise.

You bade the fathomless ocean drink in your joy. You spoke to the trees and bade them clap their hands, while the mountains and hills were invoked by you to break forth into singing. The very stars of Heaven seemed to look down upon you and you bade them sing for you and all the world was full of music through the music that was in your heart. And after all, what is man but the great musician of the world? The universe is a great organ with mighty pipes. Space, time, eternity, are like the throats of this great organ. And man, a little creature, puts his fingers on the keys and wakes the universe to thunders of harmony, stirring up the whole creation to mighty acclamations of praise. Don’t you know that man is God’s high priest in the universe? All things else are but the sacrifice. But he is the priest—carrying in his heart the fire and in his hand the wood and in his

mouth the two-edged sword of dedication with which he offers up all things to God.

But I have no doubt, Beloved, the thought has sometimes struck us that our praise does not go far enough. We seem as if we dwelt in an isle cut off from the mainland. This world, like a fair planet, swims in a sea of ether unnavigated by mortal ship. We have sometimes thought that surely our praise was confined to the shores of this poor narrow world—that it was impossible for us to pull the ropes which might ring the bells of Heaven—that we could by no means whatever reach our hands so high as to sweep the celestial chords of angelic harps. We have said to ourselves there is no connection between earth and Heaven.

A huge black wall divides us. A strait of unnavigable waters shuts us out. Our prayers cannot reach to Heaven, neither can our praises affect the celestials. Let us learn from our text how mistaken we are. We are, after all, however much we seem to be shut out from Heaven and from the great universe but a province of God's vast united empire and what is done on earth is known in Heaven. What is sung on earth is sung in Heaven. And there is a sense in which it is true that the tears of earth are wept again in Paradise and the sorrows of mankind are felt again, even on the Throne of the Most High.

My text tells us, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repents." It seems as if it showed me a bridge by which I might cross over into eternity. It does, as it were, exhibit to me certain magnetic wires which convey the intelligence of what is done here to spirits in another world. It teaches me that there is a real and wonderful connection between this lower world and that which is beyond the skies, where God dwells, in the land of the happy.

We shall talk about that subject a little this morning. My first head will be *the sympathy of the world above with the world below*. The second, *the judgment of the angels*—they rejoice over repenting sinners. We shall see what is their ground for so doing. The third, will be *a lesson for the saints*—if the angels in Heaven rejoice over repenting sinners, so should we.

I. In the first place, our text teaches us **THE SYMPATHY OF THE TWO WORLDS**. Imagine not, O Son of Man, that you are cut off from Heaven—for there is a ladder, the top whereof does rest at the foot of the Throne of the Almighty—the base whereof is fixed in the lowest place of man's misery! Conceive not that there is a great gulf fixed between you and the *Father*, across which His mercy cannot come and over which your prayers and faith can never leap. Oh, think not, Son of Man, that you dwell in a storm-girt island, cut off from the continent of eternity. I beseech you, be-

lieve that there is a bridge across that chasm, a road along which feet may travel.

This world is not separated, for all creation is but one body. And know you, O Son of Man, though you in this world do but dwell, as it were on the foot, yet from the feet even to the head, there are nerves and veins that do unite the whole. The same great heart which beats in Heaven beats on earth. The love of the *Eternal Father* which cheers the celestial, makes glad the terrestrial, too. Rest assured that though the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another, yet are they but another in appearance, for after all, they are the same. Oh, listen, Son of Man and you will soon learn that you are no stranger in a strange land—a homeless Joseph in the land of Egypt—shut out from his Father and his children, who still remain in the happy paradise of Canaan.

No, your Father loves you still. There is a connection between you and Him. Strange that though leagues of distance lie between the finite creature and the infinite Creator, yet there are links that unite us both! When a tear is wept by you, think not your Father does not behold. For, “Like as a father pities his children so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Your sigh is able to move the heart of Jehovah. Your whisper can incline His ear unto you. Your prayer can stay His hands. Your faith can move His arm. Oh, think not that God sits on high in an eternal slumber, taking no account of you! “Shall a mother forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget, yet will I not forget you.”

Engraved upon the Father’s hand your name remains. And on His heart stands your person recorded there. He thought of you before the worlds were made. Before the channels of the sea were scooped, or the gigantic mountains lifted their heads in the white clouds, He thought of you. He thinks of you still. “I, the Lord, do keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro in every place, to show Himself strong on the behalf of all them that fear Him. You are not cut off from Him. You move in Him and in Him you *live* and have your being. “He is a very present help in time of trouble.”

Remember, again, O Heir of Immortality, that you are not only linked to the Godhead, but there is another One in Heaven with whom you have a strange, yet near connection. In the center of the Throne sits One who is your Brother, allied to you by blood. *The Son of God*, eternal, equal with His Father, became in the fullness of time the Son of Mary, an infant of a span long. He was, yes, *is*, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. Think not that you are cut off from the celestial world, while He is there. For is He not your head and has He not Himself declared that you are a

member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones? Oh, Man, you are not separated from Heaven while Jesus tells you—

***“I feel at My heart all your sighs and your groans,
For you are most near Me, My flesh and My bones.
In all your distresses, your Head feels the pain,
They all are most needful, not one is in vain.”***

Oh, poor, disconsolate Mourner, Christ remembers you every hour. Your sighs are His sighs. Your groans are His groans. Your prayers are His prayers—

***“He in His measure feels afresh,
What every member bears.”***

Crucified He is when you are crucified. He dies when you die. You live in Him and He lives in you and because He lives shall you live also—you shall rise in Him and you shall sit together in the heavenly places with Him. Oh, never was husband nearer to his wife and never Head nearer to the members and never soul nearer to the body of this flesh, than Christ is to you. And while it is so, think not that Heaven and earth are divided. They are but kindred worlds—two ships moored close to one another and one short plank of death will enable you to step from one into the other—this ship, all black and coaly, having done the coasting trade, the dusty business of today and being full of the blackness of sorrow. And *that* ship all golden, with its painted pennon flying and its sail all spread, white as the down of the sea bird, fair as the angel’s wing.

I tell you, Man, the ship of Heaven is moored side by side with the ship of earth and rock though this ship may and careen though she will on stormy winds and tempests, yet the invisible and golden ship of Heaven sails by her side never sundered, never divided, always ready, in order that when the hour shall come, you may leap from the black, dark ship and step upon the golden deck of that thrice happy one in which you shall sail forever!

But, O Man of God, there are other golden links besides this which bind the present to the future and time unto eternity. And what are time and eternity, after all, to the Believer, but like the Siamese twins, never to be separated? This earth is Heaven below, the next world is but a Heaven above. It is the same house—this is the lower room and that the upper, but the same roof covers both and the same dew falls upon each. Remember, Beloved, that *the spirits of the just made perfect* are never far from you and me if we are lovers of Jesus. All those who have passed the flood still have communion with us. Do we not sing—

***“The saints on earth and all the dead,
But one communion make,
All join in Christ, the living Head,
And of His grace partake”?***

We have but one Head for the Church triumphant and for the Church militant—

***“One army of the living God,
To His command we bow,
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.”***

Does not the Apostle tell us that the saints above are a cloud of witnesses? After he had mentioned Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Gideon and Barak and Jephthah, did he not say, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight”? Lo, we are running in the plains and the glorified ones are looking down upon us. Your mother’s eyes follow you, young man. A father’s eyes are looking down upon you, young woman. The eyes of my godly grandmother, long since glorified, I doubt not, rest on me perpetually. No doubt, in Heaven they often talk of us. Methinks they sometimes visit this poor earth—they never go out of Heaven, it is true, for Heaven is everywhere to them. This world is to them but just one corner of God’s Heaven, one shady bower of Paradise.

The saints of the living God, are, I doubt not, very near unto us, when we think them very far away. At any rate, they still remember us, still look for us. For this is ever upon their hearts—the truth that they without us cannot be made perfect. They cannot be a perfect Church till all are gathered in and therefore do they long for our appearing.

But, to come to our text a little more minutely. It assures us that *the angels* have communion with us. Bright spirits, first-born sons of God, do you think of me? Oh, cherubim, great and mighty; seraphim, burning, winged with lightning, do you think of us? Gigantic is your stature. Our poet tells us that the wand of an angel might make a mast for some tall admiral. And doubtless he was right when he said so. Those angels of God are creatures mighty and strong, doing His commandments, hearkening to His word—and do they take notice of us?

Let the Scripture answer, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto those that shall be heirs of salvation?” “The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him.” “For He shall give His angels charge over you; to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” Yes, the brightest angels are but the serving men of the saints—they are our lackeys and our footmen. They wait upon us. They are the troops of our body guard. And we might, if our eyes were opened, see what Elisha saw—horses of fire and chariots of fire round about us—so that we should joyously say, “More are they that are with us than they that are against us.”

Our text tells us that the angels of God rejoice over repenting sinners. How is that? They are always as happy as they can be—how can they be any happier? The text does not say that they are any happier. But perhaps that they *show* their happiness more. A man may have a Sabbath every day, as he ought to have if he is a Christian and yet on the first day of the week he will let his Sabbatism come out plainly. For then the world shall see that he does rest. “A merry heart has a continual feast.” But then even the merry heart has some special days on which it feasts well.

To the glorified every day is a Sabbath, but of some it can be said, “and that Sabbath was an high day.” There are days when the angels sing more loudly than usual. They are always harping well God’s praise, but sometimes the gathering hosts who have been flitting far through the universe come home to their center. And round the Throne of God, standing in serried ranks, marshaled not for battle but for music, on certain set and appointed days they chant the praises of the Son of God, “who loved us and gave Himself for us.”

And do you ask me when those days occur? I tell you the birthday of every Christian is a sonnet day in Heaven. There are Christmas days in Paradise, where Christ’s high mass is kept and Christ is glorified not because He was born in a manger, but because He is born in a broken heart. There are days—good days in Heaven—days of sonnet, red letter days, of overflowing adoration. And these are days when the Shepherd brings home the lost sheep upon His shoulder, when the Church has swept her house and found the lost piece of money. For then are these friends and neighbors called together and they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory over one sinner that repents.

I have thus, I hope, shown you that there is a greater connection between earth and Heaven than any of us dreamed. And now let none of us think, when we look upward to the blue sky, that we are far from Heaven. It is a very little distance from us, when the day comes we shall go post-haste there, even without horses and chariots of fire. Balaam called it a land that is very far off. We know better—it is a land that is very near. Even now—

**“By faith we join our hands
With those that went before.
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon the eternal shore.”**

All hail, bright spirits! I see you now. All hail, angels! All hail, you Brothers and Sisters redeemed! A few more hours, or days, or months and we shall join your happy throng. Till then your joyous fellowship, your sweet compassion shall ever be our comfort and our consolation—and

having weathered all storms of life—we shall at last anchor with you within the port of Everlasting Peace.

II. But the angels are said to sing whenever a sinner repents. Let us see if there is any JUDGMENT IN THEIR SONG, or whether they make a mistake. Why do angels sing over penitent sinners?

In the first place, I think it is because they remember the days of creation. You know when God made this world and fixed the beams of the heavens in sockets of light, the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy. As they saw star after star flying abroad like sparks from the great anvil of Omnipotence, they began to sing. And every time they saw a new creature made upon this little earth, they praised afresh. When first they saw light they clapped their hands and said, "Great is Jehovah—for He said 'Light be!' and light was." And when they saw sun and moon and stars, again they clapped their hands and they said, "He has made great lights. For His mercy endures forever. The sun to rule the day. For His mercy endures forever. The moon to rule the night. For His mercy endures forever." And over everything He made, they chanted evermore that sweet song, "Creator, You are to be magnified. For Your mercy endures forever."

Now, when they see a sinner returning, they see the creation over again. For repentance is a new creation. No man ever repents until God makes in him a new heart and a right spirit. I do not know that ever since the day when God made the world, with the exception of new hearts, the angels have seen God make anything else. He may, if He has so pleased, have made fresh worlds since that time. But perhaps the only instance of new creation they have ever seen since the first day is the creation of a new heart and a right spirit within the breast of a poor penitent sinner. Therefore do they sing, because creation comes again.

I doubt not, too, that they sing because they behold God's works afresh shining in excellence. When God first made the world, He said of it, "It is very good"—He could not say so now. There are many of you that God could not say that of. He would have to say the very reverse. He would have to say, "No, that is very bad, for the trail of the serpent has swept away your beauty—that moral excellence which once dwelt in manhood has passed away." But when the sweet influences of the Spirit bring men to repentance and faith again, God looks upon man and He says, "It is very good." For what His Spirit makes is like Himself—good and holy and precious. And God smiles again over His twice-made creation and says once more, "It is very good." Then the angels begin again and praise His name, whose works are always good and full of beauty.

But, Beloved, the angels sing over sinners that repent because they know what that poor sinner has escaped. You and I can never imagine all

the depths of Hell. Shut out from us by a black veil of darkness we cannot tell the horrors of that dismal dungeon of lost souls. Happily, the wailings of the damned have never startled us—for a thousand tempests were but a maiden's whisper compared with one wail of a damned spirit. It is not possible for us to see the tortures of those souls who dwell eternally within an anguish that knows no alleviation. These eyes would become sightless balls of darkness if they were permitted for an instant to look into that ghastly shrine of torment.

Hell is horrible, for we may say of it, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the horrors which God has prepared for them that hate Him. But the angels know better than you or I could guess. They know it—not that they have *felt* it—but they remember that day when Satan and his angels rebelled against God. They remember the day when the third part of the stars of Heaven revolted against their liege Lord. And they have not forgotten how the red right hand of Jehovah Jesus was wrapped in thunder. They do not forget that breach in the battlements of Heaven when, down from the greatest heights to the lowest depths, Lucifer and his hosts were hurled.

They have never forgotten how, with sound of trumpet, they pursued the flying foe down to the gulfs of black despair. And, as they neared that place where the great serpent is to be bound in chains, they remember how they saw Tophet, which was prepared of old, the pile whereof is fire and much wood and they recollect how, when they winged back their flight, every tongue was silent, although they might well have shouted the praise of Him who conquered Lucifer. But on them all there did sit a solemn awe of One who could smite a cherubim and cast him in hopeless bonds of everlasting despair.

They knew what Hell was, for they had looked within its jaws and seen their own brothers fast enclosed within them. And, therefore, when they see a sinner saved, they rejoice—because there is one less to be food for the never-dying worm—one more soul escaped out of the mouth of the lion.

There is yet a better reason. The angels know what the joys of Heaven are and therefore they rejoice over one sinner that repents. We talk about pearly gates and golden streets and white robes and harps of gold and crowns of amaranth and all that. But if an angel could speak to us of Heaven, he would smile and say, "All these fine things are but child's talk and you are little children and you cannot understand the greatness of eternal bliss and therefore God has given you a child's horn book and an alphabet, in which you may learn the first rough letters of what Heaven is, but what it is you do not know.

“O Mortal, your eye has never yet beheld its splendors. Your ear has never yet been ravished with its melodies. Your heart has never been transported with its peerless joys.” You may talk and think and guess and dream, but you can never measure the infinite Heaven which God has provided for His children. And therefore it is, when they see a soul saved and a sinner repenting, that they clap their hands. For they know that all those blessed mansions are theirs, since all those sweet places of everlasting happiness are the entail of every sinner that repents.

But I want you just to read the text again, while I dwell upon another thought. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner *that repents*.” Now, why do they not save their joy till that sinner dies and goes to Heaven? Why do they rejoice over him when he *repents*? My Arminian friend, I think, ought to go to Heaven to set them right upon this matter. According to *his* theory, it must be very wrong of them, because they rejoice *prematurely*. According to the Arminian doctrine a man may repent and yet he may be lost. He may have grace to repent and believe and yet he may fall from grace and be a castaway. Now, Angels, don’t be too fast. Perhaps you may have to repent of this one day, if the Arminian doctrine is true. I would advise you to save your song for greater joys.

Why, Angels, perhaps the men that you are singing over today, you will have to mourn over tomorrow. I am quite sure that Arminius never taught his doctrine in Heaven. I do not know whether he is there—I hope he is—but he is no longer an Arminian. If he ever taught his doctrine there, he would be put out. The reason why angels rejoice is because they know that when a sinner repents, he is absolutely saved—or else they *would* rejoice *prematurely* and *would* have good cause for retracting their merriment on some future occasion.

But the angels know what Christ meant when He said, “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” And therefore they rejoice over repenting sinners, because they *know they are saved*.

There is yet one more fact I will mention, before I leave this point. It is said that the angels “rejoice over *one* sinner that repents.” Now this evening it shall be my happy privilege to give the right hand of fellowship to no less than forty-eight sinners that have repented and there will be great joy and rejoicing in our Churches tonight because these forty-eight have been immersed on a profession of their faith. But how loving are the angels to men. For they rejoice over *one* sinner that repents. There she is, in that garret where the stars look between the tiles. There is a miserable bed in that room, with but one bit of covering and she lies there to die! Poor creature! Many a night she has walked the streets in the time of her

merriment. But now her joys are over—a foul disease, like a demon is devouring her heart!

She is dying fast and no one cares for her soul! But there, in that chamber, she turns her face to the wall and she cries, “O You that saved Magdalene, save me! Lord I repent! Have mercy upon me, I beseech You.” Did the bells ring in the street? Was the trumpet blown? Ah, no. Did men rejoice? Was there a sound of thanksgiving in the midst of the great congregation? No. No one heard it. For she died unseen. But stop! There was one standing at her bedside, who noted well that tear—an angel, who had come down from Heaven to watch over this stray sheep and mark its return. And no sooner was her prayer uttered than he clapped his wings and there was seen flying up to the pearly gates a spirit like a star.

The heavenly guards came crowding to the gate, crying, “What news, O Son of Fire?” He said, “’Tis done.” “And what is done?” they said, “Why, she has repented.” “What? She who was once a chief of sinners? Has she turned to Christ?” “’Tis even so,” said he. And then they told it through the streets and the bells of Heaven rang marriage peals, for Magdalene was saved and she who had been the chief of sinners was turned unto the living God.

It was in another place. A poor neglected little boy in ragged clothing had run about the streets for many a day. Tutored in crime, he was paving his path to the gallows. But one morning he passed by a humble room where some men and women were sitting together teaching poor ragged children. He stepped in there a wild Bedouin of the streets. They talked to him, they told him about a soul and about an eternity—things he had never heard before. They spoke of Jesus and of good tidings of great joy to this poor friendless lad. He went another Sabbath. And another. His wild habits hanging about him, for he could not get rid of them.

At last it happened that his teacher said to him one day, “Jesus Christ receives sinners.” That little boy ran, but not home, for it was but a mockery to call it so—where a drunken father and a lascivious mother kept a hellish riot together. He ran and under some dry arch, or in some wild unfrequented corner, he bent his little knees and there he cried—that poor creature in his rags—“Lord save me, or I perish.” And the little Arab was on his knees—the little thief was saved! He said—

“Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to Your bosom fly.”

And up from that old arch, from that forsaken hovel, there flew a spirit, glad to bear the news to Heaven, that another heir of glory was born to God. I might picture many such scenes. But will each of you try to picture *your own*? You remember the occasion when the Lord met with you. Ah, little did you think what a commotion there was in Heaven! If the Queen had ordered out all her soldiers, the angels of Heaven would not have

stopped to notice them. If all the princes of earth had marched in pagentry through the streets, with all their robes and jewelry and crowns and all their regalia, their chariots and their horsemen—if the pomps of ancient monarchs had risen from the tomb—if all the might of Babylon and Tyre and Greece had been concentrated into one great parade—yet not an angel would have stopped in his course to smile at those poor tawdry things. But over *you*, the vilest of the vile, the poorest of the poor, the most obscure and unknown—over *you*—angelic wings were hovering—and concerning you it was said on earth and sung in Heaven—“Hallelujah, for a child is born to God today.”

III. And now I must conclude with this LESSON TO THIS SAINTS. I think Beloved, it will not be hard for you to learn. The angels of Heaven rejoice over sinners that repent—Saints of God, will not you and I do the same? I do not think the Church rejoices enough. We all grumble enough and groan enough. But very few of us *rejoice* enough. When we take a large number into the Church it is spoken of as a great mercy. But is the greatness of that mercy appreciated? I will tell you who they are that can most appreciate the conversion of sinners. They are those that are just converted themselves, or those that have been great sinners themselves.

Those who have been saved themselves from bondage, when they see others coming who have so lately worn the chains, are so glad that they can well take the tabret and the harp and the pipe and the psaltery and praise God that there are other prisoners who have been emancipated by grace. But there are others who can do this better still and they are the parents and relations of those who are saved. You have thanked God many times when you have seen a sinner saved. But, Mother, did not you thank Him most when you saw your own son converted?

Oh, those holy tears! They are not tears—they are God’s diamonds—the tears of a mother’s joy, when her son confesses his faith in Jesus. Oh, that glad countenance of the wife, when she sees her husband, long bestial and drunken at last made into a man and a Christian! Oh, that look of joy which a young Christian gives when he sees his father, who had long oppressed and persecuted him, converted. I was preaching this week for a young minister and being anxious to know his character, I spoke of him with apparent coolness. An estimable lady of his congregation in a very few moments began to warm in his favor.

She said, “You must not say anything against him, Sir. If you do, it is because you do not know him.” “Oh,” I said, “I knew him long before you did. He is not much, is he?” “Well,” she said, “I must speak well of him, for he has been a blessing to my servants and family.” I went out into the street and saw some men and women standing about. So I said to them, “I must take your minister away.” “If you do,” they said, “we will follow you

all over the world, if you take away a man who has done so much good to our souls.” After collecting the testimony of fifteen or sixteen witnesses, I said, “If the man gets such witnesses as these, let him go on. The Lord has opened his mouth and the devil will never be able to shut it.” These are the witnesses we want—men who can sing with the angels because their own households are converted to God.

I hope it may be so with all of you. And if any of you are yourselves brought to Christ today—for He is willing to receive you—you will go out of this place singing and the angels will sing with you. There shall be joy in earth and joy in Heaven—on earth peace and glory to God in the highest. The Lord bless you one and all, for Jesus’ sake.

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A HIGH DAY IN HEAVEN

NO. 2791

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 10, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 27, 1878.

*“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence
of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*
Luke 15:10.

EARTH has engrossed our thoughts too long. It is time that we should lift our eyes and look upward to Heaven. Do you say that you cannot see as far as that? Look again and ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes, for the Lord Jesus has set the gate wide open that you may at least get a glimpse of what is going on in the Glory Land. He has plainly declared to you many of the things which He has seen and heard of the Father—and if you will only give good heed to His words, you shall be enabled, by the eye of faith, to see what to mortal eyes is invisible!

Gaze thus upon the scene depicted in our text. They have an eternal Sabbath in Heaven, but the Sabbath of which our text speaks is, evidently, a specially high day. They have all holy days there, but now it is a holiday as well as a holy day, for there is some special cause for unusual joy! What is it all about? Our Lord tells us that “there is joy”—very special “joy in the presence of the angels of God”—and He tells us what is the cause of it. Let us draw near and see for ourselves this great sight and seek to learn its lessons. The heavenly harpers are evoking from their golden harps even sweeter music than usual! They are lifting up their voices as high as even their exalted notes can possibly rise. We will listen to them, but we will also remember the reason for their jubilation. We are told, by our Lord, the special “joy in the presence of the angels of God” is “over one sinner who repents.”

Now, you workers for the Master, you sweepers in the dust looking for the lost pieces of money! You candle-holders who have been shedding your feeble rays as far as you can—and who have become somewhat weary—now come and refresh yourselves by looking upon some of the results of your service! And you, who in imitation of the great, good, Chief Shepherd, have gone after the lost sheep and are scratched by many a briar and tired after your many desperate leaps over hill and dale—forget your weariness for a while—and begin to share in the joy of Christ's servants as you see how, before the Throne of God on high, they are making merry over the souls that are being saved! I do not think that anything can be more comforting to you who are serving the Lord than to see what comes of your service. You, who have been going forth weeping, bearing

precious seed—wipe your eyes and look above—and begin to anticipate the time when you shall come again with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you, for, up yonder they are shouting, “Harvest home!” with great delight!

And while I thus invite the working saint, I would equally invite the seeking sinner to note the cause of this special joy of Heaven. It is about persons like yourselves! O you wandering sheep, the joy is over wandering sheep that have been found by the Divine Shepherd! O prodigal sons, the merriment is over sons who were dead, but who are alive again—wanderers who were lost, but now are found! It should, surely, encourage you to hasten home while yet the joy-bells are ringing and the dance is going on! Get home as quickly as you can, for, as they are rejoicing over one Brother or Sister like yourself, everything will be in readiness for welcoming you and the Father will only need to say, “Let us keep up the feast, for here is another of My children that I had lost, but who now is found.” It is evidently a propitious season—a time in which bright hopes ought to be kindled within you and the birds within your soul should begin to sing in sweet anticipation of the bliss awaiting you! Arise, then, and go to your Father—He is rejoicing over those who have come back to Him—and He will equally rejoice over you!

I. In considering this passage, I shall ask you, first, to NOTE THE TERMS IN WHICH OUR LORD JESUS DESCRIBES THIS HEAVENLY JOY—“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

And notice, first, in these terms, that *this joy is over one sinner*. What the joy is over hundreds, thousands and millions of sinners, you can scarcely imagine, but Jesus tells us that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner.” That one may be a poor servant girl, or a working man whose name will never be known to fame—and there is only one—but the angels are not so sparing of the praises of God that they will wait till there is a score of penitents! They see them gathering Home one by one and they are glad of every opportunity of expressing their special delight at the increasing number of the redeemed. So, as they come to Jesus, one by one, the blessed spirits before the Throne of God begin to sing with special thanksgiving for every sinner saved. Have you taught for a long time in your Sunday school class and have you had only one girl saved? Do not be satisfied with that one, but, at the same time, do not forget to thank the Lord for that one. If you are not grateful to God for letting you win one soul for Him, you are not likely to be allowed to win another. Remember that the conversion of one sinner is, in Heaven, reckoned to be such a marvel that it makes special joy there in the presence of the angels of God!

Surely, then, the salvation of even one soul ought to make your spirit exult and rejoice with exceeding joy! If you have lived to bring one sinner to Christ, you have not lived in vain. Has not God already given to you in that one, my dear Brother, my dear Sister, much more than such an unworthy creature as you might ever have expected to gain? I say again, cry for more blessing, be greedy to win hundreds of souls for the Savior, but,

still, do not neglect to praise God for the one whom He has already saved.

I like to dwell upon the thought that the person who caused this melody in Heaven was “one sinner.” I do not know what sort of a sinner that one was, but I should not wonder if the conversion of special sinners makes special joy up there. Was that “one sinner” a publican, a hard-hearted Jewish tax-gatherer? Was that one sinner a harlot, lost even to society as well as to her God? We do not know, but we do know that as they would rejoice in Heaven over one king, or one prince, or one senator, or one philosopher who repented—so they would over one publican or one harlot! The angels and the redeemed in Glory know that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” They know that the precious blood of Christ was shed to cleanse sinners from every stain of sin. They know that the sweetest singers throughout eternity will be those who once were sinners, so they rejoice over any and every sinner who is saved! Out of a certain company of a hundred, there were 99 people who had not gone astray—according to their notions—and the spirits in Heaven did not rejoice over them. No, you mere moralists, you people who are so excellent in your own esteem who reckon that you will gain admission to Heaven by your own good deeds, you will never make the angels sing until you repent! But the poor lost sinner, however deeply he has plunged into crime, when he becomes a monument of the saving and renewing Grace of God, sets all the golden harps ringing with the melodious music of praise and thanksgiving unto the Most High!

Notice, next, that the rejoicing is “*over one sinner who repents.*” To repent is to be sorry for sin—to undergo a complete change of mind, heart and life—to turn away from self to Christ. In a word, to be converted, that is, turned completely around. Yet many people, nowadays, think very little of repentance. Some ministers whom I know scarcely even mention it in their preaching, so that their hearers may well imagine that it is out of date. They seem to believe in a kind of faith that ignores repentance. Well, they differ very much in their estimate from that of the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, for they rejoice “over one sinner who repents.” The poor sinner has not yet the faith that moves mountains, or the heroism that takes lions by their beards and slays them. The poor sinner has not yet preached a sermon, or even sung a hymn to the praise of God—he has simply sat down in some obscure corner and wept over his sin! He has returned to his God and said, “Father, I have sinned.” But that was sufficient to make the angels sing!

I want you to remember this, you who are just beginning to come to Christ—you who have only a little Grace—the very faintest evidence of the work of God’s Spirit in your soul. You are Believers, or else you would not be penitents, for there is no true repentance but that which is accompanied by faith! But the most prominent thing is not so much your faith as your holy mourning and moaning over sin, your sincere desire after holiness—this is the proof of that change of mind which is the essence of true repentance—and this is such a work of Grace that there is joy over you in the presence of the angels of God!

I want you also to notice, with regard to the terms used by our Lord, that He says, "*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God.*" Is there not always joy there? Certainly! Is there ever any sorrow up yonder in the courts of the Most High? Do cherubim and seraphim ever pine and cry, and sigh in agony? Never! Then, what can this joy be which makes Heaven even more joyous than it usually is? I do not know whether you or I can conceive what it must be—what I may call the ordinary, everyday joy of Heaven is perfect, yet there is something over and above that in this rejoicing over penitents. It is a bliss above bliss! A joy that rises out of joy like some huge Atlantic billow that towers above all the rest of the waves. They have a special, extra, doubly distilled joy in Heaven, sometimes, and that comes to them whenever one sinner repents! I think I can explain it a little by an expression of Rutherford's, in which he says, "God is my witness that my own Heaven would be seven heavens if I could but see you saved. If I could but see souls brought to Christ, my own bliss would be sevenfold bliss." Yes, and so it is with the spirits before the Throne of God! They are always happy, but, sometimes the joy that is always full begins to overflow and down from the celestial hills there rushes a sacred torrent that carries all before it! And this unusual delight of those who are in the presence of God is caused by one sinner repenting and returning to the Lord!

I have only one more remark to make under this first head, and it is this—our Lord does not say that the angels rejoice over one sinner who repents, but that "*there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*" Who, then, has the joy? The angels, of course, first. They must be included because the previous parable says that when the Shepherd comes home, "He calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." The redeemed from among men and the holy angels are the friends and neighbors of Christ—and they all rejoice over every sinner who repents. But, first of all, this joy is the joy of God, Himself. The angels and the redeemed stand in His Presence—they are His courtiers—but He Himself is the center, and Glory, and Lord of All—it is God Himself who rejoices "over one sinner who repents." God the Father rejoices, for has He not found His child whom He had lost, the child whom He loved, before the foundation of the world, with all the love of His infinite heart?

God the Son rejoices, for has He not found the sheep which the Father gave Him—the sheep which He was pledged to bring safely home—the sheep for which He paid the purchase price in His own heart's blood—the sheep which, though it had wandered far away from Him, He had brought home? God the Spirit also rejoices, for did He not see, in the soul's repentance, the fruit of His working, the result of His enlightenment, the consequence of His convicting and the commencement of the whole work of sanctification? Yes, dear Brothers and Sisters—Father, Son and Spirit—the one God of the spiritual Israel—rejoices greatly "over one sinner who repents." I can hardly convey to you the delight that I have in this thought! God is always full of joy. He is rightly called "the happy God," yet even He describes Himself as being, in some mysterious

manner, more happy at one season than at another! I am, of course, speaking after the manner of men, but, then, we are only men and we can only speak after our own manner as the prophet Zephaniah does when he says, “He will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” So that repentance of one sinner gives joy to the Eternal, Himself! Who would not, then, repent of sin and so give joy to God and, at the same time, find the highest joy for himself?

Thus I have noticed the terms in which our Lord Jesus describes this heavenly joy.

II. Now, secondly, I want you, very briefly, to CONSIDER THE REASONS WHY THERE IS THIS JOY IN HEAVEN.

First, God rejoices over every sinner who repents, *because He then sees one of His creatures delivered from the horrible power of sin.* God is full of benevolence toward men. He wills not the death of the sinner and He is delighted when the creature, whom He has made, becomes happy because he has become holy. He is glad when those, whom He has fashioned, enjoy the delights which He intended for them.

God rejoices, too, when a sinner repents, *because He then sees, not only one of His creatures, but a new creature in Christ Jesus.* He sees His own handiwork in that heart. We all like to see our own work when it is well done. Nobody wants to see bad work, but every worker rejoices in good work. And God rejoices in the good work of regeneration, the good work of the renewal of the heart, restoration from death and rescue from Hell.

Especially does God delight in every sinner who repents, *because He then sees His own child restored to Him.* He who has the heart of a true father knows what joy he has when he sees his boy, who has gone astray, coming back again—when he returns from the distant land to which he went in an ill humor, and comes home weeping and mourning, but loving and gentle and anxious to be better. Thus God rejoices over His returning children. There is no earthly father who can love as God loves—and if all the love of all the fathers in the world were made into one, it would not equal the love which God has for even one of His children! So He rejoices with peculiar joy when He sees any of His children repenting and returning to Him.

Moreover, God *always rejoices in everything that is holy and good* and, therefore, He rejoices in a sinner’s repentance. It is a right and holy thing that a sinner should repent of doing wrong. It is the beginning of something higher, nobler and better when a soul comes to the turning point, confesses its lost condition and seeks to be set right. And, therefore, because the Lord is good and righteous, He will teach transgressors His ways and when He sees them walking in that way, He will rejoice and be glad concerning them!

III. I will not remind you of all the reasons for the great Father’s joy over returning sinners because you can all think them out for yourselves. But I will, instead, say a little about THE JOY OF THE ANGELS OVER REPENTING SINNERS. Why is it that they, who are the friends, neighbors and servants of Christ, are so glad when sinners repent? They are not themselves sinners—they are not even men! They have no part in the

great redemption of Christ. “For verily He took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham.” Why, then, do the angels rejoice over repenting sinners?

Well it is, first, *because they are so fully in sympathy with God*. Whatever pleases God, pleases them. The growth of holiness delights the Most High and, therefore, it delights His loyal courtiers. The coming back of Jehovah’s wandering children gladdens Him and it, therefore, gladdens every servant in the family. You can see, in the parable, that the servant who went out to speak to the elder brother had his measure of joy over the prodigal’s return. He speaks in happy and grateful tones—and the spirits before the Throne of God cannot help being glad when God is glad. Will loyal subjects be sighing and crying when their king has a day of special rejoicing and is peculiarly honored? It cannot be! And the angels would not be what they are—the true and faithful servitors of God—if they were not glad when God is glad!

But besides that, *they also have great sympathy with men*. It would be worth your while to study the subject of the friendship of angels to men—their kindly feeling, the joy with which they have often brought God’s messages to men, the delight with which they have interposed, at critical times, to accomplish the miraculous designs upon which God has sent them on behalf of men. They are, indeed, most gracious spirits! We must not worship them—we are forbidden to do that—for we must worship God alone. But we may feel an intense amity, friendship and respect towards those bright and blessed spirits. What we owe to them, we shall never know, I suppose, till eternity. And then we shall set it all down to the Glory of their Master and ours! Still, he who thinks well of God may think well of God’s holy angels on the principle of, “Love Me, love My servants.” Does He not give them charge over us, to keep us in all our ways? Do they not bear us up in their hands, lest we should dash our foot against a stone? “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” They are not actually akin to us, but still, they are very near neighbors to us and they are very kind and helpful neighbors! So, when they see a soul saved, they are right glad of it.

Further, they know better than you and I do, *what a soul is saved from when a sinner repents*. They have looked over the battlements of Heaven into the dread abyss—they recollect the day when there was war in Heaven and the mighty Son of God overthrew Satan and his rebel followers and cast them down to Hell. The holy angels know that it was God’s electing love that enabled them to stand fast in that evil day. They know, too, that God passed by the fallen angels and never gave them a hope of recovery, or promised them a Mediator. Yet they do not envy men because God, in the Sovereignty of His Grace, has provided for them a Savior. They rejoice to know that repenting men shall never be cast into the Lake of Fire, the awful place prepared for the devil and his angels. They have none of the modern infidel notions, for they have seen that there is a worm that dies not and a fire that cannot be quenched, so they lift up their songs right gladly whenever a sinner is saved from going down into the Pit!

Besides this, *the angels know what repenting sinners gain*, for they have long frequented the golden streets and walked by the river of the Water of Life. They know the bliss of beholding Christ face to face—have they not done so ever since He returned to Heaven to sit upon His Father's Throne? When a man is very happy because he is very holy, he wants other people to be happy, too, and he feels all the happier the more there are to share in his joy. Our proverb "The more, the merrier," just expresses what the angels think, so they rejoice, with the utmost gladness, over those who repent because they know that, for them, there is laid up in Heaven the triple crown of life, glory and righteousness, that fades not away.

One thought I cannot help interjecting just here. *I am sure that these holy angels all believe in the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints*. If they did not, they would be very foolish in rejoicing over repenting sinners. The old proverb bids us not to count our chickens before they are hatched—and if I were an Arminian, I would recommend the angels to not rejoice over a sinner who repents, for he might fall from Grace and perish—and then they would have to ring the bells of Heaven backwards, or to toll them, and to recall their songs, and say, "We rejoiced too soon." But it is not so, for they know that repentance has in it the germ of perfection! Sincere repentance is the commencement of perfect sanctification and God will make it grow to full fruition! This grain of mustard seed will become a great tree and yonder birds of Paradise shall sit in the branches and sing to God's praise forever! So they begin to sing even now because they know what true repentance guarantees concerning the future of everyone who truly repents and believes in Christ Jesus!

Thus I have tried to give, in as brief a space as I could, the reasons for the joy of God and the joy of God's servants, the angels, over repenting sinners. There are just two lessons I want each one of us to learn and then I have done.

The first is a lesson of self-examination. Are you and I fit for Heaven? Have we the nature which would fit us to dwell in the presence of the angels of God? You say, "Well, you have set us a hard task." No, I have not. Or if so, I will help you through it. The angels rejoice "over one sinner who repents." Do you rejoice over repenting sinners? Having yourself repented, do you feel intense sympathy for other sinners? Do you dread lest they should be lost? Do you pray that they may be saved? Do you seek, by your personal testimony and entreaty, to bring them to Christ? Can you truthfully say that it would be Heaven on earth to you to see your children converted—your servants converted—your neighbors converted? Alas, there are many professors who do not care the turn of a halfpenny whether souls are lost or saved! Their one desire is to be saved themselves, but, as to doing anything to spread the Gospel of Jesus—denying themselves that the poor and ignorant may know of Christ—that is not in their line at all!

But, Sir, if you have no concern about another man's soul, it is time that you should have grave concern about your own! If no joy comes to you when another is saved, you have need to be saved yourself! And if the thought of the future world and the ruin of immortal souls never

makes you bow your head even to the dust, you need to be born-again, for they who are born in the likeness of Christ weep over sinners, pray for sinners and seek the salvation of sinners! By this test, I beseech you to try yourselves. There is not one among us who may not well chide himself for some measure of hardness of heart and indifference about this matter. I often feel as if I could flog myself and bite my tongue, to think that I preach so often with dry eyes and with a heart that is not half as earnest as it ought to be. Yet I have heard colder sermons than I generally preach, so I suppose that my Brothers must be partakers in my fault, or else their manner much belies them. And I think I know some members of the church who must make a similar confession to mine. Oh, that we were all alive to the real value of an immortal soul! Did we but believe that it is born for eternal bliss, or doomed to eternal despair, I think that we would go about as with a sword in our bones, mourning because of the multitude of mankind rushing madly upon Jehovah's buckler, dashing themselves against the bosses of His shield and seeming determined to commit spiritual suicide! God save them! Let us pray that prayer from our inmost souls. If we do not, how can we hope to ever enter that Heaven where they rejoice over repenting sinners?

The other lesson is for any of you who are seeking Christ Jesus the Lord. I gave it to you at the commencement of the sermon. I want to give it to you again that you may be sure to remember it. How gladly, how heartily, how immediately ought you to hasten to seek peace with God when you know how joyously you will be welcomed! If it will make Heaven all the gladder to see you come, why do you not come? I have read, sometimes, in the newspaper, an advertisement to this effect—"A. B." or somebody else whose initials are given, "is earnestly entreated to come back to his loving father and mother. All is forgiven. Everything is made right. Do not delay! Come back to us at once." If I were to read such an advertisement as that, and it referred to me, I do not think I could have the heart to stand out against it. I would be thinking of my father, "What? Does the old man want me as much as that?" I would be thinking of my brother, "Does he want to see me?" I would think even of the old servant of the family, "Does old Mary want to see me? She who nursed me when I was a child, does she want me back? Well, with such an invitation, I will go at once." Dear Heart, do you want to come back to God? That is a sign that the Lord wants you back! You will be glad to get back to Him, but He will be gladder to receive you than you will be to be received! And all the angels want you—they are watching and waiting for you. And those on earth who love our Lord, are, many of them, very anxious about you. The whole Church of God in Heaven and on earth, and the goodly fellowship of the angels, and God Himself, will all be glad to receive you! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! I wish I had a trumpet-tongue that I might sound the invitation out still more loudly! Remember that verse with which we began the service—

***"From the Cross uplifted high
Where the Savior deigns to die,
What melodious sounds I hear,
Bursting on my ravished ear!
'Love's redeeming work is done;***

Come and welcome, Sinner, come.”

You have but to trust Him and you have come to Him—to rely upon Him—to depend upon Him—to lean upon Him—to cast yourself upon Him, to believe in Christ Jesus, who died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God—for, as soon as you do so, you are brought back to the great Father’s house. May the Divine Spirit bring you there now, for His love’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15.**

Verse 1. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him.* However sunken they might be, they knew their best Friend! They recognized their Benefactor, so they gathered around Him. They knew who it was that smiled upon them and who would lift them up, so they came clustering around Him, like bees fly to the flowers. “Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him.”

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners, and eats with them.* Where bees come, wasps often come, too. This murmuring of the Pharisees and scribes was after their nature—they were so proud, so wrapped up in themselves, they thought so contemptuously of everybody else that they dared even to despise Him whose shoelaces they were not worthy to unloose. “This Man,” they said, “receives sinners, and eats with them.”

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.* This is really a picture in three panels—a parable with three variations.

4-7. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the 99 in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over 99 just persons which need no repentance.* There, no doubt, the Savior looked at the Pharisees, who, though they did need repentance, yet thought they did not. Little or no joy did they ever bring to Him—His heart never leaped with delight over them. Good as they thought themselves to be, they did not yield Him as much joy as these poor publicans and sinners would when He had found them—and He was bent on doing that. Now, Beloved, how much is a man better than a sheep? And if a shepherd will leave all his ease and comfort to hunt after one stray sheep, how ought you and I, after the example of the Son of Man, to be ready for any service, or any self-denial by which we, too, in our poor measure, may seek and save the lost? Now we have the second panel of the picture

8-10. *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle, and sweep the house, and search diligently till she finds it And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of*

the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Did the woman rejoice at finding her piece of silver, that she had lost, and shall not God much more rejoice over an inestimably precious human soul which had been lost, but which, through Grace, is found again? Ah, yes, there is joy in Heaven! There is joy in all heavenly hearts! There is joy in all who are the friends of Christ when lost ones are found! There was another quiet stroke at the Pharisees and scribes who were proved not to be the friends of the soul-seeking Savior because they did not rejoice with Him over those whom He had found. If they had been at all like the angels in Heaven, as they thought they were, they would have been glad that the Lord Jesus Christ had come to seek and to find the lost. Then came the third most touching panel of the picture—perhaps the best beloved of all the parables—one which, like a key, fits the locks of the human heart and many a time has opened the heart.

11-13. *And He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* It is clear that his heart had gone away from his father before he went away. He would not have wished to take from his father his portion of goods, or to be independent of his father, if he had not felt a spirit of alienation and, therefore, what his father did, developed the latent evil, just as, oftentimes, the loving mercy of God brings to the surface the concealed sin which is in man all the while and then he sins the more openly. It is a grievous thing that even Divine Love should lead us to sin—not of itself, but because of our evil nature—just as the sun shines, not that it may make the weeds grow, or that it may help to lift into the air noxious odors! With goodwill, itself, as its only motive, ill may come even of the pure sunlight.

14, 15. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in need. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* A very degrading employment for him as a Jew—perhaps, however, the best that the citizen of that country could do for him, for there was a famine in the land. And when men are all pinched with hunger, it is not much that one can do for another. And what can one poor sinner do for another? Even though he is called a priest and puts on fine apparel, yet what can he do for his fellow sinner?

16, 17. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat. But no man gave any unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* "I, his son, perish with hunger, when there is not only enough in my father's house for his children, but for his hirelings, too! Yes, and some to spare after that." "Bread enough and to spare." This was the thought which drew the prodigal home—and it ought to draw sinners to Christ. There is, in the Gospel, "bread enough and to spare." You know how some would, if they could, contract the provisions of Grace and make it out that there is bread enough, but they say that if there is anything to spare, it will be a waste.

Why, it is that “spare” bread that is God’s bait to catch poor souls with when they are cast down, “for,” they say, “if it is to spare, then, even if my father is angry with me, he will not deny me the spare bread for which there is no use, so I may as well go and ask for a portion of it.”

18-20. *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.* Oh, the speed of Divine Love! There were delays with the son, but there were no delays with the father. At the first glance, the father’s heart is made up and he runs to meet his returning child. And what a welcome he gives him! He “kissed him much,” is the right rendering. Truly, this was prodigal love for the prodigal son!

21, 22. *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father—*Stopping him short and forever obliterating the rest of the prayer, so that he never had time to utter it, seeing that it was too legal to be permitted by his father’s love. “But the father”—

22-25. *Said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field.* At work, like the good son that he was.

25. *And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.* Which he did not often hear, for he was of a gloomy spirit, and there had not been cause for much rejoicing lately.

26. *And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.* “What are you all up to in making such a noise? What new thing has happened to our orderly household to make it thus full of merrymaking and noisy gladness?”

27, 28. *And he said unto him, Your brother is come and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry.* It did not seem to him right that one who had acted so badly should be thus honored. “He was angry”—

28. *And would not go in.* He did not believe in revivals, so he would not attend them. He did not believe in many being converted, especially if they had been great sinners. He would have nothing to do with them.

28. *Therefore came his father out and entreated him.* Oh, the goodness of the father, not only in receiving the returning prodigal, but in entreating this indignant and erring son, for he was greatly erring in this matter and was not showing the true spirit of a son.

29, 30. *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this your son was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.* “I am a consistent Christian. I have maintained the excellence of my moral character. I

have tried to be orthodox and attentive to all religious duties. You know that it is so, yet I seldom have any joy in my religion. ‘You never gave me a kid.’ I go trembling and mourning all my days. I get very little delight out of my religion, yet here is one just converted, and all this fuss is made over him and he is rejoicing, too. You feast him with the best fatted calf. He is as glad as glad can be, and everybody is glad about him but nobody seems to take much notice of me. I go on my steady quiet course and I have never caused you such grief as this your son has done.”

31. *And he said unto him—So beautifully—*

31. *Son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours.* And that is what the Lord seems to say to the Believer when he gets into that naughty spirit of the elder brother and does not like to hear of sinners of the deepest dye being brought to Christ—and who disapproves of the jubilation and excitement at revival times. The Lord says to him, “Suppose you have not had such enjoyments? You may have them if you like, for you are always with Me. There is joy enough in that fact and all that I have is yours. You are joint-heir with Me. I have given you everything—what more do you want?”

32. *And it was meet—“It was fitting, it was proper.”*

32. *That we should make merry, and be glad: for this, your brother.* “For he is your brother. Notwithstanding your richer experience and your deeper Christian knowledge, and your high standing in the church, this poor prodigal, who is just saved, is your brother! So it is meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this, your brother”—

32. *Was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—508, 473, 509.

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

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

NUMBER ONE THOUSAND—OR, “BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE” NO. 1000

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 16, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants
of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!”
Luke 15:17.*

“HE came to himself.” The word may be applied to one waking out of a deep swoon. He had been unconscious of his true condition, and he had lost all power to deliver himself from it. But now he was coming round again, returning to consciousness and action. The voice which shall awaken the dead aroused him. The visions of his sinful trance all disappeared—his foul but fascinating dreams were gone. He came to himself. Or the word may be applied to one recovering from insanity. The prodigal son had played the madman, for sin is madness of the worst kind. He had been demented, he had put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—darkness for light—and light for darkness.

He had injured himself, and had done for his soul what those possessed of devils in our Savior’s time did for their bodies when they wounded themselves with stones, and cut themselves with knives. The insane man does not know himself to be insane. But as soon as he comes to himself he painfully perceives the state from which he is escaping. Returning, then, to true reason and sound judgment, the prodigal came to himself.

Another illustration of the word may be found in the old world fables of enchantment—when a man was disenthralled from the magician’s spell he “came to himself.” Classic story has its legend of Circe, the enchantress, who transformed men into swine. Surely this young man in our parable had been degraded in the same manner. He had lowered his manhood to the level of the brutes. It should be the property of man to have love to his kindred, to have respect for right, to have some care for his own interest. This young man had lost all these proper attributes of humanity, and so had become as the beast that perish.

But as the poet sings of Ulysses—that he compelled the enchantress to restore his companions to their original form—so we see here the prodigal returning to manhood, looking away from his sensual pleasures and commencing a course of conduct more consistent with his birth and parentage. There are men here today, perhaps, who are still in this swoon. O God of Heaven arouse them! Some here who are morally insane. May the Lord recover them, the Divine Physician put His cooling hand upon their fevered brow, and say to them—“I will. Be you made whole.”

Perhaps there are others here who have allowed their animal nature to reign supreme. May He who destroys the works of the devil deliver them from the power of Satan and give them power to become the sons of God. He shall have all the glory! It appears that when the prodigal came to

himself he was shut up to two thoughts. Two facts were clear to him—there was plenty in his father’s house, and that he himself was famishing.

May the two kindred spiritual facts have absolute power over all your hearts, if you are yet unsaved! For they were most certainly all-important and pressing truths. These are no fancies of one in a dream. No ravings of a maniac. No imaginations of one under fascination—it is most true that there is plenty of all good things in the Father’s house, and that the sinner needs them. Nowhere else can Divine Grace be found or pardon gained. But with God there is plenitude of mercy—let none venture to dispute this glorious Truth.

Equally true is it that the sinner without God is perishing. He is perishing now. He will perish everlastingly. All that is worth having in his existence will be utterly destroyed, and he himself shall only remain as a desolation. The owl and the bittern of misery and anguish shall haunt the ruins of his nature forever and forever. If we could shut up unconverted men to those two thoughts, what hopeful congregations we should have! Alas, they forget that there is mercy only with God, and fancy that it is to be found somewhere else. And they try to slip away from the humbling fact of their own lost estate, and imagine that perhaps there may be some back door of escape.

They imagine that, after all, they are not so bad as the Scripture declares, or that perhaps it shall be right with them at the last, however wrong it may be with them now. Alas, my Brethren, what shall we do with those who willfully shut their eyes to truths of which the evidence is overwhelming, and the importance overpowering? I earnestly entreat those of you who know how to approach the Throne of God in faith to breathe the prayer that He would now bring into captivity the unconverted heart, and put these two strong fetters upon every unregenerate soul.

There is abundant Grace with God—there is utter destitution with themselves. Bound with such fetters, and led into the Presence of Jesus, the captive would soon receive the liberty of the children of God. I intend only to dwell this morning, or mainly, upon the first thought, the master thought as it seems to me, which was in the prodigal’s mind—that which really constrained him to say—“I will arise and go to my father.”

It was not, I think, the home-bringing thought that he was perishing with hunger but the impulse towards his father found its mainspring in the consideration, “How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare”! The plenty, the abundance, the superabundance of the father’s house was that which attracted him to return home. And many, many a soul has been led to seek God when it has fully believed that there was abundant mercy with Him.

My desire this morning shall be to put plainly before every sinner here the exceeding abundance of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus—hoping that the Lord will find out those who are His sons, and that they may catch at these words, and as they hear of the abundance of the bread in the Father’s house, may say, “I will arise and go to my Father.”

I. First, then, let us consider for a short time THE MORE THAN ABUNDANCE OF ALL GOOD THINGS IN THE FATHER’S HOUSE. What do you need this morning, awakened Sinner? Of all that you need, there is, with God, an all-sufficient, a superabounding supply—“bread enough and to spare.” Let us prove this to you. First, consider the Father Himself.

Whoever shall rightly consider the Father will at once perceive that there can be no stint to mercy, no boundary to the possibilities of Divine Grace.

What is the Nature and Character of the Supreme? "Is He harsh or loving?" asks one. The Scripture answers the question, not by telling us that God is loving, but by assuring us that God is Love. God Himself is Love. It is His very Essence. It is not that love is *in* God, but that God Himself is Love. Can there be a more concise and more positive way of saying that the love of God is infinite? You cannot measure God Himself. Your conceptions cannot grasp the grandeur of His attributes. Neither can you tell the dimensions of His love, nor conceive the fullness of it.

Only understand this—that high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways higher than your ways—and His thoughts than your thoughts. His mercy endures forever. He pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage. He retains not His anger forever because He delights in mercy. "You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive: and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon You." "Your mercy is great above the heavens." "The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

If Divine Love alone should not seem sufficient for your salvation, remember that with the Father to whom the sinner returns there is as much of wisdom as there is of Grace. Is your case a very difficult one? He that made you can heal you. Are your diseases strange and complex? He that fashioned the ear, can He not remove its deafness? He that made the eye, can He not enlighten it if it is blind? No mischief can have happened to you but what He, who is your God, can recover you from it. Matchless wisdom cannot fail to meet the intricacies of your case. Neither can there be any failure of power with the Father.

Do you not know that He who made the earth and stretched out the heavens like a tent to dwell in, has no boundary to His strength, nor limit to His might? If you need Omnipotence to lift you up from the slough into which you have fallen, Omnipotence is ready to deliver you—if you cry to the Strong for strength. Though you should need all the force with which the Creator made the worlds, and all the strength with which He bears on the pillars of the universe—all that strength and force should be laid out for your good—if you would believingly seek mercy at the hand of God in Christ Jesus.

None of His power shall be against you. None of His wisdom shall plan your overthrow. But love shall reign in all, and every attribute of God shall become subservient to your salvation. Oh, when I think of sin I cannot understand how a sinner can be saved! But when I think of God, and look into His heart, I understand how readily He can forgive. "Look into His heart," asks one? "How can we do that?" Has He not laid bare His heart to you? Do you inquire where He has done this? I answer, yonder upon Calvary's Cross. What was in the very center of the Divine heart? What, but the Person of the Well-Beloved, His only begotten Son?

And He has taken His Only Begotten and nailed Him to the Cross, because, if I may venture so to speak, He loved sinners better than His Son. He spared not His Son, but He spares the sinner. He poured out His wrath upon His Son and made Him the Substitute for sinners that He might lavish love upon the guilty who deserved His anger. O Soul, if you are lost, it is not from any want of Divine Grace, or wisdom, or power in the Father. If you perish, it is not because God is hard to move or unable

to save! If you are a castaway, it is not because the Eternal refused to hear your cries for pardon or rejected your faith in Him! On your own head is your blood if your soul is lost. If you starve, you starve because you will starve. For in the Father's House there is “bread enough and to spare.”

But, now, consider a second matter which may set this more clearly before us. Think of *the Son of God*, who is, indeed, the true Bread of Life for sinners. Sinner, I return to my personal address. You need a Savior, and you may well be encouraged when you see that a Savior is provided—provided by God—since it is certain He would not make a mistake in the provision. But consider who the Savior is! He is, Himself, God! Jesus who came from Heaven for our redemption was not an angel, else might we tremble to trust the weight of our sin upon Him.

He was not mere man, or He could but have suffered as a substitute for *one*, if indeed for one. But He was very God of very God—in the beginning with the Father. And does such a One come to redeem? Is there room to doubt as to His ability, if that is the fact? I do confess this day that if my sins were ten thousand times heavier than they are, yes, and if I had all the sins of this crowd in addition piled upon me, I could trust Jesus with them all at this moment now that I know Him to be the Christ of God!

He is the mighty God, and by His pierced hands the burden of our sins is easily removed. He blots out our sins. He casts them into the depths of the sea. But think of what Jesus, the Son of God, has done. He who was God, and thus blessed forever, left the Throne and royalties of Heaven and stooped to yonder manger. There He lies. His mother wraps Him in swaddling clothes. He hangs upon her breast. The Infinite is clothed as an infant! The Invisible is made manifest in flesh! The Almighty is linked with weakness, for our sakes. Oh, matchless stoop of condescension! If the Redeemer God does this in order to save us, shall it be thought a thing impossible for Him to save the vilest of the vile?

Can anything be too hard for Him who comes from Heaven to earth to redeem? Pause not because of astonishment, but press onward! Do you see Him, who was God over all, blessed forever, living more than thirty years in the midst of the sons of men, bearing the infirmities of manhood, taking upon Himself our sicknesses, and sharing our sorrows—His feet weary with treading the acres of Palestine? Look at His body faint oftentimes with hunger and thirst, and labor—His knees knit to the earth with midnight prayer—His eyes red with weeping (for oftentimes Jesus wept), tempted in all points like as we are!

Matchless spectacle! An Incarnate God dwells among sinners, and endures their contradiction! What Glory flashed forth ever and anon from the midst of His lowliness! A glory which should render faith in Him inevitable. You who walked on the sea—You who did raise the dead—it is not rational to doubt Your power to forgive sins! Did You not Yourself put it so when you bade the man take up his bed and walk? “Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you. Or to say, Rise up and walk?” Assuredly He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him—He was able even here on earth in weakness to forgive sins—much more now that He is seated in His Glory!

He is exalted on high to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins. But, ah, the master proof that in Christ Jesus there is “bread enough and to spare,” is the Cross! Will you follow me a

moment? Will you follow HIM, rather, to Gethsemane? Can you see the bloody sweat as it falls upon the ground in His agony? Can you think of His scourging before Herod and Pilate? Can you trace Him along the *Via Dolorosa* of Jerusalem? Will your tender hearts endure to see Him nailed to the tree, and lifted up to bleed and die?

This is but the shell. As for the inward kernel of His sufferings no language can describe it, neither can conception peer into it. The everlasting God laid sin on Christ—and where the sin was laid there fell the wrath. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief." Now He that died upon the Cross was God's only begotten Son. Can you conceive a limit to the merit of such a Savior's death? I know there are some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the merit of the blood of Jesus—if my system of theology needed such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds!

I cannot! I dare not allow the thought to find a lodging in my mind! It seems so near akin to blasphemy. In Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit—my plummet finds no bottom—my eyes discover no shore. There must be sufficient efficacy in the blood of Christ, if God had so willed it, to have saved not only all this world, but ten thousand worlds, had they transgressed the Maker's Law. Once admit infinity into the matter, and *limit* is out of the question! Having a Divine Person for an offering—it is not consistent to conceive of *limited* value—boundaries and measure are terms inapplicable to the Divine Sacrifice.

The *intent of the Divine purpose* fixes the application of the infinite offering, but does not change it into a finite work. In the Atonement of Christ Jesus there is "bread enough and to spare." Even as Paul wrote to Timothy, "He is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe."

But now let me lead you to another point of solemnly joyful consideration, and that is *the Holy Spirit*. To believe and love the Trinity is to possess the key of theology. We spoke of the Father, we spoke of the Son. Let us now speak of the Holy Spirit. We do Him all too little honor, for the Holy Spirit condescends to come to earth and *dwell in our hearts*. And notwithstanding all our provocations He still abides within His people.

Now, Sinner, you need a new life and you need holiness, for both of these are necessary to make you fit for Heaven. Is there a provision for this? The Holy Spirit is provided and given in the Covenant of Grace. And surely in Him there is "enough and to spare." What cannot the Holy Spirit do? Being Divine, nothing can be beyond His power. Look at what He has already done. He moved upon the face of chaos, and brought it into order. All the beauty of creation arose beneath His molding breath.

We ourselves must confess with Elijah, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life." Think of the great deeds of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when men unlearned spoke with tongues of which they knew not a syllable before! And the flames of fire upon them were also within them, so that their hearts burned with zeal and courage to which they, up to then, had been strangers. Think of the Holy Spirit's work on such a one as Saul of Tarsus. That persecutor foams blood—he is a very wolf! He would devour the saints of God at Damascus and yet, within a few moments, you hear him say, "Who are You, Lord?" and yet again, "Lord, what will you have me to do?"

His heart is changed! The Spirit of God has newly created it. The adamant is melted in a moment into wax. Many of us stand before you as the living monuments of what the Holy Spirit can do. And we can assure you from our own experience, that there is no inward evil which He cannot overcome, no lustful desire of the flesh which He cannot subdue, no obduracy of the affections which He cannot melt.

Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Surely no sinner can be beyond the possibilities of mercy when the Holy Spirit condescends to be the Agent of human conversion. O Sinner, if you perish, it is not because the Holy Spirit lacks power, or the blood of Jesus lacks efficacy, or the Father fails in love. It is because you believe not in Christ, but do abide in willful rebellion, refusing the abundant Bread of Life which is placed before you.

A few rapid sentences upon other things, which will go to show, still further, the greatness of the provision of Divine Mercy. Observe well that *throughout all the ages God has been sending one Prophet after another*, and these Prophets have been succeeded by Apostles—and these by martyrs and confessors, and pastors and Evangelists, and teachers. All these have been commissioned by the Lord in regular succession. And what has been the message they have had to deliver? They have all pointed to Christ, the great Deliverer!

Moses and the Prophets all spoke of Him, and so have all truly God-sent ambassadors. Do you think, Sinner, that God has made all this fuss about a trifle? Has He sent all these servants to call you to a table insufficiently furnished? Has He multiplied His invitations through so long a time to bid you and others come to a provision which is not, after all, sufficient for them? Oh, it cannot be! God is not mocked! Neither does He mock poor needy souls. The stores of His Mercy are sufficient for the utmost emergencies—

***“Rivers of love and mercy here
In a rich ocean join.
Salvation in abundance flows,
Like floods of milk and wine.
Great God, the treasures of Your love
Are everlasting mines,
Deep us our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our sins.”***

Recollect, again, that *God has been pleased to stake His honor upon the Gospel*. Men desire a name, and God also is jealous of His Glory. Now what has God been pleased to select for His name? Is it not the conversion and salvation of men? When instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, and instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. And do you think God will get a name by saving little sinners by a little Savior?

Ah, His great name comes from washing out stains as black as Hell, and pardoning sinners who were foulest of the foul. Is there one monstrous rebel here who is qualified to glorify God greatly because his salvation will be the wonder of angels and the amazement of devils? I hope there is. O you most degraded, black, loathsome Sinner nearest to being a damned sinner—if this voice can reach you—I challenge you to come and prove whether God’s mercy is not a match for your sin!

You Goliath Sinner, come here! You shall find that God can slay your enmity and make you yet His friend, and even more, His loving and adoring servant, because great forgiveness shall secure great love. Such is

the greatness of Divine Mercy, that "where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound." Do you think, again, O Sinner, that Jesus Christ came out of Heaven to do a little deed, and to provide a slender store of mercy? Do you think He went up to Calvary, and down to the grave, and all, that He might do a commonplace thing, and provide a stinted, narrow, limited salvation, such as your unbelief would imagine His redemption to be?

No! We speak of the labors of Hercules—those are child's play compared with the labors of Christ who slew the lion of Hell! He turned purifying streams through the Augean stables of man's sin, and cleansed them—and performed ten thousand miracles besides! And will you so depreciate Christ as to imagine that what He has accomplished is, after all, little, so little that it is not enough to save *you*?

If it were in my power to single out the man who has been the most dishonest, most licentious, most drunken, most profane—in three words, most earthly, sensual, devilish—I would repeat the challenge which I gave just now and bid him draw near to Jesus, and see whether the Fountain filled with Christ's atoning blood cannot wash him white. I challenge him at this instant to come and cast himself at the dear Redeemer's feet and see if Jesus will say, "I cannot save you, you have sinned beyond My power."

It shall never, never, never be, for He is able to the uttermost to save. He is a Savior, and a great one. Christ will be honored by the grandeur of the Grace which He bestows upon the greatest of offenders. There is in Him pardon "enough and to spare." I must leave this point, but I cannot do so without adding that I think "BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE" might be taken for the motto of the Gospel. I believe in particular redemption, that Christ laid down His life for His sheep. But, as I have already said, *I do not believe in the limited value of that redemption*—how else could I dare to read the words of John, "He is the Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sine of the whole world"?

There is a sure portion for His own elect, but there is also over and above "to spare." I believe in the electing love which will save all its objects—"bread enough." But I believe in boundless benevolence, "Bread enough *and to spare*." We, when we have a purpose to accomplish, put forth the requisite quantity of strength and no more, for we must be economical. We must not waste our limited store. Even charity gives the poor man no more than he absolutely needs. But when God feeds the multitude, He spreads the board with imperial bounty. Our water cart runs up and down the favored road, but when Heaven's clouds would favor the good man's fields, they deluge whole nations, and even pour themselves upon the sea.

There is no real waste with God. But at the same time there is no stint. "BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE"—write that inscription over the House of Mercy, and let every hungry passerby be encouraged to enter in and eat.

II. We must now pass on to a second consideration, and dwell very briefly on it. According to the text, there was not only bread enough in the house, but **THE LOWEST IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE ENJOYED ENOUGH AND TO SPARE.** We can never make a parable run on all fours, therefore we cannot find the exact counterpart of the "hired servants." I understand the prodigal to have meant this—that the very lowest menial servant

employed by his father had bread to eat, and had “bread enough and to spare.”

Now, how should we translate this? Why, Sinner, the very lowest creature that God has made, that has not sinned against Him, is well supplied and has abounding happiness. There are adaptations for pleasure in the organizations of the lowest animals. See how the gnats dance in the summer’s sunbeam! Hear the swallows as they scream with delight when on the wing. He who cares for birds and insects will surely care for men! God who hears the ravens when they cry, will He not hear the returning penitent?

He gives these insects happiness—did He mean *me* to be wretched? Surely He who opens His hands and supplies the need of every living thing will not refuse to open His hands and supply my needs if I seek His face. Yet I must not make these lowest creatures to be the hired servants. Whom shall I then select among men? I will put it thus—the very worst of sinners that have come to Christ have found Grace “enough and to spare.” And the very least of saints who dwell in the House of the Lord find love “enough and to spare.” Take, then, the most guilty of sinners and see how bountifully the Lord treats them when they turn unto Him.

Did not some of you, who are yourselves unconverted, once know persons who were at least as bad, perhaps more outwardly immoral than yourselves? Well, they have been converted, though you have not been. And when they were converted, what was their testimony? Did the blood of Christ avail to cleanse them? Oh, yes. And more than cleanse them—for it added to beauty not their own. They were naked once—was Jesus able to clothe them? Was there a sufficient covering in His righteousness? Ah, yes! And adornment was superadded. They received not a bare apparel, but a royal raiment!

You have seen others thus liberally treated—does not this induce you, also, to come? Some of us need not confine our remarks to others, for we can speak personally of ourselves. We came to Jesus as full of sin as ever you can be and felt ourselves, beyond measure, lost and ruined. But, oh, His tender love! I could sooner stand here and weep than speak to you of it. My soul melts in gratitude when I think of the Infinite Mercy of God to me in that hour when I came seeking mercy at His hands. Oh, why will you not also come? May His Holy Spirit sweetly draw you!

I proved that there was bread enough, mercy enough, forgiveness enough, and to spare. Come along, come along, poor guilty One! Come along, there is room enough for you! If the chief of sinners bears this witness, so do *the most obscure of saints*. If we could call forth from his seat a weak Believer in God, one who is almost unknown in the Church—one who sometimes questions whether he is, indeed, a child of God, and he would be willing to be a hired servant so long as he might belong to God—and if I were to ask him, “How, after all, how has the Lord dealt with you?” what would be his reply?

You have many afflictions, doubts and fears, but have you any complaints against your Lord? When you have waited upon Him for daily Grace, has He denied you? When you have been full of troubles, has He refused you comfort? When you have been plunged in distress, has He declined to deliver you? The Lord Himself asks, “Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?” Testify against the Lord, you His people, if you have anything against Him! Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, whoever there is in

God's service who has found Him a hard Taskmaster, let him speak! Among the angels before Jehovah's Throne, and among men redeemed on earth—if there is anyone that can say he has been dealt with unjustly or treated with ungenerous churlishness, let him lift up his voice!

But there is not one. Even the devil, himself, when he spoke of God and of His servant Job, said, "Does Job serve God for nothing?" Of course he did not—God will not let His servants serve Him for nothing! He will pay them superabundant wages and they shall all bear witness that at His table there is "bread enough and to spare." Now, if these still enjoy the bread of the Father's House, these who were once great sinners, these who are now only very commonplace saints, surely, Sinner, it should encourage you to say, "I will arise and go to my Father," for His hired servants "have bread enough and to spare."

III. Notice in the third place, that the text dwells upon THE MULTITUDE OF THOSE WHO HAVE "BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE." The prodigal lays an emphasis upon that word, "*How many* hired servants of my father's." He was thinking of their great number, and counting them over. He thought of those that tended the cattle, of those that went out with the camels, of those that watched the sheep, those that minded the corn, and those that waited in the house. He ran them over in his mind—his father was great in the land, and had many servants. Yet he knew that they all had of the best food "enough and to spare."

"Why should I perish with hunger? I am only one at any rate. Though my hunger seems insatiable, it is but one belly that has to be filled, and, lo, my father fills hundreds, thousands every day! Why should I perish with hunger?" Now, O you awakened Sinner, you who feel your sin and misery this morning, think of the numbers upon whom God has bestowed His Grace already. Think of the countless hosts in Heaven—if you were introduced there today, you would find it as easy to tell the stars, or the sands of the sea, as to count the multitudes that are before the Throne even now.

They have come from the east and from the west, and they are sitting down with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob—and there is room enough for you! And beside those in Heaven, think of those on earth. Blessed be God, His elect on earth are to be counted by millions, I believe, and the days are coming—brighter days than these—when there shall be multitudes upon multitudes brought to know the Savior, and to rejoice in Him. The Father's love is not for a few only, but for an exceeding great company—a number that no man can number will be found in Heaven!

Now, a man can number a very great amount. Set to work your Newtons, your calculators—they can count great numbers—but God, and God, alone, can tell the multitude of His redeemed. Now, Sinner, you are but one at any rate, great Sinner as you are, and the mercy of God which embraces millions must have room enough in it for *you*. The sea which holds the whales and creeping things innumerable—do you say, "It will overflow its banks if I bathe in it"? The sun which floods the universe with light, can you say, "I should exhaust his beams if I should ask him to enlighten my darkness"?

Say not so. If you come to yourself you will not tolerate such a thought, but you will remember with hope the richness of the Father's Divine Grace, even though your own poverty stares you in the face. Let us add a few words to close with—close grappling words to some of you to whom

God has sent His message this morning—and whom He intends to save. O you who have been long hearers of the Gospel, and who know it well in theory, but have felt none of the power of it in your hearts—let me now remind you where and what you are! You are perishing. As the Lord lives, there is but a step between you and death! But a step, no, but a *breath* between you and Hell!

Sinner, if at this moment your heart should cease its beating and there are a thousand causes that might produce that result before the clock ticks again—you would be in the flames of Divine wrath! Can you bear to be in such peril? If you were hanging over a rock by a slender thread which must soon break, and if you would then fall headlong down a terrible precipice, you would not sleep, but be full of alarm. May you have sense enough, wit enough, Divine Grace enough, to be alarmed until you escape from the wrath to come!

Remember, however, that while you are perishing, you are perishing in sight of plenty. You are famishing where a table is abundantly spread. What is more, there are those whom you know now sitting at that table and feasting. What sad perversity for a man to persist in being starved in the midst of a banquet where others are being satisfied with good things! But I think I hear you say, “I fear I have no right to come to Jesus.” I will ask you this—have you any right to say that till you have been denied!

Did you ever try to go to Christ? Has He ever rejected you? If, then, you have never received a denial, why do you wickedly imagine that He would deny you? Wickedly, I say, for it is an offense against the Christ who opened His heart upon the Cross to imagine that He could deny a penitent. Have you any right to say, “But I am not one of those for whom mercy is provided”? Who told you so? Have you climbed to Heaven and read the secret records of God’s election? Has the Lord revealed a strange decree to you, and said, “Go and despair, I will have no pity on you”? If you say that God has so spoken, I do not believe you!

In this sacred Book is recorded what God has said. Here is the sure Word of Testimony, and in it I find it said of no humble seeker that God has shut him out from His Grace. Why have you a right to invent such a fiction in order to secure your own damnation? Instead, there is much in the Word of God and elsewhere to encourage you in coming to Christ. He has not repelled one sinner yet! That is good to begin with—it is not likely that He would, for since He died to save sinners, why should He reject them when they seek to be saved?

You say, “I am afraid to come to Christ.” Is that wise? I have heard of a poor navigator who had been converted, who had but little education, but who knew the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when dying, very cheerfully and joyfully longed to depart. His wife said to him, “But, mon, ain’t you afeared to stand before the Judge?” “Woman,” said he, “why should I be afeared of a Man as died for me?” Oh, why should you be afraid of Christ who died for sinners? The idea of being afraid of Him should be banished by the fact that He shed His blood for the guilty. You have much reason to believe from the very fact that He died, that He will receive you.

Besides, you have His Word for it, for He says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”—for no reason, and in no way, and on no occasion, and under no presence, and for no motive. “I will not cast him out,” says the original. “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

You say it is too good to be true that there can be pardon for you—this is a foolish measuring of God's corn with your bushel! Because it seems too good a thing for you to receive, do you fancy it is too good for God to bestow? Let the greatness of the Good News be one reason for believing that the news is true, for it is so like God—

***"Who is a pardoning God like You?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"***

Because the Gospel assures us that He forgives great sins through a great Savior, it looks as if it were true since He is so great a God. What should be the result of all this with every sinner here at this time? I think this Good News should arouse those who have almost gone to sleep through despair. The sailors have been pumping the vessel, the leaks are gaining, she is going down, the captain is persuaded she must be a wreck. Depressed by such evil tidings, the men refuse to work. And since the boats are all stove in and they cannot make a raft, they sit down in despair. Presently the captain has better news for them. "She will float," he says. "The wind is abating, the pumps tell upon the water, the leak can be reached yet."

See how they work—with what cheery courage they toil on, because there is hope! Soul, there is hope! *There is hope!* THERE IS HOPE! To the harlot, to the thief, to the drunkard there is hope! "There is no hope," says Satan. Liar that you are, get back to your den—for YOU there is no hope! But for fallen man, though he is in the mire of sin up to his very neck. Though he is at the gates of death—while he lives there is hope! There is hope for hopeless souls in the Savior.

In addition to arousing us this ought to elevate the sinner's thoughts. Some years ago there was a crossing-sweeper in Dublin, with his broom, at the corner, and in all probability his highest thoughts were to keep the crossing clean, and look for the pence. One day a lawyer put his hand upon his shoulder, and said to him, "My good fellow, do you know that you are heir to a fortune of ten thousand pounds a year?" "Do you mean it?" said he. "I do," he said. "I have just received the information. I am sure you are the man."

He walked away, *and he forgot his broom.* Are you astonished? Why, who would not have forgotten a broom when suddenly made possessor of ten thousand a year? So I pray that some poor sinners who have been thinking of the pleasures of the world, when they hear that there is hope—and that there is Heaven to be had—will forget the deceitful pleasures of sin, and follow after higher and better things.

Should it not also purify the mind? The prodigal, when he said, "I will arise and go to my father," became, in a measure, reformed from that very moment. How, you say? Why, he left the swine trough—more—he left the wine cup, and he left the harlots. He did not go with the harlot on his arm and the wine cup in his hand, and say, "I will take these with me, and go to my father." It could not be. These were all left, and though he had no goodness to bring, yet he did not try to keep his sins and come to Christ.

I shall close with this remark, because it will act as a sort of *caveat*, and be a fit word to season the wide invitations of the free Gospel. Some of you, I fear, will make mischief even out of the Gospel and will dare to take the Cross and use it for a gibbet for your souls. If God is so merciful, you will go, therefore, and sin the more. And because Divine Grace is freely given, therefore you will continue in sin that Grace may abound. If you do

this, I would solemnly remind you I have no Grace to preach to such as you.

“Your damnation is just.” It is the Word of Inspiration, and the only one I know that is applicable to such as you are. But every needy, guilty soul that desires a Savior is told today to believe in Jesus, that is, trust in the Substitution and Sacrifice of Christ. Trust Him to take your sin and blot it out. Trust Him to take your soul and save it! Trust Christ entirely, and you are forgiven this very moment! You are saved this very instant, and you may rejoice now in the fact that being justified by faith, you have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

O come! Come! Come! Come and welcome! Come now to the Redeemer’s blood! Holy Spirit, compel them to come in, that the House of Mercy may be filled. Amen and Amen!

[THE reader, if a believer in Christ, is requested to unite with the preacher in praising the Lord for Grace abundantly given in connection with these sermons. This is the thousandth of the series of sermons which we have published consecutively week by week, and of which the circulation has continued to increase. These discourses have, many of them, been reprinted in the United States and have also been translated into German, French, Swedish, Dutch, Italian, and Welsh. Some of them have also been issued in the Hungarian, Russian, Danish, Spanish, Telugu, Malagasay, Maori, and Gaelic tongues. Of their effect by the blessing of God’s Spirit, thousands in Heaven, and in all parts of the earth, are joyful witnesses. If we did not praise God for such mercy the stones would cry out!]

[And almost to the day, 130 years later, this request from this editor—if you or someone you know has come, by His Grace, to a saving knowledge of our Master, Jesus Christ, from reading this or any of Brother Spurgeon’s sermons in this “modern English” format, please let the person or ministry where you got this sermon know—so they may rejoice with you and praise our God for His amazing Grace!]

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THE PRODIGAL'S CLIMAX

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INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 26, 1895.
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*"When he came to himself."
Luke 15:17.*

THERE are different stages in the sinner's history and they are worth marking in the prodigal's experience. There is, first, the stage in which the young man sought independence from his father. The younger son said, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." We know something of that state of mind and, alas, it is a very common one! As yet there is no open profligacy, no distinct rebellion against God. Religious services are attended, the father's God is held in reverence, but in his heart the young man desires a supposed liberty—he wishes to cast off from all restraint. Companions hint that he is too much tied to his mother's apron string. He, himself, feels that there may be some strange delights which he has never enjoyed and the curiosity of Mother Eve to taste the fruit of that tree which was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, comes into the young man's mind—and he wishes to reach out his hand and take the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, that he may eat thereof. He never *intends* to spend his substance in riotous living, but he would like to have the opportunity of spending it as he likes. He does not *mean* to be a profligate, still, he would like to have the honor of choosing what is right on his own account. At any rate, he is a man, now—he feels his blushing honors full upon him and he wants, now, to exercise his own freedom of will and to feel that he, himself, is really his own master! Who, indeed, he asks, is Lord over him?

Perhaps there are some to whom I am speaking who are just in such a state as that—if so, may the Grace of God arrest you before you go any further away from Him! May you feel that to be out of gear with God—to wish to be separated from Him and to have other interests than those of Him who made you—must be dangerous and probably will be fatal! Therefore, now, even now, may you come to yourself at this earliest stage of your history and also come to love and rejoice in God as the prodigal returned to his father!

Very soon, however, this young man in the parable entered upon quite another stage. He had received his portion of goods—all that he would have had at his father's death he had turned into ready money—and there it was. It is his own and he may do what he pleases with it. Having already indulged his independent feeling towards his father and his wish

to have a separate establishment altogether from him, he knew that he would be freer to carry out his plans if he did so right away. Anywhere near his father there is a check upon him—he feels that the influence of his home somewhat clips his wings. If he could get into a far country, *there* he would have the opportunity to develop—and all that evolution could do for him, he would have the opportunity of enjoying—so he gathers all together and goes into the far country.

It may be that I am addressing some who have reached that stage. Now there is all the delirium of self-indulgence. Now it is all gaiety, “a short life and a merry one,” forgetting the long eternity and a woeful one! Now the cup is full and the red wine sparkles in the bowl. As yet, it has not bitten you like a serpent, nor stung you like an adder, as it will do all too soon—just now it is the deadly sweetness that you taste and the exhilaration of that drugged chalice that deceives you. You are making haste to enjoy yourself! Sin is a dangerous joy, beloved all the more because of the danger, for, where there is a fearful risk, there is often an intense pleasure to a daring heart and you, perhaps, are one of that venturesome band, spending your days in folly and your nights in righteousness.

Before long there comes a third stage to the sinner as well as to the prodigal—that is when he has, “spent all.” We have only a certain amount of spending money, after all. He who has *gold* without limit, yet has not *health* without limit! Or if health does not fail him in his sinning, yet *desire* fails and satiety comes in as it did with Solomon when he tried this way of seeking happiness. At last there is no honey left, there is only the sting of the bee! At last there is no sweetness in the cup, there is only the delirium that follows the intoxication! At last the meat is eaten to the bone and there is nothing good to come out of that bone—it contains no marrow, the teeth are broken with it—and the man wishes that he had never sat down to so terrible a feast! He has reached the stage at which the prodigal arrived when he had spent all. Oh, there are some who spend all their character, spend all their health and strength, spend all their hope, spend all their uprightness, spend *everything* that was worth having! They have spent all! This is another stage in the sinner's history and it is very apt to lead to despair, deeper sin and, sometimes, to that worst of sins which drives a man red-handed before the bar of his Maker to account for his own blood!

It is a dreadful state to be in, for there comes at the back of it a terrible hunger. There is a weary labor to get something that may stay the spirit, a descending to the degradation of feeding swine, a willingness to eat of the husks that swine eat, yet an inability to do so! Many have felt this craving that cannot be satisfied. But, for my part, I am glad when “the rake's progress” has reached this point, for often, in the Grace of God, it is the way home for the prodigal! It is a roundabout way, but it is the way home for him! When men have spent all and poverty has followed on their recklessness—and sickness has come at the call of their vice—then it is that Omnipotent Grace has stepped in—and there has come another stage in the sinner's history of which I am now going to

speak, as God may help me. That is the point the prodigal had reached, "when he came to himself."

I. Then, first, A SINNER IS BESIDE HIMSELF.

While a man is living in his sin, he is out of his mind, he is beside himself. I am sure that it is so. There is nothing more like madness than sin and it is a moot point among those who study deep problems, how far insanity and the tendency to sin go side by side, and whereabouts it is that great sin and entire loss of responsibility may touch each other. I do not intend to discuss that question at all, but I am going to say that every sinner is morally and responsibly insane and, therefore, in a worse condition than if he were only mentally insane.

He is insane, first, *because his judgment is altogether out of order*. He makes fatal mistakes about all-important matters. He reckons a short time of this mortal life to be worth all his thoughts and he puts eternity into the background. He considers it possible for a creature to be at enmity against the Creator, or indifferent to Him, and yet to be happy! He fancies that he knows better what is right for him than the Law of God declares. He dreams that the everlasting Gospel, which cost God the life of His own Son, is scarcely worthy of his attention at all, and he passes it by with contempt. He has unshipped the rudder of his judgment and steers towards the rocks with awful deliberation—and seems as if he would wish to know where he can find the surest place to commit eternal shipwreck! His judgment is out of order.

Further, *his actions are those of a madman*. This prodigal son, first of all, had interests apart from his father. He must have been mad to have conceived such an idea as that! For me to have interests apart from Him who made me and keeps me alive—for me, the creature of an hour, to fancy that I can have a will in opposition to the will of God, and that I can so live and prosper—why, I must be a fool! I must be mad to wish any such thing, for it is consistent with the highest reason to believe that he who yields himself up to Omnipotent Goodness must be in the track of happiness, but that he who sets himself against the Almighty Grace of God must certainly be kicking against the pricks to his own wounding and hurt! Yet this sinner does not see that it is so and the reason is that he is beside himself.

Then, next, that young man went away from his home, though it was the best home in all the world. We can judge that from the exceeding tenderness and generosity of the father at the head of it and from the wonderful way in which all the servants had such entire sympathy with their master. It was a happy home—well stored with all that the son could need—yet he quits it to go, he knows not where, among strangers who did not care a straw for him and who, when they had drained his purse, would not give him even a penny with which to buy bread to save him from starving! The prodigal must have been mad to act like that—and for any of *us* to leave Him who has been the dwelling place of His saints in all generations, to quit the warmth and comfort of the Church of God which is the home of joy and peace—is clear insanity! Anyone who does this is acting against his own best interests—he is choosing the

path of shame and sorrow, he is casting away all true delight—*he must be mad.*

You can see that this young man is out of his mind because, when he gets into the far country, he begins spending his money riotously. He does not lay it out judiciously. He spends his money for that which is not bread and his labor for that which satisfies not—and that is just what the sinner does. If he is self-righteous, he is trying to weave a robe out of the worthless material of his own works. And if he is a voluptuary, given up to sinful indulgence, what vanity it is for him to hope for pleasure in the midst of sin! Should I expect to meet with angels in the sewers? With heavenly light in a dark mine? No, these are not places for such things as those, and can I rationally look for joy to my heart from reveling, chambering, wantonness and such conduct? If I do, I must be mad! Oh, if men were but rational—and they often wrongly suppose that they are—if they were but rational beings, they would see how irrational it is to sin! The most reasonable thing in the world is to spend life for its own true design and not to fling it away as though it were a pebble on the seashore.

Further, the prodigal was a fool, he was mad, for he spent all. He did not even stop half-way on the road to penury, but he went on till he had spent all! There is no limit to those who have started in a course of sin. He that stays back from it, by God's Grace, may keep from it, but it is with sin as it is with the intoxicating cup. One said to me, the other day, "I can drink much, or I can drink none, but I have not the power to drink a little, for if I begin, I cannot stop myself, and may go to any length." So is it with sin, God's Grace can keep you abstaining from sin, but, if you begin sinning, oh, how one sin draws on another! One sin is the decoy or magnet for another sin, and draws it on, and one cannot tell, when he begins to descend this slippery slide, how quickly and how far he may go! Thus the prodigal spent all in utter recklessness and, oh, the recklessness of some young sinners whom I know! And, oh, the greater recklessness of some *old* sinners who seem resolved to be damned, for, having but a little remnant of life, left, they waste that last fragment of it in fatal delay!

Then it was, dear Friends, when the prodigal had spent all, that he still further proved his madness! That would have been the time to go home to his father, but, apparently, that thought did not occur to him. "He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country," still overpowered by the fascination that kept him away from the one place where he might have been happy—and that is one of the worst proofs of the madness of some of you who frequent these courts, that though you know about the great God and His infinite mercy, and know something of how much you need Him and His Grace, yet you still try to get what you need somewhere else and do not go back to Him!

I shall not have time to say much more upon this point, but I must remind you that, like sinners, *the prodigal had the ways of a madman.* I have had, at times, to deal with those whose reason has failed them, and I have noticed that many of them have been perfectly sane, and yet wise and clever, on all points except one. So is it with the inner. He is a fa-

mous politician, just hear him talk! He is a wonderful man of business—see how sharply he looks after every penny! He is very judicious in everything but this—he is mad on one point—he has a fatal monomania, for it concerns his own soul!

A madman will often conceal his madness from those around him—so will a sinner hide his sin. You may talk with this man about morals and you may watch him very closely—yet it may be a long time before you can figure him out and be able to say to him, “One thing you lack.” Perhaps, all of a sudden, you touch that weak point, and there he stands, fully developed before you, far gone in his insanity! He is right enough, elsewhere, but with regard to his soul his reason is gone!

Mad people do not know that they have been mad till they are cured—they think that they, alone, are wise, and all the rest are fools. Here is another point of their resemblance to sinners, for they, also, think that everybody is wrong except themselves. Listen how they will abuse a pious wife as “a fool”! What hard words they will use towards a gracious daughter! How they will rail at the ministers of the Gospel and try to tear God’s Bible to pieces! Poor mad souls, they think all are mad except themselves! We, with tears, pray God to deliver them from their delusions and to bring them to sit at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in their right minds.

Sometimes the sinner will be seen and known to be mad because he turns on his best friends, as madmen do. Those whom they otherwise would have loved the most, they reckon to be their worst enemies. So God, who is man’s best Friend, is most despised, and Christ, who is the Friend of sinners, is rejected, and the most earnest Christians are often the most avoided or persecuted by sinners.

Mad people sometimes, too, will rave, and then you know what dreadful things they will say. So is it with sinners when their fits are on them. I dare not speak of what they will do and what they will say. They often pull themselves up, afterwards, and feel ashamed to think that they should have gone so far. Yet it is so, for they are beside themselves, even as the prodigal was.

I will not dwell longer on this sad fact because I want to speak on the next and brighter part of my theme.

II. Secondly, IT IS A BLESSED THING WHEN THE SINNER COMES TO HIMSELF. “When he came to himself.” This is the first mark of Grace working in the sinner as it was the first sign of hope for the prodigal.

Sometimes, *this change occurs suddenly*. I was greatly charmed, this week, by meeting with one to whom this happened. It was an old fashioned sort of conversion with which I was delighted. There came into this building, some three months ago, a man who had not, for a long time, gone to any place of worship. He despised such things. He could swear and drink, and do worse things. He was careless, godless, but he had a mother who often prayed for him, and he had a brother who is, I believe, here, tonight, whose prayer has never ceased for him. He did not come here to worship—he came just to see the preacher whom his brother had been hearing for so many years. But, coming in, somehow he was no sooner in the place than he felt that he was unfit to be here, so he went

up into the top gallery, as far back as he could, and when some friend beckoned him to take a seat, he felt that he could not do so—he must just lean against the wall at the back.

Someone else invited him to sit down, but he would not. He felt that he had no right to do so. And when the preacher announced his text, [See Sermon #1949, Volume 33—*A Sermon for the Worst Man on Earth*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .]—“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner”—and said something like this, “You that stand farthest off in the Tabernacle and dare not sit down because you feel your guilt to be so great—you are the man to whom God has sent me, this morning—and He bids you come to Christ and find mercy,” a miracle of love was worked! Then, “he came to himself,” as he will tell us, soon, at the Church meeting when he comes forward to confess his faith. I rejoiced greatly when I heard of it, for in his case there is a change that everybody who knows him can see! He has become full of a desire after *everything* that is gracious as once he practiced everything that was bad! Now that is what *sometimes* happens and why should it not happen, again, tonight? Why should not some other man, or some woman, come to himself or to herself tonight? This is the way home—first to come to yourself—and then to come to your God. “He came to himself.”

On the other hand, sometimes *this change is very gradual*. I need not dwell upon that, but there are many who have their eyes opened by degrees. They first see men as trees walking. Afterwards, they see all things clearly. So long as they do but come to themselves, and come to the Savior, I mind not how they come! Some conversions are sudden, some gradual, but in every case, if it is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the man comes to himself, it is well.

Now let us consider *how this change happened*. If you should ask me the outward circumstances of the prodigal's case, I would say that it took a great deal to bring him to himself. “Why, surely,” one says, “he ought to have come to himself when he had spent all! He must have come to himself when he began to be hungry.” No, it took a great deal to bring him to himself, and to his father—and it takes a great deal to bring sinners to themselves and to their God. There are some of you who will have to be beaten with many stripes before you will be saved. I heard one say, who was crushed almost to death in an accident, “If I had not nearly perished, I would have wholly perished.” So is it with many sinners—if some had not lost all they had, they would have lost all—but, by strong winds, rough and raging, some are driven into the port of peace.

The occasion of the prodigal's climax was this—he was very hungry, in great sorrow and he was alone. It is a grand thing if we can get people to be alone. There was nobody near the poor man and no sound for him to hear except the grunting of the hogs and their munching of those husks. Ah, to be alone! I wish that we had more opportunities of being alone in this great city, yet, perhaps, the most awful loneliness may be realized while walking a London street! It is a good thing for a sinner, sometimes,

to be alone. The prodigal had nobody to drink with him, nobody to sport with him—he was too far gone for that. He had not a rag to pawn to get another pint—he must, therefore, just sit still without one of his old companions. They only followed him for what they could get out of him. As long as he could treat them, they would treat him well, but when he had spent all, “no man gave unto him.” He was left without a comrade in misery he could not allay, in hunger he could not satisfy. He pulled that belt up another notch and made it tighter—but it almost seemed as if he would cut himself in two if he drew it any tighter! He was almost reduced to a skeleton. Emaciation had taken hold of him and he was ready to lie down there and die. Then it was that he came to himself.

Do you know *why this change occurred in the prodigal's case?* I believe that the real reason was that his father was secretly working for him all the while. His state was known to his father. I am sure it was because the elder brother knew it and if the elder brother heard of it, so did the father. The elder brother may have told him, or, if not, the father's greater love would have a readier ear for tidings of his son than the elder brother had. Though the parable cannot tell us—for no parable is meant to teach us *everything*—yet it is true that our Father is Omnipotent and He was secretly touching the core of this young man's heart, and dealing with him by this wondrous surgery of famine and of need to make him, at last, come to himself.

Perhaps somebody here says, “I wish I could come to myself, Sir, without going through all that process.” Well, you have come to yourself, already, if you really wish that! Let me suggest to you that in order to prove that it is so, you should begin seriously to *think*—to think about who you are, where you are and what is to become of you. Take time to think, and think in an orderly, steady, serious manner and, if you can, jot down your thoughts. It is a wonderful help to some people to put down upon paper an account of their own condition. I believe that there were many who found the Savior one night when I urged them, when they went home, to write on a piece of paper, “Saved as a Believer in Jesus,” or else, “Condemned because I believe not on the Son of God.” Some who began to write that word, “condemned,” have never finished it, for they found Christ, then and there, while seeking Him! You keep your account books, do you not? I am sure you do if you are in trade, unless you are going to cheat your creditors. You keep your business books—well, now, keep a record concerning your soul! Really look these matters in the face, the hereafter, death—which may come so suddenly—the great eternity, the Judgement Seat. Think about these things! Do not shut your eyes to them. Men and women, I pray you, do not play the fool! If you must play the fool, take some lighter things to trifle with than your souls and your eternal destinies! Shut yourselves up, alone, for a while—go through this matter steadily, lay it out in order, make a plan of it. See where you are going. Think over the way of salvation, the story of the Cross, the love of God, the readiness of Christ to save—and I think that, while this process is going on, you will feel your heart melting—and soon you will find your soul believing in the precious blood which sets the sinner free!

III. I had much more to say, but time has gone, so I must close with just a few words on this last point, **WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF, THEN HE CAME TO HIS FATHER.**

When a sinner comes to himself, he soon comes to his God. This poor prodigal, soon after he came to himself, said, "I will arise and go to my father." What led him back to his father? Very briefly Let me answer that question.

First, *his memory awakened him.* He remembered his father's house, he remembered the past, his own riotous living. Do not try to forget all that has happened—the terrible recollections of a misspent past may be the means of leading you to a new life. Set memory to work.

Next, *his misery bestirred him.* Every pang of hunger that he felt, the sight of his rags, the degradation of associating with swine—all these things drove him back to his father. O Sirs, let your very needs, your cravings, your misery, drive you to your God!

Then, *his fears whipped him back.* He said, "I perish with hunger." He had not perished, yet, but he was afraid that he soon would do so. He feared that he really would die, for he felt so faint. O Sirs, see what will become of you if you die in your sins! What awaits you but an endless future of limitless misery? Sin will follow you into eternity and will increase upon you, there, and as you shall go on to sin, so shall you go on to sorrow always increasing. A deeper degradation and a more tremendous penalty will accompany your sin in the world to come! Therefore, let your fears drive you home, as they drove home the poor prodigal.

Meanwhile, *his hope drew him.* This gentle cord was as powerful as the heavy whip—"In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare; I need not perish with hunger, I may yet be filled." Oh, think of what you may yet be! Poor sinner, think of what God can do and is ready to do for you, to do for you even tonight! How happy He can make you! How peaceful and how blessed! So let your hope draw you to Him. Then, his resolve moved him. He said, "I will arise and go to my father." All else drove him or drew him and now he is resolved to return home! He rose up from the earth on which he had been sitting amidst his filthiness and he said, "I will." Then the man became a man! He had come to himself, the manhood had come back to him, and he said, "I will, I will."

Lastly, there was the real act of going to his father—it was that which brought him home. No, let me correct myself. It is said, "*He came to his father,*" but there is a higher Truth of God at the back of that, *for his father came to him.* So, when you are moved to return and the resolution becomes an *action* and you arise, and go to God, salvation is yours almost before you could have expected it, for, once turn your face that way, and while you are yet a great way off, your Father will outstrip the wind and come and meet you, and fall upon your neck, and kiss you with the kisses of reconciliation! This shall be your portion if you will but trust the Lord Jesus Christ!

As for you Christian people who may be saying that there is nothing for you in the sermon, do not turn into a company of grumbling elder brothers! On the contrary, go home and pray God to bless this sermon.

“But,” you say, “I have not had the fatted calf tonight.” “Oh, but if it were killed for the younger son, it was for you, also!” “I did not have the music and dancing tonight.” Well, they have had it over the returned prodigal, over some soul that has already believed in Christ, tonight—I know they have! God does not let us preach for nothing. He will pay us our wages and give us our reward! So rejoice with us over all that the Lord has done, and all that He is going to do! The Lord bless you, Beloved, all of you, without exception, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15.**

This is a chapter that needs no explanation. It carries its key within itself and the experience of every child of God is the best exposition of it. The three parables recorded here set forth the work of saving Grace in different aspects.

Verses 1, 2. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners, and eats with them.* The Pharisees and scribes formed the outside ring of Christ’s hearers, but the inner circle consisted of the guilty, the heavy-laden and the lowly. They pressed as near to Christ as they could, that they might catch His every word and, besides, there was an attractiveness about His manner that drew them towards Him. His mercy attracted their misery! They needed Him and He desired them—they were thus well met. There will be an inner circle, tonight, when the Gospel is preached, and it will not consist of the self-righteous. They that are full will not press to the table on which the Gospel feast is spread—the *hungry* will be found nearest to the heavenly provision.

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.* There are three parables here, but, inasmuch as it is called “this parable,” it is really only one. It is a picture in three panels representing the same scene from different points of view.

4. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?* It has a new importance in his eyes, for it is lost. Before, it was only one of a hundred in the fold, but now it is one distinct and separate from all the rest, and the shepherd’s thought is fixed upon it.

5, 6. *And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.* No doubt he was glad that the other sheep were not lost, but that joy was, for a while, quite eclipsed in the more striking and vivid joy over the one which had been lost!

7. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.* If such there is—and there are many who think that they belong to this class—they bring no joy to the great Shepherd. But you who

have had to mourn over your lost estate set the bells of Heaven ringing with a new melody when you are recovered by the great Redeemer! The first of these three parables may be said to represent salvation in reference to the *work of the Son of God* as the great Seeker and Saver of the souls of men. In the second, we have a representation of the *work of the Holy Spirit* in the Church of God.

8. *Or what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it?* Her thoughts were all concerning that one lost piece. It had not more intrinsic value than the rest, but, being lost, it called off her attention from the other nine. She valued it and for the hope of finding it she lighted a candle, swept the house and sought diligently till she found it. This is a picture of the Holy Spirit's work in seeking for lost souls. They bear the King's impress—they are coins of the realm. This woman knew that the silver coin was not far away, so she swept the house and sought diligently, using all her eyes, devoting all her time to this one object, quitting all other avocations until she found it.

9. *And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.* She might never have called them together to rejoice that she had ten pieces of silver—she might even have hidden them—and the joy she had in them might have been only her own, a solitary joy. But now that the one piece had been lost and had been found, again, she says, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost."

10. *Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.* Not joy among the angels, as some read it, though no doubt that is a truth, but, "joy in the presence of the angels of God." And what can that mean but that God, Himself, rejoices, and rejoices so that angels perceive it! And no doubt they then join in the delight! But all this points out that it is the lost one that is the great object of consideration, that out of any congregation where the Gospel is preached, it is the lost one who is the most important person in the whole place! In the next verses, we get the *Father's part* in the work of the recovery of the wanderer.

11-13. *And He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* His heart was far away when he asked his father to give him his portion and now his body is far away as he goes into the outward wandering which follows after the inner wandering.

14. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land.* There generally does arise "a mighty famine" in such cases. Famines and other miseries are God's messengers which He sends after His wandering children.

14. *And he began to be in want.* This was a new sensation to him—he had never known it when he was at home. He did not know it in his first

boisterous days away from his father's house, but now, "he began to be in want."

16. *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* Perhaps he did not want to employ him but said that he would give him that occupation if he cared to accept it. It was small pay, very dishonoring work to a Jew, not fit employment for the son of a nobleman, yet, "half a loaf is better than no bread," so he took it, though even the half loaf must have been a very small one.

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* Such a thing as generosity was not known in that country. His companions could share his riches when he was living riotously, but they will not share *their* riches, now that he is in his poverty.

17. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* "My father's day-laborers have bread enough and to spare, yet I, his child, perish with hunger."

18, 19. *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants.* You notice that this last part of the prayer he never did pray, for it was stopped by his father's love! There was a legalism about it, naturally suggested by his own despair, but it was not such as his father would tolerate.

20, 21. *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.* There comes an interruption there; the kiss upon his lips stops the rest of the prayer, which he had prepared, and now the father declares his will concerning the wanderer.

22-24. *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.* I have never read that they left off being merry, for the conversion of a soul is enough to make eternal joy in the hearts of the righteous!

25, 26. *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.* This was a new thing and, apparently, a thing that he did not care much about. How had it come to pass that there was such noise, such joy?

27, 28. *And he said unto him, Your brother is come; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out and pleaded with him.* I hardly know which to admire most, the love of the father when he fell upon the neck of the prodigal, or the love of the father when he went out to talk with his elder son! "Therefore came his father

out, and pleaded with him.” Oh, our God is very good to us when we give way to naughty tempers! If we begin to think that we are very holy people, that we have been long the servants of God and that there ought to be some little fuss made over us as well as over great sinners that come into the Church, then our Father is very gentle, and He comes out and entreats us.

29. *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you have never given me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.* “I have had no banquets. I have kept at home, a patient worker, and have had no extraordinary joys.” I know some Christian workers who are very much in this condition. They keep on and on and on in holy service, and they do well, but they seldom have great entertainments of high joy and unspeakable delight. It is their own fault and it is a thousand pities that they do not have them, for they might have them if they would! There is a tendency to grow so absorbed in service, like Martha, that we are cumbered by it—and we do not have the joy of Mary in communion at the Master’s feet. I am sure that this elder son was out of fellowship with his father, or else he would not have talked as he did. We are all apt to get into such a condition. See to it, you who work for Jesus, that it is not so with you! Then the elder brother went on to say—

30. *But as soon as this son of yours came, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.* I do not read that the prodigal had devoured his father’s living with harlots—that is the elder brother’s version of it. I dare say that it was true, but it is always a pity to give the roughest interpretation to things. He had spent his substance “in riotous living.” When we are cross, we generally use the ugliest words we can—we may think that we are speaking forcibly, but, indeed, we are speaking naughtily—and not as our Father would have us speak.

31. *And he said unto him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.* Oh, what a word was that! How it reminds Christians of their privileges, if they would but appropriate them! It is yours, Beloved, to live always with your God and to know that all that He has is yours! You ought to live in a perpetual festival—for you there should be one joyful Christmastide that lasts from the beginning of the year to the end of it! “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.”

32. *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.* It was the fit thing, and the proper thing, and the right thing, that there should be extraordinary joy over a returning sinner. There ought to be, there must be, there shall be special music and dancing over sinners saved by the Grace of God! The Lord give us some such, tonight, and make us glad over them! Amen.

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

AN APPEAL TO SINNERS

NO. 219

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“This Man receives sinners.”
Luke 15:2.***

IT was a singular group which had gathered round our Savior, when these words were uttered, for we are told by the Evangelist—“Then drew near unto Him all the Publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” The Publicans—the very lowest grade, the public oppressors, scorned and hated by the mean Jew—these, together with the worst of characters, the scum of the streets and the very riff-raff of the society of Jerusalem, came around this mighty preacher, Jesus Christ, in order to listen to His words. On the outside of the throng there stood a few respectable people who in those days were called Pharisees and Scribes—men who were highly esteemed in the synagogues as rulers and governors and teachers. These looked with scorn upon the Preacher. They watched Him with invidious eyes, to find some fault. If they could find none in Him personally, yet they could easily find it in His congregation. His deportment towards them shocked their false notion of propriety and when they observed that He was affable with the very worst of characters, that He spoke loving words to the most fallen of mankind, they said of Him what they intended for a disgrace, albeit it was highly to His honor—“This Man receives sinners.”

I believe that our Savior could not have wished to have had a sentence uttered concerning Him more evidently true or more thoroughly consistent with His sacred commission. It is the exact portrait of His Character. He is the man who “receives sinners.” Many a true word has been spoken in jest and many a true word has been spoken in slander. Men have said sometimes in jest, “There goes a saint.” But it has been true. They have said, “There goes one of your chosen ones, one of your elect.” They meant it as a slander but the doctrine they scandalized was to the person who received it a comfort. It was his glory and his honor. Now the Scribes and Pharisees wished to slander Christ. But in so doing they outstripped their intentions and bestowed upon Him a title of renown. “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

This evening I shall divide my observations to you into three parts. First, *the doctrine that Christ receives sinners, which is a doctrine of Holy Writ.* Secondly, *the encouragement it affords the sinner.* And thirdly, *the exhortation naturally springing from it, to the same character.*

I. First, then THE DOCTRINE. The doctrine is not that Christ receives everybody, but that He “receives sinners.” By that term we, in common

parlance, understand everybody. It is in the present day quite fashionable for everybody to lie against what he believes and to say he is a sinner—even when he believes himself to be a very respectable, well-to-do man and does not conceive that he ever did anything very amiss in his life. It is a sort of orthodox confession for men to make when they say that they are sinners. Though they might just as well use one formula as another, or repeat words in a foreign tongue—for they mean no deep and heartfelt contrition. They have no true apprehension that they are sinners at all.

These Scribes and Pharisees did virtually assert that they were *not* sinners. They marked out the Publicans and the harlots and the worthless and they said, “These are sinners, we are not.” “Very well,” said Christ, “I endorse the distinction you have made. In your own opinion, you are not sinners. Well, you shall stand exempt for the time from being called sinners—I endorse your distinction. But I beg to inform you that I came to save those very persons who, in their own estimation and in yours, are reckoned to be sinners.”

It is my belief that the doctrine of the text is this—that Christ receives not the self-righteous, not the good, not the whole-hearted, not those who dream that they do not need a Savior. But He receives the broken in spirit, the contrite in heart—those who are ready to confess that they have broken God’s Laws and have merited His displeasure. These and these alone Christ came to save. And I reassert the subject of last Sabbath evening—that Jesus has died for such and for none other. That He has shed His blood for those who are ready to confess their sins and who seek mercy through the open veins of His wounded body—but for none other did He designedly offer up Himself upon the Cross.

Now, let us remark, Beloved, that there is a very wise distinction on the part of God that He has been pleased thus to choose and call *sinners* to repentance and not others. For this reason none but these ever come to Him. There has never been such a miracle as a self-righteous man coming to Christ for mercy—none but those who want a Savior have ever come. It stands to reason that when men do not consider themselves in need of a Savior they never will approach His Throne. And surely it is satisfactory enough for all purposes that Christ should say He receives sinners, seeing that sinners are the only persons who will ever come to Him for mercy and therefore it would be useless for Him to say that He would receive any but those who most assuredly will come.

And mark, again, none but those *can* come! No man can come to Christ until he truly knows himself to be a sinner. The self-righteous man cannot come to Christ—for what is implied in coming to Christ? *Repentance*, trust in His mercy and the denial of all confidence in one’s self. Now, a self-righteous man cannot repent and yet be self-righteous. He conceives that he has no sin—why, then, should he repent? Tell him to come to Christ with humble penitence and he exclaims—“You insult my dignity! Why should I approach to God? Wherein have I sinned? My knee shall not

bend to seek pardon, wherein I have not offended. This lip shall not seek forgiveness when I do not believe myself to have transgressed against God. I shall not ask for mercy.”

The self-righteous man cannot come to God. For his coming to God implies that he ceases to be self-righteous. Nor can a self-righteous man put his trust in Christ—why should he? Shall I trust in a Christ whom I do not require? If I am self-righteous, I need no Christ to save me in my own opinion. How, then, can I come with such a confession as this?—

“Nothing in my hands I bring,”

when I have got my hands full. How can I say, “Wash me,” when I believe myself clean? How can I say “Heal me,” when I think that I never was sick? How can I cry, “Give me freedom, give me liberty,” when I believe I never was a slave and “never in bondage to any man”? It is only the man who knows his slavery by reason of the bondage of sin and the man who knows himself to be sick even unto death by reason of the sense of guilt—it is only the man who feels he cannot save himself—who can with faith rely upon the Savior. Nor can the self-righteous man renounce himself and lay hold of Christ—because in the renunciation of himself he would at once become the very character whom Christ says He will receive.

He would then put himself in the place of the sinner, when he casts away his own righteousness. Why, Sirs, coming to Christ implies the taking off the polluted robe of our own righteousness and putting on Christ’s. How can I do that if I wittingly wrap my own garment about me? And if in order to come to Christ I must forsake my own refuge and all my own hope, how can I do it if I believe my hope to be good and my refuge to be secure and if I suppose that already I am clothed sufficiently to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb? No, Beloved, it is the *sinner* and the sinner only, who can come to Christ. The self-righteous man cannot do it. It is quite out of his way—he would not do it if he could. His very self-righteousness fetters his foot so that he cannot come—palsies his arm so that he cannot take hold of Christ—and blinds his eye, so that he cannot even see the Savior.

Yet another reason—if these people, who are not sinners, would come to Christ, Christ would get no glory from them. When the physician opens his door for those who are sick and I go there full of health, he can win no honor from me, because he cannot exert his skill upon me. The benevolent man may distribute all his wealth to the poor, but let someone go to him who has abundance and he shall win no esteem from him for feeding the hungry, or for clothing the naked, since the applicant is neither hungry nor naked. If Jesus Christ proclaims that He gives His grace unto all who come for it, surely it is sufficient, seeing that none will or can come for it but those whose pressing necessities prompt them.

A great sinner brings great glory to Christ when he is saved. A man who is no sinner, if he could attain to Heaven would glorify *himself*—he would not glorify Christ. The man who has no stains may plunge into the foun-

tain. But he cannot magnify its cleansing power for he has no stains to wash away. He that has no guilt can never magnify the word “forgiveness.” It is the *sinner*, then, and the sinner only, who can glorify Christ. And hence “This Man receives sinners.” But it is not said that He receives any else. “He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” This is the doctrine of the text.

But allow us just to amplify that word—“This Man receives sinners.” Now by that we understand that He receives sinners to all the benefits which He has purchased for them. If there is a fountain, He receives sinners to wash them in it. If there is medicine for the soul, He receives sinners to heal their diseases. If there is a house for the sick, an hospital, a lazar-house for the dying, He receives such into that retreat of mercy. All that He has of love, all that He has of mercy, all that He has of atonement, all that He has of sanctification, all that He has of righteousness—to all these He receives the sinner. And more—not content with taking him to His house, He receives him to His heart. He takes the black and filthy sinner and having washed him—“There,” He says, “you are My Beloved. My desire is towards you.” And to consummate the whole, at last He receives the saints to Heaven. Saints, I said, but I meant those who were sinners, for none can be saints truly but those who once were sinners and have been washed in the blood of Christ and made white through the sacrifice of the Lamb.

Observe it then, Beloved, that in receiving sinners we mean the whole of salvation. And this word in my text, “Christ *receives* sinners,” grasps in the whole of the Covenant. He receives them to the joys of Paradise, to the bliss of the beatified, to the songs of the glorified, to an eternity of happiness forever. “This Man receives sinners.” And I dwell with special emphasis on this point—He receives none else. He will have none else to be saved but those who know themselves to be sinners. Full, free salvation is preached to every sinner in the universe, but I have no salvation to preach to those who will not acknowledge themselves to be sinners. To them I must preach the Law, telling them that their righteousness is but as filthy rags, that their goodness shall pass away as the spider’s web and shall be broken in pieces, even as the egg of the ostrich is broken by the foot of the horse. “This Man receives sinners,” and receives none else.

II. Now, then, THE ENCOURAGEMENT. If Jesus Christ receives sinners, poor sick Sinner, what a sweet word this is for you! Surely, then, He will not reject you. Come, let me encourage you this night to come to my Master, to receive His great atonement and to be clothed with all His righteousness. Mark—those whom I address, are the *bona fide*, real, actual sinners. Not the complimentary sinners. Not those who say they are sinners by way of pacifying, as they suppose, the religionists of the day. I speak to those who feel their lost, ruined, hopeless condition. All these are now frankly and freely invited to come to Jesus Christ and to be saved by Him. Come, poor Sinner, come.

Come, because He has said He will receive you. I know your fears, we all felt them once when we were coming to Christ. I know you say in your heart, "He will reject me. If I present my prayer, He will not hear me, if I cry unto Him, yet perhaps the heavens will be as brass, I have been so great a sinner that He will never take me into His house to dwell with Him." Poor Sinner! Don't say that. He has published the decree. It is enough between man and man usually, if we count our fellow creatures honest, to obtain a promise. Sinner! Is this not enough between yourself and the Son of God? He has said, "Him that comes I will in nowise cast out." Dare you not venture on that promise? Will you not go to sea in a ship as staunch as this—*He* has said it! It has been often and again the only comfort of the saints—on this they have lived, on this they have died—Jesus Christ has said it! What? Do you think Christ will lie? Would He tell you He will receive you and yet not do so? Would He say, "My fatlings are killed, come to the supper," and yet shut the door in your face? No, if He has said He will cast out none that come to Him, rest assured He cannot, He will not cast you out. Come, then, try His love on this ground, that He has said it.

Come and fear not, because, remember, if you feel yourself to be a sinner, that feeling is God's *gift* and therefore you may very safely come to one who has already done so much to draw you. A stranger calls at my house. He asks for alms and he tells me at first very plainly that he never saw me before, that he has no claim upon my generosity, but he throws himself entirely upon any benevolent feeling that I may chance to have in my breast. But if I had done anything for him before, he might say, supposing I were a rich man, "Sir, you have done so much for me, I think you will not give me up at last. I believe you will not let me starve, after so much love." Poor Sinner! If you feel your need of a Savior, Christ made you feel it. If you have a wish to come after Christ, Christ gave you that wish. If you have any desire after God, God gave you that desire. If you can sigh after Christ, Christ made you sigh. If you can weep after Christ, Christ made you weep!

No, if you can only *wish* for Him with the strong wish of one that fears he never can find, yet hopes he may—if you can but hope for Him—He has given you that hope. And oh, will not you come to Him? You have some of the king's bounties about you now—come and plead what He has done, there is no suit that can ever fail with God when you plead this. Tell Him His past mercies urge you to try Him in the future. Down on your knees, Sinner, down on your knees! Tell Him this— "Lord, I thank You that I know myself to be a sinner. You have taught me that. I bless You that I do not wrap up my sin, that I know it, that I feel it—that it is ever before me. Lord, would You make me see my sin and not let me see my Savior? What? Will You open the wound and put in the lancet and yet not heal me? What? Lord! Have you said, 'I kill,' and have You not said in the same breath, 'I make alive'? Have you killed me and will you not make me

alive?” Plead that, poor Sinner and you will find it true, that “this Man receives sinners.”

Does this not suffice you? Then here is another reason. I am sure “this Man receives sinners” because He has received many, many, before you. See, there is Mercy’s door—mark how many have been to it. You can almost hear the knocks upon the door now, like echoes of the past. You may remember how many way-worn travelers have called there for rest, how many famished souls have applied there for bread. Go, knock at Mercy’s door and ask the porter this question, “Was there ever one applied to the door that was refused?” I can assure you of the answer—“No, not one.”—

**“No sinner was ever empty sent back,
Who came seeking mercy for Jesus’ sake.”**

And shall you be the first? Do you think God will forfeit His good name by turning you away? Mercy’s gate has been open night and day, ever since man sinned. Do you think it will be shut for the first time in *your* face?

No, Brothers and Sisters, go and try it. And if you find it is, come back and say, “You have not read the Bible as you ought to have done,” or else say you have found one promise there which has not been fulfilled—for He said, “Him that comes I will in nowise cast out.” I do not believe there ever was in this world one who was suffered by God to say that He sought mercy of Him sincerely and did not find it. No, more—I believe that such a being never *shall* exist, but whosoever comes unto Christ shall most assuredly find mercy. What greater encouragement do you want? Do you want a salvation for those that will not come to be saved? Do you want blood sprinkled on those that will not come to Christ? You must want it, then. I will not preach it to you. I find it not in God’s Word and therefore I dare not.

And now, Sinner, I have yet another plea to urge with you why you should believe that Christ will receive all sinners who come to Him. It is this, that He calls all such. Now if Christ calls us and bids us come, we may be sure He will not turn us away when we do come. Once a blind man sat by the wayside begging. He *heard*—for he could not see—he heard the trampling of the many feet that were passing by him. He asked what all this meant—they said that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. Loudly did he cry, “Jesus, You son of David, have mercy on me!” The ear of mercy was apparently deaf and the Savior walked on and heeded not the prayer. The poor man sat still then, but cried aloud, though he did not move. Yet when the Savior said, “Come here,” ah, then he did not delay an instant. They said, “Arise, He calls you.” And pushing them all aside, he made his way through the crowd and offered the prayer, “Lord, let me receive my sight.”

Well, then, you who feel yourself to be lost and ruined, arise and speak. He calls for you. Convicted Sinner, Christ says, “Come.” And that you may be sure He says it, let us quote that Scripture again, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” You are called, Man—then

come. If her Majesty were riding by, you might scarcely presume to speak to her. But if your name were called, and by her own lips, would you not go to her carriage and would not you listen to what she had to say to you? Now, the King of Heaven says, "Come." Yes, the same lips that will one day say, "Come, you blessed," says this night, "Come, you poor distressed sinners, come to Me and I will save you." There is not a distressed soul in this hall, if his distress is the work of God's Holy Spirit, that shall not find salvation in the wounds of Christ. Believe then, Sinner, believe in Jesus, that He is able to save even you unto the very uttermost.

And now just one point more to commend this encouragement to you. Indeed, poor Souls, I know when you are under a sense of sin it is very hard to believe. We sometimes say, "Only believe." But believing is just the hardest thing in the world when sin lies heavy on your shoulders. We say, "Sinner, only trust in Christ." Ah, you do not know what a great "only" that is. It is a work so great that no man can do it unaided by God. For faith is the *gift of God* and He gives it only to His children. But if anything can call faith into exercise, it is this last thing I shall mention.

Sinner, remember that Christ is willing to receive you, for He came all the way from Heaven to seek you and find you out in your wanderings and to save you and rescue you from your miseries. He has given proof of His hearty interest in your welfare in that He has shed His very heart's blood to redeem your soul from death and Hell. If He had wanted the companionship of saints He might have stopped in Heaven, for there were many there. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were with Him there in Glory. But He wanted sinners. He had a thirst after perishing sinners. He wanted to make them trophies of His grace. He wanted sin-black souls, to wash them white. He wanted dead souls, to make them alive. His benevolence wanted objects on which to exert itself. And therefore—

***"Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste He fled,
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead."***

Oh, Sinner, look there and see that Cross. Mark yonder Man upon it—

***"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"***

Do you note that eye? Can you see languid pity for your soul floating in it? Do you mark that side? It is opened that you may hide your sins in it. See those drops of crimson blood, every drop is trickling down for you. Hear you that death-shriek, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani"? That shriek in all its deep-toned solemnity is for you. Yes, for *you*, if you are a sinner. If you do this night say unto God, "Lord, I know I have offended You. Have mercy upon me for Jesus' sake." If now, taught by the Spirit, you are led to abhor yourself in dust and ashes because you have sinned, verily, be-

fore God—I tell you in His sight, as His servant—you shall be saved. For Jesus would not die for you and yet let you perish.

III. Now the last point is IN EXHORTATION. If it is true that Christ came only to save sinners, my beloved Hearers, labor, strive, agonize, to get a sense in your souls of your own sinnership. One of the most distressing things in the world is to feel yourself a sinner. But that is no reason why I should not exhort you to seek it. For while distressing, it is only the distress of the bitter medicine which will effectually work the cure. Do not seek to get high ideas of yourself. Seek to get a low opinion of yourself—do not try to deck yourself with ornaments—let it not be your endeavor to array yourself in gold and silver. Do not seek to be made good in yourself, but seek to strip yourself. Seek to humble yourself. Do not soar high, but sink low. Do not go up, but go down. Ask God to let you see that you are nothing at all. Ask Him to bring you to this, that you may have nothing to say but—

“I the chief of sinners am”

and if God hears your prayer, very likely Satan will tell you that you cannot be saved because you are a sinner.

But as Martin Luther said, “Once when I was racked with pain and sin, Satan said, ‘Luther, you can not be saved, for you are a sinner.’ “No,” said Martin Luther, “I will cut your head off with your own sword. You say I am a sinner, I thank you for it. You are a holy Satan,” (he says it in mockery no doubt) “when you say I am a sinner. Well, then, Satan, Christ died for sinners, therefore He died for me. Ah” said Luther, “if you can but prove that to me, Satan, I will thank you for it. And so far from groaning, I will begin to sing, for all we want is to know and feel that we are sinners.” Let us feel that. Let us know that and we may receive this as an undoubted fact of Revelation, that we have a right to come unto Christ and to believe on Him and receive Him as all our salvation and all our desire.

No doubt Conscience will come and stop you. But do not try to stop the mouth of Conscience. But tell Conscience you are much obliged to him for all that he says. “Oh, you have been a desperate fellow” he says, “You sinned when you were young. You have sinned even until now. How many sermons have been wasted on you? How many Sabbaths have you broken? How many warnings have you despised? Oh, you are a desperate sinner.” Tell Conscience that you thank him, for the more you can prove yourself to be a sinner—not by outward acts, but in your inmost heart—the more you know yourself to be really guilty, the more reason you have to come to Christ and say, “Lord, I believe You have died for the guilty. I believe you intended to save the worthless. I cast myself on You. Lord, save me!”

That does not suit some of you, does it? It is not the kind of doctrine that flatters man much. No—you would like to be good people and help Christ a little. You like that theory which some ministers are always proclaiming, “God has done a great deal for you. You do the rest and then

you will be saved.” That is a very popular kind of doctrine. You do one part and God will do the other part, but that is not God’s Truth, it is only a delirious dream. God says, “I will do the whole. Come and prostrate yourself at My feet. Give up your doings. Let me undertake for you. Afterwards, I will make you live to My glory. Only in order that you may be holy, I desire you to confess that you are unholy. In order that you may be sanctified, you must confess that you are as yet unsanctified.”

Oh, do that, my Hearers. Fall down before the Lord, cast yourselves down. Do not stand up with pride. But fall down before God in humility—tell Him you are undone without His Sovereign Grace—tell Him you have nothing, you *are* nothing, you never will be anything more than nothing. Tell Him that you know Christ does not want anything of you, for He will take you just as you are. Do not seek to come to Christ with anything besides your sin. Do not seek to come to Christ with your prayers for a recommendation. Do not come to Him even with professions of your faith. Come to Him with your sin and He will give you faith. If you think that you will have faith apart from Him, you have made an error. It is Christ that saves us. We must come to Christ for all we want—

***“You O Christ, are all I want;
All in All in You I find:
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick and lead the blind.”***

Jesus will do so and more also, but you must come as blind, you must come as sick, you must come as lost—or else you cannot and must not come at all.

Come then, to Jesus, I beseech you, whatever may up to this time have kept you away. Your doubts would keep you away, but say, “Stand back, Unbelief—Christ says He died for sinners—and I know I am a sinner”—

***“My faith will on that promise live,
Will on that promise die.”***

And there is one thing I want to say, before I have done. Do not stay away from Christ when you know yourself to be a sinner, because you think you do not understand every point of theology. Very often I get young converts with me and they say, “I do not understand this or that doctrine.” Well, I am very glad, so far as I am able to explain it to them. But sometimes I get not young converts, but young *convicts*, those who are under conviction of sin. And when I am trying to bring them to this, that if they are but sinners they may believe in Christ, they begin with this knotty point and that knotty point—and they seem to imagine that they cannot be saved till they are thorough theologians.

Now, if you expect to understand all theology before you put your faith in Christ I can only tell you, you never will. For live as long as ever you may, there will be some depths you cannot explore. There are certain unquestionable facts which you must hold. There will always be some difficulties through which you will not be able to see. The most favored saint on earth does not understand everything. But you want to understand all

things before you come to Christ. One man asks me how sin came into the world and he will not come unto Christ till he knows that. Why, he will be lost beyond hope of recovery, if he waits till he knows it. For nobody will ever know it. I have no reason to believe that it is even revealed to those who are in Heaven.

Another wants to know how it is that men are bid to come—and yet we are taught in Scripture that no man can come—and he must have that cleared up—just as if the poor man who had a withered arm, when Christ said, “Stretch out your arm,” had replied, “Lord, I have got a difficulty in my mind. I want to know how You can tell me to stretch out my arm when it is withered.” Suppose when Christ had said to Lazarus, “Come forth,” Lazarus had said, “I have a difficulty in my mind—how can a dead man come forth?” Why, know this, vain man! When Christ says, “Stretch out your arm,” He gives you power to stretch out your arm with the command and the difficulty is solved in practice—though I believe it never will be solved in theory. If men want to have theology mapped out to them, as they would have a map of England—if they want to have every little village and every hedgerow in the Gospel kingdom mapped out to them—they will not find it anywhere but in the Bible. And they will find it so mapped out there that the years of a Methuselah would not suffice to find out every little thing in it.

We must come to Christ and learn, not learn and *then* come to Christ. “Ah, but,” says another, “that is not the ground of my misgivings. I do not perplex myself much about theological points. I have got a worse anxiety than that—I feel I am too bad to be saved.” Well, I believe you are wrong then, that is all I can say in reply to you. For I will believe Christ before I will believe you. You say you are too bad to be saved? Christ says, “Him that comes I will in no wise cast out.” Now, which shall be right? Christ says He will receive the very worst. You say He will not. What then? “Let God be true and every man a liar.”

But there is one matter of counsel I wish you would accept, I desire of God that He may bring you to come and try the Lord Jesus Christ and see whether He will turn you away. What concern is it to me that I am so often reproached for making my appeals to the worst of sinners? It is said that I direct my ministry to drunkards, harlots, blasphemers and sinners of the grosser sort. And what if the finger of scorn is pointed at me, or if I shall be accounted as a fool before the public? Do you think I shall be deterred by their irony? Do you think I shall stand abashed at their ungenerous ridicule? Oh, no—like David, when he danced before the ark of the Lord and Michal, Saul’s daughter, jeered at him and taunted him as a shameless fellow, I shall only reply, if this is vile, I purpose to be more vile yet.

While I see the footprints of my Master before me and while I see still more His gracious sanctions following my labors. While I behold His name magnified, His glory increased and perishing souls saved, (as thanks be to

God we have witness everyday)—while this Gospel warrants me, while the Spirit of God moves me and while signs following do multiply the seals of my commission—who am I that I should stay myself for man, or resist the Holy Spirit for any flesh that breathes? Oh then, you chief of sinners, you vilest of the vile, you who are the scum of the city, the refuse of the earth, the dregs of creation, whom no man seeks after—you whose characters are destroyed and whose inmost souls are polluted so black that no fuller on earth can whiten you, so debased that you have sunk beyond the hope of any moralist to reclaim you—Come! Come to Christ! Come at His own invitation. Come and you shall be surely received with a hearty welcome!

My Master said that He received sinners. His enemies said it of Him, “This Man receives sinners.” In deed and in truth we know of a surety that He does receive sinners, the enemies themselves being witnesses. Come now and yield the fullest credit to His work, His invitation, His promise. Do you object that it was only during a few days’ grace in the time of His sojourn on earth that He received sinners? No, not so. It is confirmed by all subsequent experience. The Apostles of Jesus echoed it after He had ascended into Heaven, in terms as unqualified as He Himself expressed it when on earth. Will you not believe this—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief”? You Despisers, go away and laugh at this. Go away and scorn the preached Gospel if you will. But one day we shall meet each other, face to face, before our Maker and it may, perhaps, go hard, then, with all those who have despised Christ and laughed at His gracious words.

Is there is an infidel here who says he shall be well enough off if he shall die the death of annihilation and shall not live in a future world? Well, my Friend, suppose all men die like dogs, I shall be as well off as you are and I think a little better off, even as to happiness and peace in *this* world. But if—(and mark you I do not put it so because I doubt it)—if it is true that there is a world to come, I would not like to stand in your place in the next world! If it is so that there is a judgment seat and a Hell—(I put it hypothetically, not because I have a doubt about it, but because you tell me *you* doubt it though I do not think you really do)—if there is such a place, what will you do then?

Why, even now you shake if a leaf falls in the night. You are terrified if the cholera is in the street. You are alarmed if you are a little sick and you rush to the physician and anyone can impose upon you with his medicines, because you are afraid of death. What will you do in the swellings of Jordan, when death gets hold on you? If a little pain frightens you now, what will you do when your body shall shake and your knees shall knock together before your Maker? What will you do, my Hearer when His burning eyes shall eat into your very soul? What will you do, when amid ten thousand thunders, He shall say, “Depart, depart”?

I cannot tell you what you will do. But I will tell you one thing that you dare not do. That is, you dare not say that I have not as simply as ever I could tried to preach the Gospel to the very chief of sinners. Hear it again— “He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” To believe is to trust in Christ—to drop into those blessed arms that can catch the heaviest laden sinner that ever breathed. To believe is to fall flat on the promise—to let Him do all for you until He has quickened you and enabled you to work out what He has before worked in you, “your own salvation.” And even this must be “with fear and trembling.”

God almighty grant that some poor soul may be blessed tonight! You that are safe on shore I do not expect to do you any good. If I have a rope to send abroad into the sea, it is only the stranded vessel, the shipwrecked mariner that will rejoice at the rope. You that think yourselves safe, I have no necessity to preach to you. You are all so perilously good in your own sight, it is no use trying to make you better. You are all so awfully righteous, you can go on your way well enough, without warning from me. You must excuse me, therefore, if I have nothing to say to you except this, “Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”

But allow me to turn myself to another class of people, the vilest of the vile. I should not care if I gained the nickname of the preacher to the basest and the vilest. I should not blush to be reviled like Rowland Hill, as the preacher to the lowest orders. For they want the Gospel as much as any creatures under Heaven and if nobody will preach it to them, God helping me, I will endeavor to preach it to them in words that they can understand. And if genteel people do not like preaching in that style, they have the option of leaving. If they want to hear men preach in intellectual strains, above the capacity of common sinners, let them go and hear them. I must content myself with following my Lord, who “made Himself of no reputation”—to go after out-of-the-way sinners in an out-of-the-way fashion. I would sooner do violence to pulpit decorum and break through pulpit decency than not break through hard hearts.

I count that sort of preaching to be the right sort, that does reach the heart somehow or other and I am not particular how I do it. I confess, if I could not preach in one way I would in another. If nobody would come to hear me in a black coat, they should be attracted by my wearing a red one. Somehow or other, I would make them hear the Gospel if I could. And I would labor so to preach, that the mean understanding should be able to get hold of this one fact—“This Man receives sinners.” God bless you all, for Christ’s sake!

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OPEN HOUSE FOR ALL COMERS

NO. 665

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 17, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”
Luke 15:2.*

IT is not very unusual that the Pharisees could not understand the Savior's mode of action—not only because self-righteousness and bigotry had blinded their eyes and callousness of heart to the interest of others and had bound them up in the darkness of self-righteousness—but also because the Savior's mode of acting was contrary to the general current of the dispensation to which the Pharisee had been accustomed. The dispensation of the old Covenant was that of *distance*. When God appeared to His servant Moses, it was, “Draw not near here: put off your shoes from off your feet.” And when He manifested Himself upon Mount Sinai to His own chosen and separated people, one of the first commands was, “You shall set bounds about the mount and if so much as a beast touches the mountain it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart.”

In the sacred worship of the tabernacle and the temple the thought of distance must always have been prominent to the devout mind. The mass of the people did not even enter the *outer* court. Into the *inner* court none but the priests could ever dare to come. And into the innermost place, or the holy of holies, once a year one person only ever entered! A thick costly veil hung before the manifestation of Jehovah's Presence and upon the Shekinah no mortal eye ever gazed, except that eye which, once a year, alone, dared to look upon its splendor through the mist of the smoking incense when the blood of atonement was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat.

The Lord seemed ever to be saying to the whole of His people, with but a few exceptions, “Come not near here.” It was the dispensation of *distance*—as if the Lord in those early ages would teach man that sin was so utterly loathsome to Him that He must treat men as lepers put outside the camp. And when He came nearest to them, yet He made them feel the width of the separation between a holy God and the impure sinner.

But Jesus Christ came on quite another footing. The word, “Go,” was now exchanged for, “Come,” and distance was made to give place to *nearness*! Partitions were broken down, middle walls of separation became like tottering fences, and we, who sometime were afar off, were made near by the blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Incarnate Deity has no wall of fire about it. Christ was surrounded with that Divinity which does hedge about a king, but it was only as a hedge of thorns to Himself and not as a hedge of briars to keep off the approach of the mean of mankind.

“Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”—that is the joyful proclamation of God as He appears in human flesh! Not now does He teach the leper his leprosy by setting him at a distance, but by suffering the penalty of man's defilement. Not now does He

teach man that the disease is naturally incurable—He now shows him the heavenly cure by revealing the fact that God, without sullyng His purity, can come into contact with impurity in order to its removal and without receiving contagion from the arch-leper. The devil can grapple with Him in the human heart—He can lay hold upon His adversary that He may bind him hand and foot and cast him away from men—no more to oppress our race!

Jesus ushered in the dispensation of nearness, which, as you all know is to be followed by one of greater nearness still, for, as God is very near to us *spiritually*, the day draws near—oh, hasten it, good Lord!—when the angels shall sing, “The tabernacle of God is with men and He does dwell among them!” We shall need no temple in which Deity can be enshrined, for the Lord God and the Lamb shall be the Temple of universal manhood and we shall see Him face to face and days of distance and of mourning shall be ended.

I do not wonder then that Pharisees, who had drunk very deep into the separating spirit of the Law, should have been perfectly astounded that a Person claiming to be the Messiah and professing to be that Adonai who sits at the right hand of Jehovah till His enemies are made His footstool—should, as they thought—act so inconsistently with His own professions and allow constantly a mob of the dross and scum and raff of the population to be associated with Him! They therefore said, “This Man receives sinners,” and worse still, He breaks through all rules of caste and all degrees of separateness and makes Himself so familiar that He actually eats with them!

Now, this fact, which so startled them, has become very familiar to those of us who have been received and have eaten with Him. But still, the sinner, trembling under a sense of sin, feels the spirit of the old Law like a black cloud hovering over him and he can hardly venture to believe, much less to understand in all its richness of mercy, that Jesus still receives sinners! He fosters the notion that Jesus will look for some good thing in him and demand at least *some* redeeming trait in character, some act of penitence, some holy resolution, something or other which may mitigate guilt and conciliate regard. But the abstract truth that this Man receives sinners as such and eats with them needs to be proclaimed again and again and again—that the ears of unbelieving, mistrustful men may at last receive it—and that their hearts may feel its power!

May God the Holy Spirit bless our attempt this morning and His shall be the praise. Now, first of all, Jesus receiving sinners. And secondly, Jesus eating with them.

I. First, then, JESUS RECEIVING SINNERS. This was and is a great fact—our Lord received and still receives sinners! He permits them to form a part of His congregation and even to draw near to hear Him. A philosopher wrote over the door of his academy, “He that is not learned, let him not enter here.” But Jesus speaks by Wisdom in the Proverbs and says, “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here: as for him that lacks understanding, let him eat of My bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled” (Prov. 9:4, 5).

He bids the simple come and learn at His feet. Moral teachers have always been choice in the selection of their followers and have thought it a degradation and a casting of pearls before swine to throw their useful maxims, their invaluable dogmas as they dream them to be, before the vulgar herd, the sinful crowd. But this Man receives sinners! Whatever other men may do, this Man, this One, this One alone, if no other with Him—this One beyond all other teachers, however gentle and compassionate—this Man receives sinners! He will speak and tell of His mysteries, too, even when sinful ears are listening, for He receives sinners as His *disciples*, as well as His hearers.

If they come casually into the throng, His eyes glance upon them and He has a word of gentle rebuke and wooing love. But if they will come and join the class who cluster constantly about Him, they shall be thoroughly welcome and the deeper and higher Truths reserved for disciples shall be revealed to them, and they shall know the mystery of the kingdom! When He has cleansed sinners, He receives them not only as disciples, but as *companions*. This Man permits the guilty, the once profane, the lately debauched and formerly dissolute, to associate themselves with Him—to wear His name, to sit in His house—to be written in the same Book of Life with Himself!

He makes them *here* partakers with Him in His affliction, and *hereafter* they shall be partakers with Him in His Glory. This Man receives pardoned sinners into companionship. No, more, He receives them into *friendship*. The head that leaned upon His bosom was a sinner's head, and those who sat at the table with Him, to whom He said, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but Friends," were all of them, *sinners*, as they felt themselves to be. She who bore Him. She who ministered to Him of her substance. She who washed His feet with tears. She who was first at His empty sepulcher—all these were sinners and some of them emphatically sinners!

Into His heart's love He receives sinners, takes them from the dunghill and wears them as jewels in His crown. He plucks them as brands from the burning and preserves them as precious monuments of His mercy. And none are so precious in His sight as the sinners for whom He died. When Jesus receives sinners, He has not some outside reception place where He charitably entertains them for a time, as great men may do passing beggars. No! He opens the big golden gates of His own heart and He takes the sinner right into Himself—yes, He admits the sinner into personal union with Himself and makes the sinner a member of His body—of His flesh and of His bones. There was never such a reception as this! This fact is still the same—He is *still* receiving sinners!

This fact must not excite your unbelief because of its strangeness. I know the world, sinful as it is, does not receive sinners. When her character is gone, the fallen woman is pointed at in the streets and no decent society will entertain her. But this Man receives harlots when their good name and fame has long since become a thing of the past. When the man has played the rogue and the prison has confined him, there are few among his fellows who will speak with or own him. But this Man receives thieves! A dying thief went with Him into Paradise! Some men who run

well for a season, who suddenly fall from their high estate, are banished and excluded, proscribed and shut out. And I suppose, while society is what it is, this must always be the case.

In Christ's Church discipline requires that the offender should be put forth from us. It is painful, but it must be done. But there is no "must" of this sort pressing with dire necessity upon the tender heart of the Savior! He can receive without pollution—yes, even receive into His heart without injury to His purity. "This Man receives sinners." Contrary to the maxims and customs and ways of the world, Jesus keeps open house for outcasts! When all other doors are shut, this Man's door is open. When everyone else has bid you go your way as an unclean thing, not fit to be looked upon, this Man still stands crying, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me and I will give you rest!"

Blessed fact! May you prove its truthfulness, dear Friends, by going to Jesus *yourself*, even though you are in the worst sense a sinner. "This man receives sinners"—not, however, that they may *remain* sinners, but to pardon their sins, to justify their persons, to cleanse their hearts by the Holy Spirit—to preserve their souls by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to lead them on from strength to strength, to enable them to serve Him and to show forth His praise, to have communion with Him and to enjoy His love. "This Man receives sinners," at last, to reign with Him in Glory everlasting when the world and sin shall have passed away. Thus much we have noticed with regard to the fact. O blessed Spirit, give poor troubled consciences power to rest in this sweet Truth!

I want your attention to another thought, namely, the consistency of this fact. It is a most consistent and proper thing that this Man should receive sinners. If the Pharisees had not been rendered useless by their prejudice and would have considered the matter a little while, they might have thought so, too. Consider His Person—who was this Man? He claimed to be, and even they, themselves, must have acknowledged Him to have been by descent, the Son of David. It was most natural that the Son of David should receive sinners! It is what David did—you expect to see the Son of David doing what His father did before Him.

Do you not remember when David fled to the hold, in the cave of Adullam, that it is written, "Everyone that was in distress and everyone that was in debt and everyone that was discontented gathered themselves unto him and he became a captain unto them"? The very first band of men that ever served under David were most disreputable characters in the eye of Saul and his government. They had escaped from their country partly impoverished through the tyrannical conduct of Saul, and probably being knee-deep in treason against him, they escaped to put themselves under the leadership of that captain of bandits called David. It seemed but natural that the Son of David should receive just such a company when He began to establish His *spiritual* monarchy.

The New Jerusalem is founded upon Christ Jesus who is pure and perfect, but its first stones are hewn out of the quarries of sin. Our Lord Jesus, like Solomon, builds the temple of the Church, but the materials come from among those Tyrian sinners who are strangers and aliens by birth. The Savior takes, as His father, David, did before Him, discontented

bankrupts and distressed traitors that they may make up His band. If they had thought of that circumstance, they might have seen that it was not quite so strange that the Son of David received sinners! If you and I reflect awhile, we shall remember that the types which were set forth concerning Christ all seem to teach us that He *must* receive sinners.

One of the earliest types of the Savior was Noah's ark, by which a certain company, not only of men, but also of the lowest animals, were preserved from perishing by water and were floated out of the old world into the new. See, going up the hill on which the ark is built, not only the fleet gazelle, the timid sheep, the patient ox, the noble horse, the generous dog and the fair creatures that you would wish to spare—but here comes the lion, his jaws all stained with blood! Here is the fierce tiger and the wild hyena, the filthy swine and the stupid ass—creatures of all kinds come here and find shelter!

Who complains? I hear no voice lifting up its veto and crying, "There is no room for the swine here. There is no room for the fierce tiger here." The ark was ordained on purpose to save some of every kind. And just so, our Savior, Jesus, receives all sorts of people into Himself. It is no marvel if this Man receives sinners! Fly here, you loving and tender doves! Come here, you sweet birds of purest song! But ho, you ravens, eagles, vultures, and birds of evil name, you hurry here, also, for the Ark receives all who come!

A very prominent type under the Levitical dispensation was the City of Refuge. If a man had slain another, he fled from the pursuer of blood with hot haste and swift foot. And he ran at once into the City of Refuge and the gates were shut and he was preserved. Now, Brethren, you would not have thought it a strange thing if you had seen a man-slayer flying to the city! You would have thought it far more singular if any came there *but* man-slayers! "Why," you say, "this city has been set up and ordained on purpose that men who have been men-slayers might find refuge within its walls, and therefore it is natural to find the red-handed man come fleeing here."

Beloved, Jesus Christ is the City of Refuge! Who should fly to Him but the sinner wanting refuge? And who should need shelter but those requiring sanctuary from the avenger of blood? When you see the guilty hastening to Jesus, you say, "It is in keeping with the type, and it is no marvel whatever that He receives them." The scapegoat, again, was a very manifest type of the Messiah. They laid the sins of the people upon the scapegoat's head and then it took all their iniquities away into the wilderness. Now, suppose some objecting critic had said, "This goat which is set apart in the worship of God actually bears sins upon its head and here are sinful people coming to put their sins there." Who else should come? What was the meaning of the scapegoat, if there were no sin among the people of Israel? Come here today, not you righteous—for you need no scapegoat—but you sinful ones!

Here is the Sin-Bearer in type before you, set apart to bear the iniquity of the people. He is about to be driven into the wilderness to take sin away! Come here and put your sins upon him, for unless you come, the ceremony will have no meaning whatever! Look through any of the types,

and with very few exceptions, the thought of *sin* is prominent and the doctrine that Christ is to come into the world to save sinners is clearly written upon the front of the whole set of types of the Old Testament.

Let us remark again that the metaphors which Christ has used to set Himself forth, many, if not all of them, imply that He receives sinners. What is written concerning Him? "There shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." In our hymns, over and over and over again we delight to sing—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,"

and yet again—

***"The fountain of Christ,
Lord help us to sing."***

Now what is the fountain for but for the cleansing of the filthy? Cleanse the already clean? Absurd! Why do they need it? If they are already pure, why do they need to wash? But the fact that there is provision made for great washing implies great filthiness and that the fountain is furnished with a purifying element of wondrous power, namely, precious blood, seems to indicate that it was meant for great sin, unheard-of sin—sin which to the uttermost has polluted and defiled the frame of manhood.

The Savior also describes Himself as a *feast* in many of His parables. A great king makes a supper, and oxen and fatlings are killed. Now for whom is a feast prepared but for the hungry? In the parables the feast is set not merely for hungry persons, but the blind, the halt and the lame are called and compelled to enter. The Savior would not have delighted to set Himself forth as waters except for the sake of thirsty ones, or as meat, had there been no famishing souls. "Ho, everyone that thirsts," He says, "come to the waters. And he that has no money, let him come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Why all this to persons who have no needs? *Sinners* are those who have these needs, these hunger and thirst. And they are bid to come to Christ as the Gospel Feast!

Moreover, the Master has been pleased to take to Himself one or two titles which imply that He came to receive sinners. He takes the title of Physician, but as He told these very Pharisees a little while before, "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." There is no practice for the physician in a neighborhood where every man is well. There must be *sickness* to involve the necessity for a physician. Why his art? Why his skill in pharmacy if men are safe and sound without it? And why Christ the Savior—the Pardoner—if none to save or forgive? There is no supererogation in the Bible, nothing superfluous—why Christ a Physician, unless for the sick? He styles Himself very frequently the Redeemer, and saints in the olden times delighted to speak of Him as their Redeemer.

But a Redeemer for whom? Who wants redeeming but a *slave*? Who needs to be purchased into liberty but the man who is in hopeless bondage and cannot free himself from the chain? A redeemer for men already free—how can it be? He sets free not free men, but captives! He looses real and irksome fetters! He snaps not fictitious chains which fancy binds about fretful, frivolous persons—He breaks iron chains and snatches real yokes from off the necks of the thoroughly bound. There can be no Re-

deemer in the fullness of the title unless the persons are enslaved and His office must relate to such. I think I may distinctly say that if *all* the titles of the Savior do not involve or suppose the existence of sins, *most* do, and that either directly, or indirectly, they would furnish an argument to me to show that this Man came into the world to receive sinners.

If more evidence were wanted, I would point you to the Savior's miracles. The miracles which the Savior performed were very few of them miracles of *judgment*. They were almost all miracles of *mercy*. They were performed upon the sick, symbolical of His *spiritual* miracles upon the *morally* sick. They were performed upon persons possessed of devils, as if to show at once that even the devilish element which enters into man's rebellion is not too strong for the Savior to conquer, or too foul for Him to touch. His miracles were sometimes worked on the dead and those, as you will remember, in different stages of corruption. The young child in Jairus' chamber was yet sweet of flesh as though she had just fallen asleep—He quickened her. The young man at the gates of Nain was taken out to be buried—already there were tokens which made the mother say, "Let us bury our dead out of our sight." But the Almighty voice quickened him!

As for Lazarus, he had been dead four days already, and his sister said, "By this time he stinks." And as if to betoken that Jesus Christ can deliver not only from incipient sin, but from sin in its foulest stage of corruption and putridity, He spoke to Lazarus and said, "Lazarus, come forth." These miracles must have had some meaning and some teaching. If He thus touched men and healed their natural infirmities, how can you think He will not, whose mission is mainly *spiritual*, heal spiritual infirmities?

He might have said, and said truly, "Though I heal you, that is not the grand design of My mission—My kingdom is not of this world, nor are my healings intended to be of this world, either, in their grandest development. I descended from Heaven to heal sick *souls*, to raise the *spiritually* dead and conquer disease in the realm of *spirit*, rather than in the physical world." This day every miracle of the Savior seems to cry to me, to you, "Diseased souls, look to Jesus Christ and be saved!" Did you ever observe how many of His parables, also, are to the same effect—how, time after time, as in the three memorable parables of the chapter before us, it is the *sinner* that He is teaching and it is God's love in forgiving sin that He is endeavoring to set forth before the eyes which self-righteousness has made, alas, so dim and blind?

He is constantly telling us of a vainglorious Pharisee whose prayer is a mass of reeking pride. And of a penitent Publican whose humble cry brings justification from on high. He speaks of two debtors who had nothing to pay, frankly forgiven—and of the one who loved most, because he had most forgiven. He talks of a barren fig tree, spared to be dug about and fertilized, of a wounded man, pitied and succored by a good Samaritan. He tells us of loiterers admitted to the vineyard at the eleventh hour. And of poor, and halt, and lame entertained at a banquet of love.

I need not continue longer in this strain, for I think the consistency of the fact is evident to you all. I can well picture before me Jesus Christ receiving sinners, but I cannot imagine Him, I cannot, with the utmost

stretch of the imagination, picture Him as *rejecting* sinners. I cannot read of the rest of His life and then think of Him as saying, "Stand back you unclean." I cannot suppose Him with a crowd before Him, crying, "Far from Me, you ungodly! Keep a distance from this pure and sacred Being who condescends to look upon you!" And I cannot—I will not try, either—I cannot fancy it possible that He will reject *you*, my dear Friend, if you go this morning into His Presence and humbly seek His face. It would be altogether a departure from His constant mode of action, and there can be no such departure for He is the same yesterday, today and forever!

Thus, I think, we have shown the consistency of the fact with the Person and work of Christ. Observe the condescension of this fact. This Man, who towers above all other men holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners—this Man receives sinners! This Man, who is none other than the eternal God before whom angels veil their faces—this Man receives sinners! It needs an angel's tongue to describe this mighty stoop of love! That any of us should be willing to seek after the lost seed of the house of Adam is nothing wonderful—they are of our own race! But that He, the offended God against whom the transgression had been committed—that *HE* should take upon Himself the form of a servant and bear the sins of many, and should then, as Man, be willing to receive the vilest of the vile and blot out their transgressions and iniquities—this is marvelous!

It is only rendered believable at all by the fact that God Himself declares it and that abundant witnesses testify to it. I do think that if, for the first time, any but God had told the angels of this, they could not have conceived it as true! And I do not wonder that sometimes sinners under a sense of sin cry out, "It is too good to be true!" It were, indeed, too good if it were looked at from our side of the question, but viewed as coming from God, the infinite Fountain of all bounty and mercy, it is believable—it is joyfully certain! It is the greatest wonder in Heaven, or earth, or even in Hell! There is no marvel like the Truth of God that, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"—that He who ever lives bowed His head to die for sinners—and having made atonement for sin, now receives the very chief of sinners into His heart's love and makes them His companions and His friends!

Oh, will you kick against such condescension as this? Will your hearts be like iron when you think of such favor as this manifested to sinful men? Sinners, when God stoops, will *you* not stoop? When from the highest Heaven He seeks you, will you not seek Him? When you thus see His love so infinitely revealed, are there no drawings of heart, is there no melting of penitence towards the bleeding Savior? Surely cold drops of horror might stand even upon marble, or ooze forth from granite at the sound of Calvary's groans! And are there no tears in your eyes, no thoughts of melting, moving penitence when you mark such mercy and compassion manifested towards you? Jesus condescends to receive sinners and yet they stand out against Him! Be astonished, O heavens! Be ashamed, O earth!

We do but touch that point and now let us notice the certainty of this fact. That "this Man receives sinners" is undeniable. Sometimes when the sinner comes, Jesus is standing on the doorstep and before he begins to

knock, he is safe in the Savior's arms and finds himself forgiven before he has time to make a complete confession. At other times men have to knock, but the very first knock opens the door. Some of us stood knocking four or five years, unbelievably knocking, but still knocking anxiously, craving mercy and not finding it. Ah, but we did find it after all! It does not say that He will show you that He has received you in the next minute or two—that He will pour peace into your spirit the first moment He receives you—but He *will* receive you!

If He tarries, wait for Him! Knock and knock, and knock again, for there never yet was a soul that could say, "I was a sinner—I went to this Man and He did not receive me." You are growing weary, are you, young man? These three or four months that you have been watching and praying have tried your patience. Ah, dear Brother, don't you see the Cross and the Savior hanging on it? If you look to Him, your time of suspense will doubtless be over at once! You have made a mistake—darkness has been over your eyes! You have been looking in the wrong places—to your *feelings*, your *penitence*, your *faith*—rather than to Him! Or, if it is true that He has kept you waiting, yet wait on! Hope on, hope always! While the lamp holds out to burn, despair must not trample down your soul. Jesus *must* receive you—He did receive sinners once, and again, I bid you, remember that He is the same yesterday, today and forever! He must receive you—cast yourself on Him and you shall find that He will receive you!

There is a great multitude of people here this morning and yet among us all there is not one who can say, "We sought the Lord and He would not receive us." But there are many hundreds here, who, though they had a sorry time of it in the season of conviction, yet can clap their hands and say, "Truly, truly, the Master does manifest Himself to all who cry to Him in truth. Try Him, then, and you will find it true with you, too!

I shall want you now, dear Friends, for a moment, to permit me to show the adaptation of this fact to many who are now present. "This Man receives sinners," is an announcement well adapted to many of this congregation. It is so very plain. If it were a sentence which needed much explanation, it might not suit the multitude. There would be some who would think it over and say, "Alas! Such a text hardly meets *my* case. It is a mystery! I cannot get at the bottom of it." But this is so simple, "This Man receives sinners." You know what it is to be received into a house? You go, you knock, the door opens, you are received. This is all you have to do in the matter of salvation, too! You go as you are to Christ. You knock. You are received.

It is a blessed sentence from its plainness. It is very blessed, too, from its personality. I can see *my* name in it. You will say, "How?" Well, dear Friends, I wish you may be able to see yours. "This Man receives *sinners*." It does not say He receives John, Hannah, Sarah, Mary or Thomas—it says much better than that—it says, "This man receives **SINNERS**." Now there may be a mistake about my name being Charles. And if I found it written in God's Word that He received a person of my name, I should always be excessively anxious about the registration. I should be afraid lest

I should not really be the person described. But when it says, He “receives sinners,” I am very clear about this meaning *me*, for I know I am a sinner.

The devil himself, liar as he is, dares not say I am not a sinner! No, he oftentimes does me very good service by telling me how very clearly that is my name. And I never thank him for anything but that—that he does sometimes help one to read his title clear by enabling one to see distinctly that he *is* a sinner! Well, *you* are a sinner—then the text means *you*—and, “This man receives sinners.” If you were in some country, say in the center of Africa, wandering about at night amidst a crowd of huts, wondering where you could find lodging for the night. If you saw a board put up very legibly printed with these words, “This person receives white men,” why you would say to yourself, “That is it.” You would not care that it did not say, “This person receives John Smith or Tom Brown.” It would be quite enough for you, “He receives white men.”

You are a white man and you would say, “He receives me.” Now, this Man receives sinners, you are a sinner—then He will receive you. Suppose we reverse it, and there were put up a notice in one of our streets, “At this house they receive black men.” Now, I cannot conceive any black man saying, “They will not receive me because I am so very black. Why,” he would say, “It says they will receive me and the more black I am the more certainly is this invitation meant for me. If I am a jet-black man, then I am very black and they will, with less hesitation receive me.” I cannot suppose a half-caste man saying, “Well, I have a little white in me, therefore I feel sure they will take me.” He might feel proud of it, but then there would come afterwards the thought, “I am not so clear that this is meant for me, if I am not *all* black.”

So if there are any of you who are a little self-righteous and say, “I do not know whether I am such a sinner as some people are,” you may doubt whether you are a sinner. But you who know you are sinners right through to the backbone—sinners everywhere and every way—there cannot be any doubt about *you*, *your* name is as clearly there as possible! There is plainness and there is personality. But there is presentness, too. “This Man receives sinners.” Sometimes on the doorsteps of workhouses you may see a very sorry sight late at night—a company of men, women and boys crowding on the doorstep to spend the night there because they came too late. There must be an hour when the workhouse must be shut and the refuge for the night closed, but they arrived too late and outside they must be kept.

But you never saw a soul shivering outside Christ’s door on the doorstep of eternal ruin because it came too late in this life! There was the thief—he had a hard run for it, but he just reached the door in time. Without doubt it is written on the top of my Master’s door, “This Man receives—at all times and at all seasons—this Man receives sinners.” It will be a dolorous day for you, some of you, if you die as you now are, when this sentence will be blotted out and you will see written over the door of Mercy, “This Man *received* sinners.” Then it will be the Hell of your hells that He did receive sinners once, but that you never came! That when it was said, “He receives sinners,” you passed by carelessly and proudly and

would not enter. And now mercy is a thing of the past and you are shut up where hope can never come, in the flames of Hell!

But as long as life lasts, dear Hearers, that inscription stands in all its glorious presentness, "This Man receives sinners." Do observe the unqualified sense in which the sentence is put, "This Man receives sinners." But how? What sort of sinners? How are they to feel? How are they to come? Not a word is said about their *coming*, or their *preparation*, but simply, "This Man receives sinners." Some sinners came to Christ walking. Others came to Christ limping on crutches, having lost a leg—He never turned any away because they came on crutches. One man came on his bed—indeed, he did not come, but was *brought* by other people. Jesus received him all the same for that. There were some who did not seek the Lord at all, but Christ Jesus came *to them* and received them by a blessed victory of Divine Grace. He receives sinners and the only stipulation that is put in at all is, "whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." If you will, take! If you have a will to Christ—if God has given you a will towards Christ Jesus—and if you have nothing beyond that will—no feelings, no emotions, no works, no experience which could qualify you for Him. If you do but will—"Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely"—"This man receives sinners."

Sometimes if you want to get a child into an Orphan Asylum, you might just as well keep the child yourself as go through the expense and trouble of working to get the child in—there are so many difficulties to be encountered in effecting your design. If you want to get to Jesus Christ, there is no trouble, no expense. Going to Jesus Christ is coming to an open door of mercy. The city of the New Jerusalem, you remember, had four gates and we are told none of them are ever shut, "they are not shut at all by day and there is no night there." So that come as we may, "This Man receives sinners just as they come to Him."

II. Now, I wanted to speak upon the second head, but I had not sufficient forethought to store up the time, so we must only say of that just this—Jesus Christ, having once received sinners, enters into the most familiar and endearing communion with them that is possible. HE FEASTS WITH THEM—their joys are His joys—their work for God is His work for God. He feasts with them at their table and they with Him at His table—and He does this wherever the table is spread. It may be in a attic, or in a cellar—in a wilderness, or on a mountain—He still eats with them.

He does this *now* in the ordinances and means of Grace by His Spirit. And this He will do in the fullness of Glory when He takes these sinners up to dwell with Him. Sinners are not merely permitted the parings of mercy, but the very marrow and fatness! They are not only allowed to sit and dip their feet in the margin of the stream, but they may wade in and find it a river to swim in—they shall not, in Heaven, sit in the outer circle—they shall draw near the Throne and *reign* with Jesus! There is nothing which Christ will not give to sinners. They shall be crowned. They shall have harps of gold. They shall dwell in the many mansions near to God Himself!

There is no second and lower party, as it were—He does not receive sinners and put them at the lower end of the table, below the salt. He re-

ceives sinners and eats with them! He receives them into the soul and flower of Christian life and Christian privilege among all the favored saints of the celestial courts! I would to God I had time to plead this matter home with some who are here this morning and who are not Believers in Jesus. Oh, Sinner, trust my Master and you shall be saved! May the Spirit of God make you trust Him now! I know your sense of unworthiness. I know you feel you are not fit to come. But He says *nothing* about fitness, so why should *you* say it? Christ lays down no conditions, so why do *you* make conditions? "This Man receives sinners."

Why, says Bunyan, "I felt myself such a sinner once that I could do nothing but fly to Christ. And if He had had a drawn sword in His hand, the terrors of Hell were so dreadful that I could have borne the terrors of that drawn sword to escape from the wrath of God." But here, instead of the drawn sword is the warm loving heart! Fly to it, Sinner! God help you to fly now, that you may be saved! If He should reject you, come and tell me. I would not knowingly preach a lying Gospel—and if you can prove to me that He does not receive sinners, we will have a Sunday service and preach that the Gospel has failed, for we will preach the truth of Him and not speak falsely for God. When you find He rejects a coming sinner, let us hear it, that our hopes may no longer be as bright and high as they are now!

Try the Lord Jesus, Sinner! Taste and see that the Lord is good! Come to Jesus now! Come as you are! Come now to Him! You need not stop to get to your houses to bend your knees to pray. One cry, one tear, one LOOK with the believing eye will do it. "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." While we thus preach, may the Master enter into your hearts by His Spirit and may you be led to Him, and we will praise Him together, world without end. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 15.

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“UNTIL HE FINDS IT” NO. 2821

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 8, 1903.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 28, 1877.**

*“Until he finds it.”
Luke 15:4.*

IT was not just anybody who went after the sheep that was lost—it was the person to whom the lost sheep belonged. Our Savior said, “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?” The man was not a hunter, looking after wild game that was not his, in order to make it his by capturing it, but he was a sheep-master—one who owned the sheep, going out to find what was already his own property. This is one of the great secrets that explain the care of the Good Shepherd—in looking for the lost sheep, He is caring for that which is His own. He says of them, in His great intercessory prayer to His Father, “Yours they were, and You gave them to Me.” Long before this world was created, or stars began to shine, even in the eternal ages of the past, God had given to His beloved Son a people who were then and there His by His Father’s gift. In the fullness of time He redeemed them and so they became doubly His. Yet they were His, in plan and purpose, from eternity! They were, therefore, His when they wandered away from Him and His while they strayed further and yet further off from Him—yes, they were always His wherever they went! This Truth of God is well put by the writer of the lines we have so often sung—

***“Lord, You have here Your ninety and nine,
Are they not enough for You?
But the Shepherd made answer, ‘This of Mine
Has wandered away from Me
And although the road is rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find My sheep.’”***

That wandering sheep did not belong to anybody else but that particular sheep-master. If any other man had taken it into his fold, he would have had no right to do so. If anyone had caught it and slain and eaten it, he would have been a thief for it was not his sheep. It belonged to the man who owned the other 99 sheep and it was because it belonged to him that he went after it. He would not have gone to seek another man’s sheep—he sought it because it was his own. And, in like manner, Christ has come into the world to seek His own. He Himself said, “The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” And the Apostle Paul wrote, “Chr-

ist loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” The main object and design which He had in coming to this earth was to seek His own. His great redemptive work has brought some good to all men, but it was more especially intended for the benefit of the household of faith. As Paul wrote to Timothy, “We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe.” The great purpose of His coming is in order to seek His own, whom His Father has given to Him—that none of them may be lost at the last.

Remembering this great Truth, we shall now consider these four words, “Until he finds it.” “Until” is something like a boundary mark set up to indicate a turning-point. And we shall first consider *the dark side of this*, “until,” and then come over into *the bright side of it*.

I. Looking, first, on THE DARK SIDE OF THIS, “UNTIL,” we will try to answer two questions. First, where is the sheep until the Shepherd finds it? Secondly, where is the Shepherd until He finds it?

First, then, *where is the sheep until the Shepherd finds it?* Mark, dear Friends, the pronoun in our text, “until *He* [speaking of Christ] finds it.” It is the Shepherd who finds the lost sheep. True salvation comes to the sinner by Jesus Christ finding him. You and I, if we are very earnest in seeking the souls of others, may readily find the lost ones, for they are all around us—perhaps in our own families, possibly they nestle even in our bosoms. We know well enough where the lost ones are, for we cannot walk the streets of London, or the lanes of country villages without discovering them. If we ask the city missionary where we can find those that are most evidently lost, he will tell us where they live in whole colonies! He knows where any quantity of them may be found. Now, our finding of them may be a means to an end, but it is only a means. The end must be *Christ’s finding them*, if they are really to be saved. Otherwise, it will not be of much use for the schoolmaster to find them. Though it may do them some good and be a temporal advantage to them, it will not be much good for the blessings of civilization to find them, or for them to be lifted up out of poverty. All these processes may be useful in their measure, but, as far as the eternal salvation of the lost is concerned, it all depends upon Christ finding them. He, the unique Man, the all-glorious God, must come into contact with them through His Spirit and claim them as His own—for, until that happens, they will remain in the sad, sad state of which I am now going to speak. I like that idea of the Chinese convert who, when he was applying for Baptism and membership at San Francisco, and was asked, “How did you find Jesus” answered, “I no find Jesus at all—He find me.” It is almost unnecessary to add that he was accepted upon such a testimony!

Where, then, are lost sinners until Christ finds and saves them?

Well, first, they are in a very careless state. They are here compared to sheep, partly because of their stupidity, but also because of their aptness to wander. A sheep thinks nothing of wandering—it is sport to him to have his liberty. Perhaps he enjoys himself all the more in being free from the pen and the fold. The sheep does not think at all about the shepherd seeking him. The shepherd has wide-open eyes for the sheep, but the

sheep, while he is wandering, has no eyes for the shepherd. The shepherd is pursuing him, hot foot, over hill and dale, but the sheep is carelessly eating what little grass it is able to find, thinking only of the present and making itself as happy as it can without a thought of the future. This is still the condition of the great mass of our fellow men. Until Christ finds them, they are thoughtless, careless, indifferent about eternal things. Oh, that they could but be led to *think*, for thoughtfulness is oftentimes evidence that He has found them! But they decline to think. “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed?”—these are the questions that interest them! Their chief concern is, “to kill time,” though, indeed, they have no time to lose—to hurry away the hours which are already far too fleet—this seems to be their principal occupation. Just as the sheep cannot think and will not think, so neither will the sinner—he will continue in his carelessness, indifference and brutishness until the Savior finds him.

More than this, the sheep, until it is found by its owner, is very apt to wander further and yet further away, just as sinners go on from one sin to another. It is not the nature of sin to remain in a fixed state. Like decaying fruit, it grows more rotten—the corruption is sure to increase and spread. The man who is bad today will, to a certainty, be worse tomorrow. Every week that he lives he adds some new evil habit to all that he had before, until the chain, which at first seemed but a silken cord, becomes, at last, an adamantine fetter in which he is held fast so that he cannot escape. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it is impossible to say how far men will wander away from God! If restraining Grace is not brought to bear upon them, they will certainly go to unutterable lengths of infamy and guilt. Possibly someone who is here now is wandering further and yet further away. My Friend, let me remind you that you can do, today, what you could not have done seven years ago. You laugh now at things that would have made you shudder then—and language which made your blood run cold when you first left your mother’s knee, has now become habitual with you. Yes, and certain tricks in trade, which you oftentimes condemned at the first, have now become your regular practice. Ah, yes, the wandering sheep keeps on straying further and further away—it will not come back to the fold of its own accord, but will continue to wander until the shepherd finds it.

And, until then, the sheep is in a sad condition all the while. It dreams of happiness by wandering, but it finds none. A sheep is not a proper animal to run wild. It is unable to take care of itself as a great many wild creatures can do. As corn, which is but educated grass, seems to yield a harvest nowhere but where man sows it, so a sheep seems to be entirely dependent on man. If it would do well, it must be under a shepherd’s care. A sheep running wild is out of its element—it is in a condition in which it cannot flourish or be happy. And a man without God, and without Christ, cannot possibly be blessed. You may think you can do as well without God as with Him, but as soon might a lamp burn without oil, or the lungs heave in life without air—as well might you attempt to live without food as for your soul to truly and really live without God! The

very best of you, if you are without Christ, are simply great ruins—like some dilapidated castle, or abbey which you sometimes see—there may be enough of the ancient building remaining to let us guess what it once was, and what it might again be if the original builder could come back and restore it to its pristine glory, but as it is, it is an utter ruin and bats and owls make their home there.

So is it with you if you are without Christ. Your heart is nothing but a cage of unclean birds. Your mind is full of doubts and forebodings. You are often unable to sleep because of your dread of the future. And when you come to die, then will your desolation be most evident, for, away from God you are like a fish out of the water, or like a diver, under the water, cut off from the supply of air which is essential to his life. The creature cannot do without the Creator! God can be blessed without us, but we cannot be blessed without Him!

We shall realize that the wandering sheep is in a sad condition if we only think of the loss to itself through its straying—but there is far more than that involved in its wandering. There is, also, the loss to the shepherd. That is the blessed mystery underlying our Savior’s words. The main loss was that of the shepherd—it was that fact that moved him, as the owner of the lost sheep, to seek after it until he found it. And this made him rejoice so much when he did find it, for he could not bear the thought of losing it. To be lost to Christ may, perhaps, seem to some of you who are careless and thoughtless, to be but a trifling matter. If the wandering sheep could have spoken, it might have said, “I do not want to belong to the shepherd. I know that he values me and that he is seeking me because I am his, but I do not care about that.” No, poor sheep, but, if you had been the shepherd, you would have cared and, poor Sinner, if you did but know even a little of what Christ feels, you, also, would begin to care about your own soul! Oh, it is such joy, such bliss as I cannot describe, for anyone to be able to say, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” It brings tears to my eyes even as I repeat those familiar words and meditate upon their meaning.

What a blessing it is to belong to Jesus! I do not know a sweeter song than this, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” To belong to Jesus, to be one of the sheep in His flock, to know that He is my Shepherd and that I follow Him because I recognize His voice, oh, this is Heaven upon earth! This is the beginning of the joy of Heaven itself! I wish all of you knew it, but, alas, many of you are like the sheep that was lost to the shepherd. If he counted up the 99 and rejoiced that they were safe, yet he heaved a sigh as he said, “I have lost one sheep out of my hundred,” and he could not bear the thought of losing even one of them. In the same way, some of you are, as yet, lost to Christ and lost to the great Father who is in Heaven—and that is very sad.

There was also another sad thing, namely, that the sheep was in constant danger. It was away from its natural protector. It was subject to weariness, drought, hunger, disease—and it was in continual danger from predators. It might die for need of care. It would, certainly, at last, perish altogether and be torn by the foul creatures that would feast upon

its carcass. In like manner, a sinner without a Savior is always in danger—as I have already shown you—in danger of still worse sin, in danger of death, in danger from the devil, in danger of “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.” Oh, the terrible danger of every unregenerate man! If I see a child almost run over in the street, it curdles my blood—does it not have a similar effect upon you? When you see a man knocked down in the road, even though he gets up and walks away, you feel troubled lest he should be hurt. Do you feel like that when you think about the souls of men that are in a far more terrible danger—in jeopardy of the wrath of God which abides upon them even now, and which will abide upon them forever in that dread place of torment, “where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched”? Pity the poor sheep until the shepherd finds it, for its condition is most sad! And, poor unconverted Sinner, we would also pity you until the Savior finds you, for your state is terribly sad, too.

Now I turn to the second question—*Where is the Shepherd until He finds the wandering sheep?* Ah, Brothers and Sisters, you know well enough where He is! He is seeking His sheep which is lost and He will keep on seeking until He finds it. He is very skillful in following the tracks of the wanderer, just as some shepherds seem to be able to train their sheep almost as a bloodhound will follow a trail. It is wonderful how Christ follows the track of some people. I have known them go from place to place, yet the Good Shepherd has never been far away from them. When they were children, He sought them in the hymns they learned, in their teachers’ earnest admonitions, in their mother’s entreaties and their father’s prayers. When they became young men and young women and shook off their former instructors, the Good Shepherd still followed them by many a helpful book and many a holy remembrance which they could not shake off. When they went into business—and neglected the Sabbath and forsook the house of God—the Good Shepherd still tracked them by affliction, by Christian neighbors, by the very sound of the church bell, by the death of old companions and in a hundred other ways.

It may be that some went off to America, or Canada in the hope of escaping from the influences of religion, but it was no use. You remember the backwoodsman who had begun to make a log hut and had not finished before up rode a Methodist minister with his saddlebags? With an oath the settler said, “Why, I have moved a dozen times to get away from you fellows, but wherever I move, one of you is sure to come to me.” “Yes,” said the good man, “and wherever you go, you will find us. If you go to Heaven, you will find us there. And if you go to Hell,” he added, “I am afraid that you will find some Methodist preachers even there. You had better give in, for we shall always be after you.” If you are really one of Christ’s sheep, something of this sort will happen to you and, wherever you may wander, you will find Christ is still after you! If you go to the uttermost parts of the earth, He will follow you. If you land at some far distant port where you think you may indulge without restraint in vice, even there the Divine Love of Christ will nurse you. I know one who now

preaches the Gospel, who was on board a ship at Shanghai and, that very night, a Prayer Meeting was being held in the College on his behalf, as his brother was one of our students. And while they were praying, the Lord struck him down, turned him from his sins almost without any visible instrument—and he returned home and confessed his faith in Christ! The Lord Jesus is well acquainted with sinners’ tracks and He will pursue them until He finds them!

Notice what blessed perseverance the shepherd manifests—“Until he finds it.” There is the wandering sheep, toiling up that steep hill. So up that hill goes the shepherd. Why does he climb like that? Because the sheep has gone that way and he must follow it till he finds it. Now it has gone down the other side and across that green morass where, if a man should slip, he might sink and lose his life. Yes, but the shepherd will go after that wandering one till he finds it. Day after day, from the rising to the setting of the sun and all through the night, nothing can stop the shepherd’s feet until he has his sheep that was lost, safe upon his shoulders! And how blessed is the perseverance of the Savior that He will not take our rejection as a final refusal, but still gives us fresh proclamations and invitations of Grace! Again and again He sends out His servants to bid the sinner come to the Gospel feast—not only on the Sabbath, but on week-days as well, the voice of Wisdom cries aloud, “Turn in here and feast upon the bounteous provision of redeeming love.” There are none so persevering as Christ is—“He shall not fail nor be discouraged,” but shall press on in His earnest search for His lost sheep until He finds it!

A man who is seeking lost sheep must display great wisdom because it is very difficult to find the tracks of the sheep. And the Divine wisdom which was displayed when some of us were brought to God will cause us everlasting wonderment! It is a marvelous thing that sometimes a man’s sin, though it looks as though it must damn him, has been part of the very means by which he has obtained salvation. I knew one who never recollected having told a lie until, upon a certain occasion, he was caught unaware and said what was untrue. And then he was covered with such shame and confusion of face that he saw all his boasted self-righteousness melt away and he went and humbled himself before God and so found peace and pardon! Some have allied themselves to evil companions who seemed likely to lead them further into sin, yet, before long, those very companions have been converted and have been the means of leading them to the Savior! Christ will have His sheep, somehow or other. He will lay hold of them and if they will not be brought in one way, they shall be in another! Some have been found by Him in the darkest dens of infamy. His all-piercing eyes have been able to see them even there. Some have been won by gentleness and kindness—others by terror and distress. But, in one way or another, with wondrous perseverance, Jesus seeks the lost until He finds them! And He will never give up the search until the last of His wandering sheep is brought back to the fold.

Where is the Good Shepherd until He finds His sheep? Why, He is in a state of discontent, with yearning heart and troubled brow. If you say to Him, “Good Shepherd, why did You not go home to Your Father when first the Jews sought to stone You? Why did you not ascend in splendor from amidst the ungodly throng?” He will tell you that He could not give up seeking His sheep till He found them by redemption and that now He must still continue yearning over sinners until He finds them. Do you not sympathize with Him in this feeling? If you are a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot be at ease while souls are being lost! I fear that it would not matter in the least to some professors whether a whole nation was lost or saved! They would be just as comfortable, whatever happened. But they who have the spirit of Christ and are in sympathy with Him, have hearts of compassion so that the loss of any one sinner fills them with dismay—and the penitence of any one sinner makes their heart rejoice with exceeding joy! May we always cultivate that spirit!

II. But now I must turn to THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THAT LANDMARK, “UNTIL.” I am going to ask the same questions as before, but will put the second first and the first second.

First, then, *where is the Shepherd when He finds His sheep?* I can answer this question, for I remember where He was when He found me. The first sight I had of Him was a very vivid one. Where was He then? Well, He was just where I was! The sheep and the Shepherd stood together—but Christ was where I ought to have been by reason of my sin. Christ was accursed because I was cursed by my sin. Christ was made sin because I was a sinner, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Oh, what a sight was that—Christ in my place! I have preached about it many years, yet it always makes me wonder just as it did at the first. What an overwhelming thought it seemed, and yet how full of joy! O poor Soul, if you would have a true sight of Christ, see Him suffering, dying, forsaken of His God and full of agony because the chastisement of your peace was upon Him!

The Shepherd was also standing over the lost sheep—not merely near it, but looking down upon it. How pleased, how delighted, He was to have found His sheep which was lost! Well do I remember when I saw my Lord looking down upon me with eyes of unspeakable love. I could hardly believe He could ever have loved me so—it seemed to be almost incredible! What could He see in me to love—a poor sheep with torn fleece, footsore and weary—and not worth the trouble He had taken to find me? When a queen picks up a pin, it is nothing in comparison with Christ taking me up and caring for me! For some great emperor to fall in love with a milkmaid may not be anything amazing, for she may have as sweet a face as ever graced any empress, but as for us sinners, there is no beauty in us that Christ should desire us! By nature, we were full of evil and by practice, too, we became even worse—yet Jesus loved us and, as a shepherd rejoices over the wandering sheep that he finds and brings home, or as a father rejoices over his lost child whom he has found, or as a young man rejoices over his bride, so did the Lord Jesus rejoice over us when He found us—

**“And all through the mountains
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a cry to the gate of Heaven
‘Rejoice! I have found My sheep!’
And the angels echoed around the Throne,
‘Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!’”**

We also saw Him, at that time, as bearing the marks of the toil and travail which He had endured on our behalf. There are the tokens on the shepherd’s face, and on the shepherd’s hands and on the shepherd’s garments, of the rough way that he has trodden. If the sheep could but know, it might read, in the very look of him, the price that he had to pay for its recovery. And so, dear Friends, was it with us when Jesus saved us. We looked up and saw Him with His face stained with the spit of men, His head encircled by the crown of thorns, His body covered with the bloody sweat and His hands, and feet, and side all pierced! And as we looked, we loved Him because He had first loved us, and loved us so wondrously!

One thing more about the shepherd when he found the lost sheep, he was grasping it, for I guarantee you that there was not a moment between his getting near it and his grasping it. “No, no,” he seemed to say, “you will not get away from me again. I have caught you, and I will hold you fast.” Do we not remember the grip that Christ gave us when He first found us? We were apprehended by Him whom we now have apprehended. We were held fast by Him whom now we hold fast by faith and love. We felt, then, as if a strange power had seized us—not that we resisted it, for we rejoiced in it. We were led, with full consent against our own will—that is, against our old will—but with a new will which we felt put within us by that blessed hand which had laid hold of us and which would not let us go!

But *where was the sheep when the shepherd found it?* Why there was but an instant and the sheep was on the shoulders of the shepherd! And what does that indicate but that when Christ finds me, then He bears me and all that is upon me, upon His shoulders—all my diseases, all my sin, and all my sorrows are laid upon Him! We rightly sing—

“I lay my sins on Jesus,”

but I think we ought also to sing—

“I lay myself on Jesus.”

All that I am, and all that I have, all is there! Of Benjamin, Moses said, “The Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders.” That is where we are, between the shoulders of the Divine Shepherd of souls! Christ underneath us bearing all our weight—the weight of sin, the weight of sorrow, doubt, fear, and care and whatever else there may be upon us.

What about the sheep now? Well, it is resting—not as it will rest, by-and-by, when it will lie in the Shepherd’s bosom in yet sweeter fellowship, but, even now it is resting. It has not to carry itself back to the fold. It is a long way, but neither the Shepherd nor the sheep will get weary. It is a toilsome way, full of dangers, but those boils and dangers are for the Shepherd rather than for the sheep. We are right in singing—

“Safe in the arms of Jesus”

for now that He has found us, we are under His protection. No wolf can come near us now, or, if he did, he would be quite unable to hurt us. The sheep that is found is perfectly secure in the Good Shepherd’s grip. It could not stray away even if it could. If it struggled to get free, He would grip it all the more firmly. So, Beloved, was it with us—when Christ took us on His shoulders, He held us fast and He will not let us go.

On whose shoulders was the sheep? It was on the shoulders of the rejoicing one who had found it and you and I belong to the Christ who is glad to find us! I wonder which was the happier of the two, in the feast, when the younger son came home—the son or the father? I think the father was and, certainly, of the shepherd and the sheep, the shepherd was the happier—and yet the sheep, in being found, must have participated in the shepherd’s joy. Do you not remember how, when you were saved, you nestled down under the wings of the Eternal? I love to see the little chicks beneath the feathers of the hen, peeping out with such sweet contentment and a sense of perfect security expressed in their twinkling eyes. Had they been away from their mother’s wings, they would have been afraid, but, under their mother’s protection, they did not seem at all alarmed. So have I cowered down beneath the wings of God, trusting to that blessed promise, “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust.” O Beloved, it is a blessed thing to know that we are held in the grip of a strong Christ, with great joy in His heart which is the proof of the value that He sets upon us, and the love which He bears towards us!

So you see that there is a great deal in these four words, “until he finds it.” Where are you now, my Friend? Are you still lost? What a joy it is to think that the Good Shepherd is still seeking lost sheep! But, if you have seen Christ near you, oh, that you may, by His Grace, this very hour, be caught up by His pierced hands and laid upon His everlasting shoulders and so be carried to the heavenly fold! The Lord grant it! This is what you need and what you must have if you are really to be saved. You must be “saved in the Lord.” Christ Jesus must save you—it must be by His blessed hands and His almighty power that you must be rescued from danger and saved from going down to the Pit. May He soon find all of you who are lost and carry you on His shoulders all the way to the eternal fold above, for His dear names sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 17.**

Verse 1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come.* That tremendous hour which was the very hinge of history—that hour in which He must suffer, bleed and die—to pay the ransom price for His people—“Father, the hour is come.”

1. *Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.* In the endurance of the Cross there was a mutual glorification. It was the time of the Savior’s humiliation and yet, in a certain sense, He was never so glorious

as when He died upon the tree. Then, too, He glorified His Father, vindicating Divine Justice and manifesting Divine Love.

2. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* Christ, by His death, had power given Him over all flesh—that is the universal aspect of it. But there was a special purpose hidden within it—“that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* Do you really know the only true God and Jesus Christ, His Son? Have you been brought into such familiar acquaintance with God as to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior? Then you have eternal life and you may rejoice that you have a life like that of God, Himself, which can never die!

4. *I have glorified You on the earth; I have finished the work which You gave me to do.* What a blessed thing that our Savior was able to say this just before His death! Oh, that you and I may be able to utter some humble echo of this speech when we come to the end of our lives! This is indeed a life worth living!

5. *And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.* “Take Me up from earth again. Clothe Me again with that glory which, for a while, I have laid aside.”

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your word.* What high praise this was of Christ’s disciples! “They have kept Your word.” Poor creatures that they were, they often turned aside from the right path. They were oftentimes very ignorant and very willful, yet the Lord knew that their hearts were right towards Him and that they willed to learn, and desired to believe. So He saw in them what was often hidden, even from themselves, and He testified to His Father, “They have kept Your word.”

7, 8. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You. For I have given unto them the words which You gave Me.* Every preacher of the Gospel should see to it that this is true concerning himself. When we pass on to the people the words which God has given to us, we supply them with real spiritual food and so we glorify God. But if we only give them our own words, we do but mock their hunger and we dishonor God. Our blessed Master, though quite able to speak His own original thoughts, kept to the words of His Father—let us be careful to imitate His example.

8, 9. *And they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours.* There was a special request in Christ’s prayer, now that He was nearing the end of His earthly life. He concentrated His intercessions upon the chosen people for whom He was about to shed His blood.

10, 11. *And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world,*

and I come to You. The disciples were going to be left alone and Christ’s tender heart made Him lessen the pain of the separation by offering this great petition on their behalf.

11. *Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* This was as though He had said, “You have given them to Me, My Father, to become My bride. And now I am about to die and return to You, I give back this bride of Mine into Your charge. Take care of her, I pray You, till I can come back again and receive her unto Myself.” There is such holy unity between these Divine Persons of the Godhead that the Father first gives the elect to Christ and then Christ commits the elect into the Father’s keeping.

12, 13. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in them.* Are you dull and sad today? Does anything depress your spirits? It is not according to your Savior’s mind that you should be unhappy. It is His will and purpose that His joy should be fulfilled in you. Ask for a sip from His cup of joy at this moment—one drop of His joy will make the dullest to be bright and the saddest to be glad!

14. *I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* He was a stranger here and His people are also strangers and foreigners. We are not so much to be unworldly as to be *other-worldly*. We belong to another world, to another Kingdom, even the Kingdom of Heaven!

15. *I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.* “Keep them in the world to battle with the Evil One. Make them the salt that prevents putrefaction and let them not lose their savor, let them not be contaminated by the evil in the midst of which they dwell.”

16, 17. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth.* It looks as though our Lord almost anticipated that question of Pilate, “What is truth?” Here is His answer—“Your word is truth.”

18. *As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* Christ was the Sent One and every Christian is also sent. All Believers should be missionaries, sent forth upon a mission to bless the sons of men.

19, 20. *And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.* Christ knew that His Church would grow. He did not merely pray for the little handful of disciples who were with Him there, but He prayed for all who, in later years, would believe on Him.

21. *That they all may be one.* That is the great prayer of Christ. There are not two churches, but one Church. Christ is not the Head of two bodies—He has but one mystical body. There is but one Bridegroom and

there is but one bride—that bride is His indivisible Church. Hence His prayer, “That they all may be one.”

21. *As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* Can the world believe in Christ till His Church becomes more manifestly one? I fear not, so let us, each one, aim at the true unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ. There are some who aim at this by separating themselves from everybody else, but I do not see how they promote unity in that way. I clearly and painfully see how they increase divisions and multiply strife wherever they go. But let us, Beloved, to the utmost of our power, promote the unity of the body of Christ.

22, 23. *And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and You in Me.* Do you understand this wonderful union? Jesus Christ in you—“I in them.” And then the Father in Christ—“and You in Me.”

23. *That they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me.* This is a wonderful Truth of God—that the Father loves the Church even as He loves Jesus Christ, His Son. When shall the world ever know this till the unity of the Church is more clearly seen?

24-26. *Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O Righteous Father, the world has not known You, but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* Oh, for a blessed fulfillment of that prayer in our experience this very moment, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—410, 377.

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

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

OUR GREAT SHEPHERD FINDING THE SHEEP NO. 2065

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 27, 1889.

DELIVERED BY C. H. Spurgeon,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, MARCH 25, 1888.

“Until he finds it. And when he has found it. And when he comes home.”
Luke 15:4, 5, 6.

THE love of Jesus, the Great Shepherd, is very *practical* and active. There is a sheep lost and the Lord regrets it. But His love does not spend itself in regrets. He arises and goes forth to seek and to save that which was lost. The love of Jesus Christ is love not in word only but in deed and in truth. The love of Jesus is *prudent*. He does not wait until the sheep is willing to return, or until it makes some attempt to come back. But no sooner is its lost estate known to the Shepherd than He starts off, that He may find that which was lost. The love of Jesus to the lost sheep is *pre-eminent*. He leaves the ninety-nine in their pasturage. And for a while forgets them, that all His heart, His eyes, His strength may be given to the one that has gone astray. O sweet love of Christ, so practical, so prudent, so pre-eminent! Let us ask for Divine Grace that we may imitate it, especially those of us who are called to be shepherds of men.

Among God's people most of the saints have a charge to watch over. However little the flock may be, even if it is restricted to our own family, or to the little class that gathers about us on the Sabbath, we are all our brother's keeper in some measure. Let us learn the love of Christ, that we may be wise in shepherding. Let us not talk about our friends and say we love them. But let us *show* it by earnest, personal, speedy endeavors to do them good. Let us not wait until we see some goodness in them—until they seek after instruction. But, “Oh, come, let us go and find them. In the paths of death they roam.”

And long before they have a thought of coming home, let us be on their track, eager to grasp them, if by any means we may save some. Oh, to have in our hearts such love of souls that it engrosses us so that we forget earthly needs and only remember this yet higher necessity! It is a good house, said St. Bernard, in which Martha has to complain of Mary—where gracious pursuits put other work in the background. It is a choice crime that men should even grow lax about their lower business for a while, that they may devote their chief energy to the saving of the lost sheep. Let that stand as an introduction. May we see the love of Jesus, as Bernard saw it and we shall have had sermon enough.

In my text there are three periods to which I call your attention—

I. Christ, the Good Shepherd, first seeks the lost sheep “UNTIL HE FINDS IT.” Just put a mark under those words. That is our first head—“Until He finds it.” It is a long reach “Until He finds it.”

I like the expression. The Lord Jesus did not come down to earth to make an attempt to find men but He came to do it and He did it. He tarried here, seeking the lost sheep till He found it—He never gave over till His work was done. At this hour, in His work of grace among His chosen, He does not make an attempt at their salvation and suffer defeat. But He keeps at soul-seeking work until He find it.

Look at the seeking shepherd—he is looking for the sheep. Notice his anxious countenance “until he finds it.” We read that after he found it he rejoiced. But there is no rejoicing until he finds it. He is all excitement, quick of ear to catch the faintest sound, for it may be the bleating of his lost sheep. His eyes are like the eyes of eagles. He saw something stir in the fern, yonder, and he will be there in a bound or two. He is so eager. No—it was a mistake. It was not the sheep. Perhaps it was some frightened fox. He climbs a hill and from the top of it he looks all around. I was about to say that he looks with ears and eyes together. He puts his whole soul into the organs of watchfulness, if perhaps he may discern the sheep.

Is there a smile on his face? Ah, no! Not “until he finds it.” His whole soul is in his eyes and ears until he finds it. This is a faint, yet true picture of that Great Shepherd who came here to seek His flock. So the Evangelists have drawn Him in their pen-and-ink sketches of him—always watchful—spending night and day in prayers and tears and entreaties—never more to have a joy until He finds the lost one. Then, when He did find a single sheep, finding His meat and His drink in it and becoming refreshed from the fact that He has so far accomplished His beloved work, the great Shepherd is all energy, care and concentration of thought concerning His sheep, “until He finds it.”

There is no hesitating with Jesus. The sheep is lost and the news is brought to the Shepherd. He girds His loose robe about Him and is on the way. He knows within a little while which way that stray sheep will go and He is on its track at once, though He knows that He must mark that track with His blood. See the blessed Shepherd pressing on? There is no pausing nor resting “until He finds it.” He has made up His mind that no sheep of His shall be lost and He flies over hill and dale after the wanderer until He finds it.

If you look into our Shepherd’s face, there is no trace of anger there. He does not say, “Oh, that I should be worried with this silly sheep thus going astray!” No thought is there but that of anxious love. It is all love and nothing else but love before He finds and until He finds it. And you may be sure that careful tenderness will be in full action after He has found it. He is looking with anxious eyes of love. “As I live,” says the Lord, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies but that he should turn unto Me and live.” “Until He finds it” there will be no thought of anxiety but a fullness of pitying care for the lost sheep.

And, mark, there is no giving up. That sheep has wandered now for many hours. The sun has risen and the sun has set. Or, at least it is just

going down. But as long as the shepherd can see and the sheep is still alive, he will pursue it “until he finds it.” He has been disappointed a great many times. And when he thought that he should have found it, he has missed it—but still, he will never give it up. He is impelled onward by irresistible love, and he must continue his weary search until he finds it. It was precisely so with our Lord Jesus Christ. When He came after you and after me, we ran from Him but He pursued us—we hid from Him but He discovered us—He had almost grasped us but so long as we eluded Him He still pursued with love unwearied until He found us.

Oh, if He had given up after the first ten years—if He had ceased to care for some of us after fifty different occasions in which we had choked conscience and quenched the Spirit, then we should have been lost. But He would not be turned away. If He determines to save, He continues to pursue the rambling sheep until He finds it. He cannot, He must not, He will not cease from the work of seeking and of finding till He finds it. I wish tonight that the time were come with some here that it should be said, “The Savior did pursue such-and-such a one until He found him—found him in the Tabernacle and ended all his wanderings there—found him standing in yonder gallery and ended all his wanderings at the ‘foot of the Cross.’”

God grant that it may be so! But whether it is so with you or not, you can be sure of this—that the Lord Jesus has in hundreds and thousands of cases pursued sinners with unflagging mercy, leaping to them over hills of sin and following them till He has found them. We are now His forever and ever, for He who has found us will never lose us. Blessed be His name!

Learn this lesson before I pass on. If ever you are seeking the conversion of any man, follow him until you find him. Do not be discouraged. Put up with a great many rebuffs and rebukes—you will have him yet. He is surest to succeed who cannot be put off from his aim. From some it will be necessary to receive a great deal that is most discouraging. Receive it and say nothing about it—only whisper to yourself, “I might well have put the Great Shepherd off from caring for me and yet He was not so turned aside. If He persevered with me even to the death, I may well persevere as long as I live in seeking and finding a soul.” I have heard of wives who have pleaded with God for their husbands twenty years. And by God’s Grace they have seen them converted.

There are instances in this place in which indefatigable love has followed up ungodly relatives until they have at last been saved by Sovereign Grace. Persevere with loving entreaties! Till you bury your unsaved ones, do not consider them dead. And do not bury them spiritually till they are dead really. Some are easily baffled. They have written the death warrant of their friend by ceasing to pray for him and yet that death warrant will never be written in the records of Heaven, for their friend will be brought to the Savior’s feet.

“Until He finds it.” Now nail your colors to the mast. “Until He finds it.” Go out, you under-shepherds for Christ. Wear this motto on your right

hand. “Until I find it.” Live or die, or work or suffer, whether the time is short or long, or the way is smooth or rough, let each one of you be bound to seek a soul “until He finds it.” You will find it then, even as Christ found you. There I leave that first point.

II. And now we come to the second—“AND WHEN HE HAS FOUND IT.” When he has found it, what does he do then? Well, first, he *takes fast hold*. “He lays it on his shoulders rejoicing.” So when he has found it, the first thing is to get a tight grip of it. Look at him—he has got close up to the sheep. The poor thing is spent and yet may have strength enough to get away, therefore the shepherd takes good care that he shall not. He grasps his legs and holds him tight. That is what the Lord Jesus does when at last He gets a man broken down under a sense of sin, spent and worn out as to further resistance of Divine mercy.

Our Lord gets such a grip of the rebel that he will never get away. I remember when He laid hold of me. He has never lost His grasp even to this day. But, oh, it was a grasp! Nothing ever gripped my fickle mind like the hand of Christ. When the Divine hand, which fixed the foundations of the earth, had fixed itself on me, my wanderings were ended once and for all.

The next thing after the fast hold was *the gracious lift*. He lifted this poor sheep up and put it on his shoulders and there it was with all its weight, carried by powerful shoulders. That is what the Savior does for poor weary sinners. He carries the weight of their sin, No, the weight of themselves. He takes us just as we are, and instead of driving us back by His Law, He carries us home by His love. Instead of urging us to go home, He becomes the great burden-bearer of His redeemed and bears them on His shoulders. And now you have before you one of the loveliest of portraits that ever imagination can sketch—that great crowned Shepherd of the sheep, King of kings and Lord of lords, bearing on His shoulders, as a burden He delights to carry—the sheep that had gone astray.

Oh, I pray God that you may lie on those broad shoulders if you never have been so favored. The shoulders of Omnipotence bearing up our weakness—the mighty Savior bearing us and all our sins and all our cares and our whole being upon the shoulders of His strength—this is a sight for angels!

And as He thus carries the weight, observe that *the distance is removed*. We read in the next verse, “When He comes home,” but there is nothing said about the road. For somehow our Master has the knack of being at home at once. The sinner may weary himself by twenty years of sin but in five minutes that may all be gone. It may have taken you fifty years to make yourself such a Hell-deserving sinner as you are, but it will not take Jesus fifty ticks of the clock to wash you and make you whiter than snow and get you back into the great Father’s house. Truth to tell, the Shepherd’s redeeming work is done already—

**“How dreadful was the hour,
When God our wanderings laid,
And did at once His vengeance pour
Upon our Shepherd’s head!
How glorious was the Grace,
When Christ sustained the stroke!**

***His life and blood the Shepherd pays,
A ransom for the flock.***

By that redeeming process He brought us near to God. There is no weary journey back for shepherd or sheep. He grasps the sheep. He puts it on His shoulders and they are both back at the fold. But the particular point I want you to notice is when the Great Shepherd gets this burden on His back. We read, "When He has found it He lays it upon His shoulders"—with great anxiety? Look to see whether it is so. Nothing of the sort. But is it not, "He lays it on His shoulders with great weariness"? No. Look! Look! "He lays it on His shoulders rejoicing—*rejoicing*."

He does not remember all the weariness that He has had to suffer. He does not think of the folly of His sheep in having lost good pasture, in having involved itself in so much danger and in costing Him so much labor. Not a word is mentioned of it. "He lays it on His shoulders rejoicing." He says to Himself, "I am glad to carry this burden—happy to carry My lost sheep home." And oh, I love to picture to myself at this moment the joy in the heart of the blessed Christ. "For the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame." And now, whenever He gets a lost sheep to carry back—He rejoices.

His heart leaps within Him. All anxiety is gone. Fullness of delight is upon Him. "He lays it upon His shoulders rejoicing." I wonder whether the sheep could see that the Shepherd rejoiced. I do not suppose that it could. But it could feel it. There are two ways, you know, of handling a sheep and the sheep very soon knows which expresses pleasure on its owner's part. At any rate, I am sure that a dog knows well enough what your movements mean. If you speak angrily to a sheep and throw it upon your shoulder with indignation, that is one thing. But if you have not a word to say, except, "Poor thing, I am glad I have found you," and you cast it on your shoulders rejoicing, why, sheep as it is, it knows the difference.

At any rate, I know that Christ has a way of saving us—oh, so gently, so lovingly, so gleefully, that He makes us happy in being saved. There is a way of turning a penny into stone or into gold according to the way in which you give it to a poor man. You can fling it at him as if he were a dog and he will be about as grateful to you as a dog, or not as much. But there is a way in which you can say, "I am sorry for your needs. This is all I can afford now. Take it and do what you can with it." Given with a brotherly look, it will be gratefully received and made the most of.

There is much in the manner, as well as in the matter of a gift. The mannerism of Christ is grandly gracious—He saves us rejoicing. It is a matter of thanksgiving to Him when He gets hold of His lost sheep and gets it on His shoulders. It makes me glad to think that it is so. We are not saved by a grudging Christ, who seems as if He were weary of us and must save us out of hand, to get rid of us. He does not act with us as some rude surgeon might do who says, "I will attend to you directly but I have plenty else to do and you *gratis* patients are a trouble."

Nor does He roughly set the bone. No. Jesus comes and as with a lady's dainty hand He molds the dislocated joint. And when He sets it, there is

bliss even about the method of the setting. We look into His face, and we see that He puts His most tender sympathy into each movement. You know the different ways which workmen have. Some kind of work a man is soon sick of. The principle of division of labor is a very admirable one for the production of results upon a large scale. But it is a miserable business for the workman to have to do the same thing over and over again, all day long, as if he were an robot.

Get a man at work at a statue—an artist whose whole soul is in his chisel, who knows that there is a bright spirit within that block of marble and who means to chip off all that hides the lovely image from his sight. See how he works! No man does a thing well who does it sorrowfully. The best work is done by the happy, joyful workman. And so it is with Christ. He does not save souls as of necessity—as though He would rather do something else if He might—but His very heart is in it, He rejoices to do it, and therefore He does it thoroughly and He communicates His joy to us in the doing of it.

Now, learn a lesson before I go away to the third point. “When he has found it.” Suppose that any of you should very soon meet with a poor troubled sinner, anxious to come to Christ. When you have found him, let me recommend you imitate the Master’s example—get a tight grip on him. Do not let him slip. Get a hold of him. And then, if he is in trouble, take all that trouble upon yourself. Try whether you cannot get him upon your shoulders. Imitate your Master in that way. Try to bear all his burden for him, as Christ bore yours. Conduct him to the Christ who is the true burden-bearer.

And all the while be very happy about it. I do not think we ought to go and talk to young converts in a dreadfully solemn tone, as though it would be something horrible to find a Savior. They will never come again, you may depend upon it. They will give you a wide berth. But just go and in a joyful spirit say, “I am so glad to find you caring about your soul.” The best thing that can happen to a soul-seeker is to meet with a troubled conscience. “But,” you say, “I have not the time.” Always have time, even in the middle of the night, to see a poor conscience-stricken sinner.

But perhaps you are very weary, or not well. If I were weary I should not be weary any longer when I came across a lost sheep. And if I were ill, I would get well on purpose to see after a sin-sick sinner. Talk in that way, with sweet and pleasant encouragement, for this is the way to help your brother sinner to the Savior. My time has gone but just a few words more on this last point.

III. “WHEN HE COMES HOME.” “When he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me. For I have found my sheep which was lost.” Some hurried observations. First, *Heaven is a home*. “When he comes home.” And the next verse says that it is Heaven. Heaven is a home. Do you not like to think of it under that aspect? It is the home of Jesus. And if it is the home of Jesus can any other home be equal to it? “When he comes home.”

Note, next, that *lost ones are known in Heaven*. I give you that thought more from the Greek than from the English hero. “When he comes home,

he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me. For I have found my sheep—the lost one.” That is how it should run. It is as if the friends knew that one had been lost and the loss had been deplored—and the shepherd says, “I have found my sheep—you know which one—the lost one.” Up there they know which are Christ’s sheep, and which are lost. Heaven is nearer earth than some of us dream. How long does it take to get there?—

**“One gentle sigh the spirit breaks—
We scarce can say, ‘He’s gone,’
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the Throne.”**

And there are more communications between earth and Heaven than some folks dream. For here it is clear that when the shepherd came home he said to them, “I have found the sheep,” the lost one. So they knew all about it. It is evident, again, that they all knew there that the shepherd had gone after the sheep, for he says, “I have found my sheep which was lost.” They all knew that he had gone on search, and therefore they could all understand his joy when he came back with the sheep.

I believe that they know in Heaven when Christ is seeking after anyone. It must be a great satisfaction to some up there who die with an unconverted son, or an unconverted child to know, after a little while, son or daughter is converted. I am persuaded they know it. They cannot help knowing it, because they are Christ’s friends and neighbors and, according to the parable, He tells them and He says to them, “*Rejoice with Me.*” And if He says, “Rejoice with Me,” why, of course, He tells them why.

You don’t think that Jesus ever invited a spirit before the Throne to rejoice with Him, and received for an answer, “I cannot do it, for I know no cause for joy.” If I had been converted after my mother’s death, I can fancy that when Jesus said to all of them, “Rejoice with Me. For I have found My sheep, the lost one,” my mother would say, “My Lord, I can rejoice more than any of them, for that was my boy and he is saved at last.” Your mother in Glory will be twice glorified tonight, John, if you give your heart to Christ. And I pray that you may. Your father, now before the Throne, will think that Paradise has grown more wonderful than ever if he hears it whispered down the golden streets that the wanderer has come home.

Notice, next, very briefly, that *Jesus Christ loves other people to rejoice with Him*, so that, when He finds a sinner, He has so much love in His heart that His joy runs over and He cries to others, “Come, Friends, come Neighbors, come and help Me to be glad, for I have saved another soul.” Let us catch the blessed infection. If you have just heard of somebody being saved, be glad about it. Though you do not know the person, yet be glad about it, because Jesus is glad.

Notice, next, that *repentance is regarded as coming home*. This sheep was not in Heaven. No, but as soon as it had been brought into the fold it is described as repenting. And Jesus and the angels begin to rejoice over it. If a man truly repents and Christ saves him, it is clear that he never will be lost. A certain old Proverb forbids us to count our chickens till they

are hatched. And I do not think that angels would do so in the case of immortal souls. If they believed that repenting sinners might afterwards be lost, they would not ring the marriage bells just yet, but they would wait a while to see how things worked out.

If they can yet perish there is not one convert that the angels dare rejoice over. For if any child of God might fall away and perish, why not everyone of us? If anyone falls from Divine Grace, I fear I shall. O my Brothers and Sisters, do you not fear the same for yourself? “No,” you say, “I don’t think so.” Well, then, you are a proud fellow and you are the most likely one to desert your Lord. If ever a sheep of Christ’s shall fall away, I shall. I see more of my own tendencies to wander and more of my own temptations to offend than I do of yours. I would not have the angels rejoice over a man because he repents, if repentance is only a sign of human improvement and not a token of heavenly love.

I would say, “Stop, angels. For this man may go back and perish after all, if, according to the modern Gospel, Christ loves today and hates tomorrow—and a child of God may yet be a child of the devil.” I do not believe a word of such doctrine. I believe that where the Lord begins the good work of Divine Grace He will carry it on and perfect it. And when the Lord has once given to a man to know Him, He will see that he is preserved in that knowledge forever. There is a text that clenches it—“I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”

Now, if they have eternal life, it cannot come to an end. For eternal life is eternal, evidently. And if they have eternal life, the Shepherd and His friends may justifiably sing when one single possessor of that eternal life is brought to life and salvation. In the penitent man a work is done that never can be undone. And he is put where he never can be lost. Yes—

***“I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy but not more secure.
Are the glorified spirits in Heaven.***

Sing away, angels! There is something to sing about now! And we will join with you in blessing and praising the unchanging God forever and forever. Amen.

***Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Luke 15.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—421, 257, 378.***

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PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

NO. 1801

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I say to you, that likewise there will be more joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”
Luke 15:4-7.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, while He was here below, was continually in the pursuit of lost souls. He was seeking lost men and women and it was for this reason that He went down among them, even among those who were most evidently lost, that He might find them. He took pains to put Himself where He could come into communication with them and He exhibited such kindness towards them that in crowds they drew near to hear Him. I dare say it was a strange looking assembly, a disreputable rabble, which made the Lord Jesus its center! I am not astonished that the Pharisee, when he looked upon the congregation, sneered and said, “He collects around Him the pariahs of our community! The wretches who collect taxes for the foreigner of God’s free people, the fallen women of the towns and such-like riffraff make up His audiences and He, instead of repelling them, receives them, welcomes them, looks upon them as a class to whom He has a peculiar relationship. He even eats with them! Did He not go into the house of Zaccheus and the house of Levi and partake of the feasts which those low people made for Him?”

We cannot tell you all the Pharisees thought—it might not be edifying to attempt it—but they thought as badly of the Lord as they possibly could because of the company which surrounded Him. And so, He deigns in this parable to defend Himself, not that He cared much about what they might think, but that they might have no excuse for speaking so bitterly of Him. He tells them that He was seeking the lost and where should He be found but among those whom He was seeking? Should a physician shun the sick? Should a shepherd avoid the lost sheep? Was He not exactly in His right position when there “drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him”? Our Divine Lord defended Himself by what is called an *argumentum ad hominem*—an argument to the men themselves—for He

said, "What man of you, having n hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not go after that which is lost, until he finds it?"

No argument tells more powerfully upon men than one which comes close home to their own daily life—and so the Savior put it. They were silenced, if they were not convinced. It was a peculiarly strong argument because in their case it was only a sheep that they would go after—but in His case it was something infinitely more precious than all the flocks of sheep that ever fed on Sharon or Carmel—it was the *soul* of man which He sought to save! The argument had in it not only the point of peculiar adaptation, but a force at the back of it unusually powerful for driving it home upon every honest mind.

It may be opened out in this fashion—"If you men would, each one of you, go after a lost *sheep*, and follow in its track until you found it, how much more may I go after lost *souls*, and follow them in all their wanderings until I can rescue them?" The going after the sheep is a part of the parable which our Lord meant them to observe—the shepherd pursues a route which he would never think of pursuing if it were only for his own pleasure. His way is not selected for his own ends, but for the sake of the stray sheep! He takes a track up hill and down dale, far into a desert, or into some dark wood simply because the sheep has gone that way—and he must follow it until he finds it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, as a matter of taste and pleasure, would never have been found among the publicans and sinners, nor among any of our guilty race, if He had consulted His own ease and comfort! He would have consorted only with pure and holy angels and the great Father above—but He was not thinking of Himself—His heart was set upon the lost ones and, therefore, He went where the lost sheep were, "for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The more steadily you look at this parable, the more clearly you will see that our Lord's answer was complete. We need not, this morning, regard it exclusively as an answer to Pharisees, but we may look at it as an instruction to ourselves—for it is quite as complete in that direction. May the good Spirit instruct us as we muse upon it.

I. In the first place, I call attention to this observation—THE ONE SUBJECT OF THOUGHT to the man who had lost his sheep. This sets forth to us the one thought of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, when He sees a man lost to holiness and happiness by wandering into sin. The shepherd, on looking over his little flock of 100, can only count ninety-nine. He counts them again and he notices that a certain one has gone—it may be a white-faced sheep with a black mark on its foot. He knows all about it, for, "the Lord knows them that are His."

The shepherd has a photograph of the wanderer in his mind's eye and now he thinks but little of the 99 who are feeding in the pastures of the wilderness. His mind is in a ferment about the one lost sheep! This one idea possesses him—"a sheep is lost!" This agitates his mind more and more—"a sheep is lost." It masters his every faculty. He cannot eat; he cannot return to his home; he cannot rest while one sheep is lost. To a tender heart, a lost sheep is a painful subject of thought. It is a sheep and, therefore, utterly *defenseless* now that it has left its defender. If the

wolf should spy it out, or the lion or the bear should come across its track, it would be torn in pieces in an instant! Thus the shepherd asks his heart the question—"What will become of my sheep? Perhaps at this very moment a lion may be ready to spring upon it and, if so, it cannot help itself!" A sheep is not prepared for fight or even for *flight*—it has not the swiftness of its enemy. That makes its compassionate owner the more sad as he thinks again—"A sheep is lost. It is in great danger of a cruel death."

A sheep is, of all creatures, the most *senseless*. If we have lost a dog, it may find its way home again. Possibly a horse might return to its master's stable, but a sheep will wander on and on, lost in endless mazes. It is too foolish a thing to think of returning to the place of safety. A lost sheep is lost, indeed, in countries where lands lie unenclosed and the plains are boundless. That fact still seems to ring in the man's soul—"A sheep is lost, and it will not return, for it is a foolish thing. Where may it not have gone by this time? Weary and worn, it may be fainting. It may be far away from green pastures and be ready to perish with hunger among the bare rocks or upon the arid sand."

A sheep is *shiftless*—it knows nothing about providing for itself. The camel can scent water from afar and a vulture can spy its food from an enormous distance. But the sheep can find nothing for itself. Of all wretched creatures, a lost sheep is one of the worst! If anybody had stepped up to the shepherd, just then, and said, "Good Sir, what ails you? You seem in great concern." He would have replied, "And well I may be, for a sheep is lost." "It is only one, Sir, and I see you have 99 left." "Do you call it nothing to lose one? You are no shepherd, yourself, or you would not trifle so! Why, I seem to forget these 99 that are all safe, and my mind only remembers that one which is lost!"

What is it which makes the Great Shepherd lay so much to His heart the loss of one of His flock? What is it that makes Him agitated as He reflects upon that supposition—"if He loses one of them"? I think it is, first, because of *His property in it*. The parable does not so much speak of a *hired* shepherd, but of a shepherd proprietor. "What man of you *having* a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them." Jesus, in another place, speaks of the hireling, whose own the sheep are not and, therefore, he flees when the wolf comes. It is the shepherd proprietor who lays down his life for the sheep. It is not a sheep, alone, and a lost sheep, but it is one of his own lost sheep that this man cares for. This parable is not written about lost humanity in the bulk—it may be so used if you please—but in its *first* sense, it is written about Christ's own sheep—as also is the second parable concerning the woman's own money and the third, not concerning any prodigal youth—but the father's *own* son.

Jesus has His own sheep and some of them are lost—yes, they were *all*, once, in the same condition, for, "all we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way." The parable refers to the unconverted, whom Jesus has redeemed with His most precious blood—and whom He has undertaken to seek and to save. These are those other sheep whom He also must bring in. "For thus says the Lord God; Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scat-

tered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.”

The sheep of Christ are His long before they know it—His even when they wander! And when they are brought into the fold by the effectual working of His Grace, they become manifestly what they were in covenant from of old. The sheep are Christ’s, first, because He chose them from before the foundations of the world—“You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.” His, next, because the Father gave them to Him. How He dwells upon that fact in His great prayer in John 17—“Yours they were, and You gave them to Me.” “Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” We are the Lord’s own flock, furthermore, by His purchase of us. He says—“I lay down My life for the sheep.” It is nearly 19 centuries since He paid the ransom price and bought us to be His own—and we shall be His, for that purchase-money was not paid in vain! And so the Savior looks upon His hands and sees the marks of His purchase. He looks upon His side and sees the token of the effectual redemption of His own elect unto Himself by the pouring out of His own heart’s blood before the living God!

This thought, therefore, presses upon Him, “One of My sheep is lost.” It is a wonderful supposition, that which is contained in this parable—“If He loses one of them.” What? Lose one whom He loved before the earth was? It may wander for a time, but He will not have it lost forever—that He cannot bear! What? Lose one whom His Father gave Him to be His own? Lose one whom He has bought with His own life? He will not endure the thought! That word—“If He loses one of them” sets His soul on fire! It shall not be! You know how much the Lord has valued each one of His chosen, laying down His life for His redemption. You know how dearly He loves every one of His people—it is no new passion with Him—neither can it grow old. He has loved His own and must love them to the end. From eternity that love has already endured and it must continue throughout the ages, for He changes not. Will He lose one of those so dearly loved? Never! Never! He has eternal possession of them by a covenant of salt, wherein the Father has given them to Him. This it is which in great measure stirs His soul so that He thinks of nothing but this fact—“One of My sheep is lost.”

Secondly, He has got another reason for this all-absorbing thought, namely, *His great compassion* for His lost sheep. The wandering of a soul causes Jesus deep sorrow. He cannot bear the thought of its perishing. Such is the love and tenderness of His heart that He cannot bear that one of His own should be in jeopardy. He can take no rest as long as a soul for whom He shed His blood still abides under the dominion of Satan and under the power of sin. Therefore the Great Shepherd neither night nor day forgets His sheep. He must save His flock and He is straitened till it is accomplished. He has a deep sympathy with each stray heart. He knows the sorrow that sin brings, the deep pollution and the terrible wounding that comes of transgression, even at the time—and the sore heart and the broken spirit that *will come* of it before long—and so the sympathetic Savior grieves over each lost sheep, for He knows the misery which lies in the fact of being lost.

If you have ever been in a house with a mother and father, and daughters and sons, when a little child has been lost, you will never forget the agitation of each member of the household. See the father as he goes to the police station and calls at every likely house, for he must find his child or break his heart. See the deep oppression and bitter anguish of the mother. She is like one distracted till she has news of her darling. You now begin to understand what Jesus feels for one whom He loves, who is engraved on the palms of His hands, whom He looked upon in the glass of His foreknowledge when He was bleeding His life away upon the Cross. He has no rest in His spirit till His Beloved is found! He has compassion like a God and that transcends all the compassion of parents or of brothers—the compassion of an infinite heart brimming over with an ocean of love! This one thought moves the pity of the Lord—“If He loses one of them.”

Moreover, the man in the parable had a third relation to the sheep which made him possessed with the one thought of its being lost—*He was a shepherd to it*. It was his own sheep and he had, therefore, for that very reason, become its shepherd. He says to himself, “If I lose one of them, my shepherd work will be ill-done.” What dishonor it would be to a shepherd to lose one of his sheep! Either it must be for lack of power to keep it, or lack of will, or lack of watchfulness—but none of these can appertain to the Chief Shepherd. Our Lord Jesus Christ will never have it said of Him that He has lost one of His people, for He glories in having preserved them all! “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” The devil shall never say that Jesus allowed one whom His Father gave Him to perish! His work of love cannot, in any degree, become a failure! His death in vain? No, not in jot or tittle!

I can imagine, if it were possible, that the Son of God should live in vain—but to *die* in vain? It shall never be! The purpose that He meant to achieve by His passion and death, He shall achieve, for He is the Eternal, the Infinite, the Omnipotent—and who shall stay His hand, or baffle His design? He will not have it! “If He loses one of them,” says the passage—imagine the consequence! What scorn would come from Satan! What derision would he pour upon the Shepherd! How Hell would ring with the news, “He has lost one of them.” Suppose it to be the feeblest? Then they would cry, “He could keep the strong, who could keep themselves.” Suppose it to be the strongest—then they would cry, “He could not even keep one of the mightiest of them, but must needs let him perish!” This is good argument, for Moses pleaded with God, “What will the Egyptians say?” It is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven that one of these little ones shall perish, neither is it for the Glory of Christ that one of His own sheep should be eternally lost!

You see the reason for the Lord’s heart being filled with one burning thought, for first, the sheep is His own. Next, He is full of compassion. And then, again, it is His office to shepherd the flock.

All this while the *sheep* is not thinking about the shepherd, or caring for him in the least degree! Some of you are not thinking at all about the Lord Jesus. You have no wish nor will to seek after Him! What folly! Oh,

the pity of it, that the great heart above should be yearning over you, to-day, and should fail to rest because you are in peril, and you, who will be the greater loser—for you will lose your own soul—are sporting with sin and making yourself merry with destruction! Ah, me, how far you have wandered! How hopeless would your case be if there were not an Almighty Shepherd to think about you!

II. Now we come to the second point and observe THE ONE OBJECT OF SEARCH. This sheep lies on the shepherd's heart and he must, at once, set out to look for it. He leaves the 99 in the wilderness and goes after that which is lost until he finds it.

Observe here that it is *a definite search*. The shepherd goes after the sheep and after nothing else. And he has the one particular sheep in his mind's eye. I should have imagined, from the way in which I have seen this text handled, that Christ, the Shepherd, went down into the wilderness to catch *anybody's* sheep He could find! Many were running about and He did not own any one of them more than another, but was content to pick up the one that He could first lay hold upon, or rather, that which first came running after Him. Not so is the case depicted in the parable! It is the shepherd's *own* sheep that he is seeking and he goes distinctly after that one. It is his sheep which was lost—a well-known sheep! Well known, not only to himself, but even to his friends and neighbors—for he speaks to them as if it were perfectly understood which sheep it was that he went to save.

Jesus knows all about His redeemed and He definitely goes after such-and-such a soul! When I am preaching in the name of the Lord, I delight to think that I am sent to individuals with the message of mercy. I am not going to draw the bow at a venture at all! When the Divine hands are put on mine to draw the bow, the Lord takes such aim that no arrow misses its mark—into the very center of the heart, the Word of God finds its way—for Jesus goes not forth at a “perhaps” in His dealings with men! He subdues the will and conquers the heart, making His people willing in the day of His power. He calls individuals and they come! He says, “Mary,” and the response is, “Rabboni.” I say the man in the parable sought out a distinct individual and rested not till he found it, and so does the Lord Jesus, in the movements of His love, go forth at no uncertainty—He does not grope about to catch whom He may, as if He played at Blindman's Bluff with salvation, but He seeks and saves the one out of His own sheep which He has His eye upon in its wanderings. Jesus knows what He means to do and He will perform it to the glory of the Father.

Note that this is an all-absorbing search. He is thinking of nothing but his own lost sheep. The 99 are left in safety, but they are left. When we read that he leaves them in the wilderness, we are apt to think of some barren place, but that is not intended. It simply means the open pasture, the steppe, the prairie—he leaves them well provided for; leaves them because he *can* leave them. For the time being he is carried away with the one thought that he must seek and save the lost one and, therefore, he leaves the 99 in their pasture. “Shepherd, the way is very rocky!” He does not seem to know what the way is, his heart is with his lost sheep. “Shepherd, it is a heavy climb up yonder mountainside.” He does not note his

toil—his excitement lends him the feet of the wild goat! He stands securely where, at other times, his feet would slip. He looks around for his sheep and seems to see neither crag nor chasm. “Shepherd, it is a terrible path by which you must descend into yonder gloomy valley.” It is not terrible to *him*—his only terror is lest his sheep should perish! He is taken up with that one fear and nothing else. He leaps into danger and escapes it by the one strong impulse which bears him on. It is grand to think of the Lord Jesus Christ with His heart set immovably upon the rescue of a soul which at this moment is lost to Him.

It is *an active search*, too, for observe, he goes after that which is lost until he find it, and he does this with *a personal search*. He does not say to one of his underlings, “Here, hasten after that sheep which was lost, and bring it home.” No, *he* follows it, himself. And if ever there is a soul brought from sin to Grace, it is not by us poor ministers working alone, but it is by the Master, Himself, who goes after His own sheep! It is glorious to think of Him still *personally* tracking sinners, who, though they fly from Him with a desperateness of folly, yet are still pursued by Him—pursued by the Son of God, by the Eternal Lover of men—pursued by Him until He finds them!

And notice *the perseverance of the search*—“until he finds it.” He does not stop till He has done the deed. You and I ought to seek after a soul, how long? Why, until we find it—for such is the model set before us by the Master! The parable says nothing about His *not* finding it—no hint of failure is given—we dream not that there may be a sheep belonging to Him which He will never find! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, there are a great many whom you and I would never find! But when Jesus is after His own lost sheep, depend upon it, such is His skill, so clearly does He see and so effectually does He intervene, that He will surely bring them in! A defeated Christ I cannot conceive of! It is a personal search, a persevering search and *a successful search*, until He finds it. Let us praise and bless His name for this.

Observe that when the shepherd *does* find it, there is a little touch in the parable not often noticed—he does not appear to put it back into the fold, again. I mean, we do not find it so written, as a fact to be noted. I suppose he did so, ultimately, but for the time being he keeps it with himself rather than with its fellows. The next scene is the shepherd at home, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.” It looks as if Jesus did not save a soul so much to the Church as to Himself—and though the saved are in the flock, the greatest joy of all is that the sheep is with the Shepherd! This shows you how thoroughly Christ lays Himself out that He may save His people. There is nothing in Christ that does not tend towards the salvation of His redeemed. There are no pull-backs with Him, no half-consecrated influences which make Him linger!

In the pursuit of certain objects we lay out a portion of our faculties, but Jesus lays out all His powers upon the seeking and saving of souls. The whole Christ seeks after each sinner! And when the Lord finds it, He gives Himself to that one soul as if He had but that one soul to bless! How

my heart admires the concentration of all the Godhead and Manhood of Christ in His search after each sheep of His flock.

III. Now we must pass on very briefly to notice a third point. We have had one subject of thought and one object of search—now we have ONE BURDEN OF LOVE. When the seeking is ended, then the saving appears—“When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.” Splendid action is this! How beautifully the parable sets forth the whole of salvation! Some of the old writers delight to put it thus—In His Incarnation He came after the lost sheep. In His life He continued to seek it. In His death He laid it upon His shoulders. In His resurrection He bore it on its way and in His ascension He brought it home rejoicing.

Our Lord’s career is a course of soul-winning, a life laid out for His people and in it you may trace the whole process of salvation. But now, look, the shepherd finds the sheep and he lays it on his shoulders! It is *an uplifting action*, raising the fallen one from the earth where he has strayed. It is as though he took the sheep, just as it was, without a word of rebuke, without delay or hesitancy—and lifted it out of the slough or the briers—into a place of safety. Do you not remember when the Lord lifted *you* up from the horrible pit? When He sent from above, delivered you and became your strength? I shall never forget that day! What a wonderful lift it was for me when the Great Shepherd lifted me into newness of life! The Lord said of Israel, “I bore you on eagles wings,” but it is a dearer emblem, still, to be borne upon the shoulders of the Incarnate Word!

This laying on the shoulders was *an appropriating act*. He seemed to say, “You are my sheep and, therefore, I lay you on my shoulders.” He did not make his claim in so many words, but by a rapid action he declared it—for a man does not bear away a sheep to which he has no right—this was not a sheep-stealer, but a shepherd-proprietor! He holds fast the sheep by all four of its legs, so that it cannot stir, and then he lays it on his own shoulders, for it is all his own, now. He seems to say, “I am a long way from home and I am in a weary desert; but I have found my sheep and these hands shall hold it.” Here are our Lord’s own words, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.”

Hands of such might as those of Jesus will hold fast the found one! Shoulders of such power as those of Jesus will safely bear the found one home! It is all well with that sheep, for it is positively and experimentally the Good Shepherd’s own, just as it always had been His in the eternal purpose of the Father. Do you remember when Jesus said unto you, “You are Mine”? Then I know you also appropriated Him and began to sing—

**“So I my best Beloved’s, am,
And He is mine.”**

More condescending, still, is another view of this act—it was a *deed of service* to the sheep. The sheep is uppermost, the weight of the sheep is upon the shepherd. The sheep rides, the shepherd is the burden-bearer. The sheep rests, the shepherd labors. “I am among you as He that serves,” said our Lord long ago. “Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” On that Cross He bore the burden of our sin, and what is more, the burden of our very selves! Blessed be His name, “The Lord has laid on Him

the iniquity of us all,” and He has laid us on Him, too, and He bears us. Remember that choice Scripture—“In His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old.” Soul-melting thought! The Son of God became subservient to the sons of man! The Maker of Heaven and earth bowed His shoulders to bear the weight of sinners!

It was a *rest-giving* act, very likely necessary to the sheep which could go no further and was faint and weary. It was a full rest to the poor creature if it could have understood it, to feel itself upon its shepherd’s shoulders, irresistibly carried back to safety. What a rest it is to you and to me to know that we are borne along by the eternal power and Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ! “The Beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, and he shall dwell between His shoulders.” The Christ bears us up today. We have no need of strength—our weakness is no impediment, for He bears us. Has not the Lord said, “I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you”? We shall not even stumble, much less fall to ruin—the Shepherd’s feet shall traverse all the road in safety. No portion of the way back should cause us fear, for He is able to bear us even to His home above. What a sweet word is that in Deuteronomy—“The Lord your God bore you, as a man does bear his son, in all the ways that you went, until you came into this place.” Blessed rest of faith, to give yourself up entirely to those hands and shoulders to keep and carry you even to the end!

Let us bless and praise the Lord! The shepherd is consecrated to his burden—he bears nothing on his shoulders but his sheep—and the Lord Jesus seems to bear no burden but that of His people. He lays out His Omnipotence to save His chosen. Having redeemed them, first, with His own blood, He redeems them, still, with all His power. “And they shall be Mine, says the Lord, in that day when I make up My jewels.” Oh the glorious Grace of our unfailing Savior, who consecrates Himself to our salvation and concentrates upon that object all that He has and is!

IV. We close by noticing one more matter, which is—THE ONE SOURCE OF JOY. This man who had lost his sheep is filled with joy and his sheep is the sole source of it. His sheep has so taken up all his thoughts and so commanded all his faculties that, as he found all his cares centered *upon* it, so he now finds all his joy flowing *from* it. I invite you to notice the first mention of joy we get here—“When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.” “That is a great load for you, shepherd!” Joyfully he answers, “I am glad to have it on my shoulders.” The mother does not say, when she has found her lost child, “this is a heavy load.” No, she presses it to her bosom. She does not mind how heavy it is—it is a dear burden to her. She is rejoiced to bear it once again. “He lays it on his shoulders, *rejoicing*.”

Remember that text—“Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame”? A great sorrow was on Christ when our load was laid on Him—but a greater joy flashed into His mind when He thought that we were thus recovered from our lost estate! He said to Himself, “I have taken them up upon My shoulders and none can hurt them, now, neither can they wander to destruction. I am bearing their sin and

they shall never come into condemnation. The penalty of their guilt has been laid on Me that it may never be laid on them. I am an effectual and efficient Substitute for them. I am bearing, that they may never bear, my Father's righteous ire." His love to them made it a joy to feel every lash of the scourge of justice! His love to them made it a delight that the nails should pierce His hands and feet—and that His heart should be broken with the absence of His Father, God.

Even, "Eloi, Eloi, lame Sabachthani," when the deeps of its woe have been sounded, will be found to have pearls of joy in its caverns! No shout of triumph can equal that cry of grief because our Lord rejoiced to bear even the forsaking of His Father for the sin of His chosen whom He had loved from before the foundation of the world! Oh, you cannot understand it except in a very feeble measure! Let us try to find an earthly miniature likeness. A son is taken ill far away from home. He is laid sick with a fever and a telegram is sent home. His mother says she must go and nurse him. She is wretched till she can set out upon the journey. It is a dreary place where her boy lies, but for the moment it is the dearest spot on earth to her! She joys to leave the comforts of her home to tarry among strangers for the love of her boy! She feels an intense joy in sacrificing herself—she refuses to retire from his bedside—she will not leave her charge.

She watches day and night and only from utter exhaustion does she fall asleep. You could not have kept her in England—she would have been too wretched. It was a great, deep, solemn pleasure for her to be where she could minister to her own beloved son. Soul, remember you have given Jesus great joy in His saving you! He was forever with the Father, eternally happy, infinitely glorious, as God over all—and yet He came here out of boundless love, took upon Himself our nature and suffered in our place to bring us back to holiness and God! "He lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing." That day the shepherd knew but one joy. He had found his sheep and the very pressure of it upon his shoulders made his heart light, for he knew by that sign that the object of his care was safe beyond all question.

Now he goes home with it and this joy of his was then so great that it filled his soul to overflowing! The parable speaks nothing as to his joy in getting home, again, nor a word concerning the joy of being saluted by his friends and neighbors. No, the joy of having *found his sheep* eclipsed all other gladness of heart and dimmed the light of home and friendship. He turns round to friends and neighbors and entreats them to help him to bear the weight of his happiness. He cries, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." One sinner had repented and all Heaven must make holiday concerning it! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, there is enough joy in the heart of Christ over His saved ones to flood all Heaven with delight! The streets of Paradise run knee-deep with the heavenly waters of the Savior's joy. They flow out of the very soul of Christ—and angels and glorified spirits bathe in the mighty stream!

Let us do the same! We are friends if we are not neighbors. He calls us, today, to come and bring our hearts, like empty vessels, that He may fill them with His own joy, that our joy may be full! Those of us who are saved must enter into the joy of our Lord. When I was trying to think over

this text, I rejoiced with my Lord in the bringing in of each one of His sheep, for each one makes a Heaven full of joy. But oh, to see all the redeemed brought in! Jesus would have no joy if He should lose one—it would seem to spoil it all. If the purpose of mercy were frustrated in any one instance, it were a dreary defeat of the great Savior. But His purpose shall be carried out in every instance. He “shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” He shall not fail nor be discouraged. He shall carry out the will of the Father. He shall have the full reward of His passion! Let us joy and rejoice with Him this morning!

But the text tells us there was more joy over that one lost sheep than over the 99 that went not astray. Who are these just persons that need no repentance? Well, you could never explain a parable so as to make it run on four legs if it were only meant to go on two. There may not be such persons at all and yet the parable may be strictly accurate. If all of us had been such persons and had never needed repentance, we would not have given as much joy to the heart of Christ as one sinner does when he repents. But suppose it to mean that you and I who have long ago repented—who have, in a certain sense, now no need of repentance because we are justified men and women—we do not give so much joy to the heart of God, for the time being, as a sinner does when he first returns unto God? It is *not* that it is a good thing to go astray, or a bad thing to be kept from it.

You understand how that is—there are seven children in a family and six of them are all well. But one dear child is taken seriously ill and is brought near to the gates of death. It has recovered, its life is spared—and do you wonder that, for the time being, it gives more joy to the household than all the healthy ones? There is a great deal more expressed delight about it than over all those that have not been ill at all! This does not show it is a good thing to be ill! No, nothing of the kind—we are only speaking of the joy which comes of recovery from sickness. Take another case. You have a son who has been long away in a far country and another son at home. You love them both equally, but when the absent son comes home, he is, for a season, most upon your thoughts. Is it not natural that it should be so? Those at home give us joy constantly from day to day, but when the stream of joy has been dammed back by his absence, it pours down in a flood upon his return. Then we have “high days and holy days”! And “bonfire nights”!

There are special circumstances about repentance and conversion which produce joy over a restored wanderer. There was a preceding sorrow and this sets off the joy by contrast. The shepherd was so touched with compassion for the lost sheep that now his sorrow is inevitably turned into joy. He suffered a dreadful suspense and that is a killing thing—it is like an acid eating into the soul. That suspense which makes one ask, Where is the sheep? Where can it be? is a piercing of the heart. All those weary hours of searching, seeking and following are painfully wearing to the heart. You feel as if you would almost sooner know that you never would find it than be in that doubtful state of mind. That suspense, when it is ended, naturally brings with it a sweet liberty of joy.

Moreover, you know that the joy over penitents is so unselfish that you who have been kept by the Grace of God for many years do not grieve that there should be more joy over a repenting sinner than over you. No, you say to yourself, "There is good cause. I am, myself, among those who are glad." You remember that good men made great rejoicing over *you* when you first came to Jesus—and you heartily unite with them in welcoming newcomers. You will not act the elder brother and say, "I will not share the joy of my father." Not a bit of it! But you will enter heartily into the music and dancing—and count it your Heaven to see souls saved from Hell! I feel a sudden flush and flood of delight when I meet with a poor creature who once lay at Hell's dark door, but is now brought to the gate of Heaven. Do not you?

The one thing I want to leave with you is how our gracious Lord seems to give Himself up to His own redeemed. How entirely and perfectly every thought of His heart, every action of His power, goes toward the needy, guilty, lost soul! He spends His all to bring back His banished! Poor souls who believe in Him have His whole strength engaged on their behalf. Blessed be His name! Now let all our hearts go forth in love towards Him who gave all His heart to work our redemption. Let us love Him! We cannot love Him as He loved us as to *measure*, but let us do so in like *manner*. Let us love Him with all our heart and soul! Let us feel as if we *saw* nothing, *knew* nothing, *loved* nothing but Jesus crucified! As we filled all His heart, let Him fill all our hearts!

Oh, poor Sinner, here today, will you not yield to the Good Shepherd? Will you not stand still as He draws near? Will you not submit to His mighty Grace? Know that your rescue from sin and death must be of Him and of Him, alone. Breathe a prayer to Him—"Come, Lord, I wait for Your salvation! Save me, for I trust in You." If you do thus pray, you have the mark upon you of Christ's sheep, for He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Come to Him, for He comes to you! Look to Him for He looks to you!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 15:1-24.
HYMNS FROM OUR "OWN HYMN BOOK"—387, 403, 388.**

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THE LOST SILVER PIECE

NO. 970

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 15, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, does not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.”
Luke 15:8-10.

This chapter is full of Grace and Truth. Its three consecutive parables have been thought to be merely a repetition of the same doctrine under different metaphors, and if that were so the Truth of God which it teaches is so important that it could not be rehearsed too often in our hearing. Moreover, it is one which we are apt to forget, and it is well to have it again and again impressed upon our minds. The Truth here taught is just this—that Mercy stretches forth her hand to misery, that Grace receives men as sinners, that it deals with demerit, unworthiness, and worthlessness. That those who think themselves righteous are not the objects of Divine compassion, but the unrighteous, the guilty, and the undeserving, are the proper subjects for the infinite mercy of God.

In a word, that salvation is not of merit but of Divine Grace. This Truth, I say, is most important, for it encourages penitents to return to their Father. But it is very apt to be forgotten—for even those who are saved by Grace too often fall into the spirit of the elder brother, and speak as if, after all, their salvation depended on the works of the Law. But, my dear Friends, the three parables recorded in this chapter are *not* repetitions. They all declare the same main Truth, but each one reveals a different phase of it.

The three parables are three sides of a vast pyramid of Gospel doctrine, with a distinct inscription upon each. Not only in the similitude, but also in the teaching covered by the similitude, there is variety, progress, enlargement, discrimination. We have only need to read attentively to discover that in this trinity of parables, we have at once unity of essential Truth and distinctness of description. Each one of the parables is necessary to the other, and when combined they present us with a far more complete exposition of their doctrine than could have been conveyed by any one of them.

Note for a moment the first of the three which brings before us a shepherd seeking a lost sheep. To whom does this refer? Who is the shepherd of Israel? Who brings again that which has gone astray? Do we not clearly discern the ever-glorious and blessed Chief, Shepherd of the sheep, who lays down His life that He may save them? Beyond a question, we see in the first parable the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second parable is most fitly placed where it is. It, I doubt not, represents the work of the Holy Spirit working through the Church for the lost but precious souls of men. The Church is that woman who sweeps her house to find the lost piece of money, and in her the Spirit works His purposes of love. How the work of the Holy Spirit follows the work of Christ! As here we first see the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, and then read of the woman seeking the lost piece of money, so the great Shepherd redeems, and then the Holy Spirit restores the soul.

You will perceive that each parable is thoroughly understood in its minute details when so interpreted. The shepherd seeks a sheep which has willfully gone astray, and so far the element of sin is present. The lost piece of money does not bring up that idea, nor was it necessary that it should, since the parable does not deal with the pardon of sin as the first does. The sheep, on the other hand, though stupid is not altogether senseless and dead, but the piece of money is altogether unconscious and powerless, and therefore all the fitter emblem of man as the Holy Spirit begins to deal with him, dead in trespasses and sins.

The third parable evidently represents the Divine Father in His abundant love receiving the lost child who comes back to Him. The third parable would be likely to be misunderstood without the first and the second. We have sometimes heard it said—here is the prodigal received as soon as he comes back, no mention being made of a Savior who seeks and saves him. Is it possible to teach all Truths in one single parable? Does not the first one speak of the shepherd seeking the lost sheep? Why need repeat what had been said before?

It has also been said that the prodigal returned of his own free will, for there is no hint of the operation of a superior power upon his heart, it seems as if he himself spontaneously says, "I will arise, and go unto my Father." The answer is, that the Holy Spirit's work had been clearly described in the *second* parable, and needed not to be introduced again. If you put the three pictures in a line, they represent the whole compass of salvation, but each one apart sets forth the work in reference to one or other of the Divine Persons of the blessed Trinity.

The shepherd, with much pain and self-sacrifice, seeks the reckless, wandering sheep. The woman diligently searches for the insensible but lost piece of money. The father receives the returning prodigal. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. The three life-sketches are one—and one Truth is taught in the whole three. yet each one is distinct from the other, and by itself instructive.

May we be taught of God while we try to discover the mind of the Spirit in this parable, which, as we believe, represents the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Church. The Church is evermore represented as a woman, either the chaste bride of Christ, or the shameless courtesan of Babylon. As for good a woman sweeps the house, so for evil a woman takes the leaven and hides it in the meal till all is leavened.

Towards Christ a wife and towards men a mother, the Church is most fitly set forth as a woman. A woman with a house under her control is the full idea of the text—her husband away and herself in charge of the treasure—just such is the condition of the Church since the departure of the Lord Jesus to the Father. To bring each part of the text under inspection we shall notice man in three conditions—*lost, sought, found*.

I. First, the parable treats of man, the object of Divine Mercy, as lost. Notice, first, the treasure was *lost in the dust*. The woman had lost her piece of silver, and in order to find it she had to sweep for it, which proves that it had fallen into a dusty place—fallen to the earth—where it might be hidden and concealed amid rubbish and dirt. Every man of Adam born is as a piece of silver lost—fallen, dishonored—and some are buried amid foulness and dust. If we should drop many pieces of money they would fall into different positions. One of them might fall into actual mire, and be lost there. Another might fall upon a carpet, or a clean, well-polished floor, and be lost there.

If you have lost your money, it is equally lost into whatever place it may have fallen. So all men are alike lost, but they have not all fallen into the like condition of apparent defilement. One man from the surroundings of his childhood and the influences of education, has never indulged in the coarser and more brutalizing vices. He has never been a blasphemer, perhaps never openly even a Sabbath-breaker, yet he may be lost for all that. Another, on the other hand, has fallen into great excess of riot. He is familiar with wantonness and chambering, and all manner of evil.

He is lost, he is lost with an emphasis—but the more decorous sinner is lost, also. There may be some here this morning (and we wish always to apply the Truth as we go on), who are lost in the very worst of corruption—I would to God that they would take hope and learn from the parable before us, that the Church of God and the Spirit of God are seeking after them, and they may be among the found ones yet.

Since, on the other hand, there are many here who have not dropped into such unclean places, I would affectionately remind them that they are, nevertheless lost, and they need as much to be sought for by the Spirit of God as if they were among the vilest of the vile. To save the moral needs Divine Grace as certainly as to save the immoral. If you are lost, my dear Hearer, it will be small avail to you that you perished respectably, and were accursed in decent company—if you lack but one thing, yet if the deficiency be fatal—it will be but a poor consolation that you had only one lack.

If one leak sent the vessel to the bottom, it was no comfort to the crew that their ship only leaked in one place. One disease may kill a man. He may be sound everywhere else, but it will be a sorry comfort to him to know that he might have lived long had but that one organ been sound. If, dear Hearer, you should have no sin whatever save only an evil heart of unbelief—if all your external life should be lovely and amiable—yet if that one fatal sin is in you, you can draw small consolation from all else that is good about you. You are lost by nature, and you must be found by Grace, whoever you may be.

In this parable, that which was lost was *altogether ignorant of its being lost*. The silver coin was not a living thing, and therefore had no consciousness of its being lost or sought after. The piece of money lost was quite as content to be on the floor or in the dust, as it was to be in the purse of its owner among its like. It knew nothing about its being lost, and could not know. And it is just so with the sinner who is spiritually dead in sin. He is unconscious of his state, nor can we make him understand the danger and terror of his condition. When he feels that he is lost, there is already some work of Divine Grace in him. When the sinner knows that he

is lost, he is no longer content with his condition, but begins to cry out for mercy, which is evidence that the finding work has already began.

The unconverted sinner will confess that he is lost because he knows the statement to be Scriptural, and therefore out of compliment to God's Word he admits it to be true. But he has no idea of what is meant by it, else would he either deny it with proud indignation, or he would bestir himself to pray that he might be restored to the place from which he has fallen, and be numbered with Christ's precious property.

O my Hearers, this it is that makes the Spirit of God so necessary in all our preaching, and every other soul-saving exercise—because we have to deal with insensible souls. The man who puts the fire escape against the window of a burning house may readily enough rescue those who are aware of their danger—those who rush to the front for his help—or at least are submissive to him in his work of delivering them. But if a man were insane—if he played with the flames. If he were idiotic and thought that some grand illumination were going on, and knew nothing of the danger but was only “glamored by the glare”—then would it be hard work for the rescuer.

Even thus it is with sinners. They know not, though they profess to know, that sin is Hell. That to be an alien from God is to be condemned already. To live in sin is to be dead while you live. The insensibility of the piece of money fairly pictures the utter indifference of souls unquickened by Divine Grace.

The silver piece was *lost but not forgotten*. The woman knew that she had ten pieces of silver originally. She counted them over carefully, for they were all her little store—and she found only nine. But she well remembered that one more was hers and ought to be in her hand. This is our hope for the Lord's lost ones. They are lost but not forgotten! The heart of the Savior remembers them, and prays for them.

O Soul, I trust you are one whom Jesus calls His own! If so, He remembers the pangs which He endured in redeeming you, and He remembers the Father's love which was reflected on you from old eternity, when the Father gave you into the hands of His Beloved Son. You are not forgotten of the Holy Spirit who seeks you for the Savior. This is the minister's hope, that there is a people whom the Lord remembers and whom He never will forget, though they forget Him. Strangers to Him, far-off, ignorant, callous, careless, dead—yet the everlasting heart in Heaven throbs towards them with love.

And the mind of the Spirit, working on earth, is directed to them. These, who were numbered and reckoned up of old, are still in the inventory of the Divine memory. And though lost they are earnestly remembered still. In some sense this is true of every sinner here. You are lost, but that you are remembered is evident, for I am sent today to preach the Gospel of Jesus to you. God has thoughts of love concerning you, and bids you turn unto Him and live. Have respect, I pray you, to the Word of His salvation.

Next, the piece of silver was lost *but still claimed*. Observe that the woman called the money, “*my piece which was lost*.” When she lost its possession she did not lose her right to it. It did not become somebody else's when it slipped out of her hand and fell upon the floor. Those for whom Christ has died, whom He has peculiarly redeemed, are not Satan's

even when they are dead in sin. They may come under the devil's usurped dominion, but the monster shall be chased from his throne.

Christ has received them of old of the Father, and He has bought them with His precious blood. And He will have them. He will chase away the intruder and claim His own. Thus says the Lord, "Your Covenant with death is disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand." You have sold yourselves for nothing—and you shall be redeemed without money. Jesus shall have His own, and none shall pluck them from His hand. He will defend His claim against all comers.

Further, observe that the lost piece of money was not only remembered and claimed, but *it was also valued*. In these three parables the value of the lost article steadily rises. This is not very clear at first sight because it may be said that a sheep is of more value than a piece of money. But notice that the shepherd only lost one sheep out of a hundred, but the woman lost one piece out of ten, and the father one son out of two. Now, it is not the value of the thing in itself which is here set forth, for the soul of a man, as absolutely valued in comparison with the Infinite God, is of small esteem. But because of His love it is of great value to Him.

The one piece of money to the woman was a tenth part of all she had, and it was very valuable in her esteem. To the Lord of love a lost soul is very precious—it is not because of its intrinsic value, but it has a relative value which God sets at a high rate. The Holy Spirit values souls, and therefore the Church prizes them, too. The Church sometimes says to herself, "We have but few conversions, few members. Many are called, but few chosen." She counts over her few converts, her few members, and one soul is to her all the more precious because of the few there are who in these times are in the treasury of Christ, stamped with the image of the great Being, and made of the precious genuine silver of God's own Grace.

O dear Friend, you think yourself of small value, you who are conscious that you have sinned! But the Church does not think you of small value—and the Holy Spirit does not despise you. He sets a high price upon you, and so do His people. We value your souls, we only wish we knew how to save them. We would spare no expense or pains if we might but be the means of finding you, and bringing you once more into the great Owner's hands.

The piece of money was lost, but *it was not lost hopelessly*. The woman had hopes of recovering it, and therefore she did not despair, but set to work at once. It is a dreadful thing to think of those souls which are lost hopelessly. Their state reminds me of a paragraph I have cut from this week's newspaper—"The fishing smack Veto, of Grimshy, S. Cousins, master, arrived in port from the Dogger Bank on Saturday night.

"The master reports that on the previous Wednesday, when about two hundred miles from Spurn, he sighted to the leeward what at first appeared to be a small schooner in distress, but on bearing down to her found her to be a full-sized lifeboat, upwards of twenty feet long, and full of water up to her corks. There was no name on the boat, which had evidently belonged to some large ship or steamer. It was painted white both inside and out, with a brown streak round the rim.

"When alongside, on closer examination, three dead sailors were perceived lying aft, huddled together, and a fourth athwart in the bow, with his head hanging over the rowlocks. They seemed from their dress and

general appearance to be foreigners, but the bodies had been frightfully 'washed about,' and were in a state of decomposition, and had evidently been dead some weeks. The water-logged waft drifted on with its ghastly cargo, and the horrible sight so shocked the crew of the Veto that afterwards they were almost too unnerved to attend to their trawling, and the smack, in consequence, returned to port with a comparatively small catch, and sooner than expected."

Do you wonder at the men sickening in the presence of this mystery of the sea? I shudder as I think I see that morgue-like boat floating on and on—Mercy need not follow it—she can confer no benefit. Love need not seek it, no deed of hers can save. My soul sees, as in a vision, souls hopelessly lost, drifting on the waves of eternity, beyond all hope or help. Alas, alas, millions of our race are now in that condition! Upon them has passed the second death, and powerless are we all to save them. Towards them even the Gospel has no aspect of hope.

Our joy is that we have to deal today with lost souls who are not yet hopelessly lost. They are dead in sin, but there is a quickening power which can make them live. O mariner of the sea of life, fisher of men upon this stormy sea, those castaways whom you meet with are accessible to your efforts of compassion—they can be rescued from the pitiless deeps! Your mission is not a hopeless one! I rejoice over the ungodly man here today that he is not in torment, not in Hell. He is not among those whose worm dies not and whose fire is not quenched.

I congratulate the Christian Church, too, that her piece of money has not fallen where she cannot find it. I rejoice that the fallen around us are not past hope. Yes, though they dwell in the worst dens of London, though they are thieves and harlots, they are not beyond the reach of mercy. Up, O Church of God, while possibilities of mercy remain! Gird up your loins, be soul-winners, and resolve by the Grace of God that every hour of hope shall be well employed by you.

One other point is worthy of notice. The piece of silver was lost, but it was lost *in the house*, and the woman knew it to be so. If she had lost it in the streets, the probabilities are she would not have looked for it again, for other hands might have closed over it. If she had lost it in a river, or dropped it in the sea, she might very fairly have concluded that it was gone forever—but evidently she was sure that she had lost it in the house.

Is it not a consolation to know that those here, who are lost, are still in the house? They are still under the means of Grace, within the sphere of the Church's operations, within the habitation of which she is the mistress, and where the Holy Spirit works. What thankfulness there ought to be in your minds that you are not lost as heathens, nor lost amid Roman Catholic or Mohammedan superstition, but lost where the Gospel is faithfully and plainly preached to you—where you are lovingly told that whoever believes in Christ Jesus is not condemned. Lost, but lost where the Church's business is to look after you! Where it is the Spirit's work to seek and to find you! This is the condition of the lost soul, depicted as a lost piece of silver.

II. Secondly, we shall notice the soul under another condition—we shall view it as *sought*. By whom was the piece of silver sought? It *was sought by its owner, personally*. Notice she who lost the money lit a candle and swept the house, and sought diligently till *she* found it. So, Brethren, I

have said that the woman represents the Holy Spirit, or rather the Church in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Now there will never be a soul found till the Holy Spirit seeks after it. He is the great soul-finder. The heart will continue in the dark until He comes with His illuminating power.

He is the Owner, He possesses it and He alone can effectually seek after it. The God to whom the soul belongs must seek the soul. But He does it by His Church, for souls belong to the Church, too. They are sons and daughters of the chosen mother, they are her citizens and treasures. For this reason the Church must personally seek after souls. She cannot delegate her work to anybody. The woman did not pay a servant to sweep the house, but she swept it herself. Her eyes were much better than a servant's eyes, for the servant's eyes would only look after somebody else's money, and perhaps would not see it.

But the mistress would look after her own money, and she would be certain to light upon it if it were anywhere within sight. When the Church of God solemnly feels, "It is our work to look after sinners, we must not delegate it even to the minister, or to the City-missionary, or the Bible woman, but the Church as a Church must look after the souls of sinners," then I believe souls will be found and saved. When the Church recognizes that these lost souls belong to *her*, she will be likely to find them. It will be a happy day when every Church of God is actively at work for the salvation of sinners!

It has been the curse of Christendom that she has ventured to delegate her sacred duties to men called priests, or that she has set apart certain persons to be called the religious who are to do works of mercy and charity and of evangelization. We are, every one of us who are Christ's, bound to do our own share. No, we should deem it a *privilege* of which we will not be deprived—personally to serve God—personally to sweep the house and search after the lost spiritual treasures. The Church herself, in the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, must seek lost souls.

Note that this seeking became a *matter of chief concern* with the woman. I do not know what other business she had to do, but I do know that she put it all by to find the piece of money. There was the corn to be ground for the morning meal. Perhaps that was done. At any rate, if not so, she left it unprepared. There was a garment to be mended, or water to be drawn, or the fire to be kindled, or the friends and neighbors to be conversed with—never mind, the mistress forgets everything else—she has lost her piece of money, and she must find it at once.

So with the Church of God. Her chief concern should be to seek the perishing sons of men. To bring souls to know Jesus, and to be saved in Him with a great salvation should be the Church's great longing and concern. She has other things to do. She has her own edification to consider. She has other matters to be attended to in their place—but this first—this evermore and always first.

The woman evidently said, "The money is lost, I must find that first." The loss of her piece of silver was so serious a matter that if she sat down to her mending, her hands would miss their nimbleness. Or if any other household work demanded her attention, it would be an irksome task to her, for she was thinking of that coin. If her friend came and talked with her, she would say to herself, "I wish she were gone, for I want to be look-

ing after my lost money.” I wish the Church of God had such an engrossing love for poor sinners that she would feel everything to be an impertinence which hindered her from soul-saving.

We have every now and then, as a Church, a little to do with politics, and a little to do with finance, for we are still in the world. But I love to see in all Churches everything kept in the background, compared with soul-saving work. This must be first and foremost. Educate the people—yes, certainly. We take an interest in everything which will do good to our fellow citizens, for we are men as well as Christians. But first and foremost our business is to win souls, to bring men to Jesus, to hunt up those who bear Heaven’s image, though lost and fallen. This is what we must be devoted to. This is the main and chief concern of Believers—the very reason for the existence of a Church. If she regards it not, she forgets her highest end.

Now note that the woman having thus set her heart to find her money, she *used the most fit and proper means* to accomplish her end. First, she lit a candle. So does the Holy Spirit in the Church. In Eastern dwellings it would be necessary, if you lost a piece of money and wanted to find it, to light a candle at any time. For in our Savior’s day glass was not used, and the windows of houses were only little slits in the side of the wall, and the rooms were very dark. Almost all the Oriental houses are very dark to this day, and if anything is dropped as small as a piece of silver, it must be looked for with a candle even at high noon.

Now, the sphere in which the Church moves here on earth is a dim twilight of mental ignorance, and moral darkness, and in order to find a lost soul, light must be brought to bear upon it. The Holy Spirit uses the light of the Gospel. He convinces men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. The woman lit a candle, and even thus the Holy Spirit lights up some chosen man whom He makes to be a light in the world. He calls to Himself who He wills, and makes him a lamp to shine upon the people.

Such a man will have to be consumed in his calling. Like a candle he will be burnt up in light-giving. Earnest zeal, and laborious self-sacrifice will eat him up. So may this Church, and every Church of God, be continually using up her anointed men and women who shall be as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, to find out lost souls.

But she was not content with her candle. She fetched her broom—she swept the house. If she could not find the silver as things were in the house, she brought the broom to bear upon the accumulated dust. Oh, how a Christian Church, when it is moved by the Holy Spirit, cleanses herself and purges all her work! “Perhaps,” she says, “some of our members are inconsistent, and so men are hardened in sin. These offenders must be put away. The tone of religion is low—that may be hindering the conversion of souls—it must be raised.

“Perhaps our statements of Truth, and our ways of proclaiming it, are not the most likely to command attention—we must amend them. We must use the best possible methods. We must, in fact, sweep the whole house.” I delight to see an earnest house-sweeping by confession of sin at a Prayer Meeting, or by a searching discourse—a house-sweeping when everyone is earnest to reform himself, and to get nearer to God Himself by a revival of his own personal piety. This is one of the means by which the Church is enabled to find the hidden ones.

Besides this, all the neighborhood round the Church (for the house is the sphere in which the Church moves), must be ransacked, stirred, turned over—in a word—“swept.” A Church that is really in earnest after souls will endeavor to penetrate the gloom of poverty and stir the heaps of profligacy. She will hunt high and hunt low if by any means she may rescue from destruction the precious thing upon which her heart is set.

Carefully note that this seeking after the lost piece of silver with fitting instruments, the broom and the candle, was *attended with no small stir*. She swept the house—there was dust in her eyes. If any neighbors were in the house there was dust for them. You cannot sweep a house without causing some confusion and temporary discomfort. We sometimes hear persons complain of certain Christians for making too much ado about religion. The complaint shows that something is being done, and in all probability some success being achieved. Those people who have no interest in the lost silver are annoyed at the dust.

It is getting down their throats, and they cough at it. Never mind, good Woman, sweep again and make them grumble more. Another will say, “I do not approve of religious excitement. I am for quiet and orderly modes of procedure.” I dare say that this good woman’s neighbor, when she came in to make a call, exclaimed in disgust, “Why, Mistress, there is not a chair to sit down upon in comfort, and you are so taken up about this lost money that you scarce give me an answer. Why, you are wasting candle at a great rate, and seem quite in a fever.” “Well,” the good woman would answer, “but I must find my piece of silver, and in order to seek it out I can bear a little dust myself, and so must you if you wish to stop here while I am searching.”

An earnest Church will be sure to experience a degree of excitement when it is soul-hunting, and very cautious, very fastidious, very critical people will find fault. Never mind them, my Brethren, sweep on and let them talk on. Never mind making a dust if you find the money. If souls are saved, irregularities and singularities are as the small dust of the balance. If men are brought to Jesus, care nothing what cavilers say. Sweep on, sweep on, even though men exclaim, “They that turn the world upside down are come here, also.” Though confusion and stir, and even persecution be the present result—if the finding of an immortal soul is the ultimate effect—you will be well repaid for it.

It is to be remarked, also, that in the seeking of this piece of silver the coin was *sought in a most engrossing manner*. For a time nothing was thought of but the lost silver. Here is a candle—the good woman does not read by the light of it, nor mend her garments. No, but the candle light is all spent on that piece of money. All its light is consecrated to the search. Here is a broom—there is other work for the broom to do, but for the present it sweeps for the silver and for nothing else.

Here are two bright eyes in the good woman’s head—yes, but they look for nothing but the lost money. She does not care what else may be in the house or out of it—her money she cares for—and that she must find. And here she is with candle, broom, strength, eyesight, faculties of mind, and limbs of body all employed in searching for the lost treasure. It is just so when the Holy Spirit works in a Church. The preacher, like a candle, yields his light, but it is all with the view of finding out the sinner and let-

ting him see his lost estate. Whether it is the broom of the Law or the light of the Gospel, all is meant for the sinner.

All the Holy Spirit's wisdom is engaged to find the sinner, and all the living Church's talent and substance and power are put forth if by any means the sinner may be saved. It is a fair picture! May I see it daily. How earnestly souls are sought for when the Spirit of God is truly in His Church! One other thought only. This woman *sought for her piece of silver continuously*—"till she found it." May you and I, as parts of the Church of God, look after wandering souls till we find them.

We say they discourage us. No doubt that piece of silver did discourage the woman who sought it. We complain that men do not appear inclined to religion. Did the piece of money lend the housewife any help? Was it any assistance to her? She did the seeking, she did it all. And the Holy Spirit, through you, my Brother, seeks the salvation of the sinner, not expecting the sinner to help Him, for the sinner is averse to being found. What? Were you repulsed the other day by one whose spiritual good you longed for? Go again! Were your invitations laughed at? Invite again! Did you become the subject of ridicule through your earnest entreaties? Entreat again!

Those are not always the least likely to be saved who at first repel our efforts. A harsh reception is sometimes only an intimation that the heart recognizes the power of the Truth of God though it does not desire at present to yield to it. Persevere, Brother, till you find the soul you seek. You who spend so much effort in your Sunday school class—use still your candle—enlighten the child's mind still. Sweep the house till you find what you seek. Never give up the child till it is brought to Christ.

You, in your senior class, dealing with that young man or young woman—cease not from your private prayers and from your personal admonitions—till that heart belongs to Jesus. You who can preach in the streets, or visit the lodging houses, or go from door to door with tracts, I charge you all—for you can all do something—never give up the pursuit of sinners until they are safely lodged in Jesus' hands. We must have them saved! With all the intense perseverance of the woman who turned everything upside down, and counted all things but loss that she might but find her treasure—so may we also, the Spirit of God working in us—upset everything of rule and conventionality, and form and difficulty—if we may but by any means save some, and bring out of the dust those who bear the King's image, and are dear to the King's heart.

III. Time has fled! Alas, too swiftly, and so I must close with the third point, which is the piece of silver found. Found! In the first place, this was the *woman's ultimatum, and nothing short of it*. She never stopped until the coin was found. So it is the Holy Spirit's design—not that the sinner should be brought into a hopeful state—but that he should be actually saved. And this is the Church's great concern, not that people be made *hearers*—not that they be made orthodox *professors*—but that they be really changed and renewed, regenerated and *born-again*.

The woman herself found the piece of money. It did not turn up by accident, nor did some neighbor step in and find it. The Spirit of God Himself finds sinners, and the Church of God herself, as a rule, is the instrument of their recovery. Dear Brethren, a few years ago there was a kind of slur cast upon the visible Church by many enthusiastic, but mistaken per-

sons, who dreamed that the time was come for doing away with organized effort. They were for irregular agencies outside of the visible Church doing all the work. Certain remarkable men sprang up whose ferocious censures almost amounted to attacks upon the recognized Churches.

Their efforts were apart from the regular ministry, and in some cases ostentatiously in opposition to it. It was as much their aim to pull down the existing Church as to bring in converts. I ask any man who has fairly watched these efforts—what have they come to? I never condemned them, nor will I. But I do venture to say today, in the light of their history, that they have not superseded regular Church work and never will. The masses were to be aroused, but where are the boasted results? What has become of many of these much-vaunted works?

Those who have worked in connection with a Church of God have achieved permanent usefulness. Those who acted as separatist agencies, though they blazed for awhile before the public eye and filled the corners of the newspapers with spiritual puffery, are now either altogether or almost extinct. Where are the victories which were to be won by these freebooters? Echo answers, Where?

We have to fall back on the old disciplined troops. God means to bless the Church still, and it is through the Church that He will continue to send a benediction upon the sons of men. I am glad to hear of anybody preaching the Gospel if Christ is preached! I therein do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. I remember the Master's words, "Forbid them not! He that is not against us is for us." Still the mass of conversions will come through the Church, and by her regular organized efforts. The woman who lights the candle and sweeps the house, to whom the silver belongs, will herself find it.

Now notice when she had found it what she did, *she rejoiced*. The greater her trouble in searching, the higher her joy in finding. What joy there is in the Church of God when sinners are converted! We have our high holidays. We have our mirthful days downstairs in the lecture hall, when we hear of souls turned from the paths of the Destroyer—and in the vestries behind, your pastors and elders often experience such joy as only Heaven can equal, when we have heard the stories of souls emancipated from the slavery of sin, and led into the perfect liberty which Jesus gives! The Church rejoices!

Next, she calls *her friends and neighbors* to share her joy. I am afraid we do not treat our friends and neighbors with quite enough respect, or remember to invite them to our joys. Who are they? I think the angels are here meant. Not only the angels in Heaven, but those who are watching here below. Note well that when the shepherd took home the sheep, it is written, "There *shall be joy in Heaven* over one sinner that repents." But it does not mention Heaven here, nor speak of the future, but it is written, "*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God.*"

Now, the Church is on earth, and the Holy Spirit is on earth, at work. When there is a soul saved, the angels down below, who keep watch and ward around the faithful, and so are our friends and neighbors, rejoice with us. Know you not that angels are present in our assemblies? For this reason the Apostle tells us that the woman has her head covered in the assembly. He says, "Because of the angels, for they love order and deco-

rum.” The angels are wherever the saints are, beholding our orders and rejoicing in our joy.

When we see conversions we may bid them rejoice, too, and they will praise God with us. I do not suppose the rejoicing ends there. For as angels are always ascending and descending upon the sons of man, they soon convey the tidings to the hosts above, and Heaven rejoices over one repenting sinner. The joy is a present joy. It is a joy in the house, in the Church in her own sphere. It is the joy of her neighbors who are round about her here below. All other joy seems swallowed up in this—as every other occupation was suspended to find the lost silver, so every other joy is hushed when the precious thing is found.

The Church of God has a thousand joys! The joy of her saints ascending to the skies. The joy of her saints ripening for Glory. The joy of such as contend with sin and overcome it, and grow in Grace and receive the promise. But the chief joy in the Church, which swallows all others, as Aaron’s rod swallowed up the other rods—is the joy over the lost soul which, after much sweeping and searching, is found at last! The practical lesson to the unconverted is just this. Dear Friend, *see what value is set upon you*. You think that nobody cares for you—why, Heaven and earth care for you! You say, “I am as nothing, a castaway, and I am utterly worthless.” No, you are not worthless to the blessed Spirit, nor worthless to the Church of God—she longs for you.

See, again, *how false that suspicion of yours is that you will not be welcome* if you come to Christ. Welcome! Welcome! Why, the Church is searching for you! The Spirit of God is searching for you. Do not talk of welcome—you will be a great deal more than welcome! Oh, how glad will Christ be, and the Spirit be, and the Church be, to receive you! Ah, but you complain that you have done nothing to make you fit for mercy. Talk not so—what had the lost piece of money done? What could it do?

It was lost and helpless. They who sought it did all. He who seeks you will do all for you. O poor Soul, since Christ now bids you come, come! If His Spirit draws you, yield! Since the promise now speaks, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool,” accept the promise! Believe in Jesus. God bless you and save you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Portions of Scripture read before sermon—Psalm 126 and Luke 15

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THE TURNING POINT

NO. 1189

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 23, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And he arose, and came to his father.”
Luke 15:20.***

THIS sentence expresses the true turning point in the Prodigal's life story. Many other matters led up to it and before he came to it there was much in him that was very hopeful. But this was the point, itself, and had he never reached it he would have remained a prodigal and would never have been the Prodigal restored—and his life would have been a *warning* rather than an instruction to us. “He arose, and came to his father.” Speaking, as I do, in extreme weakness, I have no words to spare. And while my voice holds out I shall speak straight to the point. I pray the Lord to make every syllable practical and powerful by His Holy Spirit.

I. We shall begin by noticing that **HERE WAS ACTION**—“*He arose, and came to his father.*” He had already been in a state of thoughtfulness. He had come to himself, but now he was to go further and come to his father. He had considered the past and weighed it—he had seen the hollowness of all the world's pleasures. He had seen his condition in reference to his father and his prospects if he remained in the far-off country. He had thought upon what he ought to do and what would be the probable result of such a course. But now he passed beyond the dreaminess of thought into matter-of-fact acting and doing!

How long will it be, dear Hearers, before you will do the same? We are glad to have you thoughtful. We hope that a great point is gained when you are led to consider your ways, to ponder your condition and to look earnestly into the future—for thoughtlessness is the ruin of many a traveler to eternity—and by its means the unwary fall into the deep pit of carnal security and perish! But some of you have been among the “thoughtful” quite long enough! It is time you passed into a more practical stage. It is high time that you came to action—it would have been better if you had acted already, for, in the matter of reconciliation to God, first thoughts are best. When a man's life hangs on a thread and Hell is just before him, his path is clear and a second thought is superfluous. The first impulse to escape from danger and lay hold on Christ is that which you would be wise to follow.

Some of you whom I now address have been thinking, and thinking, and thinking till I fear that you will think yourselves into Perdition! May you, by Divine Grace, be turned from thinking to *believing*, or else your thoughts will become the undying worm of your torment. The Prodigal had also passed beyond mere regret. He was deeply grieved that he had left his father's house. He lamented his lavish expenditure upon wantonness and

rebellious. He mourned that the son of such a father should be degraded into a swineherd in a foreign land. But he now proceeded from regret to *repentance* and bestirred himself to escape from the condition over which he mourned. What is the use of regret if we continue in sin? By all means pull up the sluices of your grief if the floods will turn the wheel of action—but you may as well reserve your tears if they mean no more than idle sentimentalism.

What avails it for a man to say he repents of his misconduct if he still perseveres in it? We are glad when sinners regret their sin and mourn the condition into which sin has brought them. But if they go no further, their regrets will only prepare them for eternal remorse. Had the Prodigal become inactive through despondency, or stolid through sullen grief, he would have perished, far away from his father's home—as it is to be feared many will whose sorrow for sin leads them into a proud unbelief and willful despair of God's love. But, by God's Grace, he was wise, for he shook off the drowsiness of his despondency and, with resolute determination, "arose and came to his father." Oh, when will you sad ones be wise enough to do the same? When will your thinking and your sorrow give place to practical obedience to the Gospel?

The Prodigal also pressed beyond mere resolves. That is a sweet verse which says, "I will arise," but that is far better which says, "And he arose." Resolves are good, like blossoms, but *actions* are better, for they are the fruits. We are glad to hear from you, the resolution, "I will turn to God." But holy angels in Heaven do not rejoice over *resolutions*—they reserve their music for sinners who actually repent! Many of you, like the son in the parable, have said, "I go, Sir," but you have not gone. You are as ready at forgetting as you are at resolving. Every earnest sermon, every death in your family, every funeral knell for a neighbor, every pricking of conscience, every touch of sickness sets you a resolving to amend—but your promissory notes are never honored—your repentance only ends in words. Your goodness is as the dew which at early dawn hangs each blade of grass with gems, but leaves the fields all parched and dry when the sun's burning heat is poured upon the pasture.

You mock your friends and trifle with your own souls! You have often, in this house, said, "Let me reach my chamber and I will fall upon my knees." But on the way home you have forgotten what manner of men you were—and sin has confirmed its tottering throne. Have you not dallied long enough? Have you not sufficiently lied unto God? Should you not, now, give over resolving and proceed to the solemn business of your souls like men of common sense? You are in a sinking vessel and the lifeboat is near, but your mere resolve to enter it will not prevent your going down with the sinking craft! As sure as you are a living man, you will drown unless you take the actual leap for life. "He arose and came to his father."

Now, observe that *this action of the Prodigal was immediate* and without further parley. He did not go back to the owner of the swine and say, "Will you raise my wages? If not, I must leave." Had he parleyed he had been lost! He gave his old master no notice! He cancelled his indentures by run-

ning away! I would that sinners here would break their league with death and violate their covenant with Hell, by escaping for their lives to Jesus, who receives all such runaways! We need neither leave nor license for quitting the service of sin and Satan! Neither is it a subject which demands a month's consideration—in this matter *instantaneous* action is the surest wisdom!

Lot did not stop to consult the king of Sodom as to whether he might quit his dominions—neither did he consult the parish officers as to the propriety of speedily deserting his home—but with the angel's hand pressing them, he and his family fled the city. No, one fled not—she looked and lingered—and that lingering cost her her life! That pillar of salt is the eloquent monitor to us to avoid delays when we are bid to flee for our lives. Sinner, do you wish to be a pillar of salt? Will you halt between two opinions until God's anger shall doom you to final impenitence? Will you trifle with mercy till Justice smites you? Up, Man, and while your day of Grace continues, fly into the arms of Love!

The text implies that *the Prodigal aroused himself* and put forth all his energies. It is said, "he *arose*." The word suggests that he had, till then, been asleep upon the bed of sloth, or the couch of presumption. Like Samson in Delilah's lap, he had been supine, inactive and unstrung. But now, startled from his lethargy, he lifts up his eyes, girds up his loins, shakes off the spell which had enthralled him and puts forth every power. He arouses his whole nature and he spares no exertion until he returns to his father. Men are not saved between sleeping and waking. "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." Grace does not stupefy us, it but arouses us. Surely, Sirs, it is worthwhile making an awful effort to escape from eternal wrath! It is worthwhile summoning up every faculty, power, emotion and passion of your being and saying to yourself, "I cannot be lost! I *will* not be lost! I am resolved that I will find mercy through Jesus Christ."

The worst of it is, O Sinners, you are so sluggish, so indifferent, so ready to let things happen as they may! Sin has bewitched and benumbed you. You sleep as on beds of down and forget that you are in danger of Hell fire! You cry, "A little more rest, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the arms to sleep," and so you sleep on, though your damnation slumbers not. Would to God you could be awakened! It is not in the power of *my* voice to arouse you, but may the Lord Himself alarm you, for never were men more in danger! Let but your breath fail, or your blood pause and you are lost forever! More fragile than a cobweb is that life on which your eternal destiny depends! If you were wise you would not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you had found your God and been forgiven. Oh, when will you come to real action? How long will it be before you believe in Jesus? How long will you sport between the jaws of Hell? How long will you dare provoke the living God?

II. Secondly, HERE WAS A SOUL COMING INTO ACTUAL CONTACT WITH GOD—"He *arose and came to his father*." It would have been of no avail for him to have arisen if he had not come to his father. This is what

the sinner has to do and what the Spirit enables him to do, namely, to come straight away to his God. But, alas, very commonly, when men begin to be anxious, they go round about and hasten to a friend to tell him about it, or they even resort to a deceitful priest and seek help from him! They fly to a saint, or to a virgin and ask *these* to be mediators for them instead of accepting the *only* Mediator, Jesus Christ, and going to God, at once, by Him. They fly to outward forms and ceremonies, or they turn to their Bibles, their prayers, their repentances, or their sermons. In fact, to *anything* rather than their God.

But the Prodigal knew better. He went to his father—and it will be a grand day for you, O Sinner, when you do the same. Go straight away to your God in Christ Jesus. “Come here,” says the priest. Pass that fellow by! Get away to your Father. Reject an angel from Heaven if he would detain you from the Lord. Go personally, directly, and at once to God in Christ Jesus. “But surely I must perform some ceremony first?” The Prodigal did not—he arose and went at once to his father. Sinner, you must come to God—and *Jesus* is the way. Go to *Him*, then! Tell *Him* you have done wrong. Confess your sins to *Him* and yield yourself to *Him*. Cry, “Father, I have sinned: forgive me, for Jesus’ sake.”

Alas, there are many anxious souls who do not go to others, but they look to *themselves*. They sit down and cry, “I *need* to repent! I need to *feel* my need! I need to be humble.” O Man, get up! What are you doing? Leave *yourself* and go to your Father! “Oh, but I have so little hope! My faith is very weak and I am full of fears.” What do your hopes or your fears matter while you are away from your Father? Your salvation does not lie within *yourself*, but in the Lord’s good will to you. You will never be at peace till, leaving all your doubts and your hopes, you come to your God and rest in His bosom.

“Oh, but I need to conquer my propensities to sin, I need to master my strong temptations.” I know what it is you need. You need the best robe without your Father’s giving it to you, and shoes on your feet of your own procuring—you do not like going in a beggar’s suit and receiving all from the Lord’s loving hands! But this pride of yours must be given up and you must get away to God, or perish forever! You must forget yourself, or only remember yourself so as to feel that you are bad throughout and not worthy to be called God’s child!

Give yourself up as a sinking vessel that is not worth pumping, but must be left to go down, and get into the life-boat of Free Grace. Think of God your Father—of Him, I say, and of His dear Son, the *only* Mediator and Redeemer of the sons of men! *There* is your hope—to fly away from self and to reach your Father. Do I hear you say, “Well, I shall continue in the means of Grace and I hope to find my God there.” I tell you, if you do that and refuse to go to God, the means of Grace will be the means of damnation to you! “I must wait at the pool,” says one. Then I solemnly warn you that you will lie there and die, for Jesus does not command you to lie there! His bidding is, “Take up your bed and walk.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” You have to go unto your Fa-

ther—and not to the pool of Bethesda, or *any* other pool of ordinances or means of Divine Grace.

“But I mean to pray,” says one. What would you pray for? Can you expect the Lord to hear you while you will not hear Him? You will pray best with your head in your Father’s bosom—the prayers of an unyielding, disobedient, unbelieving heart are mockeries! Prayers, themselves, will ruin you if they are made a substitute for going at once to God. Suppose the Prodigal had sat down at the swine trough and said, “I will pray here”? What would it have availed him? Or suppose he had wept there? What good would have come of it? Praying and weeping were good enough when he had come to his father—but they could not have been substituted for it. Sinner, your business is with God! Hasten to Him at once! You have nothing to do with yourself, or your own works, or what others can do for you—the turning point of salvation is, “he arose and came to his father.”

There must be a real, living, earnest contact of your poor guilty soul with God! There must be a recognition that there *is* a God and that God can be spoken to. And there must be an actual speech of your soul to Him through Jesus Christ—for God is only accessible in Christ Jesus—that is the only way! Going thus to God, we tell Him that we are all wrong and wish to be set right. We tell Him we wish to be reconciled to Him and are ashamed that we should have sinned against Him. We then put our trust in His Son and we are saved. O Soul, go to God! It matters not though the prayer you come with may be a very broken prayer, or even if it has mistakes in it as the Prodigal’s prayer had when he said, “Make me as one of Your hired servants.” The language of the prayer is not significant so long as you really approach God. “Him that comes to Me,” says Jesus, “I will in no wise cast out.” And Jesus ever lives to make intercessions for them that come to God through Him!

Here, then, is the great Protestant doctrine. The *Romish* doctrine says you must go round by the back door and half-a-dozen of the Lord’s servants must knock for you—and even then you may never be heard. But the grand old Protestant doctrine is, come to God *yourself*! Come with no other mediator than Jesus Christ! Come just as you are without merits and good works! Trust in Jesus and your sins will be forgiven you! That is my second point—there was *action*—and that action was *contact with God*.

III. Now, thirdly, IN THAT ACTION THERE WAS AN ENTIRE YIELDING UP OF HIMSELF. In the Prodigal’s case, his proud independence and self-will were gone. In other days he *demand*ed his portion and resolved to spend it as he pleased. But now he is willing to be as much under rule as a hired servant. He has had enough of being his own master. He is weary of the distance from God which self-will always creates. He longs to get into a child’s true place, namely, that of dependence and loving submission. The great mischief of all was his distance from his Father and he now feels it to be so. His great thought is to *remove* that distance by humbly returning, for then he feels that all other ills will come to an end. He yields up his cherished freedom, his boasted independence, his liberty to

think and do and say whatever he chose and he longs to come under loving rule and wise guidance.

Sinner, are you ready for this? If so, come and welcome! Your Father longs to press you to His bosom! The Prodigal gave up all idea of self-justification, for he said, "I have *sinned*." Before he would have said, "I have a right to do as I like with my own. Who is to dictate how I shall spend my own money? What if I sow a few wild oats? Every young man does the same. I have been very generous, if nothing else, nobody can call me greedy. I am no hypocrite. Look at your canting Methodists, how they deceive people! There's nothing of that in me, I'll warrant you! I am an outspoken man of the world and, after all, a good deal better in disposition than my elder brother, fine fellow though he pretends to be." But now the Prodigal no longer boasts. Not a syllable of self-praise falls from his lips. He mournfully confesses, "I have sinned against Heaven and before you."

Sinner, if you would be saved, you, also, must come down from your high places and acknowledge your iniquity. Confess that you have done wrong and do not try to extenuate your offense. Do not offer apologies and make your case better than it is, but humbly plead guilty and leave your soul in Jesus' hands. Of two things, to sin or to deny the sin, probably to deny the sin is the worse of the two, and shows a blacker heart. Acknowledge your fault, Man, and tell your heavenly Father that if it were not for His mercy you would have been in Hell, and that as it is you richly deserve to be there even now! Make your case rather blacker than it is if you can—I say this because I know you cannot do any such thing! When a man is in the hospital it cannot be of any service to him to pretend to be *better* than he is—he will not receive any more medical attention on that account, but rather the other way around, for the *worse* his case the more likely is the physician to give him special notice.

Oh, Sinner, lay bare before God your sores, your putrefying sores of sin—the horrid ulcers of your deep depravity—and cry, "O Lord, have mercy upon me!" This is the way of wisdom. Have done with pride and self-righteousness! Make your appeal to the undeserved pity of the Lord and you will advance. Observe that the Prodigal yielded himself up so thoroughly that he admitted his father's love to him to be an aggravation of his guilt. So I take it he means when he says, "Father, I have sinned." It adds an emphasis to the, "*I have sinned*," when it follows after the word, "*Father*." "You good God, I have broken Your good laws. You loving, tender, merciful God, I have done wrong wantonly and wickedly against You. You have been a very loving Father to me and I have been a most ungenerous and shameless traitor to You, rebelling without cause. I confess this frankly, humbly, and with many tears. Ah, had You been a tyrant I might have gathered some apology from Your severity—but You have been a Father—and this makes it worse that I should sin against You."

It is sweet to hear such a confession as this poured out into the Father's bosom. The penitent also yielded up all his supposed rights and claims upon his father, saying, "I am not worthy to be called your son." He

might have said, "I have sinned, but still I am your child." And most of us would have thought it a very justifiable argument. But he does not say so. He is too humble for that. He says, "I am no more worthy to be called your son." A sinner is really broken down when he acknowledges that if God would have no mercy on him, but cast him away forever, it would be no more than justice—

***"Should saddled vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce You just in death.
And, if my soul were sent to Hell,
Your righteous Law approves it well."***

That soul is not far from peace which has ceased arguing and submits to the sentence.

Oh, Sinner, I urge you, if you would find speedy rest, go and throw yourself at the foot of the Cross where God meets such as you are, and say, "Lord, here I am. Do what You will with me. Never a word of excuse will I offer, nor one single plea by way of extenuation. I am a mass of guilt and misery, but pity me, oh, pity me! No rights or claims have I. I have forfeited the rights of creatureship by becoming a rebel against You. I am lost and utterly undone before the bar of Your justice. From that justice I flee and hide myself in the wounds of Your Son. According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions!"

Once again, here was such a yielding up of himself to his father that no terms or conditions are mentioned or implied. He begs to be received, but a servant's place is good enough for him. Among the dish washers of the kitchen he is content to take his place, so long as he may be forgiven. He does not ask for a little liberty to sin, or stipulate for a little self-righteousness where he may boast—he gives all up. He is willing to be anything or nothing, just as his father pleases, so that he may but be numbered with his household. No weapons of rebellion are in his hands. No secret opposition to his father's rule lingers in his soul. He is completely subdued and lies at his father's feet. Our Lord never crushed a soul yet that lay prostrate at His feet and He never will! He will stoop down and say, "Rise, My child. Rise, for I have forgiven you. Go and sin no more. I have loved you with an everlasting love."

Come and let us return unto the Lord, for He has torn, but He will heal us. He has smitten, but He will bind us up. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax!

IV. Notice further, and fourthly, that IN THIS ACT THERE WAS A MEASURE OF FAITH IN HIS FATHER—a measure, I say, meaning not much faith, but some. A little faith saves the soul! There was faith in his father's power. He said, "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare." Sinner, do you believe that God is able to save you? Do you believe that through Jesus Christ He is able to supply your soul's needs? Can you get as far as this, "Lord, if You will it, You can make me clean"? The Prodigal also had some faith in his father's readiness to pardon, for if he had not so hoped he would never have returned to his father at all! If he had been sure that his father would never smile upon him he would never have returned to him. Sinner, do you believe that God is merciful?

So He is. Believe, through Jesus Christ, that He wills not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn to Him and live, for as surely as God is, this is the Truth of God. Do not believe a lie concerning your God. The Lord is not hard or harsh! He *rejoices* to pardon great transgressions!

The Prodigal also believed in his father's readiness to bless Him. He felt sure that his father would go as far as propriety would permit, for he said, "I am not worthy to be called your son, but make me at least your servant." In this, also, he admitted that his father was so good that even to be his servant would be a great matter! He was content, even, to get the lowest place, so long as he might be under the shade of so good a protector. Ah, poor Sinner, do you believe that God will have mercy on you if He can do so consistently with His justice? If you believe that, I have good news to tell you! Jesus Christ, His Son, has offered such an Atonement—that God can be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes! He has mercy upon the most vile and justifies the ungodly! He accepts the very chief of sinners through His dear Son!

Oh, Soul, have faith in the Atonement! The Atonement made by the personal sacrifice of the Son of God must be infinitely precious! Believe that there is efficacy enough in it for you! It is your safety to fly to that Atonement and cling to the Cross of Christ—and you will honor God by doing so—it is the *only way* in which you can honor Him. You can honor Him by believing that He can save you, even *you*. The truest faith is that which believes in the mercy of God in the teeth of conscious unworthiness. The penitent in the parable went to his father, too unworthy to be called his son and yet he said, "My father." Faith has a way of seeing the blackness of sin and yet believing that God can make the soul as white as snow! It is *not* faith that says, "I am a little sinner and therefore God can forgive me." But that is faith which cries, "I am a great sinner! An accursed and condemned sinner, and yet, for all that, God's infinite mercy can forgive me and the blood of Christ can make me clean."

Believe in the teeth of your feelings and in spite of your conscience! Believe in God, though everything within you seems to say, "He cannot save *me*. He will not save *me*." Believe in God, Sinner, over the tops of mountains of sins! Do as John Bunyan says he did, for he was so afraid of his sins and of the punishment due, that he could not but run into God's arms! And he said, "Though He had held a drawn sword in His hands, I would have run on the very point of it rather than have kept away from Him." So do you, poor Sinner! Believe your God! Believe in nothing else, but trust your God, and you will get the blessing. It is wonderful, the power of faith over God—it binds His justice and constrains His Grace!

I do not know how to illustrate it better than by a little story. When I walked down my garden some time ago I found a dog amusing himself among the flowers. I knew that he was not a good gardener, and no dog of mine, so I threw a stick at him and bade him be gone. After I had done so, he conquered me and made me ashamed of having spoken roughly to him, for he picked up my stick and, wagging his tail right pleasantly, he

brought the stick to me and dropped it at my feet! Do you think I could strike him or drive him away after that? No, I patted him and called him good names. The dog had conquered the man! And if you, poor Sinner, dog as you are, can have confidence enough in God to come to Him just as you are, it is not in His heart to spurn you!

There is an Omnipotence in simple faith which will conquer even the Divine Being, Himself! Only trust Him as He reveals Himself in Jesus—and you shall find salvation.

V. I have not time or strength to dwell longer here, and so I must notice, fifthly, that THIS ACT OF COMING INTO CONTACT WITH GOD IS PERFORMED BY THE SINNER JUST AS HE IS. I do not know how wretched the Prodigal's appearance may have been, but I will be bound to say he had grown none the sweeter by having fed swine! Nor do I suppose his garments had been very sumptuously embroidered by gathering husks for then from the trees. Yet, just as he was, he came! Surely he might have spent an hour profitably in cleaning his flesh and his clothes. But no, he said, "I will arise," and no sooner said than done! He did arise and he came to his father.

Every moment that a sinner stays away from God in order to get better—he is but adding to his sin—for the vilest sin of all is his being away from God! And the longer he stays in it, the more he sins! The attempt to perform good works apart from God is like the effort of a thief to set his stolen goods in order—his only real duty is to return them at once. The very same pride which leads men *away* from God may be seen in their self-conceited notion that they can improve themselves while they refuse to return to Him! The essence of their fault is that they are far off from God—and whatever they do, so long as that distance remains—nothing is effectually done. I say the evil of the whole matter is distance from God, and therefore the commencement of setting matters right lies in arising and returning to Him from whom they have departed.

The Prodigal was bound to go home just as he was, for there was nothing that he could do. He was reduced to such extremities that he could not purchase a fresh piece of cloth to mend his garments, nor a farthing's worth of soap with which to cleanse his flesh. And it is a great *mercy* when a man is so spiritually reduced that he cannot do anything but go to his God as a beggar—when he is so bankrupt that he cannot pay a farthing in the pound—when he is so lost that he cannot even repent or believe, apart from God, but feels that he is forever undone unless the Lord shall interpose. It is our wisdom to go to God for *everything*.

Moreover, there was nothing needed from the Prodigal but to return to his father! When a child who has done wrong comes back, the more its face is blurred with tears, the better! When a beggar ask for charity, the more his clothes are in rags, the better. Are not rags and sores the very livery of beggars? I once gave a man a pair of shoes because he said he was in need of them. But after he had put them on and gone a little way I overtook him in a gateway taking them off in order to go barefoot again. I think they were patent leather and what should a beggar do in such at-

tire? He was changing them for, “old shoes and clouted”—those were suitable to his business! A sinner is never so well arrayed for pleading as when he comes in rags. At his *worst*, the sinner, for making an appeal to mercy, is at his *best*.

And so, Sinners, there is no need for you to linger—come just as you are! “But must we not wait for the Holy Spirit?” Ah, Beloved, he who is willing to arise and go to his Father *has* the Holy Spirit! It is the Holy Spirit who moves us to return to God—but it is the spirit of the flesh or of the devil that would bid us wait. And so, Sinners? Some of you are sitting in those pews—where are you? *I* cannot find you out, but my Master can! He has made this sermon on purpose for you. “Well, but I would like to get home and pray.” Pray where you are, in the pew! “But I cannot speak out aloud.” You may if you like—I won’t stop you. “But I should not like to.” Well, don’t, then. God can hear you without a sound, though I wish sometimes we did hear people cry out, “What must I do to be saved?” I would gladly hear the prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

But if men cannot hear you, the Lord can hear the cries of your hearts. Now, just sit still a minute, and say, “My God I must come to You. You are in Jesus Christ and in Him You have already come a great way to meet me. My soul needs You. Take me, now, and make me what I ought to be. Forgive me and accept me.” It is the turning point of a man’s life when that is done, wherever it is—whether in a workshop, or in a saw-pit, in a Church, or in a tabernacle—it does not matter where. This is the point—the getting to God in Christ, giving all up and by faith resting in the mercy of God.

VI. The last point of all is this—THAT ACT WROUGHT THE GREATEST CONCEIVABLE CHANGE IN THE MAN. He was a new man after that. Harlots, winebibbers, you have lost your old companion now! He has gone to his Father, and his Father’s company and yours will never agree. A man’s return to his God means his leaving the chambers of vice and the tables of riot. You may depend upon it, whenever you hear of a professing Christian living in uncleanness, he has not been living anywhere near his God. He may have talked a great deal about it, but God and unchastity never agree. If you have friendship with God you will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Now, too, the penitent has done with all degrading works to support himself. You will not find him feeding swine anymore, or making a swine of himself, either, by trusting in priests or sacraments. He will not confess to a priest, again, or pay a penny to get his mother out of “Purgatory.” He is not such a fool as that any more! He has been to his God on God’s terms, and he does not need any of these shavelings to go to God for him! He has got away from that bondage! No more feeding pigs! No more superstition for him! “Why,” he says, “I have access with boldness to the Mercy Seat and what have I to do with the priests of Rome?”

There is a change in him in all ways. Now he has come to his Father, his pride is broken down. He no longer glories in that which he calls his own—all his glory is in his Father’s free pardoning love. He never boasts of

what he has, for he admits that he has nothing but what his Father gives him! And though he is far better off than ever he was in his spendthrift days, yet he is as unassuming as a little child. He is a gentleman-commoner upon the bounty of his God and lives from day to day by a royal grant from the table of the King of kings! Pride is gone, but content fills its room. He would have been content to be one of the servants of the house—he is much more satisfied to be a child! He loves his Father with a new love—he cannot even mention His name without saying, “And He forgave me! He forgave me freely! He forgave me all, and He said, ‘Bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.’ ” From the day of his restoration, the Prodigal is bound to his Father’s home and reckons it to be one of his greatest blessings that it is written in the Covenant of Grace, “I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.”

This morning I believe that God, in His mercy, means to call many sinners to Himself! I am often very much surprised to find how the Lord guides my word according to the persons before me. Last Sunday there came here a young son of a gentleman, a foreigner from a distant land, under considerable impressions as to the truth of the Christian religion. His father is a follower of one of the ancient religions of the East and this young gentleman naturally felt it a great difficulty that he would probably make his father angry if he became a Christian. Judge, then, how closely the message of last Sabbath came home to him, when the text was, “What if your father answers you roughly?” [Sermon No. 1118, *A WORD FOR THE PERSECUTED.*]

He came to tell me that he thanked God for that message and he hoped to bear up under the trial, should persecution arise. I feel that I am with equal plainness speaking to some of you. I know I am! You are saying, “May I now go to God just as I am, and through Jesus Christ yield myself up, and will He forgive *me*?” Dear Brother, or dear Sister, wherever you may be, *try it*. That is the best thing to do—*try it*—and, if the angels do not set the bells in Heaven ringing, God has altered from what He was last week, for I know He received poor sinners then, and He will receive them now. The worst thing I dread about you is that you should say, “I will think about it.” *Don’t* think about it! *Do it!* Concerning this, no more *thinking* is needed—just do it! Get away to God!

Is it not according to nature that the creature should be at peace with its Creator? Is it not according to your conscience? Is there not something within you which cries, “Go to God in Christ Jesus”? In the case of that poor Prodigal, the famine said to him, “Go home!” Bread was dear, meat was scarce—he was hungry and every pang of need said, “Go home! Go home!” When he went to an old friend and asked him for help, his scowling looks said, “Why don’t you go home?” There is a time with sinners when even their old companions seem to say, “We do not want you. You are too miserable and melancholy. Why don’t you go home?” They sent him to feed swine and the very hogs grunted, “Go home!” When he picked up those husks and tried to eat them, they crackled, “Go home!” He

looked upon his rags and they gaped at him, “*Go home.*” His hungry belly and his faintness cried, “*Go home.*”

Then he thought of his father’s face and how kindly it had looked at him, and it seemed to say, “Come home!” He remembered the bread, enough and to spare, and every morsel seemed to say, “Come home!” He pictured the servants sitting down to dinner and feasting to the full—and every one of them seemed to look right away over the wilderness to him and to say, “Come home! Your father feeds us well. Come home!” Everything said, “Come home!” Only the devil whispered, “Never go back. Fight it out! Better starve than yield!” But then he had got away from the devil this once, for he had come to himself, and he said, “No. I will arise and go to my father.” Oh that *you* would be equally wise!

Sinner, what is the use of being damned for the sake of a little pride! Yield! Down with your pride! You will not find it so hard to submit if you remember that dear Father who loved us and gave Himself for us in the Person of His own dear Son! You will find it sweet to yield to such a Friend. And when you get your head in His bosom and feel His warm kisses on your cheek, you will soon feel that it is sweet to *weep* for sin—sweet to *confess* your wrongdoing and sweeter, still, to hear Him say, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions.” “Though your sins are scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

May God Almighty grant that this may be the case with hundreds of you this morning! He shall have all the glory of it, but my heart shall be very glad, for I feel nothing of the spirit of the elder brother within me, but the greatest conceivable joy at the thought of making merry with you, by-and-by, when you come to acknowledge *my* Lord and Master as *your* Lord and Master and we sit together at the sacramental feast, rejoicing in His love! God bless you, for His sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 15.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—136 (SONG I), 614, 612.

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THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

NO. 176

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 7, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had kind compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.”
Luke 15:20.***

ALL persons engaged in education will tell you that they find it far more difficult to make the mind unlearn its errors than to make it receive truth. If we could suppose a man totally ignorant of everything we should have a fairer chance of instructing him quickly and effectually than we should have had if his mind had been previously stored with falsehood. I have no doubt you, each of you, find it harder to unlearn than to learn. To get rid of old prejudices and preconceived notions is a very hard struggle, indeed. It has been well said that those three words, “I am mistaken,” are the hardest in all the English language to pronounce and certainly it takes very much force to compel us to pronounce them. And after having done so, it is even then difficult to wipe away the slime which an old serpentine error has left upon the heart.

Better for us not to have known at all than to have known the wrong thing. Now I am sure that this truth is never more true than when it applies to God. If I had been let alone to form my notion of God entirely from Holy Scripture, I feel that with the assistance of His Holy Spirit it would have been far more easy for me to understand what He is and how He governs the world than to learn even the truths of His own Word, after the mind had become perverted by the opinions of others. Why, Brethren, who is it that gives a fair representation of God? The Arminian slanders God by accusing Him (not in his own intention, but really so) of unfaithfulness. For he teaches that God may promise what He never performs. That He may give eternal life and promise that those who have it shall never perish and yet they may perish after all. He speaks of God as if He were a mutable being, for he talks of His loving men one day and hating them the next, of His writing their names in the Book of Life one hour and then erasing their names in the next. And the influence of such an error as that is very baneful.

Many children of God who have imbibed these errors in early youth have had to drag along their poor wearied and broken frames for many a day—whereas they might have walked joyfully to Heaven if they had known the Truth of God from the beginning. On the other hand, those who hear the Calvinistic preacher are very apt to misinterpret God. Al-

though we trust we would never speak of God in any other sense than that in which we find Him represented in sacred Scripture, yet are we well aware that many of our hearers, even through our assertions when most guarded, are apt to get a caricature of God, rather than a true picture of Him. They imagine that God is a severe being, angry and fierce, very easily to be moved to wrath but not so easily to be induced to love. They are apt to think of Him as one who sits in a supreme and lofty state, either totally indifferent to the wishes of His creatures or else determined to have His own way with them, as an arbitrary Sovereign, never listening to their desires, or their woes. Oh, that we could unlearn all these fallacies and believe God to be what He is!

Oh that we could come to Scripture and there look into that glass which reflects His sacred image and then receive him as He is—the all-Wise, the all-Just and yet the all-Gracious and all-Loving Jehovah! I shall endeavor this morning, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, to represent the lovely character of Christ and if I shall be happy enough to have some in my audience who are in the position of the prodigal son in the parable—coming to Christ and yet a great way off from Him—I shall trust that they will be led by the same Divine Spirit to believe in the loving kindness of Jehovah and so may find peace with God now, before they leave this house of prayer.

“When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.” First I shall notice the *position* intended in the words, “a great way off.” Secondly, I shall notice the *peculiar troubles* which agitate the minds of those who are in this condition. And then, thirdly, I shall endeavor to teach *the great loving kindness of our own adorable God*, inasmuch as when we are “a great way off,” He runs to us and embraces us in the arms of His love.

I. First, then, what is the POSITION signified by being “A great way off?” I must just notice what is *not* that position. It is *not* the position of the man who is careless and entirely regardless of God. For you notice that the prodigal is represented now as having come to himself and as returning to his father's house. Though it is true that all sinners are a great way off from God whether they know it or not, yet in this particular instance the position of the poor prodigal is intended to signify the character of one who has been aroused by conviction, who has been led to abhor his former life and who sincerely desires to return to God. I shall not, then, this morning specially address the blasphemer and the profane. To him there may be some incidental warning heard, but I shall not specially address such a character. It is another person for whom this text is intended—the man who has *been* a blasphemer, if you please—who may have *been* a drunkard and a swearer and what not, but who has now renounced these things and is steadfastly seeking after Christ—that he may obtain eternal life. That is the man who is here said to be, though coming to the Lord, “a great way off.”

Once again, there is another person who is not intended by this description, namely, the very great man, the Pharisee who thinks himself extremely righteous and has never learned to confess his sin. You, Sir, in your apprehension, are not a great way off. You are not really in the sight of God. You are as far from Him as light from darkness, as the east is from the west. But you are not spoken of here. You are like the prodigal son, only that instead of spending your life righteously, you have run away from your Father. You have hidden in the earth the gold which He gave you and are able to feed upon the husks which swine do eat—while by a miserable economy of good works you are hoping to save enough of your fortune to support yourself here and in eternity. Your hope of self-salvation is a fallacy and you are not addressed in the words of the text. It is the man who knows himself lost, but desires to be saved, who is here declared to be met by God and received with affectionate embraces.

And now we come to the question, Who is the man and why is he said to be a great way off? For he seems to be very near the kingdom now that he knows his need and is seeking the Savior. I reply, in the first place, he is a great way off in *his own* apprehensions. You are here this morning and you have an idea that never was man so far from God as you are. You look back upon your past life and you remember how you have slighted God, despised His Sabbath, neglected His Book, trampled upon the blood of sprinkling and rejected all the invitations of His mercy. You turn over the pages of your history and you remember the sins which you have committed—the sins of your youth and your former transgressions—the crimes of your manhood and the riper sins of your older years. Like black waves dashing upon a dark shore they roll in wave upon wave upon your poor troubled memory. There comes a little wave of your childish folly and over that there leaps one of your youthful transgressions and over the head of this there comes a very Atlantic billow of your manhood's transgressions.

At the sight of them you stand astonished and amazed. "O Lord, my God, how deep is the gulf which divides me from Yourself and where is the power that can bridge it? I am separated from You by leagues of sin. Whole mountains of my guilt are piled upwards between me and Yourself. O God, should You destroy me now You would be just. And if You bring me to Yourself it must be nothing less than a power as Omnipotent as that which made the world which can ever do it. Oh, how far am I from God!" Some of you would be startled this morning, if your neighbors were to give you revelations of their own feelings. If yonder man standing there in the crowd could come into this pulpit and tell what he now feels, you might perhaps be horrified at his description of his own heart.

How many of you have no notion of the way in which a soul is cut and hacked about when it is under the convictions of the Law! If you should hear the man tell what he feels, you would say, "Ah, He is a poor deluded enthusiast—men are not so bad as that." Or else you would be apt to

think he had committed some nameless crime which he dare not mention that was preying on his conscience. No, Sir, he has been as moral and as upright as *you* have been. But should he describe himself as he now discovers himself to be, he would shock you utterly. And yet you are the same, though you feel it not and would indignantly deny it.

When the light of God's grace comes into your heart, it is something like the opening of the windows of an old cellar that has been shut up for many months. Down in that cellar, which has not been opened for so long, are all kinds of loathsome creatures and a few sickly plants blanched by the darkness. The walls are dark and damp with the trail of reptiles. It is a horrid filthy place in which no one would willingly enter. You may walk there in the dark very securely and except now and then for the touch of some slimy creature—you would not believe the place were so bad and filthy. Open those shutters, clean a pane of glass, let a little light in and now see how a thousand noxious things have made this place their habitation. Surely it was not the *light* that made this place so horrible, but it was the light that showed how horrible it was.

So let God's grace just open a window and let the light into a man's soul and he will stand astonished to see at what a distance he is from God. Yes, Sir, today you think yourself second to none but the Eternal. You fancy that you can approach His Throne with steady step—it is but little that you have to do to be saved. You imagine that you can accomplish it at any hour and save yourself upon your dying bed as well as now. Ah, Sir, if you could but be touched by Ithuriel's wand and made to be in appearance what you are in reality, then you would see that you are very far from God even now. Yes, so far from Him that unless the arms of His grace were stretched out to bring you to Himself, you must perish in your sin. Now I turn my eyes again with hope and trust I have not a few in this large assembly who can say, "Sir, I feel I am far from God and sometimes I fear I am so far from Him that He will never have mercy upon me. I dare not lift so much as my eyes towards Heaven. I smite on my breast and say, 'Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner.'" Oh, poor Heart—here is a comforting passage for you: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion on him."

But again, there is a second sense in which some now present feel themselves to be far off from God. Conscience tells every man that if he would be saved he must get rid of his sin. The Antinomian may possibly pretend to believe that men can be saved while they live in sin. But conscience will never allow any man to swallow so egregious a lie as that. I have not one person in this congregation who is not perfectly assured that if he is to be saved he must leave off his drunkenness and his vices. Surely there is not one here so stupefied with the opium of hellish indifference as to imagine that he can revel in his lusts and afterwards wear the white robe of the redeemed in Paradise?

If you imagine you can be partakers of the blood of Christ and yet drink the cup of Belial. If you imagine that you can be members of Satan and members of Christ at the same time, you have less sense than one would give you credit for. No, you know that right arms must be cut off and right eyes plucked out—that the most darling sins must be renounced—if you would enter into the kingdom of God. And I have a man here who is convinced of the unholiness of his life and he has strived to reform, not because he thinks reformation would save him, for he knows better than that, but because he knows that this is one of the first fruits of grace—reformation from sin.

Well, poor Man, he has for many years been an inveterate drunkard and he struggles now to overcome the passion. He has almost effected it. But he never had such an Herculean labor to attempt before. For now some temptation comes upon him so strongly that it is as much as he can do to stand against it. And perhaps sometimes since his first conviction of sin he has even fallen into it. Or perhaps it is another vice and you, my Brother, have set your face against it. But there are many bonds and fetters that bind us to our vices. And you find that though it was easy enough to spin the warp and woof of sin together—it is not so easy to unravel that which you have spun. You cannot purge your house of your idols. You do not yet know how to give up all your lustful pleasures. Not yet can you renounce the company of the ungodly.

You have cut off one by one your most intimate acquaintances but it is very hard to do it completely and you are struggling to accomplish it and you often fall on your knees and cry, “O Lord, how far I am from You! What high steps these are which I have to climb! Oh, how can I be saved? Surely, if I cannot purge myself from my old sins, I shall never be able to hold on my way. And even should I get rid of them, I should plunge into them once more.” You are crying out, “Oh, how great my distance from God! Lord bring me near!”

Let me present you with one other aspect of our distance from God. You have read your Bibles and you believe that faith alone can unite the soul to Christ. You feel that unless you can believe in Him who died upon the Cross for your sins you can never see the kingdom of God. But you can say this morning, “Sir, I have strived to believe. I have searched the Scriptures, not hours, but days together to find a promise upon which my weary foot might rest. I have been upon my knees many and many a time, earnestly supplicating a Divine blessing. But though I have pleaded, all in vain have I urged my plea, for until now no whisper have I had of grace, no token for good, no sign of mercy. Sir, I have strived to believe and I have said—

***‘O could I but believe!
Then all would easy be.
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve,
My help must come from You!’***

“I have used all the power I have and have desperately strived to cast myself at the Savior’s feet and see my sins washed away in His blood. I have not been indifferent to the story of the Cross. I have read it a hundred times and even wept over it. But when I strive to put my hand upon the Scapegoat’s head and labor to believe that my sins are transferred to Him, some demon seems to stop the breath that would breathe itself forth in adoration and something checks the hand that would lay itself upon the Head that died for me.” Well, poor Soul, you are indeed far from God. I will repeat the words of the text to you. May the Holy Spirit repeat them in your ear! “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.” So shall it be with you if you have come thus far, though great may be the distance. Your feet shall not have to travel it but God the Eternal One shall from His throne look down and visit your poor heart though now you tarry by the way afraid to approach Him.

II. Our second point is the PECULIAR TROUBLES which agitate the breasts of those who are in this position. Let us introduce to you the poor ragged prodigal. After a life of ease, he is by his own vice plunged into penury and labor. After feeding swine for a time and being almost starved, he sets about returning to his father’s house. It is a long and weary journey. He walks many a mile until his feet are sore and at last from the summit of a mountain he views his father’s house far away in the plain. There are yet many miles between him and his father whom he has neglected. Can you conceive his emotions when for the first time after so long an absence he sees the old house at home?

He remembers it well in the distance, for though it is long since he trod its floors he has never ceased to remember it. And the remembrance of his father’s kindness and of his own prosperity when he was with him has never yet been erased from his consciousness. You would imagine that for one moment he feels a flash of joy, like some flash of lightning in the midst of the tempest, but a black darkness comes over his spirit. In the first place, it is probable he will think, “Oh, suppose I could reach my home, will my father receive me? Will he not shut the door in my face and tell me to be gone and spend the rest of my life where I have been spending the first of it?”

Then another suggestion might arise: “Surely, the demon that led me first astray may lead me back again before I salute my parent.” “Or maybe,” he thinks, “I may even die upon the road and so before I have received my father’s blessing my soul may stand before its God.” I doubt not each of these three thoughts have crossed your mind if you are now in the position of one who is seeking Christ but mourns to feel himself far away from Him.

First, you have been afraid lest you should die before Christ has appeared to you. You have been for months seeking the Savior without finding Him and now the black thought comes, “And what if I should die with

all these prayers unanswered? Oh, if He would but hear me before I departed this world I would be content, though He should keep me waiting in anguish for many years. But what if before tomorrow morning I should be a corpse? At my bed I kneel tonight and cry for mercy. Oh, if He should not send the pardon before tomorrow morning and in the night my spirit should stand before His bar!—What then?” It is singular that other men think they shall live forever, but men convinced of sin, who seek a Savior, are afraid they shall not live another moment.

You have known the time dear, Christian Brothers and Sisters, when you dared not shut your eyes for fear you should not open them again on earth. When you dreaded the shadows of the night lest they should darken forever the light of the sun and you should dwell in outer darkness throughout eternity. You have mourned as each day has entered and you have wept as it has departed because you fancied that your next step might precipitate you into your eternal doom. I have known what it is to tread the earth and fear lest every tuft of grass should but cover a door to Hell—lest every particle and every atom and every stone should be so at league with God against me as to destroy me.

John Bunyan says that at one time in his experience he felt that he had rather have been born a dog or a toad than a man. He felt so unutterably wretched on account of sin. And his great point of wretchedness was the fact that though he had been three years seeking Christ, he might after all die without finding Him. And in Truth this is no needless alarm. It may be, perhaps, too alarming to some who already feel their need of Christ but the mass of us need perpetually to be startled with the thought of death.

How few of you ever indulge that thought! Because you live and are in health and eat and drink and sleep, you think you shall not die. Do you ever soberly look at your last end? Do you ever, when you come to your beds at night, think how one day you shall undress for the last slumber? And when you wake in the morning, do you ever think that the trump of the archangel shall startle you to appear before God in the last day of the great assize, wherein an universe shall stand before the Judge? No. “All men think all men mortal but themselves.” And thoughts of death we still push off until at last we shall find ourselves waking up in Hell—where to wake is to wake too late.

But you to whom I specially speak this morning, you who feel that you are a great way off from Christ—you shall never die, but live! And you shall declare the works of the Lord if you have really sought Him. You shall never die until you have found Him. There was never a soul yet that sincerely sought the Savior who perished before he found Him. No, the gates of death shall never shut on you till the gates of Grace have opened for you. Till Christ has washed your sins away you shall never be baptized in Jordan's flood. Your life is secure, for this is God's constant plan—He keeps His own elect alive till the day of His grace and then He takes them

to Himself. And inasmuch as you know your need of a Savior, you are one of His and you shall never die until you have found Him.

Your second fear is, "Ah, Sir, I am not afraid of dying before I find Christ. I have a worse fear than that. I have had convictions before and they have often passed away—my greatest fear today is that these will be the same." I have heard of a poor coal miner, who on one occasion, having been deeply impressed under a sermon, was led to repent of sin and forsake his former life. But he felt so great a horror of ever returning to his former conversation that one day he knelt down and cried thus unto God, "O Lord, let me die on this spot rather than ever deny the religion which I have espoused and turn back to my former conversation." And we are credibly told that he died on that very spot and so his prayer was answered.

God had rather take Him home to Heaven than suffer Him to bear the brunt of temptation on earth. Now, when men come to Christ, they feel that they had rather suffer anything than lose their convictions. Scores of times have you and I been drawn to Christ under the preaching of the Word. We can look back upon dozens of occasions on which it seemed just the turning point with us. Something said in our hearts, "Now, believe in Christ. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." But we said, "Tomorrow, tomorrow." And when tomorrow came our convictions were gone.

We thought what we said yesterday would be the deed of today but instead of it, the procrastination of yesterday became the hardened wickedness of today. We wandered farther from God and forgot Him. Now you are crying to Him for fear lest He should give you up again. You have this morning prayed before you came here and you said, "Father, suffer not my companions to laugh me out of my religion. Let not my worldly business so engross my thoughts as to prevent my due attention to the matters of another world. Oh, let not the trifles of today so absorb my thoughts that I may not be preparing myself to meet my God —

***'Deeply on my thoughtful heart,
Eternal things impress,'***

and make this a real saving work that shall never die out, nor be taken from me."

Is that your earnest prayer? O poor Prodigal, it shall be heard! It shall be answered. You shall not have time to go back. Today your Father views you from His throne in Heaven. Today He runs to you in the message of His Gospel. Today He falls upon your neck and weeps for joy. Today He says to you, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven." Today, by the preaching of the Word He bids you come and reason with Him, "for though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool, though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow."

But the last and the most prominent thought which I suppose the prodigal would have, would be that when he did get to his father, his fa-

ther would say to him, "Get along with you, I will have nothing more to do with you." "Ah," thought he to himself, "I remember the morning when I rose up before daybreak because I knew I could not stand my mother's tears. I remember how I crept down the back staircase and took all the money with me. How I stole down the yard and ran away into the land where I spent my all. Oh, what will the old gentleman say of me when I come back? Why, there he is! He is running to me. But he has got a horsewhip with him, to be sure, to whip me away. It is not at all possible that if he comes he will have a kind word for me, is it? The most I can expect is that he will say, 'Well John, you have wasted all your money, you cannot expect me to do anything for you again. I won't let you starve. You shall be one of my servants. There, come, I will take you as footman.' And if he will do that I will be obliged to him. No, that is the very thing I will ask of him, I will say, 'Make me as one of your hired servants.'"

"Oh," said the devil within him "your father will never speak comfortably to you—you had better run away again. I tell you if he gets near you, you will have such a dressing as you ever received in your life. You will die with a broken heart. You will very likely fall dead here—the old man will never bury you—the carrion crows will eat you. There is no hope for you—see how you have treated him. Put yourself in his place. What would you do if you had a son that had run away with half your living and spent it upon harlots?" And the son thought if he were in his father's place he should be very harsh and severe. And possibly, he almost turned upon his heel to run away.

But he had no time to do that. When he was just thinking about running away, on a sudden his father's arms were about his neck and he had received the paternal kiss. No, before he could get his whole prayer finished he was arrayed in a white robe, the best in the house. And they had brought him to the table and the fatted calf was being killed for his repast. And poor Soul, it shall be so with you. You say, "If I go to God, He will never receive me. I am too vile and wretched—others He may have pressed to His heart, but He will not me. If my brother should go, he might be saved but there are such aggravations in my crime, I have grown so cold since. I have done such a deal of mischief. I have so often blasphemed Him, so frequently broken His Sabbaths.

"Ah, and I have so often deceived Him. I have promised I would repent and when I have got well I have lied to God and gone back to my old sin. Oh, if He would but let me creep inside the door of Heaven! I will not ask to be one of His children. I will only ask that He will let me be where the Syrophenician woman desired to be—to be a dog, to eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. That is all I ask. And oh, if He will but grant it to me, He shall never hear the last of it, for as long as I live I will sing His praise. And when the world does fade away and the sun grow dim with age, my gratitude, immortal as my soul, shall never cease to sing His love, who pardoned my grossest sins and washed me in His blood." It shall be

so. Come and try. Now, Sinners, dry your tears. Let hopeless sorrows cease. Look to the wounds of Christ who died. Let all your griefs now be removed. There is no further cause for them—your Father loves you. He accepts and receives you to His heart.

III. Now, in conclusion, I may notice HOW THESE FEARS WERE MET IN THE PRODIGAL'S CASE and how they shall be met in ours if we are in the same condition. The text says, "The Father saw him." Yes and God saw you just now. That tear which was wiped away so hastily—as if you were ashamed of it—God saw it and He stored it in His bottle. That prayer which you did breathe just a few moments ago, so faintly and with such little faith—God heard it. The other day you were in your chamber, where no ear heard you. But God was there. Sinner, let this be your comfort, that God sees you when you begin to repent. He does not see you with His usual gaze with which He looks on all men, but He sees you with an eye of intense interest.

He has been looking on you in all your sin and in all your sorrow, hoping that you would repent. And now He sees the first gleam of grace and He beholds it with joy. Never wanderer on the lonely castle top saw the first gray light of morning with more joy than that with which God beholds the first desire in your heart. Never physician rejoiced more when he saw the first heaving of the lungs in one that was supposed to be dead, than God does rejoice over you now that He sees the first token for good. Think not that you are despised and unknown and forgotten. He is marking you from His high throne in Glory and rejoicing in what He sees. He saw you pray, He heard you groan, He marked your tear. He looked upon you and rejoiced to see that these were the first seeds of grace in your heart.

And then, the text says, "He had compassion on him." He did not merely see him, but he wept within himself to think he should be in such a condition. The old father had a very long range of eyesight. And though the prodigal could not see him in the distance, he could see the prodigal. And the father's first thought when he saw him was this—"O my poor Son! O my poor boy! That ever he should have brought himself into such a state as this!" He looked through his telescope of love and he saw him and said, "Ah, he did not go out of my house in such trim as that. Poor creature, his feet are bleeding. He has come a long way. Look at his face. He doesn't look like the same boy that he was when he left me. His eyes that were so bright is now sunken in its socket. His cheeks that once stood out with fatness, have now become hollow with famine. Poor wretch, I can see all his bones, he is so emaciated."

Instead of feeling any anger in his heart, he felt just the contrary. He felt such pity for his poor son. And that is how the Lord feels for you—you that are groaning and moaning on account of sin. He forgets your sins. He only weeps to think you should have brought yourself to be what you are. "Why did you rebel against Me and bring yourself into such a state as this?" It was just like that day when Adam sinned. God walked in the gar-

den and He missed Adam. He did not cry out, "Adam, come here and be judged." No—with a soft, sorrowful and plaintive voice, He said, "Adam, where are you? Oh, my fair Adam, you whom I made so happy, where are you now? Oh Adam! You did think to become a God. Where are you now? You have walked with Me. Do you hide yourself from your Friend? Little do you know! Oh Adam, what woes you have brought on yourself and your offspring. Adam, where are you?"

And Jehovah's heart yearns today over you. He is not angry with you. His anger is passed away and His hands are stretched out still. Inasmuch as He has brought you to feel that you have sinned against Him and to desire reconciliation with Him there is now no wrath in His heart. The only sorrow that He feels is sorrow that you should have brought yourself into a state so mournful as that in which you now are found.

But He did not stop in mere compassion. Having had compassion, "He ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." This you do not understand yet. But you shall. As sure as God is God if you this day are seeking Him aright through Christ, the day shall come when the kiss of full assurance shall be on your lips—when the arms of sovereign love shall embrace you and you shall know it to be so. You may have despised Him, but you shall know Him yet to be your Father and your Friend. You may have scoffed His name. You shall one day come to rejoice in it as better than pure gold. You may have broken His Sabbaths and despised His Word—the day is coming when the Sabbath shall be your delight and His Word your treasure. Yes, marvel not. You may have plunged into the kennel of sin and made your clothes black with iniquity. But you shall one day stand before His Throne white as the angels are. And that tongue that once cursed Him shall yet sing His praise.

If you are a real seeker, the hands that have been stained with lust shall one day grasp the harp of gold and the head that has plotted against the Most High shall yet be girt with gold. Seems it not a strange thing that God should do so much for sinners? But strange though it seem, it shall be strangely true. Look at the staggering drunkard in the ale-house. Is there a possibility that one day he shall stand amongst the fairest sons of light? Possibility? Yes, certainty, if he repents and turns from the error of his ways. Hear yonder curser and swearer? See the man who labels himself as a servant of Hell and is not ashamed to do so? Is it possible that he shall one day share the bliss of the redeemed? Possible?! Yes, more—it is sure—if he turns, by God's grace, from his evil ways. O Sovereign Grace, turn men that they may repent! "Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?"—

***"Lord do You the sinner turn,
For Your tender mercies sake!"***

One word or so and I have done. If any of you today are under conviction of sin, let me solemnly warn you not to frequent places where those convictions are likely to be destroyed. A correspondent of the *New York*

Christian Advocate furnishes the following affecting narrative—"When I was traveling in the state of Massachusetts twenty-six years ago, after preaching one evening in the town of _____, a very serious-looking young man arose and wished to address the assembly. After obtaining leave, he spoke as follows—"My friends, about one year ago, I set out in company with a young man of my intimate acquaintance to seek the salvation of my soul. For several weeks we went on together. We labored together and often renewed our covenant never to give over seeking till we obtained the religion of Jesus.

" 'But all at once, the young man neglected attending meetings, appeared to turn his back on all the means of grace and grew so shy of me that I could scarcely get an opportunity to speak with him. His strange conduct gave me much painful anxiety of mind. But still I felt resolved to obtain the salvation of my soul or perish, making the publican's plea. After a few days a friend informed me that my young companion had received an invitation to attend a ball and was determined to go. I went immediately to him and, with tears in my eyes, endeavored to persuade him to change his purpose and to go with me on that evening to a Prayer Meeting. I pleaded with him in vain. He told me, when we parted, that I must not give him up as lost, for after he had attended that ball, he intended to make a business of seeking religion.

" 'The appointed evening came and he went to the ball and I went to the Prayer Meeting. Soon after the meeting opened, it pleased God, in answer to my prayer, to turn my spiritual captivity and make my soul rejoice in His justifying love. Soon after the ball opened my young friend was standing at the head of the ballroom, with the hand of a young lady in his hand, preparing to lead the dance. And, while the musician was turning his violin, without one moment's warning, the young man sallied back and fell dead on the floor. I was immediately sent for to assist in devising means to convey his remains to his father's house. You will be better able to judge what were the emotions of my heart, when I tell you that that young man was my own brother.'"

Trifle not, then, with your convictions, for eternity shall be too short for you to utter your lamentations over such trifling.

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PRODIGAL LOVE FOR THE PRODIGAL SON NO. 2236

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 27, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 29, 1891.**

***“And kissed him.”
Luke 15:20.***

IN the Revised Version, if you will kindly look at the margin, you will find that the text there reads, “and kissed him much.” This is a very good translation of the Greek which might bear the meaning, “Kissed him earnestly,” or, “Kissed him eagerly,” or, “Kissed him often.” I prefer to have it in very plain language and, therefore, adopt the marginal reading of the Revised Version, “Kissed him much,” as the text of my sermon, the subject of which will be the overflowing love of God toward the returning sinner.

The first word, “and,” links us on to all that had gone before. The parable is a very familiar one, yet it is so full of sacred meaning that it always has some fresh lesson for us. Let us, then, consider the preliminaries to this kissing. On the son's side, there was something, and on the father's side, much more. Before the prodigal son received these kisses of love, he had said in the far country, “I will arise and go to my father.” He had, however, done more than that, otherwise his father's kiss would never have been upon his cheek. The resolve had become a *deed*—“He arose, and came to his father.” A bushel full of resolutions is of small value—a single grain of practice is worth the whole. The determination to return home is good, but it is when the wandering boy begins the business of really carrying out the good resolve that he draws near the blessing. If any of you here present have long been saying, “I will repent. I will turn to God,” leave off resolving and come to practicing! And may God, in His mercy, lead you both to repent and to believe in Christ!

Before the kisses of love were given, this young man was on his way to his father, but he would not have reached him unless his father had come the major part of the way. When you give God an inch, He will give you a mile. If you come a little way to Him, when you are “yet a great way off” He will run to meet you. I do not know that the prodigal saw his father, but his father saw him. The eyes of mercy are quicker than the eyes of repentance. Even the eyes of our faith are dim compared with the eyes of God's love. He sees a sinner long before a sinner sees Him!

I do not suppose that the prodigal traveled very fast. I should imagine that he came very slowly—

**“With heavy heart and downcast eye,
With many a sob and many a sigh.”**

He was resolved to come, yet he was half afraid. But we read that his father *ran*. Slow are the steps of repentance, but swift are the feet of forgiveness! God can run where we can scarcely limp and if we are limping towards Him, He will run towards us. These kisses were given in a hurry. The story is narrated in a way that almost makes us realize that such was the case—there is a sense of haste in the very wording of it. His father “ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him”—kissed him eagerly! He did not delay a moment, for though he was out of breath, he was not out of love. “He fell on his neck, and kissed him much.” There stood his son ready to confess his sin—therefore did his father kiss him all the more. The more willing you are to acknowledge your sin, the more willing is God to forgive you. When you make a clean breast of it, God will soon make a clear record of it. He will wipe out the sin that you willingly acknowledge and humbly confess before Him. He that was willing to use his lips for confession found that his father was willing to use his lips for kissing him!

See the contrast. There is the son, scarcely daring to think of embracing his father, yet his father has scarcely seen him before he has fallen on his neck! The condescension of God towards penitent sinners is very great. He seems to stoop from His Throne of Glory to fall upon the neck of a repentant sinner. *God on the neck of a sinner!* What a wonderful picture! Can you conceive it? I do not think you can, but if you cannot imagine it, I hope that you will *realize* it. When God’s arm is about our neck, and His lips are on our cheek, kissing us much, then we understand more than preachers or books can ever tell us of His condescending love!

The father “saw” his son. There is a great deal in that word, “saw.” He saw who it was. He saw where he had come from. He saw the swineherd’s dress. He saw the filth upon his hands and feet. He saw his rags, saw his penitent look, saw what he had been, saw what he was and saw what he would soon be. “His father saw him.” God has a way of seeing men and women that you and I cannot understand. He sees right through us at a glance, as if we were made of glass. He sees all our past, present and future.

“When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.” It was not with icy eyes that the father looked on his returning son. Love leaped into them and as he beheld him, he, “had compassion on him.” That is, he felt for him. There was no anger in his heart towards his son. He had nothing but pity for his poor boy who had got into such a pitiable condition. It was true that it was all his own fault, but that did not come before his father’s mind. It was the state that he was in—his poverty, his degradation—that pale face of his so wan with hunger that touched his father to the quick. And God has compassion on the woes and miseries of men. They may have brought their troubles on themselves and they have, indeed, done so.

But, nevertheless, God has compassion upon them. “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”

We read that the father, “ran.” The compassion of God is followed by swift movements. He is slow to anger, but He is quick to bless. He does not take any time to consider how He shall show His love to penitent prodigals—that was all done long ago in the Eternal Covenant. He has no need to prepare for their return to Him—that was all done on Calvary. God comes flying in the greatness of His compassion to help every poor penitent soul—

**“On cherub and on cherubim,
Full royally He rode!
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad.”**

And when He comes, He comes to kiss! Master Trapp says that if we had read that the father had *kicked* his prodigal son, we should not have been very much astonished. Well, I would have been very greatly astonished, seeing that the father in the parable was to represent God! But still, his son deserved all the rough treatment that some heartless men might have given and, had the story been only that of a selfish human father, it might have been written that, “as he was coming near, his father ran at him and kicked him.” There are such fathers in the world, who seem as if they cannot forgive. If he had kicked him, it would have been no more than he had deserved. But no, what is written in the Bible stands true for all time and for every sinner—“He fell on his neck, and kissed him”—kissed him eagerly, kissed him much!

What does this much kissing mean? It signifies that when sinners come to God, He gives them a loving reception and a hearty welcome. If any of you, while I am speaking, shall come to God, expecting mercy because of the great Sacrifice of Christ, this shall be true of you as it has been true of many of us—“He kissed him much.”

I. First, this much kissing means MUCH LOVE. It means much love truly *felt*, for God never gives an expression of love without feeling it in His infinite heart. God will never give a Judas kiss and betray those whom He embraces. There is no hypocrisy with God—He never kisses those for whom He has no love. Oh, how God loves sinners! You who repent and come to Him will discover how greatly He loves you! There is no measuring the love He bears towards you. He has loved you from before the foundation of the world and He will love you when time shall be no more! Oh, the immeasurable love of God to sinners who come and cast themselves upon His mercy!

This much kissing also means much love *manifested*. God’s people do not always know the greatness of His love to them. Sometimes, however, it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us. Some of us know, at times, what it is to be almost too happy to live! The love of God has been so overpoweringly experienced by us on some occasions that we have almost had to ask for a stay of the delight because we could

not endure any more! If the Glory had not been veiled a little, we would have died of excess of rapture, or happiness! Beloved, God has wondrous ways of opening His people's hearts to the manifestation of His Grace. He can pour in, not now and then a drop of His love, but great and mighty streams! Madame Guyon used to speak of the torrents of love that come swooping through the spirit, bearing all before them. The poor prodigal in the parable had so much love manifested to him that he might have sung of the torrents of his father's affection. That is the way God receives those whom He saves, giving them not a meager measure of Grace, but manifesting an overflowing love!

This much kissing means, further, much love *perceived*. When his father kissed him much, the poor prodigal knew, if never before, that his father loved him. He had no doubt about it. He had a clear perception of it. It is very frequently the case that the first moment a sinner believes in Jesus, he gets this "much" love. God reveals it to him and he perceives it and enjoys it at the very beginning. Think not that God always keeps the best wine for the last—He gives us some of the richest dainties of His table the first moment we sit there! I remember the joy that I had when first I believed in Jesus and, even now, in looking back upon it, the memory of it is as fresh as if it were but yesterday! Oh, I could not have believed that a mortal could be so happy after having been so long burdened and so terribly cast down! I did but look to Jesus on the Cross and the crushing load was immediately gone—and the heart which could only sigh and cry by reason of its burden, began to leap and dance and sing for joy! I had found in Christ all that I needed and I rested in the love of God at once. So may it be with you, also, if you will but return to God through Christ. It shall be said of you as of this prodigal, "The father saw him and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him in much love."

II. Secondly, this much kissing means MUCH FORGIVENESS. The prodigal had many sins to confess, but before he came to the details of them, his father had forgiven him. I love confession of sin after forgiveness. Some suppose that after we are forgiven we are never to confess, but, oh, Beloved, it is *then* that we confess most truly because we know the guilt of sin most really! Then do we plaintively sing—

***"My sins, my sins, my Savior,
How sad on You they fall!
Seen through Your gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee."***

To think that Christ should have washed me from my sins in His own blood makes me feel my sin the more keenly and confess it the more humbly before God. The picture of this prodigal is marvelously true to the experience of those who return to God. His father kissed him with the kiss of forgiveness and yet, after that, the young man went on to say, "Father, I

have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son.” Do not hesitate, then, to acknowledge your sin to God, even though you know that in Christ it is all put away!

From this point of view, those kisses meant, first, “*Your sin is all gone and will never be mentioned any more. Come to My heart, My son! You have grieved Me sorely and angered Me, but, as a thick cloud, I have blotted out your transgressions and as a cloud, your sins.*”

As the father looked upon him and kissed him much, there probably came another kiss which seemed to say, “*There is no soreness left—I have not only forgiven, but I have forgotten, too. It is all gone, clean gone! I will never accuse you of it any more. I will never love you any the less. I will never treat you as though you were still an unworthy and untrustworthy person.*” Probably at that there came another kiss, for do not forget that his father forgave him, “and kissed him much,” to show that the sin was all forgiven.

There stood the prodigal, overwhelmed by his father’s goodness, yet remembering his past life. As he looked on himself, and thought, “I still have these old rags on and I have just come from feeding the swine,” I can imagine that his father would give him another kiss, as much as to say, “My boy, I do not remember the past. I am so glad to see you that *I do not see any filth on you, or any rags on you, either.* I am so delighted to have you with me once more that as I would pick up a diamond out of the mire and be glad to get the diamond, again, so do I pick you up, you are so precious to me.” This is the gracious and glorious way in which God treats those who return to Him. As for their sin, He has put it away so that He will not remember it. He forgives like a God! Well may we adore and magnify His matchless mercy as we sing—

***“In wonder lost, with trembling joy
We take the pardon of our God!
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus’ blood.
Who is pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”***

“Well,” asks one, “can such a wonderful change ever take place with *me?*” By the Grace of God it may be experienced by every person who is willing to return to God! I pray God that it may happen now and that you may get such assurance of it from the Word of God, by the power of His Holy Spirit, and from a sight of the precious blood of Christ shed for your redemption, that you may be able to say, “I understand it now! I see how He kisses all my sins away and when it rises, He kisses it away again! And when I think of it with shame, He gives me another kiss. And when I blush all over at the remembrance of my evil deeds, He kisses me again and again, to assure me that I am fully and freely forgiven.” Thus the many kisses from the prodigal’s father combined to make his wayward son feel that his sin was, indeed, all gone. They revealed much love and much forgiveness.

III. These repeated kisses meant, next, FULL RESTORATION. The prodigal was going to say to his father, “Make me as one of your hired servants.” In the far country he had resolved to make that request, but his father, with a kiss, stopped him. By that kiss, *his sonship was acknowledged*. By it the father said to the wretched wanderer, “You are my son.” He gave him such a kiss as he would only give to his own son. I wonder how many here have ever given such a kiss to *anyone*. There sits one who knows something of such kisses as the prodigal received. That father’s girl went astray and, after years of sin, she came back worn out, to die at home. He received her, found her penitent and gladly welcomed her to his house. Ah, my dear Friend, you know something about such kisses as those!

And you, good woman, whose boy ran away, you can understand something about these kisses, too. He left you and you did not hear from him for years. And he went on in a very vicious course of life. When you did hear from him, it well-near broke your heart. And when he came back, you hardly knew him. Do you recollect how you took him in? You felt that you wished that he was the little boy you used to press to your bosom, but now he was grown up to be a big man and a great sinner—yet you gave him such a kiss and repeated your welcome so often that he will never forget it, nor will you forget it either. You can understand that this overwhelming greeting was like the father saying, “My boy, you are my son. Despite all that you have done, you belong to me. However far you have gone in vice and folly, I love you. You are bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.” In this parable Christ would have you know, poor Sinner, that God will acknowledge you if you come to Him confessing your sin through Jesus Christ. He will gladly receive you, for all things are ready against the day that you return—

***“Spread for you the festal board,
See with richest dainties stored.
To your Father’s bosom pressed,
Yet again a child confessed.
Never from his house to roam,
Come and welcome, sinner, come.”***

The father received his son with many kisses and so proved that his *prayer was answered*. Indeed, his father heard his prayer before he offered it! He was going to say, “Father, I have sinned,” and to ask for forgiveness, but he got the mercy, and a kiss to seal it, before the prayer was presented! This also shall be true of you, O Sinner, who are returning to your God through Jesus Christ! You shall be permitted to pray and God will answer you. Hear it, poor, despairing Sinner, whose prayer has seemed to be shut out from Heaven! Come to your Father’s bosom, right now, and He will hear your prayers and, before many days are over, you shall have the clearest proofs that you are fully restored to the Divine favor by answers to your intercessions that shall make you marvel at the Lord’s loving kindness to you!

Further than this, you shall have all your *privileges restored*, even as this wandering young man was put among the children when he returned. As you see him now in the father's house, where he was received with the many kisses, he wears a son's robe, the family ring is on his finger and the shoes of the home are on his feet. He eats no longer swine's food, but children's bread! Even thus shall it be with you if you return to God! Though you look so foul and so vile—and really are even more defiled than you look—and though you smell so strongly of the hogs among which you have been living that some people's nostrils would turn up at you, your Father will not notice these marks of your occupation in the far country with all its horrible defilement! See how this father treats his boy. He kisses him and, kisses him again, because he knows his own child and, recognizing him as his child, and feeling his fatherly heart yearning over him, he gives him kiss after kiss. He kisses him much to make him know that he has full restoration.

In this repeated kissing we see, then, these three things—much love, much forgiveness and full restoration.

IV. But these many kisses meant even more than this. They revealed his father's EXCEEDING JOY. The father's heart is overflowing with gladness and he cannot restrain his delight. I think he must have shown his joy by *a repeated look*. I will tell you the way I think the father behaved towards his son who had been dead, but was alive again, who had been lost, but was found. Let me try to describe the scene. The father has kissed his son and he bids him sit down. Then he comes in front of him and looks at him, and feels so happy that he says, "I must give you another kiss." Then he walks away a minute, but he is back again before long, saying to himself, "Oh, I must give him another kiss!" He gives him another, for he is so happy. His heart beats fast. He feels very joyful. The old man would like the music to strike up. He wants to be at the dancing, but meanwhile he satisfies himself by a repeated look at his long-lost child. Oh, I believe that God looks at the sinner and looks at him again, and keeps on looking at him, all the while delighting in the very sight of him, when he is truly repentant, and comes back to his Father's house!

The repeated kiss meant, also, *a repeated blessing*, for every time he put his arms round him, and kissed him, he kept saying, "Bless you, oh, bless you, my boy!" He felt that his son had brought a blessing to him by coming back and he invoked fresh blessings upon his head. Oh, Sinner, if you did but know how God would welcome you and how He would look at you, and how He would bless you, surely you would at once repent and come to His arms and heart—and find yourself happy in His love!

The many kisses meant, also, *repeated delight*. It is a very wonderful thing that it should be in the power of a sinner to make God glad. He is the happy God, the Source and Spring of all happiness—what can we add to His blessedness? And yet, speaking after the manner of men, God's highest joy lies in clasping His willful Ephraims to His breast, when He has heard them bemoaning themselves, and has seen them arising and

returning to their home! God grant that He may see that sight, even now, and have delight because of sinners returning to Himself! Yes, we believe it shall be so because of His Presence with us and because of the gracious working of the Holy Spirit! Surely that is the teaching of the Prophet's words—"The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." Think of the eternal God *singing* and remember that it is because a wandering sinner has returned to Him that He sings! He joys in the return of the prodigal and all Heaven shares in His joy!

V. I have not got through my subject yet. As we take a fifth look, we find that these many kisses mean OVERFLOWING COMFORT. This poor young man, in his hungry, faint and wretched state, having come a very long way, had not much heart in him. His hunger had taken all energy out of him and he was so conscious of his guilt that he had hardly the courage to face his father. So his father gives him a kiss, as much as to say, "Come, boy, do not be cast down; I love you."

"Oh, *the past, the past, my Father!*" he might moan, as he thought of his wasted years. But he had no sooner said that than he received another kiss, as if his father said, "Never mind the past. I have forgotten all about that." This is the Lord's way with His saved ones. Their past lies hidden under the blood of Atonement. The Lord says by His servant, Jeremiah, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

But then, perhaps, the young man looked down on his foul garments and said, *the present, my Father, the present*, what a dreadful state I am in!" And with another kiss would come the answer, "Never mind the present, my Boy. I am content to have you as you are. I love you." This, too, is God's word to those who are "accepted in the Beloved." In spite of all their vileness, they are pure and spotless in Christ, and God says of each one of them, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you. Therefore, though in yourself you are unworthy, through My dear Son you are welcome to My home."

"Oh, but," the boy might have said, "*the future, my Father, the future!* What would you think if I should go astray again?" Then would come another holy kiss and his father would say, "I will see to the future, my Boy. I will make home so bright for you that you will never want to go away again." But God does more than that for us when we return to Him. He not only surrounds us with tokens of His love, but He says, concerning us, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." Furthermore, He says to each returning one, "a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the

stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.”

Whatever there was to trouble the son, the father gave him a kiss to set it all right and, in like manner, our God has a love token for every time of doubt and dismay which may come to His reconciled sons. Perhaps one whom I am addressing says, “Even though I confess my sin and seek God’s mercy, I shall still be in sore trouble, for through my sin I have brought myself down to poverty.” “There is a kiss for you,” says the Lord—“Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure.” “But I have even brought disease upon myself by sin,” says another. “There is a kiss for you, for I am Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord that heals you, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.” “But I am dreadfully down at the heel,” says another. The Lord gives you, also, a kiss, and says, “I will lift you up and provide for all your needs. No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly.” All the promises in this Book belong to every repentant sinner who returns to God believing in Jesus Christ, His Son!

The father of the prodigal kissed his son much and thus made him feel happy then and there. Poor souls, when they come to Christ, are in a dreadful plight, and some of them hardly know where they are. I have known them talk a lot of nonsense in their despair and say hard and wicked things of God in their dreadful doubt. The Lord gives no answer to all that except a kiss, and then another kiss! Nothing puts the penitent so much at rest as the Lord’s repeated assurance of His unchanging love. Such a one the Lord has often received, “and kissed him much,” that He might fetch him up, even, from the horrible pit and set his feet upon a rock and establish his goings. The Lord grant that many whom I am addressing may understand what I am talking about!

VI. And now for our sixth head, though you will think I am getting to be like the old Puritans with these many heads. But I cannot help it, for these many kisses had many meanings—love, forgiveness, restoration, joy, comfort—were in them and, also, **STRONG ASSURANCE**.

The father kissed his son much to make him quite certain that it was *all real*. The prodigal, in receiving those many kisses, might say to himself, “All this love must be true, for a little while ago I heard the hogs grunt and now I hear nothing but the kisses from my dear father’s lips.” So his father gave him another kiss, for there was no way of convincing him that the first was real like repeating it—and if there lingered any doubt about the second, the father gave him yet a third. If, when the dream of old was doubled, the interpretation was sure—these repeated kisses left no room for doubt! The father renewed the tokens of his love that his son might be fully assured of its reality.

He did it that in the future it might *never be questioned*. Some of us were brought so low before we were converted that God gave us an excess of joy when He saved us, that we might never forget it. Sometimes the

devil says to me, “*You are no child of God.*” I have long ago given up answering him, for I find that it is a waste of time to argue with such a crafty old liar as he is—he knows too much for me. But if I must answer him, I say, “Why, I remember when I was saved by the Lord! I can never forget even the very spot of ground where first I saw my Savior—then and there my joy rolled in like some great Atlantic billow and burst in mighty foam of bliss, covering all things. I cannot forget it.” That is an argument which even the devil cannot answer, for he cannot make me believe that such a thing never happened. The Father kissed me much and I remember it full well. The Lord gives to some of us such a clear deliverance, such a bright, sunshiny day at our conversion, that, from that day, forward, we cannot question our state before Him but *must* believe that we are eternally saved!

The father put the assurance of this poor returning prodigal beyond all doubt. If the first kisses were given privately, when only the father and son were present, it is quite certain that, afterwards, he kissed him *before men*, where others could see him. He kissed him much in the presence of the household, that they, also, might not be calling in question that he was his father’s child. It was a pity that the elder brother was not also there. You see he was away in the fields. He was more interested in the crops than in the reception of his brother. I have known such a one in modern days. He was a man who did not come out to weekly evening services. He was such a man of business that he did not come out on a Thursday night and the prodigal came home at such a time—and so the elder brother did not see the father receive him. If he lived now, he would probably not come to the Church Meetings—he would be too busy. So he would not get to know about the reception of penitent sinners. But the father, when he received that son of his, intended all to know, once and for all, that he was, indeed, his child! Oh, that you might get those many kisses even now! If they are given to you, you will have, for the rest of your life, strong assurance derived from the happiness of your first days.

VII. I have done when I have said that I think that here we have a specimen of the INTIMATE COMMUNION which the Lord often gives to sinners when they first come to Him. “His father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him much.”

You see, this was *before the family fellowship*. Before the servants had prepared the meal, before there had been any music or dancing in the family, his father kissed him. He would have cared little for all their songs and have valued but slightly his reception by the servants, if, first of all, he had not been welcomed to his father’s heart. So is it with us—we need first, to have fellowship with God *before* we think much of union with His people. Before I go to join a Church, I want my Father’s kiss! Before the pastor gives me the right hand of fellowship, I want my heavenly Father’s right hand to welcome me! Before I become recognized by God’s people here below, I want a private recognition from the great Father above—and

that He gives to all who come to Him as the prodigal came to his father. May he give it to some of you now!

This kissing, also, was *before the table communion*. You know that the prodigal was afterwards to sit at his father's table and to eat of the fatted calf. But before that, his father kissed him. He would scarcely have been able to sit easily at the feast without the previous kisses of love. The Communion Table to which we are invited is very sweet. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, in symbol, in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, is, indeed, a blessed thing. But I want to have communion with God by the way of the kiss of love before I come there. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." This is something private, ravishing and sweet. God give it to many of you! May you get the many kisses of your Father's mouth before you come into the Church, or to the Communion Table!

These many kisses, likewise, came *before the public rejoicing*. The friends and neighbors were invited to share in the feast. But think how shamefaced the son would have been in their presence, if, first of all, he had not found a place in his father's love, or had not been quite sure of it. He would almost have been inclined to run away again! But the father had kissed him much and so he could meet the curious gaze of old friends with a smiling face until any unkind remarks they might have thought of making died away, killed by his evident joy in his father! It is a hard thing for a man to confess Christ if he has not had an overwhelming sense of communion with Him. But when we are lifted to the skies in the rapture God gives us, it becomes easy, not only to face the world, but to win the sympathy of even those who might have opposed. This is why young converts are frequently used to lead others into the Light of God—the Lord's many kisses of forgiveness have so recently been given to them that their words catch the fragrance of Divine Love as they pass the lips just touched by the Lord. Alas, that any should ever lose their first love and forget the many kisses they have received from their heavenly Father!

Lastly, all this was given *before the meeting with the elder brother*. If the prodigal son had known what the elder brother thought and said, I would not have wondered at all if he had run off and never come back! He might have come near home, and then, hearing what his brother said, have stolen away again. Yes, but before that could happen, his father had given him the many kisses! Poor Sinner, you have come in here and, perhaps, you have found the Savior. It may be that you will go and speak to some Christian man and he will be afraid to say much to you. I do not wonder that he should doubt you, for you are not, in yourself, as yet a particularly nice sort of person to talk to. But, if you get your Father's many kisses, you will not mind your elder brother being a little hard on you!

Occasionally I hear of one who wished to join the Church, saying, "I came to see the Elders and one of them was rather rough with me. I shall never come again." What a stupid man you must be! Is it not their *duty* to be a little rough with some of you, lest you should deceive yourselves and

be mistaken about your true state? We desire lovingly to bring you to Christ and if we are afraid that you really have not yet come back to God, with penitence and faith, should we not tell you so, like honest men? But suppose that you have really come and your brother is mistaken—go and get a kiss from your Father and never mind your brother! He may remind you how you have squandered your living, painting the picture even blacker than it ought to be—but your Father’s kisses will make you forget your brother’s frowns!

If you think that in the household of faith you will find everybody amiable, and everyone willing to help you, you will be greatly mistaken. Young Christians are often frightened when they come across some who, from frequent disappointment of their hopes, or from a natural spirit of caution, or perhaps from a lack of spiritual life, receive but coldly those upon whom the Father has lavished much love. If that is your case, never mind these cross-grained elder brothers and sisters—get another kiss from your Father! Perhaps the reason it is written, “He kissed him *much*,” was because the elder brother, when he came near him, would treat him so coldly and so angrily refuse to join in the feast.

Lord, give to many poor trembling souls the will to come to You! Bring many sinners to Your blessed feet and while they are yet a great way off, run and meet them! Fall on their neck, give them many kisses of love and fill them to the full with heavenly delight, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 15*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—568, 521, 548.**

The publishers desire to call special attention to the first sermon in the new volume of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. It is entitled, “Gratitude for Deliverance from the Grave,” and is the first sermon that Mr. Spurgeon has been able to revise since his long illness. The text is Psalm 118:17, 18—“I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death.” Both preacher and publisher would be glad if friends who have been profited by reading the sermons would introduce them to others who at present are not acquainted with them.

An Illustrated Catalog of Mr. Spurgeon’s Works, got up in a most attractive style, has just been issued by Messrs. Passmore & Alabaster, who will, on application, be pleased to forward it, accompanied by a List of Texts and subjects of more than 2,200 Sermons.

END OF VOLUME 37.

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

HE RAN, AND HE RAN NO 2507

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 7, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1885.**

*“But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.”
Mark 5:6.*

*“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had
compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”
Luke 15:20.*

THESE two texts have a measure of apparent likeness—the man runs to Jesus from afar and the father runs to the prodigal from afar. They both run—and when two run to meet each other, they soon meet. When a sinner is running to Christ and the Father is running to the sinner, there shall be a happy meeting before very long, and there shall be joy in Heaven and joy on earth, too! I shall begin my discourse by noticing the case of the demoniac, whose story we read—“When he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.”

I. Using that narrative as a kind of parable, I would remark, in the first place, that we have, here, an emblem OF THE SINNER'S PLACE.

He is “afar off” from Christ and when, first of all, the Spirit of God begins to open his eyes to his own true condition, one of the chief difficulties in his way is the realization of his distance from the Savior. He begins to cry, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!” The poor man feels as if there were a great and dreadful distance between him and the great Mediator—he can only see “Jesus afar off,” as the demoniac did. He has not yet come to Christ, nor proved His wondrous power to bless.

I daresay there are some in this congregation who feel that they are “afar off” from the Lord Jesus Christ and, “afar off” from the great Father. You are “*afar off*” as to character. I am not going to bring an accusation against you, for your own heart and conscience accuse you. It is not necessary for me to describe your past life—if you are the person whom Christ has come to bless, then I know that your sin is always before you. You cannot hide it from yourself, it seems to be painted on your very eyeballs! You have to look at everything through the mist and haze of your past guilt and, consequently, everything looks dark and dreary to you. The very mercies which God gives you seem to accuse you of your ingratitude to your Benefactor and any denials of mercy, any chastisements that you are enduring, seem to you to be but premonitions of a coming doom, for you feel yourself to be, by your past life, very far off from Christ. He is perfect and you are full of sin! He is just and you are unjust! He is meek and lowly—you confess that you have been proud and

wayward! He is beloved of His Father, the beloved Servant of God, but you have derided God's Gospel and you have refused to obey Him. You are, indeed, far off from Christ! It seems to you that if Christ and the penitent thief made a pair, then you, also, might make a pair with your dying Savior, but not otherwise. You feel yourself to be unworthy to be in the same world with Him, much less to be in the same Heaven with Him.

Well, now, when our Lord went to Gadara, as far as I can see, He crossed the Sea of Galilee and endured that storm at night in order that He might heal *one man*—and He went back, again, well content when He had worked that one miracle! It may be that you are a man of that kind, as far off from any likeness to Christ as that poor lunatic was, and He may have come here at this good hour with the intent to save *you*. At any rate, His servant will go home as grateful as a man can be, if he is but made the means of saving one such sinner as you are. But, first of all, you must realize that this is your position—"afar off" from Christ as to character.

But what, perhaps, may appear to you to be even worse is that you seem to be "*afar off*" as to *any hope of salvation by Christ*. It may be that you have long been a hearer of the Gospel. When you were younger, it seemed as if the Kingdom of God had come near to you, but now, the older you grow, the less susceptible you are to holy influences. You used to weep under sermons—you can more easily sleep under them now! Time was when your rest was broken after some kindly admonition from a Christian friend. But now, perhaps, Christian friends scarcely ever admonish you because you have a sarcastic way of repelling what they say. And even while you are sitting here, you are moaning to yourself, "Some in this congregation may be converted, but I shall not be. The Lord Jesus Christ may come here and deliver some poor soul, but assuredly He will not deliver me. I am an off cast and an outcast—not, perhaps, by open sin—but by an inward hardening of my spirit till my soul has become like the northern iron and steel, and nothing can move me. I am far off from any hope that the Savior will ever bless me."

Well, now, let me say to you, dear Friend, that I am very sorry that it should be so with you, yet am I glad you are here when such a subject as this is being handled, for that Gadarene demoniac seemed to be about as hopeless a man as there was in all the country round about! Apart from Christ, his case was absolutely hopeless. They had, doubtless, used all the arts for the management of lunatics which they understood in those barbarous days, but no chains of iron, nor bands of brass could hold him—he could not be tamed, or kept in check. And yet, O blessed Christ, You could cross the stormy sea at midnight to save this one man! It may be that it is so with you, also, dear Friends, who are so far away from Christ in the misapprehensions of your lack of hope. Yet it may be that this very hour is the time when you are to be set free from the power of the devil and brought to sit at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in your right mind!

Some are also "*afar off*" from Christ as to *knowledge of Him*. They know but little of the Christ of God. They have heard His name. They have some dim notions about Him, but as yet they only see Him "afar off." In these days, when the Gospel is preached at so many street corners, and

when there is a sanctuary in almost every street, it is astonishing what gross ignorance there is about Him whom to know is life eternal—by knowledge of whom many are justified and without knowledge of whom men must perish eternally! O Friends, it is terrible to think that there are persons, well instructed in everything else, who know nothing about this salvation which God has provided for the sons of men! You hear them railing against the Bible and in almost every case the railer has never read the Book! You hear them speak against Christ and it is almost a proverb that those who speak most against Him are ignorant of the common facts of His life. They have not studied His Character, nor have they examined His teaching, yet they cast it all aside as if *they* were infallible and as if *they* were qualified to judge and to decide without hearing the case at all! This is a wretched mode of action, yet, if any of you who are here know but little of Christ, for all that I am glad you are here and I only trust that you may be led to do what this poor ignorant demoniac did! Though he must have known very little about Christ, yet he ran to Him and worshipped Him! A little knowledge, like the star of Bethlehem, may suffice to guide to Christ those who are willing to follow its light. A faint gleaming of what Christ is may burn and glow into a more complete and perfect knowledge of Him and by that knowledge you may be brought into the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free.

I will not keep you longer in describing the sad state of the sinner in being thus far from Christ, except to say that it may be possible that you feel far from Christ *because you do not feel as if you could get at Him*. You are so unspiritual that you say to yourself, “If Christ were on earth, I would walk till I dropped, but I would get to Him. And if I could speak with Him, so that He could hear my words and could answer me with actual vocal sounds—if I could see Him and He would look at me, I would spend the last penny I am worth and pass over any length of sea and land if I could but get at Him—but somehow I cannot.

“If it were a matter of touching the hem of His garment with my finger, I would push through the press to do it. If it were a matter of taking Him up in my arms, as Simeon took the young Child Jesus, I would do it, and do it with joy. But I do not know how to get to Him—it seems to be all mist and all cloud to me.” I know what you mean, dear Friend, for I was in that state, once, and then, indeed, I also “saw Jesus afar off,” and for a long while I could not get to realize that He was mine. Well, notwithstanding that feeling which possesses you, I shall speak to you, yet further, in the fond hope that you may imitate this poor man who must have been very much like you, only in a worse plight than yours, and it will be my prayer and desire that you may come running to Christ, as he did—and that you, also, may worship Him!

II. Now notice, secondly, THE SINNER’S PRIVILEGE—“He saw Jesus,” though he only saw Him, “afar off.”

Those of you who only see Christ in the distance, who do not know much about Him and cannot get at Him, do at least *know that there is such a Person!* You have heard and it is the best news you ever did hear, that the Son of God came down to live among men and took our flesh, and became Man of the substance of His mother, and though He died upon the Cross, yet He has risen from the dead and He still lives. You

have heard tell of all that. You have not thought of it as you ought to have done—you have not let it weigh upon your heart, or sought to understand all its holy lessons—but still, you have such a knowledge of Him that you have seen Him “afar off.”

More than that, you have heard, and you believe that *Jesus has done great things for men*. You do not think much about what He has done, but still, it has come to your knowledge that He lived, loved and died that He might save men. You have often heard that on the Cross He made an expiation for human sin. And let me tell you that this is the choicest news you ever heard, or ever will hear! And the day may come when you will look at this Truth of God as the only star of hope in a night which otherwise must be eternal. I hope you will yet clasp that Truth of God to your heart as the brightest jewel and the rarest treasure you have ever met with.

And I believe, further, that some of you have caught the idea that *the Lord Jesus Christ is saving other people*. You have met with some whom you observe to be very much changed, greatly altered from what they used to be and, though you sometimes laugh at them, yet deep down in your heart you do not really mock them—you wish it were yourself! You have, after all, a respect for any one of these wonderful changes, called conversions, when you see them to be real and genuine—and you, perhaps, know some fellows with whom you work and, although you ridicule them, you know that they are better men than they used to be—and you admire the change. And there is a feeling in your inmost heart that though you cannot make out the mystery, there is still something in it. Yes, you can see Jesus, though I still grieve to say that you do but see Him afar off. You have, in your heart, some sort of belief that it may be possible that He will yet save you and there is some sort of humble desire in your soul that He will look your way and cast the devils out of you—and make you to be His happy servant.

But, once more, concerning the sinner’s privilege, *Christ has come to the district where he is*. It is a horrible country, full of tombs and full of pollution—and the man has made it more horrible by his wildness and his madness—yet there is the Christ, Himself, treading that same Gadarene shore! He who is “mighty to save” has come into the land of death-shade! He who could cast out devils has come into the devil’s own territory! He has come to beard the lion in his den. Herein, also, is the privilege of men today—the Lord Jesus Christ, who made Heaven and earth, is still among us—and will be with us to the end of this dispensation. He who could raise the dead and heal the lepers and cast out demons, is still here working by His Spirit! Though corporeally He is gone, yet in efficacious power to save He still lingers among us and His lingering means salvation to all who trust Him! Hear it, O sons of men, and as you hear it, may God bless the message to your souls!

III. What did this demoniac do when he saw Jesus afar off? That is the point to which we are coming and that will teach us THE SINNER’S WISEST COURSE—“He ran and worshipped Him.”

I do not know that he did intelligently and after the right manner, worship Christ as the disciples worshipped Him. Perhaps at first, when he was up a hill, howling and cutting himself with stones, he spied a

boat come near the shore and he saw a single Stranger coming up from the boat, much as the natives of Erromanga saw John Williams landing on that cannibal shore—and his horrible instinct moved him to fly down at once to the beach, perhaps to attack the Man who dared, in open daylight, intrude on the wild man's domain. But as he approached nearer and nearer to this mysterious Stranger, quite a new feeling came over him. His steps grew slower, his fierce eyes beamed with a duller fire, the beast-like instinct became calm. The ravening wolf, the roaring lion within him began to tremble, for it perceived its Master—and when he had come near enough to get a fuller view of Christ, who stood there in simple majesty, calm and serene—the very opposite of the poor creature's mad fury—the man fell down at Jesus' feet and worshipped Him.

Then the devils within him spoke out and, using the man's voice, said, "What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the most high God?" But for the moment it was the man, and not the devil, who prevailed! For an instant, what little relics there were of manhood made themselves felt and the man fell down and worshipped under the influence of the mysterious Presence of Christ. What I hope and trust may come of our consideration of this subject is that some big sinner here may have a lucid interval—that some mad sinner here, before the devil can speak, again, may have just a little quiet time, so that, though he may have come in here fresh from all manner of evil, yet for the moment he may feel a solemn calm steal over his spirit, a sacred hush that shall make him quiet as he has not been for many a day. I pray that some strange influence—strange to him up to this time—may draw him so that he shall run to Christ and fall at His feet and worship Him!

I am not, just now, saying anything about faith in Christ except that I do not believe any man worships Christ without having some faith in Him. I am just going to take this very low standard and say that this man, with all his madness, was wise in what he did—and the Spirit of God was leading him in the right direction when, breaking loose, as it were, from the devil's power for a moment or two, he ran to Christ and worshipped Him. And to any poor soul in like case, I would say—"I beseech you, for a minute or two, at any rate, worship the Christ of God whom I preach to you."

For consider that, first, *Christ is God as well as Man*, and, therefore, worthy to be worshipped. This poor demoniac was wiser than the Socinians or Unitarians of our day—he felt that there was more in Christ than in any mere man. Devil-possessed though he was, yet he fell down and worshipped Christ. And you, my Friend—you also know that Christ is God. Well, then, for a few minutes do yourself the justice to worship Him as God over all, blessed forever. If He shall never save you, yet He is worthy to be worshipped, for He is so great and so gracious. Therefore, let your mind be still for a moment and pay your homage before His feet. And from your very heart call Him, "Lord," and "God."

Besides, *Christ died to save sinners* and, being God, and having died to save sinners, I say to you, "Worship Him." I recollect the time when I was afraid that Jesus would never save me, but I used to feel in my heart that even if He did not, I must love Him for what He had done for poor sinners. It seemed to me, as I read the wondrous story of His life and

death, that if He spurned me I would still lie at His feet and say, "You may spurn me, but You are a blessed Christ, for all that and, if You curse me, yet I can only say to You that I well deserve it at Your hands. Do what You will with me, but You saved the dying thief and You saved her out of whom You did cast seven devils, but if You do not deign to save me, yet You are a blessed Christ, and I cannot rail at You, or find fault with You, but I lie down at Your feet and worship You."

Can you speak and act like that? Can you look up at Him through your tears and, as you see the nail prints in His hands and feet, and that great gash in His side, which reached His heart, can you not feel that you must lie at His feet and worship Him? Just waive all questions about yourself for a minute and think only of Him! Forget even your own sin for the time being and think of what He deserves, and now, at least, for the next few minutes, bow your soul reverently before the Christ of God and worship Him!

I think I may add that you may well worship Him because there is in that poor, flurried soul of yours, worried and confused and devil-ridden though it is, this thought—*that Christ alone can save you!* You do know *that*. Where else can you go but to Him? What other door is open to you? What other hand was ever pierced for you? What other side ever bled that it might give cleansing for your sin? Where lives there another person who loves as Christ has loved? Therefore, realize that He is unique, One altogether by Himself and while you cannot and will not worship others, yet, poor devil-possessed soul that you are, fall down and worship Him! Say to Him, "Lord, if my night never ends, yet will I look eastward, for there the sun will rise, if not for me. Lord, if I die of thirst, yet will I linger by the lone well in the desert, for if I ever drink at all, I must drink there. I can but perish if I linger at the Cross—and I am resolved to linger there. And if my blood shall stain that blessed tree, then even so it must be, for I am resolved—and it is my last resource—if I must perish, I will die here." O Soul, I am not telling you to do any great thing now, am I? I am not urging you to exercise any unreasonable confidence, but I do advise you to fall down and worship at my Lord's dear feet! Mad though you are, and your mad worship so poor and imperfect, yet, nevertheless, He will accept you and do great things for you!

For remember, next, that *Christ can save you*. Christ can save you! You have gone to the end of your tether, but you have not gone beyond the reach of His power! You have cut yourself and howled through many a dreary night, and snapped your chains and cursed the men that bound you. You have driven away friend and helper—and you are altogether undone—but, all the same, Christ can save you! What if the devil is in you? There is no devil in Hell, or out of Hell who does not tremble at Christ's Presence! Oh, that He would come and lay His cool hands upon your fevered brow and put His own life into your poor withered heart and make you live! He can save you—of that I am sure. I cannot speak as my Master can, but yet my Master can make these poor words of mine to bless and comfort you. And I pray that He may. This is the one thing that I bid you do—run to Him and worship Him!

IV. Now, turning to my second text, I must briefly remind you of THE SECRET HOPE FOR SINNERS—that while you are yet a great way off,

the Father, Himself, will see you, and will run to you! While you are running to His Son, the Father will run to you—and you and He shall meet in Christ—the only safe meeting place for God and man.

Turn your thoughts for a minute or two from that Gadarene demoniac to the prodigal son. He was coming back, you remember, and when he was a great way off, I should not wonder that his heart began to misgive him. “Oh,” he seemed to say, “there is the old house!” He has reached the top of the hill and he can see it. He recollects those old trees under which he used to play with his brother and he thinks that he can spy out the very spot where he left his father and went that reckless journey into the far country. “I wonder what Father will say to me,” he says. “I do not know how I can ever face him. I have treated him so badly that I must have broken his heart. I fear he is angry with me, and I do not think I can bear his wrath. I am ready to humble myself and say, ‘Father, I have sinned,’ but, oh, what a wretch I am! He will hardly know me. I do not look like the person I was when I left. What awful times I have been through since last I saw his dear face! I think I must run back again. Bad as it is to perish out in the far country, I do not think I can really face him.” He is just turning back when, to his surprise, his father clasps him in his arms, for, “when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

O dear Hearts, if I knew there was a poor soul here beginning to seek the Lord, how glad I should be to speak with him! And there are some of my dear Brothers and Sisters here who are always on the lookout for any in whom there is the faintest beginning of a work of Grace! But, you see, we cannot see the germs of Grace as God can—we cannot spy out returning sinners as He can, for *God has far-reaching eyes* and if there is only half a wish to repent in any of your hearts, the Father sees it! If you only know that there is a Christ and that you would gladly worship Him, but you have not gone the length of really trusting Him and casting your souls upon Him, yet remember that when the prodigal was yet a great way off, his father saw him!

When God sees anything, His is a very different sight from yours or mine. We see a thing with our eyes and then we get a microscope and look through that, and see it very differently. But God, as it were, always sees everything microscopically and telescopically! He sees the whole of it, sees the very heart and soul of it. God at this moment sees all the sin of the whole of your life. He sees all your brokenness of spirit, all your doubts, all your fears, all the struggles against sin and all the strivings of His Spirit. He takes it all in with a single glance and comprehends and understands it all! And though you are a great way off, the Father sees you and He sees you with a father’s eyes, too. How quick a father’s eyes are when he looks at his boy who is ill! He spies out that hectic flush before the boy believes there is any trace of consumption in his countenance, for a loving father has a physician’s eyes—and a mother’s eyes are still more quick to perceive anything wrong.

Moreover, *God sees with compassionate eyes*—“His father saw him and had compassion” on him. The two things went together. I know a Sister in Christ who did me great good one day. I had helped a man many times, poor wretch that he was. I never clothed him but he sold the

garments in a day or two! I never helped him but he sank into deeper degradation than before and, at last, after he had been rigged out afresh from top to toe and a job found for him—and he was put into a position for getting on in life—he came here again. And when I saw him, I shrank back from him. I felt indignant with him, but our Sister—a better Christian than I—lifted up both hands and began to cry! The man was covered with vermin and he had evidently been drinking hard. As she lifted up her hands, she cried, “O poor creature, we have done all we can to save you, and you will go to Hell.” And she stood and cried as if he had been her own child!

And I believe that is how God feels for poor sinners, for He cannot bear to see them act as they do. If you are coming back to Him, that is the compassionate way in which He is looking at you. He spies you out and, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, so does the great Father weep over sinners, grieving that they will be so desperately wicked and foolish as to destroy their own souls! **V.** Now I must close, for our time has gone. The last point to be noticed is, **THE ACTION OF THE SINNER’S FATHER.**

No sooner did the Father see His son coming back than, “He ran.” When God runs, it is quick running. “He ran, and fell on his neck.” And when God stoops to fall on a sinner’s neck, it is wondrous condescension! This is compassion like a God. “And kissed him.” God’s kiss is the essence of a million kisses all in one. One kiss from God is the soul of Heaven laid to the heart of a burdened sinner. “He ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him,” and so the prodigal was received back into his father’s family!

What I am longing for is that God’s blessed Spirit may move some of you to run to Christ, if only in the poor way that I have set forth. Just for a few minutes, quietly worship Him, and while you are doing that, may the great Father come in with all His Omnipotent Love and put away your sin, and change your nature, and receive you into eternal union with Himself to the praise of the glory of His Grace! If I were to say ten thousand things, but God did not bless what I had said, all would be in vain. I hope that you do not need more words, but that you will come at once to Christ. Do not perish, I pray you, do not damn your own souls! There is enough misery in this world without incurring the miseries of the world to come! The Lord Himself says, “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?” In the name of the bleeding Christ, seek His mercy even now! By His bloody sweat and crown of thorns, seek Him now! I know no better argument except it be by His death cry, “It is finished.” Come to Christ! Look to Him and live, even now, and to Him shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGON:
MARK 5:1-24; 35-43.**

Verse 1. *And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.* They had had a very eventful passage across that small but stormy sea, and Christ had proved Himself to be the Lord High Admiral of the seas. But now that He steps ashore, they are to see His power quite as distinctly displayed as upon the stormy waves.

2, 3. *And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains.* Those ancient graveyards were in remote places, for the people were too wise to bury their dead inside their cities. Very often the tombs were hewn in caverns in the sides of hills and rocks where the dead were laid. Of course, every man who touched a tomb was thereby ceremonially defiled, so that the tombs were fit places for an unclean person possessed by an unclean spirit. What a ghastly dwelling place! What a grim abode for the man and yet most fitting, for he was dangerous to all who passed by—a raving lunatic who could not be restrained by any bonds or chains that could be put upon him!

4, 5. *Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.* Poor creature! His howling must have been right hideous, indeed. Those who passed that way were startled by his unearthly cries, He was a terror to the whole district. Persons could not bear to live anywhere near the places where he resorted. “Night and day” he was a misery to himself and a terror to all around him—sad type of some whom we know, to our sorrow, who have gone madly into sin. It certainly is madness, whatever else it may be, and when madness and badness go together, what a terror such a man becomes!

6. *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.*—There is a wondrous attraction in the Person of our Divine Lord and Master. Though He was a long way off, yet a gracious magnetic influence proceeded from Him by which He drew this poor object of pity to Him. “When he saw Jesus afar off, He ran and worshipped Him.”

7. *And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the most high God? I adjure You by God, that You torment me not.* Who was speaking then—the man, himself, or the devil within him? It is very hard to tell. The man and the devil were two personalities, but they were so effectually blended into one that it is scarcely possible to tell when it was the man speaking and when it was the devil. So, when sin enters into a man, it gets so completely into his very nature that, sometimes, we feel it must be the evil spirit speaking in the man—and yet it is not easy to be quite sure that it is so—and we cannot free the man, himself, from the guilt of his words and actions.

8. *For He said unto him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.* Whenever Christ speaks to the devil, His message is a very short and very sharp one. The Lord treats Him like the dog that He is! “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.” Christ has no compliment for devils and it is a pity that some of His servants have such soft words when they are dealing with unbelief, which is but a devil, or one of the devil’s demons.

9. *And He asked him, What is your name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.* The devil is obliged to tell his name when Christ treats him like a catechized child. And he is compelled to crouch before Christ like a whipped cur at his master’s feet.

10. *And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country.* Satan clings to this world and to any place where he has had a signal triumph, as he had among those tombs and those rocky ravines.

11, 12. *Now there was near unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.* Such is the malice of these evil spirits, that they would rather do mischief among swine than nowhere! But notice their unanimity—with all the faults that can be laid at the door of demons, you cannot find them divided and quarrelling! They are unanimous in evil and it is a shame that those who are the followers of Christ should often be divided, whereas the kingdom of Satan is not divided against itself. Let us learn from our great enemy at least this one lesson.

13. *And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine, and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand).* It was strange that there should be so many swine in the country where lived God's people, Israel. And as they had no right to be there, and were there contrary to Jewish Law, it was well that they should be destroyed.

13-15. *And were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus and saw him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.* Ah, me! How variously different people look upon the same thing! If you and I, who are Christ's disciples, had gone there and seen this poor lunatic fully restored, we would have been filled with holy joy! And we would have composed new hymns of praise in honor of the Great Physician who had cured him! But these people, in their alienation of heart from the Lord Jesus Christ, "were afraid." They feared and trembled in the Presence of Almighty Mercy! Omnipotent Love awoke no joy in their hearts, but the spirit of bondage was upon them.

16. *And they that saw it, told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.* You may be sure that they dwelt upon the latter part of the story, for the loss of the swine touched them more than the healing of the demoniac!

17. *And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts.* O dear Friends, let none of us ever get into such a state of mind and heart as to pray Christ to go away from us! Yet we have known people act in such a dreadful way as that—a person troubled in conscience has said, "I will never go and hear that preacher again! I cannot sleep at night after listening to him. I will never read such-and-such a book again, it disturbs me so that I cannot enjoy myself." This is, in effect, to pray Christ to depart out of your coasts! What? Is salvation worth so little that you have no care to possess it? Is Christ Himself so small a blessing that you even tremble lest He should change your nature and save you? I think there were more lunatics than one on that Gadarene shore—the people were all as mad at heart as that one poor man was mad in brain!

18. *And when He was come into the ship—*Christ will go from you if you want Him to go. He forces Himself upon no man—the Grace of God does not violate the will of man—it acts in accordance with man's nature

and achieves the Divine purpose without disturbing the individuality of the man. So Christ went from Gadara. “And when He was come into the ship.”—

18. *He that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him.* Was not that a proper prayer? I think, dear Friends, that not only nature, but the man’s new nature must have suggested this petition. He prayed Christ that he might be with Him. In our day it is very natural that as soon as we are converted, we should wish to go Home to Heaven. But what is the reason why we should not do so? It is in order that we may *bear witness* for Christ here on earth and gather in others unto Him!

19. *Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but said unto him, Go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.* That is one of the chief points on which we ought always to speak—not only to tell of the greatness of the change which the Grace of God has worked in us, but especially to testify to the tenderness of God to us! Oh, how gently did He handle our broken bones! That good Physician of ours has a lion’s heart, but He has a lady’s hand! He does not spare us necessary pain, but He never inflicts even a twinge that is unnecessary. And, oh, the pity of His heart toward us when He sees the sorrow which our sin has brought upon us!

20. *And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis.*—In the ten little cities that were in that region. “He departed and began to publish in Decapolis.”—

20. *How great things Jesus had done for Him: and all men did marvel.* This is the kind of ready-made preacher whose service for his Lord is usually most effectual. The man who, though he has studied little on many points, yet knows *by experience* what the Grace of God has done for him, and keeps to that one theme, and tells out the story with simple untrained eloquence, is the man who will do much for his Master! As we read here, “all men did marvel.” If he had plunged into deep doctrinal subjects, it may be that men would have ridiculed him, but inasmuch as he spoke of what he knew and told of the greatness and graciousness of God, “all men did marvel.”

21, 22. *And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was near unto the sea. And, behold.*—Wherever we see that word, “behold,” it is like our nota bene, saying to us, “Mark well what is coming.” “Behold”—

22-24. *There came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jarius by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lies at the point of death: I pray You, come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him and thronged Him.*

35, 36. *While He yet spoke, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain which said, Your daughter is dead: why trouble you the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.* I can imagine that if Jarius had not been a man of much faith, he would have looked at the Savior with a meaning glance, as much as to say, “‘Only believe?’ Could You ask more of me when my child is dead? Yet

You bid me, ‘Only believe.’” But, Brothers and Sisters, here is the very sphere of faith! Where there is no wading, there must be swimming—and where there is no hope in the creature, then we must throw ourselves upon the Creator. So, the child’s death made room for the father’s faith.

37-39. *And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He said unto them, Why make you this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleeps. She was dead, but not dead as far as Christ’s intention was concerned. She was not so dead as to remain dead. He meant, soon, to bring her back again to life and, therefore, to Him it was as if she were but sleeping.*

40. *And they laughed Him to scorn.* What a wonderful picture this must have been—The Lord of Glory in the center of a ribald crew who laughed Him to scorn! But it is not the man who is laughed at who is necessarily contemptible, it is often the *laughers* who are the most deserving of scorn. It was so, here, in Christ’s day, and it has often been so since.

40. *But when He had put them all out.* They were not worthy to be answered in any other fashion.

40-42. *He took the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entered in where the damsel was lying. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto you, arise. And straightway the damsel arose and walked, for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.* How very often persons were “astonished” in Christ’s day! Sometimes it is put, “they marveled.” At other times, “they were amazed,” or, “they wondered.” It would have been well if wonder had always turned to faith—but sometimes it corrupted into hate! God grant that our wonder at Christ may always be of that kind which crystallizes into love!

43. *And He charged them strictly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.* Life must be nourished. Young life, especially, needs frequent food. If Christ has spiritually quickened your child, see that you feed the child with convenient food. If you have won a convert to Christ in the Sunday school, take care that the unadulterated milk of the Word is brought forth, that the new-born child may be fed and nourished till it comes unto the perfect stature of a man in Christ Jesus!

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

THE PRODIGAL'S RECEPTION

NO. 588

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1864,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.”

Luke 15:20.

THERE he is! He is as wretched as misery itself—as filthy as his brute associates who could satisfy themselves with husks—while he could not. His clothes hang about him in rags and what he is on the outside, that he is within. He is disgraced in the eyes of the good and the virtuous remember him with indignation. He has some desires to go back to his father's house but these desires are not sufficient to alter his condition. Mere *desires* have not scraped the filth from him, nor have they so much as patched his rags. Whatever he may or may not desire, he is still filthy, still disgraced, still an alien from his father's house—and he knows it—for, by God's Grace, he has come to himself.

He would have been angry if we had said as much as this before, but now we cannot describe him in words too black. With many tears and sighs he assures us that he is even worse than he appears to be and that no man can know all the depth of the vileness of his conduct—he has spent his living with harlots—he has despised a generous parent's love and broken loose from his wise control. He has done evil with both his hands to the utmost of his strength and opportunity. There he stands, notwithstanding this confession, just what I have described him to be—for even though he has said within himself, “I have sinned”—yet that confession has not removed his griefs.

He acknowledges that he is not worthy to be called a son—and it is true he is not. But his unworthiness is not removed by his consciousness of it nor by his confession of it. He has no claims to a father's love. If that father shuts the door in his face, he acts with justice. If he shall refuse so much as to speak a single word, except words of rebuke, no one can blame the father, for the son has so sadly erred. To this the son utters no denial. He confesses that if he is cast away forever, he well deserves it.

This picture, I know, is the photograph of some who are now present. You feel your vileness and sinfulness but you cannot look upon that sense of vileness as in any way extenuating or altering your condition. You feel, but you cannot *plead*, your feelings. You confess this morning that you have desires towards God but that you have no rights to Him—you cannot

demand anything at His hands. If your soul were sent to Hell, His righteous Law approves it and so does your own conscience! You can see your rags. You can mark your filthiness. You can long for something better but you are no better. You have no more claims than you used to have upon God's mercy. You stand here today a self-convicted offender against the loving kindness and holiness of God.

I pray that to such of you as are in this shape I may be the bearer of a message from God to your soul this morning. O you who know the Lord, put up earnest and silent prayers just now that my message may come home with power to troubled consciences! And I beseech you, for your own profit, look back to the hole of the pit where you were dug and to the miry clay where you were drawn and remember how God received you! And while we talk of what He is willing and able to do to the far-off sinners, let your souls leap with joyous gratitude at the recollection of how He received you into His love and made you partakers of His Grace in days gone by.

There are two things in the text—the first is the condition of many a seeker—he is yet a great way off. And then, secondly, the matchless kindness of the Father towards him.

I. First, dear Friends, THE CONDITION OF SUCH A SEEKER—HE IS YET A GREAT WAY OFF. He is a great way off if you consider one or two things. Remember his need of strength. This poor young man had, for some time, been without food—brought so very low that the husks upon which the swine fed would have seemed a dainty to him if he could have eaten them. He is so hungry that he has become emaciated and to him every mile has the weariness of leagues within it.

It costs him many pains and sore griefs to drag himself along, even though it is but an inch. So the sinner is a long way off from God when you consider his utter need of strength to come to God. Even such strength as God has given him is very painfully used. God has given him strength enough to desire salvation but those desires are always accompanied with deep and sincere grief for sin. The point which he has already reached has exhausted all his power and all he can do is fall down before Jesus and say—

***“Oh, for this no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie.”***

He is a great way off, again, if you consider his need of *courage*. He longs to see his father but yet the probabilities are that if his father should come he would run away—the very sound of his father's footsteps would act upon him as they did on Adam in the garden—he would hide himself among the trees. So instead of crying after his father, the great father would have to cry after him—“Where are you, poor fallen creature? Where are you?” His need of courage, therefore, makes the distance long—for every step up to now has been taken as though into the jaws of death.

“Ah,” says the sinner, “it must be a long time before I can dare to hope—for my inequities have gone over my head so that I cannot look up.”

Are you, then, in alarm and dread this morning? Do your prayers seem to have been no prayers at all? When you think of God, does terror come over your mind and you feel that you are a long, long way from Him? Do you imagine that it is not likely that He will hear your cries nor give heed to your words? You are yet a great way off. You are a great way off when we consider the difficulty of the way of repentance. John Bunyan tells us that Christian found, when he went back to the arbor after his lost roll, that it was very hard work going back. Every backslider finds it so and every penitent sinner knows that there is a bitterness in mourning for sin comparable to the loss of one's only son.

A drowning man feels no great pain—the sensations of drowning are even said to be pleasant. It is only when the man is being restored to life—when the blood begins to make the veins tingle because life leaps there, when once again the nerves are sensitive—then, we are told, the whole body is full of many agonies! But then they are the agonies of life! And so the poor penitent feels the goal must be a great way off, for if he had to feel as he now feels, even for a month, it were too long a time. And if he had to journey many miles as he now journeys, so painfully, with such bleeding feet, it would, indeed, be a great way!

Let us look into this matter and show that while the road seems long on this account, it really is long if we view it in a certain light. There are many seeking sinners who are a great way off in their life. I think I see the man now and hear him thus bewail himself—“I have left off my drunkenness. I could not sit where I used to sit by the hour. I thank God I shall never be seen reeling through the streets again, for that groveling lust I detest. I have given up Sabbath-breaking and I am found in God's House. And I have endeavored, as much as I can, to renounce the habit of swearing, but still I am a great way off—I do not feel as if I could yet lay hold of Christ for I cannot master my own passions yet.

“An old companion stopped me this week and he had not long been talking before I found the old man was in me and the old lusting came up into my face again. Why, Sir, the other day an oath came rapping out. I thought I had got over it, but I had not—I am a great way off. When I read of what saints are and observe what true Christians are, I do feel that my conduct is so inconsistent and so widely apart from what it ought to be that I *know* that I am a great way off.”

“Ah, dear Friend, you are. And if you had to come to God by the way of your own righteousness you would never reach Him for He is not thus to be found. Christ Jesus is the way! He is the safe, sure, and perfect road to God. He who sees Jesus has seen the Father. But he who looks to himself will only see despair. The road to Heaven by Mount Sinai is impassable by

mortal man, but Calvary leads to Glory! The secret places of the stairs are in the wounds of Jesus.

Again, you feel yourself a great way off as to *knowledge*. "Why," you say, "before I felt thus I considered myself a master of all theology. I could twist the doctrines round my fingers. When I listened to a sermon I felt quite able to criticize it and to give my judgment. Now I see that my judgment was about as valuable as the criticism of a blind man upon a picture, for I was without *spiritual* sight. Now I feel myself to be a fool! I do know what sin means, but only to a degree. Even here I feel that I am not conscious of the heinousness of human guilt. I have heard the doctrine of the Atonement of Christ and I thank God I know it to some degree, but the excellence and glory of the Substitutionary Sacrifice which Christ offered—I confess I do not fully comprehend."

The sinner's confession now is that instead of understanding Scripture he finds he needs to go, like a child, to school to learn the A B C of it. "O Sir," he says, "I am a great way off from God for I am so ignorant, so foolish. I seem to be but as a beast when I think of the deep things of God." Ah, poor Soul! Poor young wandering Brother! I wonder not that it seems so to you for the ignorance of the carnal man is, indeed, fearful, and only God can give you light. But He can give it to you in a *moment* and the distance between you and Him upon the score of ignorance can be bridged at once and you may comprehend even today, with all saints, what are the heights and depths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

In another point many an earnest seeker is a great way off, I mean in his *repentance*. "Alas," says he, "I cannot repent as I ought. If only I could feel the brokenness of heart which I have heard and seen in some! Oh, what would I give for penitential sighs! How thankful would I be if my head were waters and my eyes fountains of tears. If I could even feel that I was as humble as the poor publican and could stand with downcast eyes and beat upon my breast and say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' But, alas, I have been a hearer of the Word for years and all the progress I have made is so little that while I know the Gospel is true, I do not *feel* it. I know myself to be a sinner, and sometimes I mourn over it, but my mourning is so superficial, my repentance is a repentance that needs to be *repented* of! O Sir, if God would use the heaviest hammer that He had—if He would but break my heart—every broken fragment should bless His name!"

"I wish I had a genuine repentance. Oh, how I pant to be brought to feel that I am lost and to desire Christ with that vehement desire which will not take a denial. But in this point my heart seems hard as Hell-hardened steel. Cold as a rock of ice. It will not, *cannot* yield though wooed by Divine love. Adamant itself may run in liquid torrents, but my soul yields to nothing. Lord, break it! Lord, break it!"

Ah, poor Heart. I see you are a great way off, but do you know if my Lord should appear to you this morning and say to you, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," your heart would break in a moment?—

**"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone.
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
Can dissolve a heart of stone."**

Great way off as you are, if the Lord pardons you while yet callous and consciously hard of heart, will you not then fall at His feet and commend that great love with which He loved you—even when you were dead in trespasses and sins?

Yes, but I think I hear one say, "There is another point in which I feel a great way off, for I have little or no *faith*. I have heard faith preached every Sunday. I know what it is—I think I do—but I cannot reach it. I know that if I cast myself wholly upon Christ I shall be saved. I quite comprehend that He does not ask anything of me, any willings, or doings, or feelings—I know that Christ is willing to receive the greatest sinner out of Hell if that sinner will but come and simply trust Him. I have tried to do it! Sometimes I have thought I had faith, but then, again, when I have looked at my sins I have doubted so dreadfully that I perceive I have no faith at all! There are bright moments with me when I think I can say—

**'My faith is built on nothing less,
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,'**

but oh, when I feel my corruptions within rising upon me, I hear a voice saying, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson,' and straightway I discover my own weakness. I have not the faith that I want! I am a great way off from it and I fear that I shall never possess it."

Yes, my Brethren, I perceive your difficulty, for I have felt the sorrow of it myself. But oh, my Lord, who is the Giver of faith—who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins—can give you the faith you so much desire and can cause you, *this morning*, to rest with perfect confidence upon the work which He has finished for you! To gather up all things in one word, the truly penitent sinner feels that he is yet a great way off in *everything*. There is no point upon which you can talk with him but it will be sure to lead to a confession of his deficiency. Begin to put him in the scales of the sanctuary and he cries, "Alas, before you put in the weights I can tell you I shall be found wanting." Bring him to the touchstone and he shrinks from it! "No," he says, "but I cannot endure any sort of trial—

'All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but sin.' "

Look, look how well my Master has pictured your case in this parable—"Yet a great way off"—yet covered with rags! Yet polluted with filth! Yet in disgrace! Yet a stranger to your Father's house! There is only this one point about you—you have your face towards your Father—you have a desire towards God and you would, oh, you would if you could, lay hold

upon eternal life! But you feel too far off for anything like comfortable hope.

Now I must confess I feel many fears about you who are in this state. I am afraid lest you should come so far and yet go back—for there are many whom we thought had come as far as this and yet they have gone back, after all. Oh, remember that *desires* after God will not change you so as to *save* you! You must find Christ! Remember that to say, “I will arise,” is not enough, nor even to arise—you must never rest till your Father has given you the kiss—till He has put the best robe on you.

I am afraid lest you should rest satisfied and say, “I am in a good state. The minister tells us that many are brought to such a state before they are saved. I will stop here.” My dear Friend, it is a good state to pass through, but it is a bad state to rest in. I pray you never are content with a *sense* of sin, never be satisfied with merely knowing that you are not what you ought to be. It never cures the fever for a man to know he has it. His knowledge is in some degree a good sign, for it proves that the fever has not yet driven him to delirium. But it never gives a man perfect health to know that he is sick. It is a good thing for him to know it, for he will not otherwise send for the physician—but unless it leads to that he will die whether he feels himself to be sick or not.

A mere consciousness that you are hungry while your father's hired servants have bread enough to spare will not lessen your hunger—you need more than this. You are a great way off and I beseech you remember what the danger is lest you should stop here or should lose what sensibility you already have. Perhaps despair may come upon you. Some have committed suicide while under a sense of the greatness of their distance from God because they dared not look to the Savior. Our prayers shall go up to God that the second part of our text may come true to you and that backsliding and despair alike may be prevented by the speedy coming of God dressed in the robes of Grace to meet your guilty soul and give you joy and peace through believing!

II. Secondly—and O, may the Master give us His help—we have to consider THE MATCHLESS KINDNESS OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER. We must take each word and dwell upon it. First of all we have here Divine *observation*. “When he was yet a great way off his father saw him.” It is true He has always seen him. God sees the sinner in every state and in every position. Yes, and sees him with an eye of love, too—such a chosen sinner as is described in this text—not with complacency, but with affection God looks upon His wandering chosen ones.

I say that Father saw His son when he spent his living with harlots. He saw him with deep sorrow when he gladly would have filled his belly with the husks which the swine ate. But now, if there can be such a thing as for Divine Omniscience to become more exact, the Father sees him with an eye full of a more tender love, a greater care. “His father saw him.” Oh,

what a sight it was for a father to see! His son, it is true, but his *reprobate* son, who had dishonored his father's name—brought down the name of an honorable house to be mentioned among the dregs and scum of the earth!

There he is! What a sight for a father's eye! He is filthy, as though he had been rolling in the mire. And his fine clothing has long ago lost its fine colors and hangs about him in wretched rags. The father does not turn away and try to forget him—he fixes his full gaze upon him. Sinner, you know that God sees you this morning! Sitting in this house you are observed by the God of Heaven. There is not a desire in your heart unread by Him, nor a tear in your eye which He does not observe! I tell you He has seen your midnight sins. He has heard your cursing and your blasphemies and yet He has loved you notwithstanding all that you have done!

You could hardly have been a worse rebel against Him and yet He has noted you in His book of love and determined to save you! The eye of His love has followed you wherever you have gone. Is there not some comfort here? Why could not he see his father? Was it the effect of the tears in his eyes that he could not see? Or was it that his father was of quicker sight than he? Sinner, you can not see God for you are unbelieving and carnal and blind, but He can see you! Your tears of penitence block up your sight, but your Father is quick of eye and He beholds you and loves you now. In every glance there is love.

“His father saw him.” Observe this was a loving observation, for it is written, “His father saw him.” He did not see him as a mere casual observer. He did not note him as a man might note his friend's child with some pity and benevolence, but he marked him as a father, alone, can do. What a quick eye a parent has! Why, I have known a young man come home, perhaps for a short holiday—the mother has heard nothing, not even a whisper, as to her son's conduct and yet she cannot help observing to her husband, “There is a something about John which makes me suspect that he is not going on as he should do. I do not know, my Husband,” she says, “what it is. But yet I am sure he is getting among bad companions.” She will read his character at once. And the father notes something, too. He cannot precisely say what, but he knows it to be cause for anxiety.

But here we have a Father who can see everything and who has as much of the quickness of love as He has of the certainty of knowledge. He can, therefore, see every spot and bruise and note every putrefying sore. He sees His poor son right through as though he were a vase of crystal—He reads his heart—not merely the telltale garments. Not merely the sorrowful tale of the unwashed face and those clouted shoes, but He can read his soul! He understands the whole of his miserable plight. O poor Sinner, there is no need for you to give information to your God for He knows it already! You need not pick your words in prayer in order to make your case plain and easy to understand! God can see it! All you have to do

is to uncover your wounds, your bruises and your putrefying sores and say, "My Father, You see it all, the black tale you read in a moment. My Father, have pity upon me."

The next thought to be well considered is Divine *compassion*. "When he saw him he had compassion on him." Does not the word "compassion" mean suffering with, or, fellow-suffering? What is compassion, then, but putting yourself into the place of the sufferer and feeling his grief? If I may say so, the father put himself into the son's rags and then felt as much pity for him as that poor ragged prodigal could have felt for himself. I do not know how to bring up your compassion this morning unless it is by supposing that it is your own case.

I saw, not many hours ago, a young man who brought to my mind the prodigal in this case—his face marked with innumerable lines of sin and wretchedness. His body lean and emaciated, his clothes close-buttoned—his whole appearance the very mirror of woe. He knocked at my door. I knew his situation—I cannot hurt him by telling it. He had disgraced his family—not once or twice—but many times. At last he drew out what money he had in the business of a respectable family, came up to London with four hundred pounds and in about five weeks spent it all!

And, without a single farthing to help himself, he often begs for bread. And I fear that he has often crept at night into the parks to sleep and thus has brought aches and pains into his bones which will be with him till he dies. He wanders the streets by day a vagabond and a reprobate. I have written to his friends—the case has been put before them. They will not have anything to do with him. And considering his shameful conduct, I do not wonder. He has no father and no mother left. If he were helped beyond mere food and lodging, as far as we can judge, it would be money thrown away.

If he were helped, he seems so desperately set on wickedness that he would do the same again. Yet, as I think, I can but desire to see him have one more chance, at least, and he would have it, I doubt not, if his father yet lived. But others feel the fountains of their love are stayed. As I think of him, I cannot but feel that if he were a son of mine and I were his father and I saw him in such a case come to my door, whatever the crime was that he had committed, I must fall upon his neck and kiss him. The biggest sin could not put out forever the sparks of paternal love. I might condemn the sin in sharpest terms and most severely. I might regret that he had ever been born and cry with David, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for you!" but I could not shut him out of my house, nor refuse to call him my child. My child he is and my child he shall be till he dies.

You feel just now that if it were your child you would do the same. That is how God feels towards you, His chosen, His repentant child. You are His child—I hope so, I trust so—those desires which you have in your soul

towards Him make me feel that you are one of His children. And as God looks out of Heaven He knows what you mean. What is it? What shall I say? No, I need not describe, but, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." He will have compassion upon you. He will receive you to His bosom—be of good courage, for the text says, "He had compassion on him."

Notice and observe carefully the swiftness of this Divine love. "He ran." Probably he was walking on the top of his house and looking out for his son, when one morning he just caught a glimpse of a poor sorry figure in the distance. If he had been anything but the father he would not have known it to be his son. But he looked and looked again, till at last he said, "It is he! Oh, what marks of famine are upon him and of suffering, too!" And down comes the old gentleman—I think I see him running downstairs and the servants come to the windows and the doors, and say, "Where is Master going? I have not seen him run at that rate for many a day."

See, there he goes! He does not take the road for that is a little round about. But there is a gap through the hedge and he is jumping over it! The straightest way that he can find he chooses. And before the son has had time to notice who it is, he is on him and has his arms about him, falling upon his neck and kissing him! I remember a young prodigal who was received in the same way. Here he stands. It is I, myself. I sat in a little Chapel, little dreaming that my Father saw me. Certainly I was a great way off.

I felt something of my need of Christ, but I did not know what I must do to be saved. Though taught the letter of the Word, I was spiritually ignorant of the plan of salvation. Though taught it from my youth up, I knew it not. I felt, but I did not feel what I wished to feel. If ever there was a soul that knew itself to be far off from God, I was that soul. And yet in a moment, in one single *moment*—no sooner had I heard the words—"Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth"—no sooner had I turned my eyes to Jesus Crucified than I felt my perfect reconciliation with God! I knew my sins were then forgiven!

There was no time for getting out of my heavenly Father's way—it was done and done in an instant! And in my case, at least, He ran and fell upon my neck to kiss me. I hope that will be the case this morning—before you can get out of this place—before you can get back to your old doubts and fears and sighs and cries—I hope here the Lord of Love will run and meet you and fall upon your neck and kiss you!

After noticing thus—observation, compassion and swiftness, do not forget the *nearness*—"He fell upon his neck and kissed him." This I can understand by experience, but it is too wonderful for me to explain. "He fell upon his neck." He did not stand at a distance and say, "John, I would be very glad to kiss you but you are too filthy. I do not know what may be under those filthy rags. I do not feel inclined to fall upon your neck just

yet—you are too far gone for me. I love you, but there is a limit to the display of love. When I have got you into a proper state, then I may manifest my affection to you but I cannot just now, while you are so very foul.”

Oh, no! But *before* he is washed He falls on his neck—*there* is the wonder of it! I can understand how God manifests His love to a soul that is washed in Jesus' blood and knows it. But how He could fall upon the neck of a foul, filthy sinner as such! There it is—not as sanctified, not as having anything good in himself—but as nothing but a filthy, foul, desperate rebel, God falls upon his neck and kisses him! Oh, strange miracle of love! The riddle is solved when you remember that God never had looked upon that sinner as he was in himself—He had always looked upon him as he was in Christ!

And when He fell upon that prodigal's neck, He did, in effect, only fall upon the neck of His once-suffering Son, Jesus Christ, and He kissed the sinner because He saw him in Christ! He did not see the sinner's loathsomeness, but saw only Christ's loveliness and therefore kissed him as He would have kissed his Substitute. Observe how near God comes to the sinner! It was said of that eminent saint and martyr, Bishop Hooper, that on one occasion a man in deep distress was allowed to go into his prison to tell his tale of conscience. But Bishop Hooper looked so sternly upon him and addressed him so severely, at first, that the poor soul ran away and could not get comfort until he had sought out another minister of a gentler aspect.

Now Hooper really was a gracious and loving soul, but the sternness of his manner kept the penitent off. There is no such stern manner in our heavenly Father! He loves to receive His prodigals. When He comes there is no, “Hold off!” No “Keep off!” to the sinner. No, He falls upon his neck and He kisses him! There is yet another thought to be brought out of the metaphor of kissing. We are not to pass that over without dipping our cup in the honey. In kissing his son the father recognizes *relationship*. He said, with emphasis, “You are *my* son,” and the prodigal was—

**“To his Father's bosom pressed,
Once for all a child confessed.”**

Again, that kiss was the seal of forgiveness. He would not have kissed him if he had been angry with him. He forgave him, forgave him all. There was, moreover, something more than forgiveness—there was acceptance—“I receive you back into my heart as though you were worthy of all that I give to your elder brother and therefore I kiss you.” Surely this was also a kiss of delight—as if he took pleasure in him, delighting in him, feasting his eyes with the sight of him and feeling more happy to see him than to see all his fields and the fatted calves and all the treasures that he possessed! His delight was in seeing this poor restored child. Surely this is all summed up in a kiss.

And if this morning my Father and your Father should come out to meet mourning penitents, in a moment He will show you that you are His children! You shall say, "Abba, Father," on your road to your own house! You shall feel that your sins are all forgiven, that every particle has been cast behind Jehovah's back! You shall feel today that you are accepted—as your faith looks to Christ you shall see that God accepts you—because Christ your Substitute is worthy of God's love and God's delight! I trust you shall, this very morning, delight yourself in God, because God delights Himself in you and you shall hear Him whisper in your ear, "You shall be called Hephzibah . . . for the Lord delights in you."

I wish I could picture such a text as this as it ought to be. It needs some tender, sympathetic heart—some man who is the very soul of pathos—to work out the tender touches of such a verse as this! But, oh, though I cannot describe it, I hope you will feel it and that is better than description. I come not here to paint the scene, except to be the brush in God's hand to paint it on your hearts. There are some of you who can say, "I do not want descriptions, for I have felt it. I went to Christ and told Him my case and prayed Him to meet me. Now I believe on Him and I have gone my way rejoicing in Him."

We will just say these words and have done. In summing up, one may notice that this sinner, though he was a great way off, was not received to full pardon and adoption and acceptance by a *gradual* process, but he was received at once! He was not allowed to enter into the outhouse first and to sleep in a barn at night. And then afterwards allowed to come, sometimes, and have his meals with the servants in the kitchen. And then afterwards allowed to sit at the end of the table and by degrees brought near. No. The father fell on his neck and kissed him the first moment! He gets as near to God, as he ever will, the very first moment! So a saved soul may not enjoy and know so much, but he is as near and dear to God the first moment he believes as he ever will be—a true heir of all things in Christ and as truly so as even when he shall mount to Heaven to be glorified and to be like his Lord.

Oh, what a wonder is this! Fresh from his pigsty, was he not? Yet in a father's bosom! Fresh from the swine with their grunts in his ears and now he hears a father's loving words! A few days ago he was putting husks to his mouth and now it is a father's lips that are on his lips. What a change and all at once! I say there is no gradual process in this, but the thing is done at once—in a moment he comes to his father—his father comes to him and he is in his father's arms!

Observe again, as there was not a gradual reception, there was not a *partial* reception. He was not forgiven on conditions. He was not received to his father's heart if he would do so-and-so. No. There were no "ifs," no "buts." He was kissed and clothed and feasted without a single condition of any kind whatever. No questions asked—his father had cast his of-

fenses behind his back in a moment and he was received without even a censure or a rebuke. It was not a partial reception. He was not received to some things and refused others. He was not, for instance, allowed to call himself a child, but to think of himself an inferior. No! He wears the best robe. He has the ring on his finger. He has the shoes on his feet. And he joins in eating the fatted calf.

And so the sinner is not received to a second-class place, but he is taken to the full position of a child of God. It is not a gradual nor yet a partial reception. And once more, it is not a temporary reception. His father did not kiss him and then turn him out at the back door. He did not receive him for a time, and then afterwards say to him, "Go your way. I have had pity upon you. You have now a new start—go into the far country and mend your ways." No, the father would say to him what he had already said to the elder brother, "Son, you are ever with me and all that I have is yours."

In the parable, the son could not have the goods restored for he had spent his part. But in truth itself and matter of fact, God makes the man who comes in at the eleventh hour equal with the one who came in at the first hour of the day—He gives every man the penny. And He gives to the child who has been the most wandering the same privileges and ultimately the same heritage which He gives to His own who have been these many years with Him and have not transgressed His Commandments.

That is a remarkable passage in one of the Prophets, where he says, "Ekron as a Jebusite," meaning that the Philistine, when converted, should be treated just the same as the original inhabitants of Jerusalem—that the branches of the olive which were grafted in have the same privileges as the original branches! When God takes men from being heirs of wrath and makes them heirs of Grace they have just as much privilege at the first as though they had been heirs of Grace twenty years! In God's sight they always were heirs of Grace and from all eternity He viewed His most wandering sons—

***"Not as they stood in Adam's fall,
When sin and ruin covered all.
But as they'll stand another day,
Fairer than the sun's meridian ray."***

O, I would to God that He would in His infinite mercy bring some of His own dear children home this day and He shall have the praise, world without end. Amen.

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A PROGRAM NEVER CARRIED OUT NO. 2520

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY JUNE 6, 1897.

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER. 25, 1885.

*“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.”
Luke 15:20, 21.*

I THOUGHT I would hardly preach a set discourse from this familiar text, but just give you some odds and ends of thought upon these words. You know that there are many people who are in such a low state of mind—and who have such a humble opinion of themselves that if I bring them a loaf of bread, they will be afraid to eat it—so I have only brought a few crumbs, this time, and my hope is that they will say with the Syrophenician woman, “Truth, Lord: yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” May any such persons who are here feel able to pick up a stray thought which shall be spiritual food to them, even manna sent from Heaven and, perhaps, when they have eaten one morsel of it, they may then dare to eat more, and yet more, until their souls are satisfied and they learn to rejoice in the God of their salvation! I am going to take a roving commission and ramble about somewhat more than usual—and I shall do so because I know there are many here who are, themselves, rambling. Perhaps if I ramble, I may come across them. If I keep along the city road, some of the hedge birds that are out of the way may get missed, but if I go over hedge and ditch and say something unusual here and something startling there—it may be that they will wonder how I went just where they happened to be as much as I marvel how they have managed to go where they are!

My one thought at this time is not concerning my subject, but my objective. I have not any particular subject, but my objective is that some poor prodigal may return to God, that some lost child may come back to the Father’s heart, that, in fact, some sinner may repent of sin and believe in Jesus and so enter into rest this very hour! I would rather be the means of saving a soul from death than be the greatest orator on earth! I would rather bring the poorest woman in the world to the feet of Jesus than I would be made Archbishop of Canterbury! There is no honor and no dignity under Heaven that can content us unless souls are won for Christ! And if souls are won, we shall care little how the great work was done instrumentally, for God will have the whole of the glory of it.

I. From my text I am going, first, to make this observation, that THE COMING SINNER'S FORECASTS DIFFER VERY MUCH FROM THE FACTS.

When a sinner comes back to God, he generally has a notion of how he is coming back and what he is going to feel—and what he is going to say, and what he is going to receive. He fashions in his mind a kind of program of what he fancies is about to happen. But, so far as my observation has gone, his programs are generally good for nothing and his forecasts of what will happen are usually quite mistaken! This forlorn son said, “I will arise and go to my father, and I will ask him to make me as one of his hired servants.”

Notice, dear Friends, first, that the prodigal's program was not carried out *with regard to his own prayers*. He did not say *in prayer* what he had determined that he would say. He did begin to repeat it, but he never finished it. You remember that he resolved to say, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants.” That was his intention, but the prayer he actually uttered did not contain that last sentence, he did not cry, “Make me as one of your hired servants!” I suppose that he was going to say it, but his father kissed him and so stopped it. “No, my boy,” the father seemed to say, “you shall not even *ask* to be made a hired servant. I know that humble petition is simmering in your heart, but it shall never come out of your lips, I will not permit you to say that.”

Perhaps someone here is saying, “I know what I will say tonight when I pray, I know how I will confess my sin, I know what I will ask of God.” No, dear Friend, you do not! When you come to the real praying, you will find that something very different will occur to your mind. Much of what now suggests itself to you will fly away and fresh thoughts will come in. Therefore, do not be particular about making up a program at all. If this son had gone back to his father without having a preconceived prayer, it would have been just as well. And so, if you do but go back, with a strong desire, to the great Father from whom you have wandered—even though you cannot compose a prayer in words, never mind about that! The composition would have been of little value to you if you had been able to make it. Go with your broken heart and pour out sighs and cries and tears before the Lord. Wordless though the prayers may be, they shall not lack for force and energy to prevail with God.

But the prodigal's program also broke down, very sweetly and blessedly, *with regard to his father's action*. He had, in his mind's eye, a vision of what his father would do. Possibly he feared that his father would spurn him altogether but, dismissing that fear, he may have thought, “If my father is very kind, indeed, to me, he will at least severely chide me and then put me into some low position in the household and bid me seek to retrieve my lost character and work my way up till, at last, I may be permitted to sit somewhere at the bottom of the table.” He had some such notion as that, but his program went all to pieces because his father suddenly manifested his intense love to him. He was a great way off, his tears were flowing and his heart was trembling, yet, in a moment, be-

fore he knew where he was, his father's arms were around his neck and the kiss of love was on his cheek!

So, when a sinner is coming to Christ, he tries to fancy what will happen. He says, "I must be in distress of mind, I must be in deep anguish, I must be pleading and crying to God for forgiveness and so, perhaps, the Light of God will gradually come to me." Then it often happens that, in a single moment, the soul finds perfect peace with God. I should not wonder if, while I am speaking, the Spirit of God should come rushing into some dry and thirsty soul and fill it up to the brim with heavenly delight! Multitudes of persons find peace with God all of a sudden. It is not so with all, for God has many ways of working. "The wind blows where it will," but have you not sometimes noticed that when everything has been very quiet and still, suddenly you have heard the moaning of the wind and then, almost before you were aware of it, the clouds were flying before the breeze, like winged chariots? Have you never been on the Thames, in a yacht, when there has come a sudden squall that seemed as if it would upset everything? Well the Spirit of God can come upon a man just as swiftly as that! The poor soul is dreaming of the way in which he thinks the blessing may come to him, but when it is bestowed by God, it surprises, astonishes, astounds him! Before he expects such gifts, sin is forgiven, Divine Grace is received, joy fills the heart and the man is glad with exceedingly great joy. May it be so with some of you who are now here! May your program be broken in that respect by the sudden incoming of unexpected Grace!

There is no doubt whatever that this prodigal son expected that he would have to undergo a probation—that his father would put him in quarantine for a time. He felt that he was not fit to be received back just as he was, that his father could not let him sit at the table the first day he came home, but that he would say to him, "Remember how badly you have behaved, young man—you have acted so wildly that it will be long before I can think of trusting you again." Instead of speaking thus, the father said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring here the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry." This was done at once, the very first day the prodigal returned! "What?" asks someone, "can I be introduced to the highest privileges of Christian communion as soon as I come to Christ?" Yes, that is God's way of welcoming sinners! Look at the dying thief. The very day he repented, he went to Paradise! Though he had been a great sinner until then, Jesus said to him, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Only think of a child of the devil in the morning being changed to a child of God at night—and made to rejoice in Christ Jesus with the happiest of the saints in Glory!

It was after a similar fashion in the case of this younger son. He was to be in no inferior position, he was to be in all ways equal to his elder brother and, in some respects, there was even a higher joy concerning him. I wish it might happen to some of you as it happened to me one Sunday morning, long ago. I went into the little House of Prayer as burdened as ever this forlorn young man could be, but I came out as full of joy as ever that household was when "they began to be merry." Why

should it not be so with you, also? I have seen my Master give His most charming feasts to newcomers and make a festival for raw recruits—yes, and set upon the tables all the delights of His dearest love to be food for sinners who, but a day or two before, were feeding the swine of their lusts and indulging in every kind of sin! Oh, the splendor of Almighty Love, the Infinite Majesty of the Grace of God to deal thus with the guilty! Your poor program is no guide at all! You think that God will treat you as men deal with men, but, lo, He deals with you after the manner of God! “Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.”

So, you see, this prodigal’s program was erroneous, both as to his own prayers and as to his father’s action. In like manner God deals with His returning prodigals exceeding abundantly above all they ask or even think. This fact ought to induce many to come to Christ who are, at present, afraid to come. You do not know, dear Friends, how gracious my Lord is! You would never stand outside His door if you knew what accommodation He has for the poorest beggar who does but knock. Did you but know the readiness of Christ’s heart to move towards the chief of sinners, you would not linger away from Him. If you could only imagine how near you are to a heavenly bliss, the likes of which you have never tasted, you would cross the borderline at once! If other prodigals could only know what music and what dancing of a celestial kind might soon be all around them, they would not stay with the citizens of this barren country feeding the swine of this world—they would hasten home to the Father’s house and the Father’s love! Do not stay away, Brothers and Sisters, because of that foolish program of yours which makes you fancy that you must feel this and must feel that! God does not save us according to our programs—He has a far better way of His own! He does not act according to our prejudices or suppositions, but according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus!

So much for the first observation, that the coming sinner’s forecasts differ very much from the facts.

II. My second remark is that **THAT WHICH PREVAILS WITH GOD IS NOT THE COMING SINNER’S PRAYER TO GOD, BUT GOD’S SIGHT OF HIM.**

Notice, when the prodigal resolved to return, he promised to himself what he would say to his father. But his father fell on his neck and kissed him before he could utter his petition—“When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned.” The utterance of the prayer of the son *followed* the display of love on the part of the father! The reason why the father acted with such wondrous favor to his son was not because the prodigal had prayed, for he had not done so. He had *resolved* to pray, but he had not actually prayed. His prayer followed the deed of mercy done by his father—and the cause of that mercy was that his father saw him! Do notice that his father saw him and, therefore, had compassion on him. His father saw

him and, therefore, ran to him. His father saw him and, therefore, fell on his neck. His father saw him and, therefore, kissed him!

What did the father see? Long before the prodigal saw his father, his father saw him and, first, *he saw his misery*. Suppose that it were your boy, you who have children. Suppose that somewhere in this crowd, perhaps near the door, you should see that son of yours who long ago ran away from you? Possibly he has been far away at sea—that might not be to his discredit, but, alas, he has also been living a very loose and sinful life. You have enquired for him. You have advertised for him, but you have not been able to find him. Suppose that you should, tonight, stumble on him all in rags, lean, cadaverous, consumptive, ready to die? I am sure that you would not begin enquiring what he had done, or where he had been, or anything of the sort! It would be the very sight of his awful misery, the lines of his sorrow and sickness that would at once touch your heart! As you would look at him, you would see his misery and you would also see *his relationship to you*. You would ask, “Is that really my boy? Is that my son?” When you had reckoned him up and, perhaps, his mother at your side had said, “Yes, that is our John, I am sure it is,” there would be no further delay—your heart would have compassion and you would be ready to fall upon his neck and kiss him in the Tabernacle just as he is!

I knew a good minister whose name happened to be a Jewish one. We will say, “Benjamin.” However, he was not a Jew, but one day there called upon him a venerable Israelite who fell at once upon the minister’s neck and said, “O my son, my dear lost son!” The good man looked at him and said, “I do not understand what you mean, Sir.” The Jew replied, “Years ago, I had a son who became a Christian and I disowned him. And I have always lamented for him ever since. I have hunted the world for him. I have advertised for him and now, at last, I thank the God of Abraham that I have found him.” The good minister had to say, “My dear Sir, I am very sorry for you, but I am obliged to rob you of your comfort. I am not a Jew, I am a Gentile. My father long since went to be with God. You have made a mistake.” So the poor old Jew went down the stairs broken-hearted because he had not found his son. It does not matter whether a man is a Jew or a Gentile—he loves his boy, does he not? Why, because we are men, we cannot bear to see our offspring in sickness and sorrow and poverty! And though they may have broken our hearts by their sin, yet they have not broken our hearts off from love to them.

It is just thus that God looks towards you, O penitent Sinner! It is not because you pray. It is not because of anything in you, but it is because He sees your sin and your misery—and sees in you, as a returning penitent, a child of His heart, one whom He has loved with an everlasting love, one for whom He gave His Son to die! And because He sees this in you, therefore He falls upon your neck and manifests Himself in Infinite Love to you. I have put this Truth of God, I hope, very plainly. But to any poor soul who says, “I cannot pray,” I would answer, “Suppose you cannot? That is no reason why the Father should not run and fall upon your neck and kiss you.” “But, oh, I cannot put words together! I have tried,

but failed to do so.” Do you not see that this father kissed his son *before the prodigal had said a word*? Do you not perceive that very clearly in the narrative? The prayer, truly, had been concocted in his own heart, but he had not uttered it! He *never* uttered all of it, but his father had kissed him and blessed him before he had spoken a single word! So, it is not your *prayers*, it is not your *feelings*, it is not *anything in you* that will save you—it is the great heart of God who loves you that is your highest hope and the real grounds why you should be saved! Would to God you could believe this and find peace with Him through Jesus Christ His Son even now!

III. Now I want to make a third observation, which is that THE FASHION OF PRAYER MATTERS LITTLE, AS LONG AS IT IS TRUE PRAYER.

This young man had intended to pray *a contradictory prayer*. Notice what his prayer was. It makes me smile as I read it. Listen—“I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father,” and so on, “I am not worthy to be called your son.” Why, then, did he call him, “Father”? So there is often a beautiful inconsistency about a true penitent’s prayer—he puts God in His right place by calling Him, “Father,” yet he does not dare, himself, to get into his right place to be called a son. But, surely, if I may call God, “*Father*,” I may call myself, “son,” for the relationship necessarily exists on both sides if it exists at all! Ah, poor Sinner, I dare say your first prayer is full of blunders, but that does not matter as long as your heart is in it! The Lord knows how to put our prayers together and take all the contradictions out of them—He understands the meaning of our sighs and our groans!—

**“To Him there’s music in a groan
And beauty in a tear.”**

Notice, too, that the prodigal’s prayer was *a confession rather than a prayer*. “Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.” You see, he does not *ask* for anything—he just acknowledges his guiltiness and his unworthiness. It is only *part* of a prayer—a one-legged prayer, as it were—but, blessed be God, He accepts limping prayers! The oddest, strangest, most singular prayers that ever were prayed, so long as the heart of the man is in them going towards the Father, shall not be refused!

I am going to read you some Scriptures to comfort those of you who are afraid you cannot be saved because you cannot pray. Have you ever noticed what is regarded as prayer according to the Word of God? David says, in the 22nd Psalm, “Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?” So that *roaring* is prayer when the heart is so sad that it cannot use words—when it *roars* like a wild beast rather than speaks like a human being! Some of you know what it means to get into such a state of misery that you dare not speak and yet cannot be silent—to be so distracted that you cannot think consecutively, you cannot read your own thoughts and do not know how to shape them before God—so that your utterance is more that of the roaring of a wounded and dying animal than the praying of a sensible, intelligent man. Yet even *that* is prayer and God accepts it as prayer!

Cries also are prayers. In the same 22nd Psalm, at the second verse, we read, “O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent.” This is the cry of pain that comes from a child, rather than the intelligent expression of the thoughts within the soul. But have you never known, dear Friend, what it is to be in such distress, even as a man, that you wish you could get alone and weep? The tears, perhaps, have refused to come, and you have sat down and said, “I am lost! I am lost. Ah, me! What will become of me, O my God?” Such crying as that, when you can hardly get the words out, is the best praying in the world. It is only, “Oh!” and, “Ah!” and, “Would that!” and all manner of broken and strange expressions. Yet those are prayers such as God hears and answers!

I will give you another text to show that prayer may sometimes take the shape of a cry. In Psalm 69:3, we read, “I am weary of my crying: my throat is dry.” So crying *is* prayer, even hoarse crying, when, at last, the throat becomes so dry that not a word can be uttered. But that is not all, for *breathing* may also be praying. In the Book of Lamentations, in the third Chapter, at the 56th verse, we find this amazing petition, “Hide not Your ears from my breathing.” The man cannot speak, his soul is too full. If he looks through Heaven and earth, he cannot find a word that he can utter! But quick and hot are the breathings of his life which seems as if it would ebb away. Yet that is true prayer. Some of the best prayer that ever reaches the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth is just like that—the breathing of agony when the very life seems to be expiring. As everything that has breath is to praise Jehovah, so let everyone who has breath feel that he can pray, for even breathing may be prayer!

Yes, and when you cannot breathe, what do you do, then? Why, when a man grows short of breath, then he *pants*. That again is prayer. Hear how David puts it in Psalm 42:1—“As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God!” You know how the stag that has been hunted, longs to have its smoking flanks in the water brooks, and to take a deep draught from the cooling stream, for it seems to be burning within like an oven. There it stands and pants to find the water—its whole soul seems to go up and down as it pants. Well, when you cannot breathe, when you feel as if that strong breath that I mentioned just now cannot be reached by you, you can pant! “I opened my mouth and panted,” said David. Well, that again is some of the best prayer that God ever hears. Do not be afraid, therefore, that you cannot pray if even *panting is prayer!*

Yet further, in the 69th Psalm, at the third verse, David says, “My eyes fail while I wait for my God.” And in the fifth Psalm, third verse, “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up.” So, you see, prayer may take another shape—*looking up may be a prayer*. I have read of an old saint who usually spent a whole hour in the day alone. And being watched and noticed, it was seen that he never said anything, but he stood quite still for an hour. So he was asked, “What, then, is your devotion?” He answered, “I look at God, and God looks at me.” And I must confess that I sometimes find it a very high form of devotion to sit quite

still and look up. There is a reverent silence of worship that will sometimes disable the spirit from any other kind of communion. Prayer is—

**“The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.”**

Oh, you who cannot speak, but yet have your eyes—you can look up—and even in the look there shall be a prayer that God will regard, for He observes which way men’s eyes go and, if their eyes are towards the hills, from where comes their help, He will bless them!

Next, a *moan may be a prayer*. Notice this text, Jeremiah 31:18—“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.” Moaning is rather the language of a cow than of a man, but, oh, that is a prayer that touches God’s heart! We cannot bear to hear a child moan. You mothers who have nursed a sick child at night, I know that it has gone to your heart when you have heard that which you cannot describe otherwise than as moaning. And oh, poor troubled Sinner, if you cannot pray, but can only get alone and moan, that is good praying! See how Hezekiah prayed when he was sick—his praying was of this kind, according to Isaiah 38:14—“Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn like a dove.” You know how a dove coos and how pathetic is the mourning of a dove bereaved of its mate. That is good praying and though to you it seems like chattering and only making a poor, silly, bird-like noise, it is true prayer when the heart is in it!

I am laboring with all my might to bring these things before you that you may see how simple a matter prayer is, so long as the heart is right with God. So notice, next, that *prayer is a sigh*. Psalm 80:11—“Let the sighing of the prisoner come before you.” Further, it is a *groan*. Psalm 102:19, 20—“From Heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner.” The very best prayer out of Heaven is a groan! Remember Romans 8:26? “The Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered”—groans with such unutterable pain about them that they are not to be fully expressed in words! These are the very intercessions of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, our groans are among the very best of prayers!

There is another form of prayer that David was accustomed to use and that was *spreading out his hands*. Psalm 88:9—“I have stretched out my hands unto You.” And, in another place, Psalm 143:6—“I stretch forth my hands unto You.” Sometimes he stood in prayer in this way, as if his heart was saying, “I need to get the blessing. I long to receive it. I am reaching out to You, my God, for it.” How often have I seen a sick man pray like this when he could not do anything else, for words had gone and the mouth was stopped and choked, and the brow was covered with a clammy sweat! That is the sort of prayer that God will hear. O Sirs, you may go through your liturgies as many times as you please and, perhaps, there may not be any prayer in them, after all! You may intone them and accompany them with all the music of your choirs and your organs—and they may fall flat as death before the Throne of God! But a true penitent who gets alone in his agony and does but groan, or stretch out his hands, or glance his eyes to Heaven, shall never be refused by the great Father above!

There is one other kind of prayer—there may be a great many more—but this must suffice for the present. David says, in Psalm 6:8, “The Lord has heard the voice of my *weeping*.” There, again, is wondrous power, as if the tears that fell from penitent and earnest eyes were treasured up in the tear bottle of God. Every tear from His children’s hearts will go to the heart of the great Father and He will answer the requests of our tears. There is a salt about the tear of a seeking soul that is pleasant to God. If your tears burn their way down your cheeks, they will burn their way into the heart of God—and you shall get the blessing that you desire.

Now, after all this, I think that I may add that there is nobody here who dares to say that if he wills to pray, he cannot pray. If there is true prayer in his heart, the expression of it is so simple, so varied, so easy, that everyone must be capable of it! And I do pray that many here may feel that it is not so much *how* they come, or with *what* they come, as that if they do but come with the *heart*, God will receive them! Dear Hearts, will you not come? I wonder whether I am right in the reflection I sometimes make after I have been preaching? I sometimes say to myself, “I think that if I had heard that sermon when I was seeking the Savior, I would have found Him.” I do not know how to put Christ’s love more plainly, or give the invitation more simply. I wonder that souls do not come and yet I know that you will not come unless my Master draws you! But, surely, He will draw you! He *is* drawing you! Breathe a prayer to Him. He who refuses to pray deserves to be lost. He who knows that God will hear a cry, a breath, a groan, a moan, a panting and will not put up any of these—ah, well, what shall I say of him? Are you choosing your own damnation? Do you really mean to be ruined forever? Do not so, I pray you! God help you to come, now, to the great Father and to find joy and peace in Him! “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?” “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”

May He turn you, and bless you, and save you, for His great mercy’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY CHARLES H. SPURGEON: *LUKE 15.*

Verse 1. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.* It was a motley group—“all the publicans and sinners”—the riff-raff, the scum, as people sometimes call them. “All the publicans and sinners” drew near unto Jesus “for to hear Him.”

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners, and eats with them.* “See,” they said, “what kind of a ministry this must be that attracts all these low people? In what a condition must

be the mind of this Man who seems pleased to associate with such people as these!”

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.*—Our Savior’s aim was to show them that the first objective of God is to find the lost, that His first thoughts are toward the guilty and the fallen that He may bless and save them. “He spoke this parable unto them saying.”

4. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?* Is not the shepherd’s first thought concerning the one lost sheep? For the time, anxiety about that lost one swallows up the consideration of the 99 that are in safe keeping! And he goes “after that which is lost, until he finds it.”

5, 6. *And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.* He did not say, “Rejoice with me over the 99 that were never lost,” but, for the time, all his anxiety and, afterwards, all his joy, centered upon the lost one.

7. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.* The mercy of God shall seem, as it were, to swallow up every other attribute, and His great heart shall rejoice to the fullest over repenting sinners!

8. *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it.* The woman’s candle and broom and eyes are all for this one lost piece of silver! She does not look, just now, at the other nine pieces. They are, at present, left in a safe place by themselves, and she is thinking only of this lost piece.

9. *And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.* She does not rejoice one half so distinctly and markedly over the nine pieces which were not lost, as she does over the one piece that had been lost, but now is found.

10. *Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.* Our Savior, you see, is still keeping on the same tack and showing that He was right in associating with the publicans and sinners, since He aimed at finding and reclaiming and saving them. He now goes on with a third most beautiful and instructive parable.

11-15. *And He said, A certain man had two sons and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in need. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. That was the best the citizen of the far country could do for the prodigal! The devil’s best is always bad—*

what must his worst be? If he sets his favorites the employment of feeding swine, what will he do with them when the time of his favor is over and they are forever in his power?

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* Here was the free and easy gentleman who had spent his thousands without a thought, and now, “no man gave unto him.” I do not know that this prodigal spent his living with harlots—the Scripture does not say that he did. It was his elder brother who said that and he may have made out the case to be even worse than it was. He was simply a waster of his substance in riotous living—and that was bad enough. But I never find that the younger brother tried to set himself right and repudiate the slanderous accusation of the elder. It was not worthwhile for him to try to do so, for he was right with his father and he would get right with his elder brother, by-and-by. If you get right with God, my dear Friend, even if some Christian people should not believe in you, never mind about that! Even if they should think you worse than you have been, never mind! If you are right with God, you will be right with them in due time.

17. *And when he came to himself.*—For he had journeyed into a far country and he had gone as far away from himself as he had gone from his father! But, “when he came to himself.”

17-22. *He said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father said to His servants.—As much as to say—“Let me hear no more of this, my Son! I cannot bear it. You break my heart with the story of your repentance.” “The father said to His servants.”*

22. *Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.* “Dress him like a gentleman! Do not let it be seen that he ever was in rags—‘Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.’”

23. *And bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry.* “Do all that you can to make this poor broken heart happy again, to lift this poor fallen son into the sphere from which he has been away so long. Make him feel at home ‘and let us eat, and be merry.’”

24. *For this, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.* I have no information that they ever left off being merry. The Church of God never ceases to praise and bless the Lord for saved sinners. If you come to Christ, dear Friend, you will set bells a-ringing that will never leave off throughout eternity! “They began to be merry.”

25, 26. *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the*

servants and asked what these things meant. Perhaps he was not very musical and did not care much for joy and delight. He may have been a hard-working, plodding man, but not a happy one.

27, 28. *And he said unto him, Your brother is come; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out, and entreated him.* I scarcely know where the father's love is the more seen—in falling on the neck of the younger son, or in going out to entreat this elder son who was in a pet because the returned prodigal had been welcomed so kindly.

29. *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.* He seems to say, "I have had no joy of religion. I have been a good, steady, moral person, but my soul has had no high delights."

30. *But as soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.* "Not even a little lamb or kid of the goats for me, but a fatted calf for him!" So some still say, "There has been a revival and some of the worst people in the parish have been brought to Christ. But we, who have always gone to church and always were moral and upright, have not had half the joy of these new converts. No fuss has been made over us—all the rejoicing is over the returning prodigals." Do you see your portraits, any of you? If so, may you soon be set right by the only One who can make you what you ought to be!

31. *And he said unto him, Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours.* "Everything I have is yours. If you have not had the kid you spoke of, it was your own fault—you might have taken it if you had pleased. The whole house is at your disposal. I never denied you anything. All that I have is yours."

32. *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad.* See, the younger son did not speak for himself—there was no need for him to do so. His father spoke for him. What a blessed Intercessor, what a wondrous Advocate we have with our elder Brother! We may well leave them alone, ourselves, for He will bring them right—"It was meet that we should make merry and be glad."

32. *For this your brother, was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—551, 607, 571.

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

THE RECEPTION OF SINNERS

NO. 1204

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 22, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.”
Luke 15:22, 23.

LAST Lord's-Day we spoke upon the consecration of priests. That theme might seem too high for troubled hearts and trembling consciences who fear that they shall never be made priests and kings unto God. So glorious a privilege appears to them to hang in the dim, distant future, if, indeed, they reach it at all. Therefore, at this time, we will go down from the elevated regions to comfort those who are seeking the Lord—with the view of helping them, in their turn, to climb, also!

We speak this morning, not of the consecration of priests, but of the reception of sinners, and this, according to our text, is a very joyful business. It is even described as a merrymaking, accompanied with music and with dancing. We, very frequently, speak of the sorrow for sin which accompanies conversion, and I do not think we can speak of it too often. But yet there is a possibility of our overlooking the equally holy and remarkable joy which attends the *return* of a soul to God. It has been a very common error to suppose that a man must pass through a very considerable time of despondency, if not of horror of mind, before he can find peace with God.

But in this parable the father seems determined to cut short that period. He stops his son in the very middle of his confession and, before he can ask to be made as one of the hired servants, his mournful style is changed to rejoicing, for the father has already fallen on his neck and kissed his trembling lips into a sweet silence! It is not the Lord's desire that sinners should tarry long in the state of unbelieving conviction of sin. It is something wrong in themselves which keeps them there—either they are ignorant of the freeness and fullness of Christ, they harbor self-righteous hopes—or they cling to their sins. Sin lies at the door but it is no work of God which blocks the way. He delights in their delight and joys in their joy!

It is the Father's will that the penitent sinner should at once believe in Jesus, at once find complete forgiveness and enter into rest. If any of you came to Jesus without the dreary interval of terror which is so frequent, I pray you do not judge yourselves as though your conversions were dubious—they are all the more, instead of all the less, genuine, because they bear, rather, the marks of the Gospel than of the Law! The weeping of Peter, which in a few days turns to joy, is far better than the horror of Judas

which ends in suicide! Conversions, as recorded in Scripture, are, for the most part, exceedingly rapid.

They were pricked in the heart at Pentecost and the *same day* baptized and added to the Church because they had found peace with God through Jesus Christ! Paul was struck down with conviction and in three days was a baptized Believer! Perhaps the figure is inapt, but I was about to say that sometimes God's power is so very near us that the lightning flash of conviction is often attended at the very same moment by the deep thunder of the Lord's voice which drives away our fears and proclaims peace and pardon to the soul! In many cases the sharp needle of the Law is immediately followed by the silken thread of the Gospel—the showers of repentance are succeeded at once by the sunshine of faith—Peace overtakes Penitence and walks arm in arm with her into yet fuller rest!

Having thus reminded you that God would have penitents very soon rejoice, I want to spend this morning in setting forth the joy which is caused by pardoned sin. That joy is threefold. We will talk about it, first, as *the joy of God over sinners*. Secondly, *the joy of sinners in God*. And, thirdly, what is so often forgotten—*the joy of the servants*—for they, too, rejoiced, for the father said, "Let us eat and be merry." One of the points of the parable is just this, that as in the case of the lost sheep the shepherd calls together his friends and neighbors, and as in the case of the piece of money the woman calls her neighbors together, so in this case, also, others share in the joy which chiefly belongs to the loving father and the returning wanderer.

I. THE JOY OF GOD OVER SINNERS. It is always difficult to speak of the ever-blessed God becomingly when we have to describe Him as touched by emotions. I pray, therefore, to be guided in my speech by the Holy Spirit. We have been educated to the idea that the Lord is above emotions, either of sorrow or pleasure. That He cannot suffer, for instance, is always laid down as a self-evident postulate. Is that quite clear? Cannot He do or bear anything He chooses to do? What does the Scripture mean which says that man's sin, before the flood, made the Lord repent that He had made man on the earth, "and it grieved Him at His heart"?

Is there no meaning in the lord's own language, "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation"? Are we not forbidden to grieve the Holy Spirit? Is He not described as having been vexed by ungodly men? Surely, then, He can be grieved—it cannot be an altogether meaningless expression. For my part, I rejoice to worship the living God, who, because He *is* living, dose grieve and rejoice! It makes one feel more love to Him than if He dwelt on some serene Olympus, careless of all our woes because incapable of any concern about us, or interest in us, one way or the other. To look upon Him as utterly impassive and incapable of anything like emotion does not, in my mind, exalt the Lord, but rather brings Him down to be comparable to the gods of stone or wood which cannot sympathize with their worshippers.

No, Jehovah is not insensible! He is the living God and everything that goes with life—pure, perfect, holy life—is to be found in Him. Yet must such a subject always be spoken of very tenderly, with solemn awe, be-

cause, albeit we know something of what God is, for we are made in the image of God and the best likeness of God undoubtedly was man as he came from his Maker's hand, yet man is *not* God and, even in his perfectness, he must have been but a very tiny miniature of God! While now that he has sinned he has blotted and blurred that image.

The finite cannot fully mirror the Infinite, nor can the grand, glorious, essential properties of Deity be communicated to creatures—they must remain peculiar to God, alone. The Lord is, however, continually represented as displaying joy. Moses declared to sinful Israel that if they returned and obeyed the voice of the Lord, the Lord would again rejoice over them for good as He rejoiced over their fathers (Deut. 30:9). The Lord is said to rejoice in His works and to delight in mercy—and surely we must believe it! Why should we doubt it? Many passages of Scripture speak very impressively of God's joy in His people.

Zephaniah puts it in the strongest manner: "He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." Our God is forever the happy or blessed God. We cannot think of Him as other than supremely blessed. Still, from the Scriptures we gather that He displays, on certain occasions, a special joy which He would have us recognize. I do not think that it can be mere parable, but it is real *fact*, that the Lord does rejoice over returning and repenting sinners. Every being manifests its joy according to its nature and seeks means for its display suitable to itself. It is so with men.

When the old Romans celebrated a triumph because some great general returned a victor from Africa, Greece, or Asia with the spoils of a long campaign, how did the fierce Roman nature express its joy? Why, in the Coliseum, or in some yet more vast amphitheatre where buzzing nations choked the ways! They gathered in their myriads to behold not only beasts, but their fellow men, "butchered to make a Roman holiday." Cruelty upon an extraordinary scale was their way of expressing the joy of their iron hearts. Look at the self-indulgent man! He has had a prosperous season and has made a lucky hit, as he calls it, or some event has occurred in his family which makes him very jubilant. What will he do to show forth his joy? Will he bow the knee in gratitude, or lift a hymn of praise? Not he! He will hold a drinking bout and, when he and his fellows are mad with wine, his joy will find expression! The sensual show their joy by sensuality.

Now, God whose name is Good, and whose Nature is Love—when He has joy—expresses it in mercy, in lovingkindness and Grace. The father's joy in the parable before us showed itself in the full forgiveness accorded in the kiss of perfect love bestowed, in the gift of the best robe, the ring, the sandals and in the gladsome festival which filled the whole house with hallowed mirth! Everything expresses its joy according to its nature. Infinite Love, therefore, reveals its joy in acts of love. The Nature of God—being as much above ours as the Heaven is above the earth—the expression of His joy is, therefore, all the loftier and His gifts the greater. But there is a likeness between God's way of expressing joy and ours which it will be profitable to note.

How do we express ourselves, ordinarily, when we are glad? We do so very commonly by a display of *bounty*. When, in the olden times, our kings came into the city of London, or a great victory was celebrated—the conduit in Cheapside ran with red wine and even the gutters flowed with it! Then there were tables set in the street and My Lords, and the aldermen, and the mayor kept open house and everybody was fed to the full. Joy was expressed by *hospitality*. You have seen the picture of the young heir coming of age and have noticed how the artist depicts the great yard of the manor as full of men and women who are eating and drinking to their hearts' content.

At Christmas seasons and upon marriage days and harvest homes, men ordinarily express their joy by bountiful provision. So also does the father, in this wondrous parable, exhibit the utmost bounty, representing, thereby, the boundless liberality of the great Father of spirits who shows His joy over penitents by the manner in which He entertains them. The best robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf and the, "Let us eat and be merry," all show, by their bountifulness, that God is glad! His oxen and His fatlings are killed, for the feast of Mercy is the banquet of the Lord! So unrivalled are the gifts of His gracious hand that the receivers of His favors have cried out in amazement, "Who is a God like unto You!"

Beloved, consider, awhile, the Lord's bounty to returning sinners, blotting out their sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud their iniquities—justifying them in the Righteousness of Christ, endowing them with His Holy Spirit, regenerating them, comforting them, illuminating them, purifying them, strengthening them, guiding them, protecting them, filling them with all His own fullness, satisfying their mouth with good things—and crowning them with tender mercies. I see, in the bounty of God with which He so liberally endows returning sinners, a mighty proof that His inmost soul rejoices over the salvation of men!

At glad times men generally manifest some *specialty* in their bounty. On the day of the young heir's coming of age the long-stored cask of wine is broached and the best bullock is roasted whole. So here in the parable we read, "*Bring forth* the best robe," indicating that it had been laid by and kept in store until then. Nobody had used that robe. It was locked up in the wardrobe, only to be brought out on some very special occasion. This was the happiest day that ever had made glad the house and, therefore, "Bring forth the best robe." No other will suffice! If meat is needed for the banquet, let a calf be killed. Which shall it be? A calf taken at random from the herd? No, but *the fatted* calf which has been standing in the stalls and is well fed—and has been reserved for a festival!

Oh, Beloved, when God blesses a sinner He shows His joy by giving him the *reserved* mercies, the *special* treasures of everlasting love, the *precious* things of Divine Grace, the *secret* of the Covenant—yes, He has given to sinners the best of the best in giving them Christ Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! The best that Heaven affords, God bestows on sinners when they come to Him. No scraps and odds and ends are dealt out to hungry and thirsty seekers, but in princely munificence of unstinting love the heavenly Father deals out abundant Grace! I would that sinners

would come and try my Lord's hospitality! They would find His table to be more richly loaded than even that of Solomon, though 30 oxen and a hundred sheep did not suffice for one day's provision for the household of that magnificent sovereign!

If they would but come, even the largest-hearted among them would be wonder-struck as they saw how richly God supplied all their needs according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus—

***“Rags exchanged for costly treasure
Shoe and ring and Heaven's best robe!
Gifts of love, which knows no measure;
Who can tell the heart of God?
All His loved ones His redeemed ones,
Perfect are in His abode.”***

We also shower our joy by a *concentration of thought* upon the object of it. When a man is carried away with joy, he forgets everything else and gives himself up to the one delight. David was so glad to bring back the Ark of the Lord that he danced before the Lord with all his might, being clad only with a linen ephod. He laid aside his stately garments and thought so little of his dignity that Michal sneered at him. He was so much absorbed in adoring his Lord that all regard to appearances was quite gone.

Observe well the parable and listen, as you hear the father say, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on *him*, and put a ring on *his* hand and shoes on *his* feet, and let us eat and be merry, for *this, my son*, was dead and is alive again.” The son, alone, is in the father's eyes and the whole house must be ordered in reference to him. Nothing is to be thought of today but the long-lost son! He is paramount in the wardrobe, the jewel room, the farmyard, the kitchen and the banqueting chamber. He that was lost—that was dead—he, being found and alive, engrosses the whole of the father's mind!

Sinner, it is wonderful how God sets all His thoughts on you according to His promise, “I will set My eyes upon them for good,” (Jer. 24:6). And again, “I will watch over them to build and to plant says the Lord.” The Lord thinks upon the poor and needy! His eyes are upon them and His ears are open to their cry! He thinks as much of each penitent sinner as if he were the only being in the universe! O Penitent, for you is the working of the Lord's Providence to bring you home! For you the training of His ministers that they might know how to reach your heart! For you the gifts of the Spirit upon them that they might be powerful with your conscience! Yes, for you His Son, His eternal Son, once bleeding on the Cross, and now sitting in the highest heavens making intercession for *you*!

I saw, in Amsterdam, the diamond cutting, and I noticed great wheels, a large factory and powerful engines—and all the power was made to bear upon a small stone no larger than the nail of my little finger. All that huge machinery for that little stone, because it was so precious! I think I see you, poor insignificant sinners, who have rebelled against your God, brought back to your Father's house—and now the whole universe is full of wheels and all those wheels are working together for *your* good—to make out of *you* a jewel fit to glisten in the Redeemer's crown! God is not represented as saying more of Creation than, “it was very good.” But in

the work of Grace He is described as singing for joy! He breaks the eternal silence and cries, "My son is found!"

As the philosopher, when he had compelled Nature to yield her secret, ran through the street crying, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it! I have found it!" so does the Father dwell on the word, "My son that was dead, is alive again, he that was lost is found." The whole of Scripture aims at the bringing back, again, of the Lord's banished! For this the Redeemer leaves His Glory! For this the Church sweeps her house and lights her candle—and when the work is done, all other bliss is secondary to the surpassing joy of the Lord, of which He bids His ransomed ones partake, saying—"Enter you into the joy of your Lord."

We also show our joy by *an alacrity of motion*. I quoted David just now. It was so with him. He danced before the ark. I cannot imagine David walking slowly before the ark, or creeping after it like a mourner at a funeral. I often notice the difference between your coming to this place and people going to other places of worship. I remark a very solemn, stately and somber motion in almost everybody else—but you come tripping along as if you were glad to go up to the House of the Lord! You do not regard the place of our joyous assemblies as a sort of religious *prison*, but as the palace and banqueting house of the great King!

When anyone is joyous, he is sure to show it by the quickness of his motions. Listen to the father—he says, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring here the fatted calf, and let us eat and be merry." As quickly as possible he pours out sentence after sentence. There is no delay—no interval between the commands. Might he not have said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and let us look at him awhile, and sit down and prepare him for the next step. And in an hour's time, or tomorrow, we will put a ring on his hand. And then, soon, we will put shoes on his feet—he is best without shoes for the present—for perhaps if he has shoes on, he will run away. As to the festival, perhaps we had better rejoice over him when we see whether his repentance is genuine." No, no, no! The father's heart is too glad! He must bless his boy at once, heap on his favors and multiply his tokens of love!

When the Lord receives a sinner, He runs to meet him. He falls on his neck. He kisses him. He speaks to him. He forgives him! He justifies him! He sanctifies him! He puts him among the children. He opens the treasures of His Grace to him—and all in quick succession. Within a few minutes after he has been cleansed from sin, the prodigal is robed and adorned, and shod for service! The love of our Redeemer's heart made Him say to the poor thief, "*Today* shall you be with Me in Paradise." He would not let him linger in pain on the cross, but carried him away to Paradise in an hour or two. Love and joy are ever quick of foot. God is slow to anger, but He is so plenteous in His mercy that His Grace overflows and rushes on like a torrent when it leaps along the ravine.

Once more, the joy of the father was shown, as it often is, by *open utterance*. It is hard for a glad man to hold his tongue! What can dumb people do when they are very happy? I cannot imagine how they endure si-

lence at such times. It must then be a terrible misfortune. When you are very happy you must tell somebody! So does this father. He pours out his joy and the utterance is very simple. "My son was dead, and is alive again, was lost, and is found." Yet, simple as it is, it is poetry. The poetry of the Hebrews consisted in parallelism, or a repetition of the sense or a part of the words. Here are two lines which pair with each other and make a verse of Hebrew poetry. Glad men, when they speak naturally and simply, always say the right thing in the very best manner, using Nature's poetry, as does the father here.

Note, also, that there is reiteration in his utterance. He might have been satisfied to say, "This, my son, was dead and is alive again." No, the fact is so sweet he must repeat it, "He was lost, and is found." Even thus we speak when we are very full of sweet content. The heart bubbles up with a good matter and over and over again we rehearse our joy. When the morsel is sweet, we roll it under the tongue. We cannot help it! So the Lord rejoices over sinners and tells His joy in Holy Scripture in varied phrases and metaphors. And though those Scriptures are simple in their style, yet they contain the very essence of poetry.

The bards of the Bible stand in the first rank among the sons of song! God Himself deigned to use poetry to utter His joy because a more prosaic manner would be all too cold and tame. Hear how He puts it—"As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." "I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in My people." We might have been left in the dark about this joy of God. We might have been coldly informed that God would save sinners and we might never have known that He found such joy in it—but the Divine Joy was too great to be concealed! The great heart of God could not restrain itself—He must tell to all the universe the delight which the exercise of mercy brought to Him! It was meet that He should make merry and be glad and, therefore, He did it, for nothing that is meet to be done will ever be neglected by the Lord our God!

Thus, dear Friends, have I feebly spoken of the joy of God. And I want you to notice that it is a delight in which every attribute of God takes a share. Condescension ran to meet the son. Love fell on his neck. Grace kissed him. Wisdom clothed him. Truth gave him the ring. Peace shod him. Wisdom provided the feast and Power prepared it. No one attribute of the Divine Nature quarrels with the forgiveness and salvation of a sinner! Not one attribute holds back from the beloved employ. Power strengthens the weak and Mercy binds up the wounded. Justice smiles upon the justified sinner, for it is satisfied through the atoning blood. Truth puts forth her hand to guarantee that the promise of Grace is fulfilled.

Immutability confirms what has been done and Omniscience looks around to see that nothing is left undone. The whole of Deity is brought to bear upon a poor worm of the dust, to lift it up and transform it into an heir of God, joint-heir with the Only Begotten! The joy of God occupies the whole of being, so that when we think of it we may well say, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name," since all that is within *Him* is engaged to bless His saints! This joy of the Lord

should give every sinner great confidence in coming to God by Jesus Christ, for if you would be glad to be saved, He will be glad to save you!

If you long to lay your head in your Father's bosom, your Father's bosom longs to have it there! If you pant to say, "I have sinned," He equally longs to say to you, by acts of love, "I forgive you freely." If you pine to be His child in His own house once more, the door is open and He, Himself, is on the watch! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! No more delay!

II. I have now to speak of THE JOY OF THE SINNER. The son was glad. He did not express it in words, as far as I can see in the parable, but he felt it, none the less. Sometimes silence is discreet and it was so in this case. At other times it is absolutely forced upon you by inability to utter the emotion—this was also true of the prodigal. The son's heart was too full for utterance in words, but he had speaking eyes and a speaking countenance as he looked on that dear father. As he put on the robe, the ring and the shoes, he must have been too astonished to speak. He wept in showers that day, but the tears were not salted with grief—they were sweet tears, glittering like the dew of the morning.

What do you think would make the son glad? Why, the father's love, the father's forgiveness—and restoration to his old place in the father's heart! That was the point. But then, each gift would serve as a token of that love and make the joy overflow. There was the robe put on—the dress of a son, and of a son well-beloved and accepted. Have you noticed how the robe answered to his confession? The sentences match each other thus—"Father, I have sinned."—"Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." Cover all his sins with Christ's Righteousness! Put away his sin by imputing to him the Righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

The robe also met his condition. He was in rags, therefore, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him," and you shall see no more of his rags. It was fit that he should be thus arrayed, in token of his restoration. He who is re-endowed with the privileges of a son should not be dressed in sordid clothes, but wear raiment suitable to his station. Moreover, as a festival was about to begin, he ought to wear a festive garment. It would not be seemly for him to feast and be merry in his rags. Put the best robe on him that he may be ready to take his place at the banquet. So, when the penitent comes to God, he is not only covered, as to the past, by the Righteousness of Christ, but he is prepared for the future blessedness which is reserved for the pardoned ones. Yes, he is fitted to begin the rejoicing at once!

Then came *the ring*, a luxury rather than a necessity, except that now he was a son, it was well that he should be restored to all the honors of his relationship. The signet ring in the east, in former times, conferred great privileges—in those days men did not sign their names, but stamped with their signet, so that the ring gave a man power over property and made him a sort of other self to the man whose ring he wore. The father gives the son a ring, and how complete an answer was that gift to another clause of his confession. Let me read the two sentences together, "I am no

more worthy to be called your son.” “Put a ring on his hand.” The gift precisely meets the confession!

It also tallied with his change. How singular that the very hand which had been feeding swine should now wear a ring. I guarantee you there were no rings on his hands when they were soiled at the trough! But now he is a swine-feeder no longer! He is now an honored son of a rich father. Slaves wear no rings. Juvenal laughed at certain freed men because they were seen walking up and down the Via Sacra with conspicuous rings on their fingers, the emblems of their new-found liberty. The ring indicated the penitent’s liberty from sin and his enjoyment of the full privileges of his father’s house.

O Beloved, the Lord will make you glad if you come to Him, by putting the seal of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling upon you—which is both the earnest of the inheritance and the best adornment of the hand of your practical character! You shall have a sure and honorable token and shall know that all things are yours, whether things present, or things to come. This ring upon your finger will declare your marriage union to Christ, set forth the eternal love which the Father has fixed upon you, and be the abiding pledge of the perfect work of the Holy Spirit!

Then they put *shoes* on his feet. I suppose he had worn out his own. In the East servants do not usually wear shoes at home, and especially in the best rooms of the house. The master and the son wear the sandals, but not the servants, so that this order was an answer to the last part of the penitent’s prayer, “Make me as one of your hired servants.” “No,” says the father, “put shoes on his feet.” In the forgiven sinner, the awe which puts off its shoes is to be overmatched by the familiarity which wears the shoes which infinite love provides. The forgiven one is no longer to tremble at Sinai, but he is to come unto Mount Zion—and to have familiar union and communion with God! Thus, also, the restored one was shod for filial service—he could run upon his father’s errands, or work in his father’s fields. He had now, in every way, all that he could need—the robe that covered him, the ring that adorned him—and the shoes that prepared him for travel or labor.

Now you awakened and anxious ones who are longing to draw near to God, I would that this description of the joy of the prodigal would induce you to come at once! Come, you naked, and He will say, “Bring forth the best robe!” Come, you that see your natural deformity through sin, and He will adorn you with a ring of beauty! Come, you who feel as if you could not come, for you have bleeding, weary feet, and He will shoe you with the silver sandals of His Divine Grace! Only come and you shall have such joy in your hearts as you have never dreamed of! There shall be a young Heaven born within your spirit which shall grow and increase until it comes to the fullness of bliss.

III. The time has now come for us to dwell upon THE JOY OF THE SERVANTS. They were to be merry and they *were* merry, for the music and the dancing which were heard outside could not have proceeded from one person only! There must have been many to join in it and who should

these be but the servants to whom the father gave his commands? They ate, they drank, they danced, they joined in the music!

There are many of us, here, who are the servants of our own heavenly Father. Though we are His children, we delight to be His servants. Now, whenever a sinner is saved, we have *our* share of joy. We have joy, first, *in the Father's joy*. They were so glad because their lord was glad—good servants are always pleased when they see that their master is greatly gratified. And I am sure the Lord's servants are always joyous when they feel that their Lord is well-pleased. That servant who went out to the elder brother, showed, by his language that he was in sympathy with the father, for he pleaded with the son upon the matter.

And when you are in sympathy with God, my dear Brother or Sister, if the Lord lets you see poor sinners saved, you must and will rejoice with Him! It will be to you better than finding a purse full of money, or making a great gain in business! Yes, nothing in the world can give you more delight than to see some brother of yours or some child of yours made to rejoice in Christ! A mother once beautifully said, "I remember the new and strange emotions which trembled in my breast when, as an infant, he was first molded to my heart—my first-born child. The thrill of that moment still lingers—but when he was 'born again,' clasped in my arms a 'new creature in Christ Jesus,' my *spiritual* child, my son in the Gospel, pardoned, justified, adopted, saved, forever saved! Oh! It was the very depth of joy! Joy unspeakable! My child was a child of God! The prayers which preceded his birth, which cradled his infancy, which girdled his youth were answered! My son was Christ's! The weary watching, the yearning desires, the trembling hopes of years were at rest! Our first-born son was avowedly the Lord's."

May every father and mother here know just such joy by having sympathy with God. But they had sympathy with *the son*. I am sure they rejoiced to see *him* back again, for somehow, usually even bad sons have the goodwill of good servants. When young men go away and are a great grief to their fathers, the servants often stick to them. They will say, "Well, Master John was very inconsiderate and he vexed his father a great deal, but I should like to see the poor boy back again." Especially is this true of the old servants who have been in the house since the boy was born—they never forget him. And you will find that God's old servants are always glad when they see prodigal children return! They are delighted beyond measure, because they love them, notwithstanding their wanderings.

Sinner, with all your faults and hardness of heart, we do love you and we should be glad, for your sake, to see you delivered from eternal ruin and from the wrath of God, which now abides on you, and brought to rejoice in pardoned sin and acceptance in the Beloved! We would rejoice for the sinner's sake, but I think the servants rejoiced most of all when *they were the instruments* in the father's hand of blessing the son. Just look at this. The father said to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe." He might have gone to the wardrobe, himself, with a key, and opened it, and brought out the robe himself. But he gave them the pleasure of doing it.

When I get my orders from my Lord and Master on the Lord's-Day morning to bring forth the best robe, I am delighted, indeed! Nothing delights me more than to preach the Imputed Righteousness of Jesus Christ and the substitutionary sacrifice of our exalted Redeemer! "Bring forth the best robe." Why, my Master, I might be content to keep out of Heaven if You would always give me this work to do—to bring forth the best robe and extol and exalt Jesus Christ in the eyes of the people!

Then he said, "Put it on him." When our Lord gives us Divine Grace to do *that*, there is still more joy! How many times I have brought forth the best robe, but could not put it on you! I have held it up and expatiated on its excellencies—and pointed to your rags and said what a delightful thing it would be if I could put it on you—but I could not. But when the heavenly Father, by His Divine Grace and the power of the Spirit, makes us the means of bringing these treasures into the possession of poor sinners, oh, what joy! I should rejoice to bring forth the ring of the Spirit's sealing work and the shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, for it is a joy to exhibit these blessings and a greater joy, still, to put them upon the poor, returning wanderer!

God be thanked for giving His servants so great a pleasure! I would not have dared to describe the Lord's *servants* as putting on the robe, the ring and the shoes—but as He has, Himself, done so, I am rejoiced to use the Holy Spirit's own language! How sweet was the command, "Put it on *him*." Yes, put it on the poor trembling, ragged, shivering sinner! "Put it on *him*," even on him, though he can hardly believe such mercy to be possible. "Put it on *him*?" Yes, on *him*. He who was a drunk, a swearer, an adulterer? Yes, put it on *him*, for he repents! What joy it is when we are enabled, by God's commission, to throw that glorious mantle over a great sinner! As for the ring, put it on *him*! That is the beauty of it. And the shoes, put them on *him*. That they are for him is the essence of our joy—that such a sinner, and especially when he is one of our own household—should receive these gifts of Divine Grace is wonderful!

It was most kind of the father to divide the labor of love. One would put on the robe, another the ring and a third the shoes. Some of my Brothers can gloriously preach Jesus Christ in His Righteousness and they put on the best robe. Others seem most gifted in dwelling upon the work of the Spirit of God, and they put on the ring. While yet another class are practical Divines, and they put on the shoes. I do not mind *which* I have to do, if I may but have a *part* in helping to bring to poor sinners those matchless gifts of Grace which, at infinite expense, the Lord has prepared for those who come back to Him!

How glad those were who helped to dress him, I cannot tell. Meanwhile, another servant was gone off out of doors to bring in the fatted calf and perhaps two or three were engaged in killing and dressing it, while another was lighting a fire in the kitchen and preparing the spits for the roast. One laid the table and another ran to the garden to bring flowers to make wreaths for the room—I know I should have done that if I had been there. All were happy! All ready to join in the music and dancing. Those who work for the good of sinners are always the most glad when they are

saved! You who pray for them, you who teach them, you who preach to them, you who win them for Christ—you shall share in their merriment!

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, we are told that they “began to be merry,” and according to the description it would seem that they were merry, indeed, but still they only “began.” I see no intimation that they ever left off. “They began to be merry,” and as merriment is apt to grow beyond all bounds when it once starts, who knows what they have come to by this time? The saints begin to be merry now and they will never cease, but rejoice evermore. On earth all the joy we have is only *beginning* to be merry—it is up in Heaven that we get into full swing! Here our best delight is hardly better than a near tide at its ebb. There the joy rolls along in the majesty of a full spring tide—

***“Oh what rapturous hallelujahs
In our Father’s home above!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
O’er the embraces of His love!
Wondrous welcome—
God’s own welcome,
May the chief of sinners prove.
Sweet melodious strains ascending,
All around a mighty flood;
Servants, friends, with joy attending—
Oh! the happiness of God!
Grace abounding, all transcending,
Through a Savior’s precious blood.”***

Let us begin to be merry this morning! But we cannot unless we are laboring for the salvation of others in all ways possible to us. If we have done and are doing that, let us praise and bless the Lord and rejoice with the reclaimed ones. And let us keep the feast as Jesus would have it kept, for I hope there is no one here of the elder brethren who will be angry and refuse to go in. Let us continue to be merry, as long as we live, because the lost are found and the dead are made alive! God grant you to be merry, on this account, world without end. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 15:11-32.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—548, 1002, 1004.**

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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER—A STEWARD

NO. 192

A SERMON DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.
AT BLOOMSBURY CHAPEL,
ON BEHALF OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION

“Give an account of your stewardship.”
Luke 16:2.

WE have heard many times in our lives that we are all stewards to Almighty God. We hold it as a solemn truth of our religion that the rich man is responsible for the use which he makes of his wealth. The talented man must give an account to God of the interest which he gets upon his talents. Everyone of us, in proportion to our time and opportunities, must give an account for himself before Almighty God. But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, our responsibility is even deeper and greater than that of other men. We have the ordinary responsibility which falls upon all professors of religion to give an account of all we have to God. But besides this, you and I have the extraordinary responsibilities of our official standing—you, as teachers for Christ in your classes. And others of us as preachers for Him before the great congregation.

The first responsibility is too heavy for any man to fulfill. Apart from Divine grace, it is not possible that any man should so use all that God has given him as to be accepted at last with a, “Well done you good and faithful servant.” Yet even if that were possible, it would still remain an utter impossibility for us fully to sustain the fearful weight of responsibility which rests upon us as teachers of the Word of God to our fellow immortals. Upon our necks there are two yokes—sovereign grace can make them light and easy, but apart from that they will gall our shoulders. For they are, of themselves, too heavy for us to bear.

Common responsibility is as Solomon’s whip. But extraordinary responsibility derived from official standing, when not regarded, will be as the scorpion of Rehoboam—its little finger shall be thicker than its father’s loins. Woe unto the watchman who warns them not! Woe unto the minister who fails to teach the Truth! Woe unto the Sunday school teacher who is unfaithful to his trust! Now, let us try to stir one another up upon this seriously important matter. You will pray for me while I preach, that I may utter some things that may do good to all now present and I will labor that God may, in answer to your prayers, give me words and thoughts which shall be blessed to you.

Now first, let me show *the meaning of our being stewards*. Then let us consider *what kind of account we shall have to give*. And lastly, let us notice *the days of reckoning when we OUGHT to cast up our account and the days of reckoning when we MUST give in our account*.

I. First, then, THE STEWARD—WHAT IS HE? In the first place, the steward is a *servant*. He is one of the greatest of servants. But he is only a servant. Perhaps he is the bailiff of a farm and looks, to all intents and purposes, like a country farmer—he rides over his master's estate and has many men under him. Still he is only a servant—he is under authority—he is only a steward. Perhaps he is steward in the house of some gentleman who employs him to see after the whole of his establishment in order that he may be free from cares in that capacity. He is himself a master, but still he is a servant. For he has one over him.

Let him be as proud as he pleases, he has little to be proud of—for the rank he holds in life is the rank of a servant. Now, the minister and the Sunday school teacher specially stand in the rank of servants. We are none of us our own masters. We are not independent gentlemen who may do as we please! Our classes are not our own farms which we may till in our own manner and neglect if we please. They are not such that we may produce any harvest, or none at all, at our own discretion. No, we are nothing better than stewards and we are to labor for our Master in Heaven. What a strange thing it is to see a minister or a teacher giving himself fine airs, as if he were somebody in the world and might do as he pleased. Is it not an anomaly?

How is he to talk about the sacrifices that he makes when he is spending only his master's property? How is he to boast about the time which he expends when his time is not his own? It is all his Master's. He is a servant and therefore, do what he may, he only discharges the duty for which he is well rewarded. He has no reason to be proud or to lord it over others, for whatever his power among them may be, he is himself neither more nor less than a servant. Let each of us try to remember that. "I am only a servant."

If a superintendent puts a teacher in a class which she does not like, she will remember that she is a *servant*. She does not allow her servants at home to stand up and say they are not going to do the dishes but will only wait on tables. They are servants and must do as they are told. And if we felt that we were servants, we should not object to do what we are told for Christ's sake—though we would not do it at the dictation of men—yet for Christ's sake we do it as unto the Lord.

We do not suppose that our servants will come to us at night and expect us to say to them, "You have done your work very well today." We do not imagine that they will look for constant commendation. They are servants and when they get their wages that is their praise for their work. They may judge they are worth their money, or else we should not keep them. When you do your work for Jesus, remember you are only a servant. Do not expect always to have that encouragement which some people are constantly crying after.

If you get encouragement from your pastor or from other teachers or from your friends, be thankful. But if you do not, go on with your work notwithstanding. You are a servant and when you receive your reward, that is of grace and not of debt. Then you will have the highest praises that can be passed upon you—the plaudits of your Lord and eternity with Him whose you are and whom you desire to serve.

But still while the steward is a servant, he is an *honorable one*. It does not do for the other servants in the house to tell him that he is a servant. He will not endure that—he knows it and feels it. He desires to act and work as such, but at the same time he is an honored servant. Now, those who serve Christ in the office of teaching are honorable men and women. I remember to have heard a very unseemly discussion between two persons as to whether the minister was not superior to the Sunday school teacher. It reminded me of that talk of the disciples, as to who among them was the greatest.

Why, we are all of us “the least,” if we feel aright and though we must each of us exalt our office as God has given it to us, yet I see not anywhere in the Bible anything that should lead me to believe that the office of the preacher is more honorable than that of the teacher. It seems to me that every Sunday school teacher has a right to put “Reverend” before his name as much as I have, or if not, if he discharges his trust, he certainly is a “Right Honorable.” He teaches his congregation and preaches to his class. I may preach to more and he to less, but still he is doing the same work, though in a smaller sphere.

I am sure I can sympathize with Mr. Carey, when he said of his son Felix, who left the missionary work to become an ambassador, “Felix has driveled into an ambassador”—meaning to say, that he was once a great person as a missionary but that he had afterwards accepted a comparatively insignificant office. So I think we may say of the Sunday school teacher, if he gives up his work because he cannot attend to it on account of his enlarged business—he drivels into a rich merchant. If he forsakes his teaching because he finds there is so much else to do, he drivels into something less than he was before.

There is one exception—if he is obliged to give up to attend to his own family and makes that family his Sunday school class. There is no driveling there. He stands in the same position as he did before. I say they who teach, they who seek to pluck souls as brands from the burning are to be considered as honored persons—second only to Him from whom they received their commission. But still in some sweet sense lifted up to become fellows with Him, for He calls them His Brethren and His friends. “The servant knows not what his Lord does, but I have called you Friends, for all things I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.”

Only one more thought here. The steward is also a servant *who has very great responsibility attached to his position*. A sense of responsibility seems to a right man always a weighty thing. To do a thing where there is no responsibility involved at all is a very slight matter and hence we find in ordinary affairs that the labor which involves no trust is but poorly paid. But where there is a large amount of trust reposed the labor is paid in proportion. Now the work of the Sunday school teacher is one of the most responsible in the world. It has sometimes staggered me to think how greatly God trusts you and me.

You remember the story of the prodigal. It finds a counterpart in each of us, who after long wandering in sin have come home to Jesus. I sometimes think that a prudent father, when the prodigal was restored to his house, could receive him to his heart, would press him to his bosom

and give him a share of all his wealth. But he would be very slow to trust him in any matter of responsibility. The next market-day the old gentlemen would say, “Now John, I love you with all my heart, but you know you ran away once and spent your living riotously. I must send your elder brother to market. I cannot trust you with my purse—I love you. I have totally forgiven you but at the same time I cannot yet rely upon you.”

Why does not God say so to us? Instead of that, when He takes poor prodigals to His heart, He trusts us with His most precious jewels—He trusts us with immortal souls. He permits us to be the means of seeking His lost sheep and then allows us to feed the lambs after they are gathered. He puts the prodigal into the most important station and has confidence in him. Then, my Brothers and Sisters, seeing He has been gracious enough to repose confidence in such unworthy persons, shall we deceive Him? Oh no—let us earnestly labor as stewards that every part of the estate committed to us shall be found in good order when our Master comes. That every jot and tittle of our account shall be found correct when He sums it up in the great day of the audit before His Throne.

Our office is a very, very solemn one. Some think little of it. Some take it upon themselves very lightly. Giddy youths are enticed into the school and not rendered more sober by their connection with it. Let such depart from us. We want none but those who are sober, none but those who solemnly weigh what they are doing. We want those who enter upon the work as a matter involving life or death—not as a trivial affair which concerns the interests of time—but an awfully solemn thing which even an angel would be incapable of performing, unless he had the abundant assistance of God the Holy Spirit. I have thus endeavored very simply to set forth the idea couched in the word “stewardship.” We are servants highly honored, very responsible and much trusted.

II. And now, THE ACCOUNT—“Give an account of your stewardship.” Let us briefly think of this giving an account of our stewardship.

Let us first notice that when we shall come to give an account of our stewardship before God, that account must be given *personally*, by each of us. While we are here, we talk in the mass. But when we come before God, we shall have to speak as individuals. You hear persons boasting about “*our* Sunday school.” Many persons are wicked enough to call the Sunday school “*their* school,” when they never see it in a year’s time. They say, “I hope *our* school is flourishing,” when they never subscribe a half-penny, when they never give the teachers a word of encouragement, or even a smile and do not know how many children the school contains.

Yet they call it theirs. Thieves that they are, taking to themselves that which does not belong to them! But we, in our measure, make the same mistake. As a ministry, we often talk of the doings of the “body,” and what wonders have been done by the “denomination.” Now, let us remember, when we come before God, there will be no judging us in denominations, no dealing with us in schools and in churches—the account must be given for each one by himself. So, then, you that have the infant class, you will have to give your own account. It was but the other day

you were finding fault with the conduct of the senior class and you were told then to look at home. Conscience told you so.

But at last, when you shall have to stand before God, you will have no account to give of the senior class, but of that infant class committed to you. And you, my Sister, you have been seven or eight years a teacher—you must give an account for yourself, not for that other teacher of another class of whom you have often boasted, because she has been the means of bringing six or seven children to Christ lately.

Remember, her six won't be put with your none at all, in order to make the total at the year's end look respectable. But there will stand your great blank at the end of your labors and there will remain the dark mark for your negligence, for your unpunctuality, your carelessness in your class, without the relief of the bright side of the diligent teacher's success. You must be judged each of you for *yourself*, not in parties, but one by one. This makes it terrible work—for a man to be looked at all alone.

I have known people who could not bear to stand up in a pulpit. The very fact of so many eyes looking upon them seemed so horrible. But how will it be when we must stand up and hear our hearts read by the all-searching eye of God? When the whole of our career in the offices which we now hold will be published before the sun and that—I repeat it—without the salvo of the success of others, without any addition to our labors derived from the diligence of other teachers?

Come, Mr. Steward, what is your account? Not that one, Sir, not that one—*your* account. “Lord, I have brought in the account of the Sunday school books.” “No, not that, the account of *your own* class?” “Well, my Master, I have brought in the account of the class for the last twenty-five years, showing how many were converted.” “No, not that. The account of *your own class while you were its teacher.*” “Well, I have brought in the account of the class during the time I was teacher with So-and-So.” “No, not that. The account of the class while you were the teacher of it *alone*—the account of how you taught what you taught, how you prayed, how earnestly you labored, how diligently you studied, and what you sought to do for Christ.”

Not the accomplishments of the other teacher who helped you in another part of the duty, but your own personal account alone must be brought in before God. “Give an account of *your* stewardship.” Putting it in this light, what account will some of you give at the last and great day? Just let me stop a minute to charge your memories. What kind of account will it be? I trust a very large number here can humbly in their hearts say, “I have done but little, but I did *that* sincerely and prayerfully. May God accept it through Jesus Christ!”

But I fear there are some others, who, if they are true to their consciences, will say, “I have done but little. I did that little carelessly. I did it without prayer. I did it without the help of the Holy Spirit.” Then, my Brother and Sister, I hope you will add after that, “Oh, my God, forgive me and help me from this good hour to be diligent in this Divine business, fervent in my spirit, serving the Lord.” And may God bless you in that prayer! Make no resolution, but offer a *prayer* which is far better. And may you be heard in Heaven, the dwelling place of God.

And note again, that while this account must be personal it must be *exact*. You will not, when you present your account before God, present the gross total, but every separate item. When you give your account of your stewardship, it will be thus. You had so many children. What did you say to this child and to this and to this and to the other? How often did you pray for that child with his bitter temper? For that child with his unbending obstinacy? For that child with its quickness and its sweet affection? For that child, that sulky one? For that child, the headstrong, vicious one that had learned all the evils of the street and seemed to taint others?

What did you do for each one of these? How did you labor for the conversion of each one? And to make the account still more particular it will run thus—What did you do for each child on each Sabbath? You heard one child utter an ill word—did you reprove it? You saw another child oppress a little one—did you deliver the less out of his hand and reprove him and teach both children to love each other? Did you notice the follies of each and strive to understand the temperament of each so that you should fit your discourse or your prayer to each? Did you travail as in birth for the conversion of each one?

Did you agonize in prayer with God and then did you agonize in exhortation with them, beseeching them to be reconciled to Christ? I believe the account will be far more minute than this, when God shall come to try our hearts and reins as well as our works and ways. My poor way of putting it does but becloud the truth which I seek to bring forth, but nevertheless so shall it be—a special and exact account shall be given. And then there shall be an account given for every opportunity—not only for every child, but for every opportunity of doing good to the child.

Did you avail yourself of that afternoon when the child was in a peculiarly solemn frame because his little brother lay at home dead? Did you seek to send the arrows home when Providence had made a wound in his little heart because he had lost his dear mother? Did you seek to turn every event which occurred in the school to account, whether it was joyous or the reverse? God gave you the opportunity and He will at last ask you what you did with it. We shall many of us make but a sorry account, for we have neglected much that we ought to have done. And the general confession must be ours as teachers, “We have done those things which we ought not to have done and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done.”

And then remember, the account will be exact as to everything that we did. We shall not only be examined as to how we addressed the school. We may have had peculiar gifts for that and we may have done well. It will be, “How did you address your own class?” and not that alone, but, “How did you study the lessons?” If you had no time it will not be required of you to do what you could not do, but if you had much leisure how did you spend it? Was it for your children, for your Master’s good, that you might find polished shafts to shoot forth from your bow—that God might bless you—by giving you strength to send them home into the heart?

And then, what did you do in your closet? Were you cold and careless there? Were your children forgotten, or did you bring them on your heart and in your arms and with tears and cries

commend them to Christ? Ah, Sunday school teachers, your closet shall be turned into the open air one day and the contents of your secret chambers be published before the sun. Oh, you whose cob-webbed closets witness against you! Oh, you against whom the beam out of the wall exclaims because your voice has not been heard there, against whom the very floor might bear witness, because it has never felt the weight of your knees—how will you stand this searching test? How will you endure this day of burning, when God shall try you for everything you did and everything you did not do which you ought to have done, in connection with the work of teaching your children? The account must be exact and precise, as well as personal. I shall not stop to enlarge upon that. Your own conscience and judgment can enlarge upon it at home.

Now, remember, once again, that the account must be *complete*. You will not be allowed to leave out something, you will not be allowed to add anything. Perhaps some of you would like to begin with tomorrow, or next Sabbath and strike out the past. No, Sunday school teacher, when God says, “Give an account of your stewardship,” you will have to begin with the day when you first were a teacher. Ah, my God, how many there are who profess to preach the Word, who might well beg that you would let many a year of their ministry be buried in forgetfulness! Ah, might not some of us fall upon our knees and say, “Lord, let me give account of my diligent years, not of my idle years!”

But we must begin with our ordination. We must end with our death and you must begin with the first hour when you sat down in your class. And you must end when life ends and not till then. Does not this put a very solemn aspect upon your account, some of you? You are always saying, “I will be better tomorrow.” Will that blot out yesterday? “I must be more diligent in future.” Will that redeem the lost opportunities which have departed in the years gone by? No—if you have loitered long and lingered much, you will find the hardest running of today will not make up for the loitering of yesterday.

There have been some men who, after spending many years in sin, have been doubly diligent for Christ afterwards, but they have always felt that they have only done the day’s work in the day and they mourned over those years which the locusts had eaten, as gone beyond recall. Oh, catch the moments as they fly, Sunday school teachers! Use the days as they come. Do not be talking about making up for the badness of the first part of the account by the brilliant character of the conclusion.

You cannot do it. You must give an account for each day separately, for each year by itself. And do what you may to retrieve your losses, the losses still stand upon the book and the Master will say, at last, “How came these here?” And, though they are all covered up in Sovereign Grace, if you believe in Christ Jesus, yet you would not wish to have any the more stains for that. Because Christ has washed you, you do not desire to make yourself filthy. Because He has atoned you do not desire to commit sin. No, live, my Brothers and Sisters, as Sunday school teachers should live. Live as if your own salvation depended upon the strictness of your fulfilling your duty. And yet remember your salvation does not depend upon that, but on your personal interest

in the Everlasting Covenant and in the all-prevailing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Israel's Strength and Redeemer.

III. And now, though there are many other things I might say, I fear lest I might weary you. Therefore, let me notice some occasions when it will be WELL for you all to give an account of your stewardship. And then notice when you MUST give an account of it.

You know there is a proverb, that "short reckonings make long friends," and a very true proverb it is. A man will always be at friendship with his conscience as long as he makes short reckonings with it. It was a good rule of the old Puritans, that of making frank and full confession of sin every night. They did not leave a week's sin to be confessed on Saturday night, or Sabbath morning. They recalled the failures, imperfections and mistakes of each day in order that they might learn from one day of failure how to achieve the victory on the morrow. They washed themselves daily from their sins knowing they might preserve the purity and whiteness of their garments. Brothers and Sisters, do the same—make short reckonings.

And it will be well for you every Sabbath evening, or at any other time, if so it pleases you, to make a reckoning of what you do on the Sabbath. I do not say this in order that you may be encouraged in any self-righteous congratulation that you have done well. If you make your reckoning correct, you will never have much cause to congratulate yourself, but always cause to mourn that you did your duty so ill compared with what you ought to have done. When the Sabbath is over and you have been twice to the house of God to teach your class, just sit down and try to remember what were the points in which you failed. Perhaps you exhibited a hasty temper. You spoke to a boy too sharply when he was a little rebellious. Perhaps you were too complacent. You saw sin committed and ought to have reproved it and you did not do so. If you find out your own failing, that is half the way to a cure. Next Sabbath you can try and set it right.

Then there are times which Providence puts in your way which will be excellent seasons for reckoning. For instance, every time a boy or girl leaves the school, there is an opportunity afforded you of thinking to yourselves, "Well, how did I deal with Betsy? How did I treat John? Did I give William such teaching as will help him in his future life to maintain integrity in the midst of temptation and preserve righteousness when he shall be subjected to imminent perils? How did I teach the girl? Did I so teach her that she will know her duty when she goes into the world? Did I strive with all my might to lead her to the foot of the Cross?"

There are many solemn questions which you may put concerning the child. And when you meet with any of them grown up in later years, you will find that a very proper season for giving an account of your stewardship to your conscience, by seeing whether you really did with that person, when a child, as you could have desired.

Then, there is a peculiar time for casting up accounts when a child dies. Ah, what a host of thoughts cluster around the bed of a dying child whom we have taught. Next to the father and the mother, I should think the Sunday school teacher will take the most interest in the dying one. You will remember, "There lies withering the flower which my hand has watered. There is an

immortal soul about to pass the portals of eternity, whom I have taught. O God, have I taught this dying child the Truth, or have I deceived him! Have I dealt faithfully with him? Have I told him of his ruin? Have I set before him how he was fallen in Adam and depraved in himself? Have I told him about the great redemption of Christ? Have I shown him the necessity of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit? Or have I amused him with tales about the historical parts of the Bible and pieces of morality and kept back the weightier matters of the Law?

Can I put my hand into his dying hand and silently lifting my heart to Heaven, can I say, “O God You know I am clear of his blood”? Ah, that is a thing that stings the minister often—when he recollects that any of his congregation are dying. When I stand sometimes by the deathbed of any of the ungodly in my congregation, it brings many a tearful thought to me. Have I been as earnest as I ought to have been? Did I cry to this man, “Escape for your life, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, flee to the mountains!”?

Did I pray for him, weep over him, tell him of his sin, preach Christ simply, plainly, boldly, to him? Was there not an occasion when I used lightness when I ought to have been solemn? Might there not have been a season when I uttered something by mistake which may have been a pillow for the armhole of his conscience on which he might rest? Have not I helped to smooth his path to Hell, instead of putting blocks in his way and chains across his path that he might be turned out of it and led to seek the Savior?

Ah, while we know that salvation is all of grace let none of us imagine we are free from the blood of souls unless we warn them with diligence, unless we preach with faithfulness. For this same Bible which tells me that Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, tells me that if I warn them not, their blood, if they perish, shall be required at my hand.

But now, Teacher, let me tell you an occasion when you must give your account. You may put off all these seasons if you like. You may live as carelessly as you please, but if you have a particle of heart in you, you will have to give an account when you are sick and cannot go to your class. If your conscience is worth having—which some people’s consciences are not, for they are dead and seared—if your conscience is an awakened one, when you are put out of your work, you will begin to think how you did it.

You should read the letters of that holy man Rutherford. If ever there was a man who preached the Gospel sweetly and with Divine unction, I should think it must have been he. And yet when he was shut up in Aberdeen and could not get out to his much-loved flock, he said, “Ah, if the Lord will let me go out to preach again, I will never be such a dull drone as I was likely to be. I will preach with tears in my eyes, so that the people may be comforted and the sinners converted.” Perhaps when you are lying ill in your bed-room, little Jane comes to see you and says, “I hope you will soon get well, teacher.” Or William, or Thomas calls and enquires about you every Sunday afternoon and asks the servant to give his love to you and hopes that teacher will soon come back again.

Then is the time when I know you will be sure to cast up your account. You will say, “Ah, when I get back to my class, I won’t teach them as I used to do. I will study my lesson more, I will pray more. I won’t be so hot or so fast with them as I was likely to be. I will bear with their ill manners. Ah, if my Master will give me, like Hezekiah, another fifteen years of labor and will give me more grace, I will strive to be better.” You will be sure to cast up your accounts when you get sick.

But if you do not do it then, I will tell you when you *must*. That is when you come *to die*. What a dreadful thing it must be to be an unfaithful preacher on a deathbed. (Oh that I may be saved from that)! To be upon one’s bed when life is over. To have had great opportunities, mighty congregations and to have been so diligent about something else as to have neglected to preach the full and free Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! Methinks as I lie in my bed a-dying, I should see specters and grim things in the room. One would come and stare upon me and say, “Ah, you are dying. Remember how many times I sat in the front of the gallery and listened to you, but you never once told me to escape from the wrath to come. You were talking to me about something I did not understand. But the simple matter of the Gospel you never preached to me and I died in doubt and trembling. And now you are coming to me to the Hell which I have inherited because you were unfaithful.”

And when in our gray and dying age we see the generations which have grown up around our pulpits, we shall think of them all. We shall think of the time when as striplings we first began to preach. We shall remember the youths that then crowded, then the men and then the gray heads that passed away. And methinks as they come on in grim procession, they will everyone leave a fresh curse upon our conscience because we were unfaithful. The deathbed of a man who has murdered his fellows, of some grim tyrant who has let the bloodhounds of war loose upon mankind must be an awful thing.

When the soldier and the soldier’s widow and the murdered man of peace rise up before him. When the smoke of devastated countries seems to blow into his eyes and make them sore and red. When the blood of men hangs on his conscience like a great red pall. When bloody murder, the grim chamberlain, draws red curtains round his bed and when he begins to approach the last end where the murderer must inherit his dreary doom—it must be a fearful time indeed. But, methinks to have murdered *souls* must be more awful still—to have distributed poison to children instead of bread, to have given them stones when they asked us for right food—to have taught them error when we ought to have taught them the Truth as it is in Jesus, or to have spoken to them with cold listlessness when earnestness was needed. Oh, how your children seem to curse you, when you lie there and have been unfaithful to your charge! Yes, you will have to cast up your account then.

But let me tell you, your hope must all be fixed on Jesus and that must be the consolation of your life and death. And it will be very sweet when you come to die, you that have been successful in winning souls to Christ. Ah, that will bring a little life into the cheek of the consumptive

teacher who dying young, when you remind her that there was a little girl who, a year before she was taken ill, kissed her hand and said, “Good bye, teacher, we shall meet in Heaven. Do not you remember, Teacher, telling me the story of Jesus on the Cross and taking me home one Sunday afternoon and putting your arms around my neck and kneeling down and praying that God would bless me? Oh my Teacher, that brought me to Jesus.”

Yes, Teacher, when you are lying on your bed, pale and consumptive, you will remember that there is one up there beside your Savior who will receive you into eternal habitations—that young spirit who has gone before you—who by your means was emancipated from the wickedness and bondage of a sinful world. Happy is the teacher who has the hope of meeting a whole band of such in Heaven! Such a thought often cheers me. Let the world say what it will, I know when I die there are many a spirit that will think of me in after years as the man who preached the Gospel to him. Many a drunkard brought to Jesus and many a harlot reclaimed, by God’s grace.

And to the teacher it must be the same to think that when he claps his wings and mounts from this lower valley of earth to Heaven, he will see a bright spirit coming down to meet him and he will hear the Spirit saying—

“Sister spirit, come away.”

And when he opens his eyes, he will see that the song came from the lips of one to whom he had been blessed as the means of conversion. Happy you who shall be welcomed at the gates of Paradise by your spiritual sons and daughters and who shall have besides your Master’s welcome, the welcome of those whom He has given you to be jewels in your crown of glory forever and ever.

Now to conclude. We must all give an account to God in the Day of Judgment. That is the thing which makes death so terrible. Oh, Death, if you were all, what are you but a pinch and all is over! But after Death the Judgment. *This* is the sting of the dragon to the ungodly. The last great day is come. The books are opened—men, women and children are assembled. Many have come and some on the right and some on the left, have already heard the sentence. It is now your turn. Teacher! What account will you render? In the first place, are you in Christ yourself? Or have you taught to others what you did not know yourself?

Have I any such here? Doubtless, I have, for alas, there are many such in our schools. Oh, my Friend, what will you say when the Master, opening the book, shall ask you, “What had you to do, to declare *my* statutes?” Will you look at Him and say, “Lord I taught in Your schools and You have eaten and drunk in our streets.” If you should say so, He will say, “Verily, I never knew you, depart from me you cursed.”

Then, what have you to say with regard to your schools—for although our state at last will really be settled according to our interest in Christ, you will be *judged* by your works, as evidences. The Scripture always says that we are to be judged according to our works. Well, then, the book is opened. Some of you hear your own name read and you hear that one brief sentence—“Inasmuch as you have been faithful over a few things I will make you a ruler over many things—enter you into the joy of your Lord!” Oh, Heaven of heavens! And is this the reward of

the little trouble of teaching a few children? Oh, Master, You give ingots of gold for our grains of dust—our fragments of service You reward with crowns and kingdoms!

But He turns to others and to some of you He says, “Inasmuch as you did it not unto the least of these my Brethren, you did it not unto Me. Depart from Me into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Which of these two shall be said to *me*? Which of these two shall be said to *you*? “Oh, as in God’s sight I charge you by Him who is the Judge of the quick and dead, by the swiftness of His chariot wheels which now are bringing Him here, by the solemnity of His awful tribunal, by that sentence which shall never be reversed—judge yourselves—for then you shall not be judged.

Give an account of your stewardship to your conscience and to your God. Confess your sins, seek His help and begin from this hour, by His Holy Spirit, to undertake His work afresh. And may you stand before His face clothed in the righteousness of your Redeemer and washed in His blood. Though not boasting in your works may you be able to stand accepted in Him and your works shall follow when you rise from your labors and you shall be among the blessed that die in the Lord.

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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER— A STEWARD NO. 192

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.
AT BLOOMSBURY CHAPEL,
ON BEHALF OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION**

*“Give an account of your stewardship.”
Luke 16:2.*

WE have heard many times in our lives that we are all stewards to Almighty God. We hold it as a solemn truth of our religion that the rich man is responsible for the use which he makes of his wealth. The talented man must give an account to God of the interest which he gets upon his talents. Everyone of us, in proportion to our time and opportunities, must give an account for himself before Almighty God. But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, our responsibility is even deeper and greater than that of other men. We have the ordinary responsibility which falls upon all professors of religion to give an account of all we have to God. But besides this, you and I have the extraordinary responsibilities of our official standing—you, as teachers for Christ in your classes. And others of us as preachers for Him before the great congregation.

The first responsibility is too heavy for any man to fulfill. Apart from Divine grace, it is not possible that any man should so use all that God has given him as to be accepted at last with a, “Well done you good and faithful servant.” Yet even if that were possible, it would still remain an utter impossibility for us fully to sustain the fearful weight of responsibility which rests upon us as teachers of the Word of God to our fellow immortals. Upon our necks there are two yokes—sovereign grace can make them light and easy, but apart from that they will gall our shoulders. For they are, of themselves, too heavy for us to bear.

Common responsibility is as Solomon’s whip. But extraordinary responsibility derived from official standing, when not regarded, will be as the scorpion of Rehoboam—its little finger shall be thicker than its father’s loins. Woe unto the watchman who warns them not! Woe unto the minister who fails to teach the Truth! Woe unto the Sunday school teacher who is unfaithful to his trust! Now, let us try to stir one another up upon this seriously important matter. You will pray for me while I preach, that I may utter some things that may do good to all now present and I will labor that God may, in answer to your prayers, give me words and thoughts which shall be blessed to you.

Now first, let me show *the meaning of our being stewards*. Then let us consider *what kind of account we shall have to give*. And lastly, let us no-

tice *the days of reckoning when we OUGHT to cast up our account and the days of reckoning when we MUST give in our account.*

I. First, then, THE STEWARD—WHAT IS HE? In the first place, the steward is a *servant*. He is one of the greatest of servants. But he is only a servant. Perhaps he is the bailiff of a farm and looks, to all intents and purposes, like a country farmer—he rides over his master’s estate and has many men under him. Still he is only a servant—he is under authority—he is only a steward. Perhaps he is steward in the house of some gentleman who employs him to see after the whole of his establishment in order that he may be free from cares in that capacity. He is himself a master, but still he is a servant. For he has one over him.

Let him be as proud as he pleases, he has little to be proud of—for the rank he holds in life is the rank of a servant. Now, the minister and the Sunday school teacher specially stand in the rank of servants. We are none of us our own masters. We are not independent gentlemen who may do as we please! Our classes are not our own farms which we may till in our own manner and neglect if we please. They are not such that we may produce any harvest, or none at all, at our own discretion. No, we are nothing better than stewards and we are to labor for our Master in Heaven. What a strange thing it is to see a minister or a teacher giving himself fine airs, as if he were somebody in the world and might do as he pleased. Is it not an anomaly?

How is he to talk about the sacrifices that he makes when he is spending only his master’s property? How is he to boast about the time which he expends when his time is not his own? It is all his Master’s. He is a servant and therefore, do what he may, he only discharges the duty for which he is well rewarded. He has no reason to be proud or to lord it over others, for whatever his power among them may be, he is himself neither more nor less than a servant. Let each of us try to remember that. “I am only a servant.”

If a superintendent puts a teacher in a class which she does not like, she will remember that she is a *servant*. She does not allow her servants at home to stand up and say they are not going to do the dishes but will only wait on tables. They are servants and must do as they are told. And if we felt that we were servants, we should not object to do what we are told for Christ’s sake—though we would not do it at the dictation of men—yet for Christ’s sake we do it as unto the Lord.

We do not suppose that our servants will come to us at night and expect us to say to them, “You have done your work very well today.” We do not imagine that they will look for constant commendation. They are servants and when they get their wages that is their praise for their work. They may judge they are worth their money, or else we should not keep them. When you do your work for Jesus, remember you are only a servant. Do not expect always to have that encouragement which some people are constantly crying after.

If you get encouragement from your pastor or from other teachers or from your friends, be thankful. But if you do not, go on with your work

notwithstanding. You are a servant and when you receive your reward, that is of grace and not of debt. Then you will have the highest praises that can be passed upon you—the plaudits of your Lord and eternity with Him whose you are and whom you desire to serve.

But still while the steward is a servant, he is an *honorable one*. It does not do for the other servants in the house to tell him that he is a servant. He will not endure that—he knows it and feels it. He desires to act and work as such, but at the same time he is an honored servant. Now, those who serve Christ in the office of teaching are honorable men and women. I remember to have heard a very unseemly discussion between two persons as to whether the minister was not superior to the Sunday school teacher. It reminded me of that talk of the disciples, as to who among them was the greatest.

Why, we are all of us “the least,” if we feel aright and though we must each of us exalt our office as God has given it to us, yet I see not anywhere in the Bible anything that should lead me to believe that the office of the preacher is more honorable than that of the teacher. It seems to me that every Sunday school teacher has a right to put “Reverend” before his name as much as I have, or if not, if he discharges his trust, he certainly is a “Right Honorable.” He teaches his congregation and preaches to his class. I may preach to more and he to less, but still he is doing the same work, though in a smaller sphere.

I am sure I can sympathize with Mr. Carey, when he said of his son Felix, who left the missionary work to become an ambassador, “Felix has drived into an ambassador”—meaning to say, that he was once a great person as a missionary but that he had afterwards accepted a comparatively insignificant office. So I think we may say of the Sunday school teacher, if he gives up his work because he cannot attend to it on account of his enlarged business—he drivels into a rich merchant. If he forsakes his teaching because he finds there is so much else to do, he drivels into something less than he was before.

There is one exception—if he is obliged to give up to attend to his own family and makes that family his Sunday school class. There is no driveling there. He stands in the same position as he did before. I say they who teach, they who seek to pluck souls as brands from the burning are to be considered as honored persons—second only to Him from whom they received their commission. But still in some sweet sense lifted up to become fellows with Him, for He calls them His Brethren and His friends. “The servant knows not what his Lord does, but I have called you Friends, for all things I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.”

Only one more thought here. The steward is also a servant *who has very great responsibility attached to his position*. A sense of responsibility seems to a right man always a weighty thing. To do a thing where there is no responsibility involved at all is a very slight matter and hence we find in ordinary affairs that the labor which involves no trust is but poorly paid. But where there is a large amount of trust reposed the labor is paid in proportion. Now the work of the Sunday school teacher is one of the

most responsible in the world. It has sometimes staggered me to think how greatly God trusts you and me.

You remember the story of the prodigal. It finds a counterpart in each of us, who after long wandering in sin have come home to Jesus. I sometimes think that a prudent father, when the prodigal was restored to his house, could receive him to his heart, would press him to his bosom and give him a share of all his wealth. But he would be very slow to trust him in any matter of responsibility. The next market-day the old gentlemen would say, "Now John, I love you with all my heart, but you know you ran away once and spent your living riotously. I must send your elder brother to market. I cannot trust you with my purse—I love you. I have totally forgiven you but at the same time I cannot yet rely upon you."

Why does not God say so to us? Instead of that, when He takes poor prodigals to His heart, He trusts us with His most precious jewels—He trusts us with immortal souls. He permits us to be the means of seeking His lost sheep and then allows us to feed the lambs after they are gathered. He puts the prodigal into the most important station and has confidence in him. Then, my Brothers and Sisters, seeing He has been gracious enough to repose confidence in such unworthy persons, shall we deceive Him? Oh no—let us earnestly labor as stewards that every part of the estate committed to us shall be found in good order when our Master comes. That every jot and tittle of our account shall be found correct when He sums it up in the great day of the audit before His Throne.

Our office is a very, very solemn one. Some think little of it. Some take it upon themselves very lightly. Giddy youths are enticed into the school and not rendered more sober by their connection with it. Let such depart from us. We want none but those who are sober, none but those who solemnly weigh what they are doing. We want those who enter upon the work as a matter involving life or death—not as a trivial affair which concerns the interests of time—but an awfully solemn thing which even an angel would be incapable of performing, unless he had the abundant assistance of God the Holy Spirit. I have thus endeavored very simply to set forth the idea couched in the word "stewardship." We are servants highly honored, very responsible and much trusted.

II. And now, THE ACCOUNT—"Give an account of your stewardship." Let us briefly think of this giving an account of our stewardship.

Let us first notice that when we shall come to give an account of our stewardship before God, that account must be given *personally*, by each of us. While we are here, we talk in the mass. But when we come before God, we shall have to speak as individuals. You hear persons boasting about "*our* Sunday school." Many persons are wicked enough to call the Sunday school "*their* school," when they never see it in a year's time. They say, "I hope *our* school is flourishing," when they never subscribe a half-penny, when they never give the teachers a word of encouragement, or even a smile and do not know how many children the school contains.

Yet they call it theirs. Thieves that they are, taking to themselves that which does not belong to them! But we, in our measure, make the same

mistake. As a ministry, we often talk of the doings of the “body,” and what wonders have been done by the “denomination.” Now, let us remember, when we come before God, there will be no judging us in denominations, no dealing with us in schools and in churches—the account must be given for each one by himself. So, then, you that have the infant class, you will have to give your own account. It was but the other day you were finding fault with the conduct of the senior class and you were told then to look at home. Conscience told you so.

But at last, when you shall have to stand before God, you will have no account to give of the senior class, but of that infant class committed to you. And you, my Sister, you have been seven or eight years a teacher—you must give an account for yourself, not for that other teacher of another class of whom you have often boasted, because she has been the means of bringing six or seven children to Christ lately.

Remember, her six won't be put with your none at all, in order to make the total at the year's end look respectable. But there will stand your great blank at the end of your labors and there will remain the dark mark for your negligence, for your unpunctuality, your carelessness in your class, without the relief of the bright side of the diligent teacher's success. You must be judged each of you for *yourself*, not in parties, but one by one. This makes it terrible work—for a man to be looked at all alone.

I have known people who could not bear to stand up in a pulpit. The very fact of so many eyes looking upon them seemed so horrible. But how will it be when we must stand up and hear our hearts read by the all-searching eye of God? When the whole of our career in the offices which we now hold will be published before the sun and that—I repeat it—without the salvo of the success of others, without any addition to our labors derived from the diligence of other teachers?

Come, Mr. Steward, what is your account? Not that one, Sir, not that one—*your* account. “Lord, I have brought in the account of the Sunday school books.” “No, not that, the account of *your own* class?” “Well, my Master, I have brought in the account of the class for the last twenty-five years, showing how many were converted.” “No, not that. The account of *your own class while you were its teacher.*” “Well, I have brought in the account of the class during the time I was teacher with So-and-So.” “No, not that. The account of the class while you were the teacher of it *alone*—the account of how you taught what you taught, how you prayed, how earnestly you labored, how diligently you studied, and what you sought to do for Christ.”

Not the accomplishments of the other teacher who helped you in another part of the duty, but your own personal account alone must be brought in before God. “Give an account of *your* stewardship.” Putting it in this light, what account will some of you give at the last and great day? Just let me stop a minute to charge your memories. What kind of account will it be? I trust a very large number here can humbly in their hearts say, “I have done but little, but I did *that* sincerely and prayerfully. May God accept it through Jesus Christ!”

But I fear there are some others, who, if they are true to their consciences, will say, "I have done but little. I did that little carelessly. I did it without prayer. I did it without the help of the Holy Spirit." Then, my Brother and Sister, I hope you will add after that, "Oh, my God, forgive me and help me from this good hour to be diligent in this Divine business, fervent in my spirit, serving the Lord." And may God bless you in that prayer! Make no resolution, but offer a *prayer* which is far better. And may you be heard in Heaven, the dwelling place of God.

And note again, that while this account must be personal it must be *exact*. You will not, when you present your account before God, present the gross total, but every separate item. When you give your account of your stewardship, it will be thus. You had so many children. What did you say to this child and to this and to this and to the other? How often did you pray for that child with his bitter temper? For that child with his unbending obstinacy? For that child with its quickness and its sweet affection? For that child, that sulky one? For that child, the headstrong, vicious one that had learned all the evils of the street and seemed to taint others?

What did you do for each one of these? How did you labor for the conversion of each one? And to make the account still more particular it will run thus—What did you do for each child on each Sabbath? You heard one child utter an ill word—did you reprove it? You saw another child oppress a little one—did you deliver the less out of his hand and reprove him and teach both children to love each other? Did you notice the follies of each and strive to understand the temperament of each so that you should fit your discourse or your prayer to each? Did you travail as in birth for the conversion of each one?

Did you agonize in prayer with God and then did you agonize in exhortation with them, beseeching them to be reconciled to Christ? I believe the account will be far more minute than this, when God shall come to try our hearts and reins as well as our works and ways. My poor way of putting it does but becloud the truth which I seek to bring forth, but nevertheless so shall it be—a special and exact account shall be given. And then there shall be an account given for every opportunity—not only for every child, but for every opportunity of doing good to the child.

Did you avail yourself of that afternoon when the child was in a peculiarly solemn frame because his little brother lay at home dead? Did you seek to send the arrows home when Providence had made a wound in his little heart because he had lost his dear mother? Did you seek to turn every event which occurred in the school to account, whether it was joyous or the reverse? God gave you the opportunity and He will at last ask you what you did with it. We shall many of us make but a sorry account, for we have neglected much that we ought to have done. And the general confession must be ours as teachers, "We have done those things which we ought not to have done and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done."

And then remember, the account will be exact as to everything that we did. We shall not only be examined as to how we addressed the school. We may have had peculiar gifts for that and we may have done well. It will be, "How did you address your own class?" and not that alone, but, "How did you study the lessons?" If you had no time it will not be required of you to do what you could not do, but if you had much leisure how did you spend it? Was it for your children, for your Master's good, that you might find polished shafts to shoot forth from your bow—that God might bless you—by giving you strength to send them home into the heart?

And then, what did you do in your closet? Were you cold and careless there? Were your children forgotten, or did you bring them on your heart and in your arms and with tears and cries commend them to Christ? Ah, Sunday school teachers, your closet shall be turned into the open air one day and the contents of your secret chambers be published before the sun. Oh, you whose cob-webbed closets witness against you! Oh, you against whom the beam out of the wall exclaims because your voice has not been heard there, against whom the very floor might bear witness, because it has never felt the weight of your knees—how will you stand this searching test? How will you endure this day of burning, when God shall try you for everything you did and everything you did not do which you ought to have done, in connection with the work of teaching your children? The account must be exact and precise, as well as personal. I shall not stop to enlarge upon that. Your own conscience and judgment can enlarge upon it at home.

Now, remember, once again, that the account must be *complete*. You will not be allowed to leave out something, you will not be allowed to add anything. Perhaps some of you would like to begin with tomorrow, or next Sabbath and strike out the past. No, Sunday school teacher, when God says, "Give an account of your stewardship," you will have to begin with the day when you first were a teacher. Ah, my God, how many there are who profess to preach the Word, who might well beg that you would let many a year of their ministry be buried in forgetfulness! Ah, might not some of us fall upon our knees and say, "Lord, let me give account of my diligent years, not of my idle years!"

But we must begin with our ordination. We must end with our death and you must begin with the first hour when you sat down in your class. And you must end when life ends and not till then. Does not this put a very solemn aspect upon your account, some of you? You are always saying, "I will be better tomorrow." Will that blot out yesterday? "I must be more diligent in future." Will that redeem the lost opportunities which have departed in the years gone by? No—if you have loitered long and lingered much, you will find the hardest running of today will not make up for the loitering of yesterday.

There have been some men who, after spending many years in sin, have been doubly diligent for Christ afterwards, but they have always felt that they have only done the day's work in the day and they mourned over those years which the locusts had eaten, as gone beyond recall. Oh, catch

the moments as they fly, Sunday school teachers! Use the days as they come. Do not be talking about making up for the badness of the first part of the account by the brilliant character of the conclusion.

You cannot do it. You must give an account for each day separately, for each year by itself. And do what you may to retrieve your losses, the losses still stand upon the book and the Master will say, at last, "How came these here?" And, though they are all covered up in Sovereign Grace, if you believe in Christ Jesus, yet you would not wish to have any the more stains for that. Because Christ has washed you, you do not desire to make yourself filthy. Because He has atoned you do not desire to commit sin. No, live, my Brothers and Sisters, as Sunday school teachers should live. Live as if your own salvation depended upon the strictness of your fulfilling your duty. And yet remember your salvation does not depend upon that, but on your personal interest in the Everlasting Covenant and in the all-prevailing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Israel's Strength and Redeemer.

III. And now, though there are many other things I might say, I fear lest I might weary you. Therefore, let me notice some occasions when it will be WELL for you all to give an account of your stewardship. And then notice when you MUST give an account of it.

You know there is a proverb, that "short reckonings make long friends," and a very true proverb it is. A man will always be at friendship with his conscience as long as he makes short reckonings with it. It was a good rule of the old Puritans, that of making frank and full confession of sin every night. They did not leave a week's sin to be confessed on Saturday night, or Sabbath morning. They recalled the failures, imperfections and mistakes of each day in order that they might learn from one day of failure how to achieve the victory on the morrow. They washed themselves daily from their sins knowing they might preserve the purity and whiteness of their garments. Brothers and Sisters, do the same—make short reckonings.

And it will be well for you every Sabbath evening, or at any other time, if so it pleases you, to make a reckoning of what you do on the Sabbath. I do not say this in order that you may be encouraged in any self-righteous congratulation that you have done well. If you make your reckoning correct, you will never have much cause to congratulate yourself, but always cause to mourn that you did your duty so ill compared with what you ought to have done. When the Sabbath is over and you have been twice to the house of God to teach your class, just sit down and try to remember what were the points in which you failed. Perhaps you exhibited a hasty temper. You spoke to a boy too sharply when he was a little rebellious. Perhaps you were too complacent. You saw sin committed and ought to have reproved it and you did not do so. If you find out your own failing, that is half the way to a cure. Next Sabbath you can try and set it right.

Then there are times which Providence puts in your way which will be excellent seasons for reckoning. For instance, every time a boy or girl leaves the school, there is an opportunity afforded you of thinking to

yourselves, “Well, how did I deal with Betsy? How did I treat John? Did I give William such teaching as will help him in his future life to maintain integrity in the midst of temptation and preserve righteousness when he shall be subjected to imminent perils? How did I teach the girl? Did I so teach her that she will know her duty when she goes into the world? Did I strive with all my might to lead her to the foot of the Cross?”

There are many solemn questions which you may put concerning the child. And when you meet with any of them grown up in later years, you will find that a very proper season for giving an account of your stewardship to your conscience, by seeing whether you really did with that person, when a child, as you could have desired.

Then, there is a peculiar time for casting up accounts when a child dies. Ah, what a host of thoughts cluster around the bed of a dying child whom we have taught. Next to the father and the mother, I should think the Sunday school teacher will take the most interest in the dying one. You will remember, “There lies withering the flower which my hand has watered. There is an immortal soul about to pass the portals of eternity, whom I have taught. O God, have I taught this dying child the Truth, or have I deceived him! Have I dealt faithfully with him? Have I told him of his ruin? Have I set before him how he was fallen in Adam and depraved in himself? Have I told him about the great redemption of Christ? Have I shown him the necessity of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit? Or have I amused him with tales about the historical parts of the Bible and pieces of morality and kept back the weightier matters of the Law?”

Can I put my hand into his dying hand and silently lifting my heart to Heaven, can I say, “O God You know I am clear of his blood”? Ah, that is a thing that stings the minister often—when he recollects that any of his congregation are dying. When I stand sometimes by the deathbed of any of the ungodly in my congregation, it brings many a tearful thought to me. Have I been as earnest as I ought to have been? Did I cry to this man, “Escape for your life, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, flee to the mountains!”?

Did I pray for him, weep over him, tell him of his sin, preach Christ simply, plainly, boldly, to him? Was there not an occasion when I used lightness when I ought to have been solemn? Might there not have been a season when I uttered something by mistake which may have been a pillow for the armhole of his conscience on which he might rest? Have not I helped to smooth his path to Hell, instead of putting blocks in his way and chains across his path that he might be turned out of it and led to seek the Savior?

Ah, while we know that salvation is all of grace let none of us imagine we are free from the blood of souls unless we warn them with diligence, unless we preach with faithfulness. For this same Bible which tells me that Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, tells me that if I warn them not, their blood, if they perish, shall be required at my hand.

But now, Teacher, let me tell you an occasion when you must give your account. You may put off all these seasons if you like. You may live as carelessly as you please, but if you have a particle of heart in you, you will have to give an account when you are sick and cannot go to your class. If your conscience is worth having—which some people's consciences are not, for they are dead and seared—if your conscience is an awakened one, when you are put out of your work, you will begin to think how you did it.

You should read the letters of that holy man Rutherford. If ever there was a man who preached the Gospel sweetly and with Divine unction, I should think it must have been he. And yet when he was shut up in Aberdeen and could not get out to his much-loved flock, he said, "Ah, if the Lord will let me go out to preach again, I will never be such a dull drone as I was likely to be. I will preach with tears in my eyes, so that the people may be comforted and the sinners converted." Perhaps when you are lying ill in your bed-room, little Jane comes to see you and says, "I hope you will soon get well, teacher." Or William, or Thomas calls and enquires about you every Sunday afternoon and asks the servant to give his love to you and hopes that teacher will soon come back again.

Then is the time when I know you will be sure to cast up your account. You will say, "Ah, when I get back to my class, I won't teach them as I used to do. I will study my lesson more, I will pray more. I won't be so hot or so fast with them as I was likely to be. I will bear with their ill manners. Ah, if my Master will give me, like Hezekiah, another fifteen years of labor and will give me more grace, I will strive to be better." You will be sure to cast up your accounts when you get sick.

But if you do not do it then, I will tell you when you *must*. That is when you come *to die*. What a dreadful thing it must be to be an unfaithful preacher on a deathbed. (Oh that I may be saved from that!) To be upon one's bed when life is over. To have had great opportunities, mighty congregations and to have been so diligent about something else as to have neglected to preach the full and free Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! Methinks as I lie in my bed a-dying, I should see specters and grim things in the room. One would come and stare upon me and say, "Ah, you are dying. Remember how many times I sat in the front of the gallery and listened to you, but you never once told me to escape from the wrath to come. You were talking to me about something I did not understand. But the simple matter of the Gospel you never preached to me and I died in doubt and trembling. And now you are coming to me to the Hell which I have inherited because you were unfaithful."

And when in our gray and dying age we see the generations which have grown up around our pulpits, we shall think of them all. We shall think of the time when as striplings we first began to preach. We shall remember the youths that then crowded, then the men and then the gray heads that passed away. And methinks as they come on in grim procession, they will everyone leave a fresh curse upon our conscience because we were unfaithful. The deathbed of a man who has murdered his fellows, of some

grim tyrant who has let the bloodhounds of war loose upon mankind must be an awful thing.

When the soldier and the soldier's widow and the murdered man of peace rise up before him. When the smoke of devastated countries seems to blow into his eyes and make them sore and red. When the blood of men hangs on his conscience like a great red pall. When bloody murder, the grim chamberlain, draws red curtains round his bed and when he begins to approach the last end where the murderer must inherit his dreary doom—it must be a fearful time indeed. But, methinks to have murdered *souls* must be more awful still—to have distributed poison to children instead of bread, to have given them stones when they asked us for right food—to have taught them error when we ought to have taught them the Truth as it is in Jesus, or to have spoken to them with cold listlessness when earnestness was needed. Oh, how your children seem to curse you, when you lie there and have been unfaithful to your charge! Yes, you will have to cast up your account then.

But let me tell you, your hope must all be fixed on Jesus and that must be the consolation of your life and death. And it will be very sweet when you come to die, you that have been successful in winning souls to Christ. Ah, that will bring a little life into the cheek of the consumptive teacher who dying young, when you remind her that there was a little girl who, a year before she was taken ill, kissed her hand and said, "Good bye, teacher, we shall meet in Heaven. Do not you remember, Teacher, telling me the story of Jesus on the Cross and taking me home one Sunday afternoon and putting your arms around my neck and kneeling down and praying that God would bless me? Oh my Teacher, that brought me to Jesus."

Yes, Teacher, when you are lying on your bed, pale and consumptive, you will remember that there is one up there beside your Savior who will receive you into eternal habitations—that young spirit who has gone before you—who by your means was emancipated from the wickedness and bondage of a sinful world. Happy is the teacher who has the hope of meeting a whole band of such in Heaven! Such a thought often cheers me. Let the world say what it will, I know when I die there are many a spirit that will think of me in after years as the man who preached the Gospel to him. Many a drunkard brought to Jesus and many a harlot reclaimed, by God's grace.

And to the teacher it must be the same to think that when he claps his wings and mounts from this lower valley of earth to Heaven, he will see a bright spirit coming down to meet him and he will hear the Spirit saying—

"Sister spirit, come away."

And when he opens his eyes, he will see that the song came from the lips of one to whom he had been blessed as the means of conversion. Happy you who shall be welcomed at the gates of Paradise by your spiritual sons and daughters and who shall have besides your Master's welcome, the welcome of those whom He has given you to be jewels in your crown of glory forever and ever.

Now to conclude. We must all give an account to God in the Day of Judgment. That is the thing which makes death so terrible. Oh, Death, if you were all, what are you but a pinch and all is over! But after Death the Judgment. *This* is the sting of the dragon to the ungodly. The last great day is come. The books are opened—men, women and children are assembled. Many have come and some on the right and some on the left, have already heard the sentence. It is now your turn. Teacher! What account will you render? In the first place, are you in Christ yourself? Or have you taught to others what you did not know yourself?

Have I any such here? Doubtless, I have, for alas, there are many such in our schools. Oh, my Friend, what will you say when the Master, opening the book, shall ask you, “What had you to do, to declare *my* statutes?” Will you look at Him and say, “Lord I taught in Your schools and You have eaten and drunk in our streets.” If you should say so, He will say, “Verily, I never knew you, depart from me you cursed.”

Then, what have you to say with regard to your schools—for although our state at last will really be settled according to our interest in Christ, you will be *judged* by your works, as evidences. The Scripture always says that we are to be judged according to our works. Well, then, the book is opened. Some of you hear your own name read and you hear that one brief sentence—“Inasmuch as you have been faithful over a few things I will make you a ruler over many things—enter you into the joy of your Lord!” Oh, Heaven of heavens! And is this the reward of the little trouble of teaching a few children? Oh, Master, You give ingots of gold for our grains of dust—our fragments of service You reward with crowns and kingdoms!

But He turns to others and to some of you He says, “Inasmuch as you did it not unto the least of these my Brethren, you did it not unto Me. Depart from Me into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Which of these two shall be said to *me*? Which of these two shall be said to *you*? “Oh, as in God’s sight I charge you by Him who is the Judge of the quick and dead, by the swiftness of His chariot wheels which now are bringing Him here, by the solemnity of His awful tribunal, by that sentence which shall never be reversed—judge yourselves—for then you shall not be judged.

Give an account of your stewardship to your conscience and to your God. Confess your sins, seek His help and begin from this hour, by His Holy Spirit, to undertake His work afresh. And may you stand before His face clothed in the righteousness of your Redeemer and washed in His blood. Though not boasting in your works may you be able to stand accepted in Him and your works shall follow when you rise from your labors and you shall be among the blessed that die in the Lord.

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THE LAST SERMON FOR THE YEAR NO. 2445

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 29, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Give an account of your stewardship, for you may no longer be steward.”
Luke 16:2.

THE first part of this text applies to us all. The second part will apply to each one of us before long. “Give an account of your stewardship,” is a command that may be addressed to the ungodly. They are accountable to God for all that they have, or have ever had, or ever shall have. The Law of the Lord is not relaxed because they have sinned—they still remain responsible to God even though they attempt to cast off the yoke of the Almighty. As creatures formed by the Divine hand and sustained by Divine power, they are bound to serve God. And if they do not, and will not, His claims upon them do not cease—and to each of them He says, “Give an account of your stewardship.”

This text may also be applied to the children of God, to the godly—in a different sense, however, and after another fashion. For, first of all, the godly are God's *children*—they are accounted as standing in Christ. They are no longer merely God's subjects, for what they owed to God as sinners has all been discharged by Jesus Christ, their Substitute and Savior. They have, therefore, been placed on a different footing from other men. But having been saved by Grace and adopted into God's family, they have had entrusted to them talents which they are to use to His honor and Glory. Being the Lord's children and being saved, they become His servants—and as His servants they are under responsibility to God and they will all have to give to Him an account of their stewardship.

Look at Eli. I have no doubt that he was a saved man, but God made him a steward over his own family as well as a Prophet to Israel, and he had to give an account of his stewardship. And because he had not been faithful in it, although he was not eternally condemned, yet he was made to suffer most miserably when he was told that the whole of his house would be swept away—and also when he heard of the deaths of his sons and, as the direst news of all, learned that the Ark of God was taken by the Philistines. God visited him in his capacity of steward, made him give his account, and awarded him *in this life* a heavy penalty for his unfaithfulness! And I do not doubt that many a child of God who has been saved at the last, yet, being found unfaithful as a steward, has had to suffer much, has lost much of honor and much of fellowship with God—and much of high advancement in the way of Grace which he might otherwise have obtained.

David was another such steward. He was not a lost soul—I have no doubt that he is among the saved and blessed saints in Heaven—but as a steward he was not found faithful. You remember how grievously he sinned and from that moment his family was full of rebellion, his kingdom was full of trouble and he went with broken bones all the way down to his grave! Hence I may say to you, children of God, who are not under the Law—and I do not address you at all in a legal strain when I so speak to you—you *also have a stewardship*. Give an account of it, or else, perhaps, you may no longer be spared. Or, being spared, yet you may still have tokens of your Lord’s displeasure which you may carry with you even to your tomb. Thank God you shall leave them there! But it would be more for God’s Glory and for your own comfort to not have them at all.

I desire, on this last Sabbath evening of another year, not so much to speak to you, as to get you to talk to yourselves. So, first, we will think together upon the *reasonable demand made in our text*—“Give an account of your stewardship.” Next, we will examine *some reasons why we should at once give an account of our stewardship*. And, lastly, we will consider *the weighty reason in the text* which will come with force to each of us sooner or later—“You may no longer be steward.”

I. First, then, let us consider this REASONABLE DEMAND and let each one of us try to comply with it—“Give an account of your stewardship.” You man of God, you Christless soul, you aged man, you young Sister, “Give an account of your stewardship.”

First, give an account of the stewardship of *your time*. How have you spent it? Have not many hours been allowed to run to waste, or worse than waste, in frivolity and sin? Have you lived as a dying man should live? Have you employed your hours as remembering that they are very few and more precious than the diamonds in an emperor’s crown? What about your time? Has there not been much of it spent in indolence, in frothy talk, or that did not minister to edification? You need not accuse yourself for time spent in lawful recreation that may sustain your body and better fit it for the Lord’s service. It is well that you should have such recreation, but how much time is utterly wasted by some people, neither used for the good of this world, nor of that which is to come, but wholly frittered away in the service of sin, self and Satan? Where, for instance, did some of you spend yesterday—how did you employ its precious hours? I will but bring that one day to your remembrance—was it a well-spent day? Is that hour well spent that is passed in the company of drunks? Do you call that day well spent that is given up to rioting, or that night that is defiled with wantonness? I charge you to answer this question! For every moment that God has lent to you, He will ask for an account of what you did with it. There is not an hour since you began to understand right from wrong for which you will not have to give an account to God! If there were nothing but time entrusted to our stewardship, here is room, indeed, for heart-searching and close reckoning!

“Give an account of your stewardship,” next, as to *your talents*. We all vary in our natural gifts and in our acquirements. One has the tongue of eloquence, another has the pen of a ready writer and a third has the artistic eye that discerns beauty. But, whichever of these gifts we may

have, they belong to God and ought to be used in His service. Some have only such gifts as qualify them to earn their daily bread by manual labor—they have but little mental power—yet, for that little they must give an account and also for the physical strength with which God has blessed them. There is no person here without a talent of some sort or other. There is no one individual here without some form of power either given by nature or acquired by education. We are all endowed, in some degree or other, and we must, each one, give an account for that talent. What an account must some give who have been endowed with 10 talents, but have wasted them all!

What must be the account rendered by a Napoleon? What must be the reckoning given in by a Voltaire, with all the splendor of his intellect laid at the feet of Satan and desecrated to the damnation of mankind? Yet, while you think of these great ones of the earth, do not forget yourselves! What has been your special gift? You can speak well enough in some companies—have you ever spoken for Christ? You can write well, you judge that you have no mean gift in that direction—has your pen ever written a line that will bring your fellow men to the service of the Savior? What? Having 10 talents, are they all wrapped up in napkins, or all used for *self*, and none employed for God, for holiness, for the Truth of God, for righteousness? How sternly does the command come to you, “Give an account of your stewardship.” Yet I am afraid that we cannot, any of us, give an account of our talents without fear and trembling!

Next, give an account of *your substance*. We vary greatly as to our temporal circumstances, I suppose there are a few present to whom God has entrusted great wealth, more to whom He has given considerable substance and that to the most of us He has given somewhat more than is absolutely necessary for our actual needs. But whether it is much or little, we must give an account for it all! I do not know what some rich professors will have to say concerning that which they give to the cause of God. It is no tithe of their substance—it is, as it were, but the cheese parings and the candle ends—and these they only give for the sake of appearance because it would not look respectable if they were altogether to withhold them! The Church’s coffers would never be as empty as they are if it were not that some of the stewards in the Church are not faithful to their trust.

It is very sad to think of some of the great men in our own country who have incomes which, in a single month, would furnish a competent support for an entire family during their whole lives! I wonder what sort of reckoning theirs will be when they have to give an account of hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds? With some of them, all that they can say will be, “So much lost on the racetrack, so much spent upon a paramour, so much paid for diamonds, so much squandered in this form of waste and so much in that.” But for the poor and needy, who are perishing in our streets, the multitudes who crave even necessary bread—some of them have done nothing at all! There are grand exceptions, names that shall live as long as philanthropy is prized among mankind, but the exceptions are so terribly few that when the rich men of England are indicted at the bar of God, as they certainly will be, the

account of their stewardship will be a truly terrible one! Yet what are you, and what am I, to judge thus, if we cannot say that we have been faithful with our little? I ask you if you have and I pray you to make a reckoning in your mind, now, of your stewardship of the gold, or the silver, or the copper with which God has entrusted you.

We must give an account, in the next place, of *our influence*. Everybody has some kind of influence. The mother who never leaves the nursery has a wondrous influence over those little children of hers, though no neighbor feels the force of her influence and no one but her own little ones are affected by her faithfulness. And who knows but that she is pressing to her bosom, perhaps a Whitefield who will thunder out the Gospel through the length and breadth of the land or perhaps, on the other hand, an infidel, whose dreadful blasphemies shall ruin multitudes? There is an influence that the mother has for which she must give an account to God! And the father's influence—oh, Fathers, you cannot shake off your obligations to your children by sending them to school, whether to a Sunday school or a boarding school! They are your children and you must give an account of your stewardship concerning your own offspring!

Yes, and even the nurse girl, though she seems of small note in the commonwealth, yet she, also, has an influence over her little charge which she must use for Christ. Not only he who thrills a senate with his oratory, but he who speaks a word from the carpenter's bench—each has his influence and each must use it—and give an account of it. Not merely the man who, by refusing to lend his millions, could prevent the horrors of war, but the man who with a smile might help to laugh at sin, or with a word of rebuke might show that he abhorred it. There is no one of you without influence and I ask you, now, how you have used it? Has it always been on the side of the Lord? "Give an account of your stewardship," for that influence will not always last.

We might pass on to consider all the other things that God has entrusted to us, but time would fail us. So I will remind you, my dear Friends, with much affection, that the account which you will have to render and which I ask you to render now, is *not an account concerning other people*. Oh, how nice it would be if we had to do that! Would it not? With what gusto some would undertake the task if they had to give a report upon other people's characters! How easily each of us can play the detective upon our fellows! How ready we are to say of this man, "Oh, yes, he gives away a good deal of money, but it is only out of ostentation." Or of that woman, "Yes, she appears to be a Christian, but you do not know her private life." Or of that minister of the Gospel, "Yes, he is very zealous, but he makes a good thing out of his ministry." We like thus to reckon up our fellow creatures and our arithmetic is wonderfully accurate, at least, so we think!

But when other people cast *us* up according to the same rule, the arithmetic seems terribly out of order and we cannot believe it to be right! Ah, but at the Great Judgment we shall not be asked to give an account for others, neither will I ask any of you, now, to be thinking about the conduct of others. What if others are worse than you are, does that

make you the better, or the less guilty? What if others are not all they seem to be, perhaps neither are you! At any rate, their hypocrisy shall not make *your* pretense to be true! Judge yourselves, that you be not judged! Let each man thrust the lancet into his own wound and see to the affairs of his own soul—for each one must give account of himself to God.

Remember, too, that *you are not called upon to give an account to others*. Alas, there are many people who seem to live only that they may win the esteem of their fellows! There is somebody to whom we look up to—if we do but have that somebody's smile, we think all is well. Perhaps some here are broken-hearted because that smile has vanished and they have been misjudged and unjustly condemned. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgement—and who is he that judges another man's servant? To his own master, the servant shall stand or fall, and not to this interloping judge! My dear Friends, when the opinion of one leans this way, and of another the other way—when we see public opinion to be as restless and changing as the vane upon the Church steeple swinging round with every wind that blows—we may well bid defiance to it all and thank God that the last bar is not swayed by the follies of the times, and that the Great Judge will not give His verdict according to the whimsies of an hour, but according to the rule of absolute equity!

Yet remember that if it is hard to be judged of man, it will be still sterner to be judged of God! If, weighed even in the balances of men, some of us are found wanting, how shall we bear to be put into the unerring scales adjusted by the Divine hand, to be judged by Him who cannot err—and to have our destiny fixed for *all eternity*—either in Heaven or in Hell? Remember this, my dear Hearer, and be ready to give an account of your stewardship—not to your fellow creature—but to the great Creator and Judge of all!

Remember also, dear Friends, that the account to be rendered will be from every man, *from every man, personally, concerning himself*. And whatever another man's account may be, it will not affect him. Some men will not have been any better than others of you have been. Yet if you perish as they perish, a numerous company will not make Hell any the cooler! If some men shall have been worse than others of you have been, it certainly will not diminish your punishment if you know that their doom is heavier than your own! Forget, for a while, that there are any other men in the world, and stand individually and separately before those awful eyes which are searching you through and through—for God will judge each of you as if there were no other men to judge—and read your inmost heart as if He had not another object to look upon! Give an account, then, of your stewardship. God grant us Grace to give, on each of these separate items that I have mentioned, an honest statement not only to our own conscience, but to Him who is the Judge of all!

II. Now, for a few minutes, let us examine SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD AT ONCE GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF OUR STEWARDSHIP.

It was a maxim of Pythagoras that each of his disciples should, every eventide, give a record of the actions of the day. I think it is well to do so, for we cannot too often take a retrospect of the past. But since, perhaps,

some of you may have been lax in this duty, let me remind you that *we have come, as it were, to the eventide of the year* and it seems to be most suitable that before we cross into another year of Grace, we should, in our heart and conscience, take stock and give an account of our stewardship.

Sit down a while, Pilgrim! Sit down a while. Here is the milestone marked with the end of another year—sit down upon it, put your hand to you brow and think! And lay your hand upon your heart and search and see what is there. This last Sabbath evening in the year is a most fitting time for giving this account and I ask you to use it in making up the account which you have to present before God. And if you feel unwilling to do it, I shall the more earnestly press you to do it! There are no persons who so dislike to look into their account books as those who are insolvent. Those who keep no books, when they come before the court, are understood to be rogues of the first water—and men who keep no mental memoranda of the past and bring up no recollections with regard to their sins, having tried to forget them all—may depend upon it that they are deceiving themselves! If you dare not search your hearts, I am afraid there is a reason for that fear and that, above all others, you ought to be diligent in this search.

Permit me to remind you that *if all should be wrong with you, it is best for you to know it*. It is only the most reckless seaman who would rather not know whether there is a rock in the course that he is sailing. O Sirs, are you like the ostrich that, having covered its head in the sand, and shut its eyes to the hunter, thinks it is all secure? I pray you, seek to know the worst of your case! It seems to me that any honest and sane man would want to do this. There is nothing a wise man hates more, when he is sick, than to have a doctor attending him who will always, if he can, give a flattering report, but will never speak the truth about his patient. Let not your heart flatter you any longer, but say to it, “My Soul, make out an honest account! See what and where you are and whether you are God’s servant or not, doing as God would have you do.”

Believer in Christ, it will be well for you to make out this account because you will find that *it will help you to prize your Savior more*. I never look into my own heart without first feeling shame and, afterwards, feeling greater love to Him who has eternally loved such a sinner as I am! I am sure it will drive you to your knees if you honestly search your own lives. There is enough in the history of a single week to make you prize your Redeemer more than ever if you fully realize the guilt of that one week and the greatness of His Grace in pardoning it! O Christian, if you would be driven nearer to your Lord, search and see, confess, repent and seek forgiveness. Go again to the Cross because you have again felt the burden of the sin that nailed your Savior there!

And, ungodly man, I press you, also, to give an account of your stewardship because, *perhaps, the same result may come to you*. If you find that you cannot give so good an account as you thought you could when you were wrapped up in self-righteousness, perhaps you may be alarmed and dismayed when you see the true state of the case—and it may be that God the Holy Spirit will lead you to say, “I will go to Jesus, for I am

undone without Him. I will hasten to His Cross, for I need the pardon that His blood has bought. I will now go with the language of confession on my lips and beseech Him to accept me before another year begins." It seems such a long time since I have talked to some of you. Tossing to and fro upon my bed, suffering great pain, I have thought that those of you to whom I have preached, now, these many years, will have to give an account of every address that I have delivered to you and of every exhortation with which I have plied you. I beseech you, seek to make that account at once to your God in private and ask Him to humble you, and to draw you sweetly to trust His dear Son, that you may be saved!

I cannot bear the thought that any of you should be lost! I had hoped that those who have supplied my place during my illness might, perhaps, have been guided to shoot the arrow more directly than I can shoot it. One thing I know, there was not among them all, whoever they might be, one who more anxiously desired that you might find the Savior than I do! And I pray at this moment, since I shall never preach to you again on another Sabbath of this year, that this night may be the last one you will spend in sin—and that tomorrow may be a spiritual birthday to you, the first day in which you shall rejoice in a Savior! No, that *this very night you may be born again* and become a new creature in Christ Jesus!

III. And now, lastly, let us consider THE REASON WHICH THE MASTER GIVES—"Give an account of your stewardship, *for you may no longer be steward.*"

This may happen in various ways. It may be that some here may live for years and yet no longer be stewards. A preacher may be laid aside, his voice gone, his mental faculties weakened—he is "no longer steward." One is thankful to have further opportunities of serving the Lord and trying to bring sinners to the Savior. O my dear Brother, work for God while you can! It is one of the bitterest regrets a man can know, to lie on his bed, to be unable to speak and to think to himself, "I wish I could preach that sermon over again. I did not drive that nail home with all the force I ought to have used! I have not been earnest enough in pleading with sinners! I have not wrestled, even to agony, over the salvation of their souls." It may be possible, my dear Brother Minister, that you and I may have 20 or 30 years of being laid aside from active service. Then let us work while we can, before the night comes when no man can work! Brother, let us seize the oar of the lifeboat and row out over the stormy sea, seeking to snatch the drowning ones from yonder wreck, for the time may come when our strong right arm shall be palsied and when we can do no more!

Yes, and rich professors may have to give an account of their stewardship and no longer be stewards. There were some of that kind when the recent financial panic came—though they had much *before* the crash, they had nothing left afterwards so they could no longer be stewards of the wealth that had been taken from them! It must be a cause of deep regret to men in that position if they cannot give a good account of their stewardship because they have done but little good with their wealth while they had it. And think, Sirs, you to whom God has given great possessions, how soon He may take them from you, for riches abide not for-

ever. Behold, they take to themselves wings and fly away! I know of no better way of clipping their wings than by giving generously to the cause of God and using in His service all that you can. It would be a subject for continual regret to you, I am sure, if you came down to poverty, not so much that you had descended in the social scale, for that you could bear if it came by mere misfortune through the Providence of God—but if you felt, “I did not do what I should have done when I had wealth”—that would be the arrow which would pierce you to the heart! It may be so, dear Brothers and Sisters, it may be so with some of you. At any rate, I feel that there are some of you who are poor because God will not lend His money where He knows that it will be locked up and not put out to good interest in His cause. What little you have is all hidden away, so the Lord will not trust you with more! He sees you are not fit to be one of His stewards. There are some, on the other hand, whom God has entrusted with much because He sees that they use it wisely in promoting the interests of His Kingdom.

But, after all, to every man, whether he is rich, or whether he is in the office of the ministry, *there may be a close of his stewardship before he dies*. The mother has her little children swept away, one after another. This is the message to her, “You may no longer be steward.” The teacher has his class scattered, or he is, himself, unable to go to the school. The word to him, also, is, “You may no longer be steward.” The man who went to his work, who might have spoken to his fellow workman, is removed, perhaps, to another land, or he is placed in a position where his mouth is shut. Now he can no longer be steward. Use all opportunities while you have them! Catch them on the wing! Serve God, while you can, today! Today! Today! Today! Let each golden moment have its pressing service rendered unto God, lest it should be said to you, “You may no longer be steward.”

But we shall soon no longer be stewards in another sense. *The hour must come for us to die*. Out of our large congregation we have constant reminders that those who have served us as a Church and have served God faithfully in His Church, cannot abide with us forever. One or another, whom we have loved and honored, gives his account and passes to his rest. So will it be in turn with the pastor, with the deacons and with the elders. Do not put away the thought of that day, my fellow workers, as though you were immortal! It may come to us all of a sudden—no gray hairs may cover our heads—but while we are yet in the full strength of manly vigor, you or I may be called to give our account! What do you think? What do you think? Could you gather up your feet in the bed and look into eternity without feeling the cold sweat of fear stand upon your brow?

What do you think? Could you face the great Judgment Seat and say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”? Oh, God be praised if we are able to say that! What monuments of mercy will you and I be if we are able to say this at the close of our service—and to hear

our Lord say, “Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord.”

My fellow member, by the fact that God is continually removing from us one and another, I ask you to remember that you, also, will soon depart. Therefore, be making up your account. Rest in Christ more confidently! Love God more earnestly! Serve your generation more intensely! Live while you live—play not at living, but live in real earnest—and let it never be said of you that you trod so lightly on the sands of time that you left no footprints there! Make your mark upon your age and fill your appointed place, as God shall help you, that when you are gathered to your fathers, you may not be forgotten, but the Church may remember you because in her midst there are children born to God through your means!

As for the unconverted here, need I tell them that they must soon depart and no longer be stewards? You must go from your business, O Trader. You must go from your merchandise, O Merchant. You must go from your bench, O Artisan. You must go from your machine, O Engineer. You must each depart and go to that place from which no traveler returns. Be ready! Be ready! I will ring the alarm for some of you—perhaps my text is a prophecy meant for some man here—“Give an account of your stewardship, for you may no longer be steward.” You have had children about you and you have taught them blasphemy and drunkenness! Or you have had workmen in your employ and you have laughed at their religion, or aided and abetted them in sin! You have had talent, but you have used that talent in the service of the Evil One! You have had gold, but you have lavished it upon wantonness!

Now give an account of it all! Ah, Sirs, you may not heed what I say, but you will have to heed what will be said to you at another time! You will see this matter in another light when the death angel shall put his cold, freezing hand upon your shoulder and say to you, “Give an account! Give an account! Give an account of your stewardship!”

O Savior, Son of God, put Your pierced hands on these blind souls and give them light that they may be able to render up their account with joy, and not with grief! Give them Grace to believe in Your name and trust in Your atoning Sacrifice, for this is the way of salvation! O poor Sinners, trust in Christ Jesus and Him Crucified! You cannot be saved by your stewardship, any of you, but unfaithful stewardship will ruin you! Christ Crucified is your only hope of salvation! Look unto Him and live! Oh, look unto Him now! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 12:13-44.**

Verses 13, 14. *And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And He said unto him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you? Our Lord was a Judge and a Divider, but His sphere of action was spiritual—He did not interfere in the personal disputes of those who gathered round Him.*

15. *And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.* Christ took advantage of this man's request and made it the text for a sermon against covetousness.

16-19. *And He spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* Notice how fond the rich man was of the little pronouns, "I," and, "my." He lived only for himself and was an embodiment of that covetousness which our Lord abhorred and denounced! What a vivid contrast there is between what the man said to himself and the Lord's message to him!

20. *But God said unto him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be, which you have provided?* This may also be said to any of you—where would you be if the Lord said to you, "This night your soul shall be required of you"?

21-23. *So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And He said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.* Do not spend your care on the lower things—care most for that which is most worth caring for—more for the body than for raiment, more for life than for meat, and consequently, more for the *immortal spirit* than for anything besides—and more for God, even, than for your own soul! Let your cares be rated according to their objectives—to set a caring, anxious care upon the lesser things will be folly, indeed!

24. *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouses nor barns and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls?* It seems, then, that those that are fed by God are much better fed than those that are fed by men! The ravens know no care, whatever, for God cares for them. And if we could ever bring our hearts into such a condition that we felt that everything to do with us was in God's hands, we should enter into a blessed, hallowed freedom from care in which we should find a sweet repose of spirit—

***"Beneath the spreading heavens,
No creature but is fed.
And He who feeds the ravens,
Will give His children bread."***

25, 26. *And which of you, by worrying, can add one cubit to his stature? If you, then, are not able to do that thing which is least, why take you thought for the rest?* It would be a very small matter to you if you were a foot taller, or if you were a foot shorter. It is not that the making of yourself a cubit taller or shorter would be a small thing to do, but it is a small thing in its result—it is an inconsiderable matter whether a man is tall or short. If you, then, are not able, even, to reduce your stature, or to increase it, take no anxious thought about other things!

27. *Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.* So that God cares not only for things that have necessities, as ravens have, but for things that have luxuries, as lilies have! When God does anything, He does it well. He is a grand Housekeeper! He does not measure out so many ounces of bread per diem, as if we were in a work-house, but, “they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” The lilies might do as well without their golden hues. They might ripen their seed without the lengthened stems that lift them where they can be observed, but God takes more care of them, even, than Solomon did of himself, for, “Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

Now, dear children of God, if you trust your Heavenly Father, He will see that you have no cause for care. If you trust Him with your souls, He will not give you a bare salvation, but a rich robe of righteousness to cover all your nakedness! When He does any work, He does it after a better fashion than the wisest of men could do it and, Nature herself, working as she does for the lilies, is only God working in another way! But when God, Himself, without the intervention of the laws of Nature, works in the Kingdom of His Grace, He does it perfectly—He does it gloriously!

28. *If, then, God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?* Your life is not like that of the grass, or the flower of the field that fades on a summer’s day. God will take care of you and the everlasting things shall have from Him a care greater than He gives to the temporal. Yet how much God really does for flowers—flowers that only open their cups in the morning and shut them in death at night! How much of skill and wisdom there is, even, about them! Shall there not be greater skill and wisdom employed upon *you* who, when you have once begun to bloom in the Light of God, shall go on blooming, flowering and shedding your perfume throughout the endless ages?

29, 30. *And seek not you what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of doubtful mind. For all these things in the nations of the world seek after and your Father knows that you have need of these things.* For you, the immortal, the twice-born, the very bodyguard of Christ—to live for such things as the men of the world live for is to degrade the peerage of Heaven—to bring those who are of the blood royal of the skies down to a gross pursuit! No, let your whole thought, heart and life be spent for something higher and better than these things—and leave the lower cares with your Father!

31, 32. *But rather seek you the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* When Abraham had many sons, he gave to each one of them a portion and sent them away. But Isaac had the family heritage. It is the same with you! The Lord may give to others more than He bestows upon you in this life, but for you He reserves the Kingdom! Are you not content with that, whatever else your Father gives you or withholds from you?

33. *Sell what you have and give alms.* That is to say, do not merely give a little which you can readily spare, but sometimes even pinch yourselves to relieve the poor!

33, 34. *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be, also.* You are sure to live for that which is the choicest object of your love. Whatever you think to be first, *will be first*—and what you love in your heart, you will be sure to follow in your life.

35, 36. *Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and you yourselves like unto men that wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately.* Many people are thinking just now of Christ's First Advent—but this passage bids us watch for His glorious Second Coming.

37. *Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* I never read this verse without wondering at the marvelous condescension of our Lord! Even in the day of His appearing in Glory, His thoughts will be more about His people than about Himself—"He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

38. *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.* We cannot tell when He will come, but, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He comes, shall find watching."

39-44. *And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broke into. Be you, therefore, ready also: for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you think not. Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speak You this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his master, when he comes, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has.* Wonderful words! We cannot at present tell all that they mean, but, by God's Grace, may they be fulfilled to us when our Lord comes to take us to Himself!

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

END OF VOLUME 41

THE BRIDGELESS GULF

NO. 518

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 5, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from there.”
Luke 16:26.***

FOR the last few months I have been led to blow the silver trumpet, sounding forth the love and mercy of our God in Christ. Many times in your hearing I have preached a full Christ for empty sinners, and have set forth the freeness and graciousness of the Divine proclamation which in the Gospel is made to the chief of sinners. I have not, concerning that point, shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. But I feel that I must now blow a blast upon the rough ram's horn—for sometimes our congregations need to be reminded of the Law and terrors of God--and of the judgment to come.

Our experience is that the preaching of judgment is greatly blessed of God. We have remarked that a very large number of conversions have occurred under those sermons in which the declaration of God's wrath against all iniquity has been the most plain and solemn. A thunderstorm clears the air. There are pestilences which would gather beneath the wings of calm which can only be purged away by the lightning flash. When God sends His servant with heavy tidings, His message of alarm cleanses the spiritual atmosphere and kills the sloth, pride, indifference, and lethargy, which otherwise might fall upon the people.

As the sharp needle prepares the way for the thread, so the piercing Law makes a way for the bright silver thread of Divine Grace. The lancet is quite as needful as the healing balm. The Law is our teacher to bring us to Christ—like the old Greek pedagogue who led the boy to school—so the Law leads us to Christ—who teaches and instructs us and makes us wise unto salvation. Those who preached the Law, as well as the Gospel, in the Puritan times, were the most fruitful soul winners. We find our blessed Lord and Master, whose heart was overflowing with compassion, and whose very Nature was love, often dwelling upon the wrath to come.

And indeed, His utterances are more telling and terrible than the most burning threat from the lips of thundering Seers of old. God grant that this morning the effect which so anxiously desire may follow from that burden of the Lord which now weighs so heavily upon me. May the Master I gather out this day a seed unto Himself, who shall be saved from the

wrath to come, and be to all eternity the reward of the Redeemer's travail. Lift up your hearts to God, you that know Him and have power with Him, and ask that now the Divine Spirit may work mightily, that hearts may be broken and sinners led to Jesus. "Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed."

Human ingenuity has done very much to bridge great gulfs. Scarcely has the world afforded a river so wide that its floods could not be leaped over. Or a torrent so furious that it could not be made to pass under the yoke. High above the foam of Columbia's glorious waterfall, man has hung aloft his slender, but substantial road of iron—and the shriek of the locomotive is heard above the roar of Niagara. This very week I saw the first chains which span the deep rift through which the Bristol Avon finds its way at Clifton—man has thrown his suspension bridge across the chasm, and men will soon travel where only that which has wings could a little while ago have found a way.

There is, however, one gulf which no human skill or engineering ever shall be able to bridge. There is one chasm which no wing shall ever be able to cross. It is the gulf which divides the world of joy, in which the righteous triumph, from that land of sorrow in which the wicked feel the smart of Jehovah's sword. Whatever other arguments there may be why the righteous should have no communion with the wicked in a future state, beside all these other things, any one of which is enough and sufficient of itself, there is a great gulf fixed, so that there can be no passage from the one world to the other.

I. In trying solemnly to speak upon this matter, I shall commence with this—THERE IS NO PASSAGE FROM HEAVEN TO HELL. "They which would pass from here to you, cannot." Glorified saints cannot visit the prison of lost sinners. Long enough were the righteous mingled with the wicked—sufficient was the evil time in which the wheat was choked with the tares. Quite long enough was the period in which the chaff laid upon the same floor, side by side with the wheat. Patience had its perfect work. They did both grow together until the time of the harvest. It is not necessary, now that harvest has come, that they should lie together any longer.

It were inconsistent with the perfect joy and the beatific state of the righteous, with its perfect calm and purity, that sin should be admitted into their midst, or that they should be permitted to find companionships in the abodes of evil. It were not glorious to the Lord Jesus Christ that they should cease from beholding His beauties and adoring His Person, in order to succor His enemies, and comfort His desperate foes. Shall the courtiers of Heaven become traitors to their King, that they may relieve His implacable adversaries? Shall the princes of the blood imperial, who wear eternal coronets, lay aside their robes of honor to become menial servants to the damned in Hell—who would not, when Christ was preached to them—bow the knee and kiss the Son? This must not, and cannot be. Besides, the decree of God, like a great mountain of brass, has

forever shut the righteous in with holiness, with happiness, with God. And they cannot, if they would, must not, cross the great gulf which divides them from the world of the wicked.

It follows that *the most earnest and diligent preacher* must, then, renounce all hope of converting sinners. God has raised up some Apostolic spirits whose presence in a nation is like the rising of the sun. Darkness flies before them and the light of salvation streams from them to tens of thousands. When they lift up their hands to preach, God gives them power to shake the gates of Hell. And when they bend the knee to pray, they unlock the gates of Heaven. Men like Baxter, with bursting hearts of love, or Joseph Alleine with glowing tongue, or Whitfield with seraph's fire, or Wesley with cherub's zeal—these are the men who bless their age—and are most truly great.

These men can go to the borders of the earth if they will. Their commission is co-extensive with the human race—"Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the ends of the world." These men are never so happy as when they are preaching. Woe unto them if they preach not the Gospel, and when they preach it, and God helps them, they are like Elihu, refreshed by the effort! They were born to preach the Gospel, and to win sinners to Christ. They are never content except they are fulfilling their high commission.

But they must cease from their labors soon, for in Heaven they are not needed—and from Hell they are excluded. O Sinner, even my voice, feeble though it is, may win you to Jesus now. But if you die impenitent, it can never woo you again to a Savior. *Now* is my time to preach to you and set open Mercy's door before you, but *then* I can never warn you, nor invite you. Then I can never again depict the agonies of my Lord and Master and endeavor to attract you by the story of His love, His dying, bleeding love. No, it will be all over then. "They rest from their labors. And their works do follow them." They must bring their sheaves with them, for they cannot return into another field to sow—nor journey into other broad acres to reap.

Burning as their hearts will still be with Divine love, they will have to exercise it in another way. Their passionate longings for God's Glory will find other channels in which to flow. They will bow their heads and adore Him day and night. But they can no longer serve Him in Gospel ministry. The ambassador rolls up his commission, for God has run up the black flag of damnation and hangs out no more signals of peace. Poor Sinner, gladly would I win you now, for it is now or never with you and me.

The efforts of the most importunate visitor, the most earnest friend, must cease with death. Some of you have friends who can get nearer to your hearts than I can. You can afford, sometimes, to forget my poor words and go your way to sin again. But you have a sister, and when she pleads with you, you do feel it. You have one loving friend, and when he speaks to you, you cannot be deaf. Your conscience has often been im-

pressed by him and sometimes through him the strivings of the Spirit have been very mighty with your soul. I love, my Brothers and Sisters, to see you earnest for the souls of others. God may give *you* some souls whom He will never give to me. And so long as they are saved, though I have a holy covetousness and earnestly desire to bring many to Christ, yet I will as unashamedly rejoice in their salvation by *your* instrumentality as if it had been accomplished by my own.

Go and labor with all your might. Tell what Christ has done for you. With pleading, loving accents, beseech them to be reconciled to God. But oh, remember, you can only do that in *this* life, for when the gates are shut, you are shut in for your reward, and all the world is shut out from your efforts. O my Hearer, do you hear this? Not only will there be no public congregations, no Sabbaths, no houses of prayer, but there shall be no private messengers, no earnest Christians who shall privately seek your soul's good! What do you say to this? Does not this give an awful value to those tender words of importunate love? Turn at the gentle rebuke, for otherwise you shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

Those who are nearest and dearest must be divided from you, if you perish in your sins! A mother can put her arms about her child's neck and pray for it *here*. She may affectionately exhort her son to seek peace with God *now*. She may earnestly and incessantly follow him with her holy entreaties—but she can never come to him from the realms of Glory if once he is lost. "They which would pass from us to you cannot." Do you hear it, young Man? Those glistening eyes of a mother's love shall never weep again for you. That touching voice which sometimes awoke the echoes of your heart shall never plead again. O ungodly Woman, you shall never see your godly child.

Father, is it that daughter you are thinking of who loved and feared God in childhood, and was taken from you? Did she say to you when she was dying, "Follow me to Heaven, my Father"? You have heard her voice for the last time. That child will never see her father again unless he turns from his evil ways. Methinks if she could be in Heaven what she was on earth, she would fling her arms about your neck and seek to draw you to the glorious Throne of the Most High. But oh, it cannot be! A just God condemns the impenitent sinner, and just men assent to the Divine sentence.

See then, O you ungodly ones that are present today! You often think our company a great nuisance, and perhaps while I am preaching, my alarming words annoy you. Ah, we shall not annoy you long. Does your mother tease you when she bids you seek the Lord? She will not tease you long! When I bring home the judgment to come, is the subject obnoxious to you? I shall not ask your patience long. We shall be separated. If you go your way, and follow after sin and wrath, there will come a dividing time. And O let me say to you—you would give worlds if you had them! You would give them if they were solid diamonds, to hear again the voice

which now fatigues you—and to listen once more to those plaintive invitations which vex you, and spoil your mirth!

Ah, how would you bless God if He would let you come back again and have once more those Sabbaths which were so dull and dreary, and permit you to go up once more to the House of God which now, perhaps, is like a prison to your vain and frivolous spirits. O Sirs, I say you may well have patience with us for a little time, and bear with our importunities, for we shall not plague you much longer. We beseech you to come to Jesus. We would pluck you by your garments and beseech you to flee from the wrath to come. Forgive us for being thus in earnest, for even if we should fail with you, you will soon escape the importunities of our love. A few short months of mortal life and then you will be far away from all religious discourses and all spiritual talk of things to come. You will be in your own company, but I warn you—this will yield you no contentment.

Dear Friends, how earnest this ought to make the people of God to work while it is called today. If this is our only time for doing good, let us do good while we can. I hear people sometimes say, “Mr. So-and-So does too much. He works too hard.” Oh, we none of us do half enough! Do not talk about working too hard for Jesus Christ—the thing is impossible. Are souls perishing, and shall I sleep? My idle, lazy Flesh, shall you keep me still while men are dying and Hell is filling? Brothers and Sisters, let us be lukewarm no longer. If God makes us lights in the world, let us spend ourselves as a candle does, which consumes itself by shining.

As the poor work girl, who has but one candle, works with desperate pace because that will soon be burned out, so let us be instant in season and out of season—watching, praying, laboring for the souls of men. We are not earnest enough about immortal souls. If we had but a view of the shortness of life, the fleeting character of time, and the terrors of eternal wrath. If we could but see lost souls and understand their unutterable woe, we should shake ourselves from the dust and go forth to work while it is called today.

II. As we cannot go from Heaven to Hell, so the text assures us, “NEITHER CAN THEY PASS TO US THAT WOULD COME FROM THERE.” The lost spirits in Hell are shut in forever. I see the angel standing at that iron door. I hear the awful key as it grates among the tremendous wards, and when that gate is closed, he hurls the key into the abyss of oblivion! The captives are fast imprisoned, bound in fetters which will never break, in chains which never rust. The sinner cannot come to Heaven for a multitude of reasons.

Among the best, these: First, *his own character* forbids it. As a man lives and dies, so will he be throughout eternity. The drunkard *here* will have all a drunkard’s thirst *there* without the means of gratifying it. The swearer here will become a yet more ripe and proficient blasphemer. Death does not change but fixes character. It petrifies it. “He that is holy let him be holy still. He that is filthy let him be filthy still.” The lost man

remains a sinner, and a growing sinner, and continues to rebel against God. Would you have such a man in Heaven? Shall the thief prowl through the streets of the New Jerusalem? Shall the atmosphere of Paradise be polluted by an oath? Shall the songs of angels be disturbed by the ribaldry of licentious conversation?

It cannot be! Heaven were no Heaven if the sinner could be permitted to enter it. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and as there is no hope of the finally lost ever being born again, the kingdom of God they cannot see. Sinner, if you are not fit for Heaven now, have you any right to hope you ever will be? If you die without God and without hope, where must your portion be? Without a God can you dwell in Heaven—God's own dominions? Without hope, can you enter where hope is consummated in full fruition? Never! The enemies of God shall never be permitted to beard Him to His Face and vent their blasphemies in His own palace. They must be driven from His Presence and driven from that Presence forever.

Moreover, not only does the man's character shut him out, but also *the sinner's doom*. What was it? "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment." If it is everlasting, how can they enter Heaven? What does the Savior say, "Where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched." If there is any truth in that metaphor, the lost are lost forever. The worm would die if they entered Heaven, and the fire were quenched if they obtained celestial seats. How does the Holy Spirit put it? Does He not describe the wrath to come as a bottomless pit? It were not such if they could get a handhold and afterwards climb upward to the starry thrones of angels.

Brothers and Sisters, He that dooms men, He that has put it in the strong expression, "He that believes not shall be damned," will certainly and literally carry out His own words. And if it is so, it shall never be possible for them to break their prison of fire, and enter the land of joy and peace. Moreover, Sinner, you cannot go out of the prison because *God's Character* and God's Word are against you. Shall God ever cease to be just? If He is just, He must never cease from punishing you when you are finally condemned. "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," is the never ceasing cry of cherubim—and as long as He is, "Holy, Holy, Holy," you can never be acceptable to Him. Shall God ever cease to be true?

And remember, as long as He is true to His own threats, He must and will send His arrows through you and make His fierce wrath to consume you. Then there stands His decree, "He that believes not shall be damned." This is the great gulf, that fixed chasm by which the impenitent sinner is fast as firmest destiny, bound, like Prometheus, to the rock forever, never to be loosed in time or in eternity. It must not—it shall not be—if God is God—if His decree is not a falsehood and a vanity, you must not come out of the place of your torment.

There is more. Remember, Sinner, there never was but one bridge between fallen man and a holy God. That bridge you reject. The Person of the Mediator, His substitution, His righteousness, His painful death—these make the only road from sin to righteousness, from wrath to acceptance. But these you reject. If you should ever be lost you will have finally rejected Christ. And inasmuch as you are not, this morning, saved, O my poor fellow Creature, you are now rejecting Christ. You are as good as saying, “Christ died, but not for me. Christ shed His blood to save men, but I will not be saved in His way. Let Him die. I count His death a trifle, and His blood a vanity. I had sooner perish than be saved by Him.”

This is what you in effect are saying. I know the words make you shudder. You would not venture to *utter* them, but that is your *feeling*. You will not have this Man to reign over you. You will not bow the knee, and kiss the Son. You will still be an adversary to God, and sooner be destroyed than be saved through the Atonement of Christ. Well, now, if you reject the only way, what wonder if having rejected that, there remains no hope? Besides, remember there is no other sacrifice for sin. Scripture expressly tells us that there remains no more sacrifice for sin. Do you think that Jesus will come a second time to die? Shall those Divine hands be stretched again to the wood?

You reject Him now. If He died again, you would reject Him. Shall the head again be pierced with thorns? Shall the side again be rent with the spear? Why, Sinner, if you refuse to have Him now, you would refuse Him could He die a second time. But that cannot be. He has offered an Atonement once and for all, and now He forever sits down at the right hand of the Majesty on High. No second Atonement—no second redemption shall ever be offered for the sins of men.

Besides, remember, there is no Holy Spirit in the pit. The blessed Spirit is here today, and often has He striven with some of you. Do you remember when you trembled like Felix? Do you not remember the time when, like Agrippa, you were almost persuaded? But still all this was put away—conscience was hushed. The Spirit of God was quenched. Well, that Spirit can strive with you again, and if He comes forth in His Irresistible strength, if your heart is like a flint, He can break it. And if like iron, He can melt it. But once in the pit, and the Holy Spirit never comes there. That blessed dove shuns the place of wrath. And over souls given up to destruction, never will His life-giving wings be known to brood.

If so, then you cannot be born again and cannot enter Heaven. You cannot be sanctified. And unsanctified spirits cannot have a portion in the skies. So then it is clear enough you cannot possibly pass from Hell to Heaven. Ah, this will be a judgment upon you, a solemn judgment upon you for many things. You do not like the House of God. You shall be shut out of it. You do not love Sunday. You are shut out from the eternal Sunday. The voice of sacred song had no charm in it for you. You shall not

join it. The face of God you never loved. You shall never see it. The name of Jesus Christ was never melodious in your ears. You shall never hear it.

Jesus Christ was preached to you, but you rejected him—His blood you trod beneath your feet. The way to Heaven was freely set open before you, but you would not come to Him that you might have life. There is a road from earth to Heaven—Sinner, though you have gone into the depths of sin, if you have been the most infamous and most outrageous of offenders, there is *still* a road for you to Heaven. The harlot, the thief, the profane, the drunkard may yet find mercy through the Divine Grace of Jesus, but—

***“There are no acts of pardon passed
In that cold grave to which we haste.
Only darkness, death and long despair
Reign in eternal silence there.”***

God bless the solemn remarks we make and He shall have the glory.

III. But now, once again to change the subject for a few minutes, I have to notice in the third place, that while no persons can pass that bridgeless chasm, so NO THINGS CAN. Nothing can come from Hell to Heaven. Rejoice, you saints in light, triumph in your God for this—no temptation of Satan can ever vex you when once you are landed on the golden strand. You are beyond bowshot of the archenemy. He may howl and bite his iron bands, but his howling cannot terrify and his biting cannot disturb.

No longer shall you be vexed with the filthy conversation of the ungodly. Lot shall never hear another foul word. You shall not have to say, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar.”—

***“No light discourse shall reach your heart,
Nor trifles vex your ear.”***

You shall be shut out from everything that belongs to Hell. And remember, you shall be in *Heaven*. You will be so secure, that the wrath of God which makes Hell, shall never light on you. Your Savior carried it for you. Not a drop of it shall fall upon you. No present pains shall be in Heaven, they are for the lost. No pains of body, no distractions of mind. You shall have no sin—sin cannot pass from them to you. You shall be perfect—like your Lord, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—

***“Your inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan vex your peace again.”***

You shall have no fears for the future. You shall know that your bliss is *eternal*. This shall always be the honey of your honeycomb—that it lasts forever. Millions of years you shall gaze into the face of your Beloved, throughout endless ages you shall bask in the sunlight of His smile.

This is joy, I say, to the Christian! If he will but think it over it will reconcile him to the hardest strokes of temporary tribulation, and make him rejoice in the hardest toil of this mortal struggle. Courage, Brothers and Sisters, it is but a day or two of wrestling and then the immortal crown—an hour or two of fighting and then the everlasting rest! Methinks I see today the angels leaning from the battlements of the celestial palace, and as

they mark you, like armed men cutting your way to the gates thereof, they cry to you——

**“Come in, come in,
Eternal glory you shall win.”**

Will you sheathe your swords? Will you stop the conflict? No! Press on and let your true Jerusalem blades cut through soul and spirit, and divide joint and marrow till you reach the summit and the eternal Glory shall be yours!

IV. Again, we change the strain for a fourth point and this a terrible one. As nothing can come from Hell to Heaven, so nothing heavenly can ever come to Hell. There are rivers of life at God’s right hand—those streams can never leap in blessed waterfalls to the lost. No, Lazarus is not permitted to dip the tip of his finger in water to administer the cooling drop to the fire-tormented tongue. Not a drop of heavenly water can ever cross that chasm.

See then, Sinner, Heaven is *rest*, perfect rest—but there is no rest in Hell. It is labor in the *fire*, and no ease, no peace, no sleep, no calm, no quiet—everlasting storm—eternal hurricane—unceasing tempest in the worst disease. There are some respites—*spasms of agony*—but then no pauses of repose. There is no pause in Hell’s torments. The dreadful music of the eternal lamentation has not so much as a single stop in it. It is on, on, on, with crash of battle, and dust, and blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.

Heaven, too, is a place of *joy*. There, happy fingers sweep celestial chords. There, joyous spirits sing Hosannas day without night. But there is no joy in Hell. For music there is the groan. For joy there is the pang. For sweet fellowship there is the binding up in bundles. For everything that is blissful there is everything that is dolorous. No, I could not exaggerate, that were impossible. I cannot come up to the doleful facts. Therefore I leave them. Nothing of the joy of Heaven can ever come to Hell. Heaven is the place of *sweet communion* with God—

**“There they behold His face,
And never, never sin.
There from the rivers of His Grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”**

There is no communion with God in Hell. There are prayers, but they are unheard. There are tears, but they are unaccepted. There are cries for pity, but they are all an abomination unto the Lord. God wills not the death of any. He had rather that he should turn unto Him and live, but if that Divine Grace is *refused*—

**“The Lord, in vengeance dressed,
Shall lift His hand and swear,
You that despised My promised rest
Shall have no portion there.”**

Tell me what Heaven is, if you will, and I must say of any description that you give of its joys, that there is none of them in Tophet, for Heaven’s

blessings cannot cross from the celestial regions to the infernal prison. No, it is sorrow without relief, misery without hope—and here is the pang of it—it is death without end. There is only one thing that I know of in which Heaven is like Hell—it is eternal. “The wrath *to come*, the wrath *to come*, the wrath *to come*,” forever and forever spending itself and yet never being spent.

And now, would to God, I could speak with you as my heart desires. For this is my only opportunity, since, as I have already said, I can do this no more if I am saved and if you are lost. Spare me, then, two or three minutes while I close this poor discourse of mine by trying to reason with those of you who are unconverted. I have had little to say to God’s people this morning. I may comfort them in the evening, but this morning I have to deal with you who fear not God. Many of you now present are unconverted. I will never flatter you by preaching to you as though you were all Christians.

The Lord my God knows there is many a heart here that never was broken. There is many a spirit here that never trembled before the majesty of infinite justice, and never kissed the outstretched scepter of a crucified Redeemer. You know this, some of you. You know you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. I do not mean you, alone, who live in open sin. But I mean you who are amiable, excellent, admirable in your carriage and deportment—but yet the love of God is not in you. There is no fault to be found with your outward character, perhaps, but you have not been born again. You have never passed from death unto life.

And remember, Sirs, there is the same Hell for the most excellent as for the most abominable, unless you fly to Christ—“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” And if you believe not in Him, you shall die in your sins, “for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Come, then, let me plead with you, and I will ask you a question—do you believe all this? Do you believe that there is a Hell? Do you believe that there is a Heaven to be lost? If you profess that you do not so believe, I have done with you. God bring you to a better mind.

But what did you come here for? Why do you profess to be a Christian if you reject the Christian’s inspired Book? Become an infidel and be honest. For my part, modern infidelity never gives me any alarm. I had as soon see you outwardly infidels, as to hear you pretend to be Christians and yet disbelieve what this Book teaches. I like honesty, and it seems to me that when a man honestly says, “I shall not make a profession of believing what I do not believe,” that there is at least one virtue in him. And we may hope that others may find soil to grow in.

But you that profess to be religious and attend your Church or your Chapel, and yet do not believe the Revelation of God, what can I say to you, but that your damnation will be most just. I think I hear many of you say, “Believe it, Sir, oh, we never doubted it! We learned it in our earliest

childhood, we have heard it always, and we never ventured to doubt.” Ah, well then, I ask you—are you in your sober senses to believe that there is a Hell and not seek to escape from it? Do you believe there is a wrath to come, and that it may fall upon you in the next minute, for you may be dead, and never leave this House of Prayer—and yet do you sit easy in your pews? Or, are you mad? Has sin so besotted you with its foul intoxication, that you cannot think? For if you *can* think, and there is an angry God who will punish with the awful force of His Omnipotence, how is it that you can be at ease in Zion?

Let me ask you another question—if these things are so, have you used your senses in giving a preference to the pleasures of this life beyond the joys of Heaven—in following the pleasures of today, when you know they will be followed with the miseries of eternity? Do not be mistaken, I do not mean to say that a Christian is without pleasures—we have the highest and purest pleasure that mortal or immortal can know. We have not the pleasures of *sin*, but we have higher, more delightful and deeper pleasures. But this is what I mean—will you spend yourselves in sinful pleasure? Will you occupy your time with lust, or drunkenness, or with the frivolities of fashionable life, and do you think that these are worth the expense that they will cause?

“Oh,” said one to me, who holds a high position in society, as I talked with him a long time after having preached earnestly the Gospel—he took me by the button and he said, “it does seem to me to be an awful thing, that I, knowing as I do what will be my lot if I live and die as I am, should still act as I do. When you are with me,” he said, “and I listen to a solemn address, I think there shall come a change over me. I will serve God. But, O Sir, you do not know the temptations of my life! You do not know how it is when I get into the midst of pomp and vanities and perhaps mingle with men who ridicule all thoughts of religion, it all goes—and I am such a fool that I sell my soul—sell my soul for it.”

Oh, there are such fools here today—who sell their souls for a little sin—one or two whirls in the world’s mad dance and then the devil is your partner and your mirth is over. I ask you to use your reason and judge whether it is worth your while to gain the whole world and lose your own soul?

I shall put it to you in another way. How is it that you do not lay hold of Christ, since this is the only time when there is a probability that Christ can be laid hold of? I will tell you why it is. You do not love Christ. You love sin. Or else you are too proud to come to Christ. You think yourselves good enough, and you think that Christ is not for such as you are, but only for great sinners and the lowest of the low. O Sirs, is your pride such a fine thing that you will be damned in order to maintain its dignity? Throw your pride down, come as a sinner must come, and lay hold of Jesus Christ. Or if it is your sin which hinders, may God the Holy Spirit help

you to pluck out the right eye, and cast off a right arm sooner than having two eyes and two arms to be cast into Hell fire.

“But,” says one, “how may I lay hold on Christ?” May the blessed Spirit enable you to do it. Here it is—trust Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Conscious that you deserve His wrath, trembling because of His terrible Law, look to Jesus. There hangs a bleeding Savior. Methinks these eyes can see Him bleeding there. God eternal, He by whom the Heaven of heavens were Made, and the earth and the fullness thereof, takes upon Himself the form of Man and hangs upon the tree of the curse—

**“See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”**

There is life in a look at that Crucified One, there is life at this moment for you! Will you glance at Him with a tearful eye?

“Jesus slaughtered, martyred, murdered for my sake, I do believe in You. Here at Your feet I throw myself, all guilty, polluted, foul. Let Your blood drop on me. Turn Your eyes upon me. Say to me, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with the bands of My kindness have I drawn you.’ Come and welcome, Sinner—come.”

I have but preached the Law to you out of love. God knows how these hard things, as I speak them, make my heart bleed blood. O that you would believe in Jesus! He is freely preached to you—accept Him. May the Spirit of God lead you now to accept Him. These are no hard terms, no stern conditions of a bloodthirsty tyrant. He does but say, “Bow the knee and kiss the Son. Come and welcome, Sinner—come.”

Young Man, will you be saved or not? You, Sinner yonder, with your gray head, approaching the approach of death, will you believe in Christ or not? It may be this is your last time—you shall never hear the Gospel faithfully and affectionately pressed home upon you again. Will you have Jesus to be yours? Spirit of God, lead that heart to say, “Yes, Lord, I will.” And as the acceptance is heard on earth, may it be registered in Heaven—and may salvation come to that man’s heart this day!

The Lord bless you all, every one of you. And when He gathers His people together, may I and you, every one of us, by His Grace, be found at His right hand, to see His smiling face. Amen.

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A PREACHER FROM THE DEAD

NO. 143

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 26, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And He said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”
Luke 16:31.***

MAN is very loath to think ill of himself. The most of mankind are very prone to indulge in apologies for sin. They say, “If we had lived in better times we had been better men. If we had been born into this world under happier auspices we should have been holier. And if we had been placed in more excellent circumstances we should have been more inclined to be right.” The mass of men, when they seek the cause of their sin, seek it anywhere but in the right place. They will not blame their own nature for it. They will not find fault with their own corrupt heart but they will lay the blame anywhere else.

Some of them find fault with their peculiar position. “If,” says one, “I had been born rich, instead of being poor, I should not have been dishonest.” “Or if,” says another, “I had been born in middle life, instead of being rich, I should not have been exposed to such temptations of lust and pride as I am now. But my very condition is so adverse to piety that I am compelled by the place I hold in society to be anything but what I ought to be.” Others turn round and find fault with the whole of society. They say that the whole organism of society is wrong. They tell us that everything in government, everything that concerns the State, everything which melts men into commonwealths is all so bad that they cannot be good while things are what they are.

They must have a revolution, they must upset everything—then they think they could be holy! Many on the other hand throw the blame on their training. If they had not been so brought up by their parents, if they had not been so exposed in their youth they would not have been what they are. It is their parent’s fault. The sin lay at their father’s or their mother’s door. Or it is their constitution. Hear them speak for themselves, “If I had such a temper as So-and-So, what a good man I would be! But with my headstrong disposition it is impossible. It is all very well for you to talk to me but men have different turns of mind and my turn of mind is such that I could not by any means be a serious character.”

And so he throws the blame on his constitution. Others go a deal farther and throw the blame on the ministry. “If,” say they, “at one time the minister had been more earnest in preaching, I should have been a better

man. If it had been my privilege to sit under sounder doctrine and hear the Word more faithfully preached, I should have been better.” Or else they lay it at the door of professors of religion and say, “If the Church were more consistent, if there were no hypocrites and no formalists—then we should reform!” Ah, Sirs, you are putting the saddle on the wrong horse—you are laying the burden on the wrong back.

The blame is in your *hearts*, nowhere else. If your hearts were renewed you would be better. But until that is done, if society were remodeled to perfection, if ministers were angels and professors of religion were seraphs, you would be none the better. And having less excuse for your sin you would be doubly guilty and perish with a more terrible destruction. But yet men will always be saying that if things were different they would be different, too. But the difference must be made in themselves before they can begin in the right place.

Among other whims which have occurred to the human mind, such an one as that of my text may sometimes have arisen. “If,” said the rich man in Hell, “if one should arise from the dead, if Lazarus should go from Heaven to preach, my hardened Brethren would repent.” And some have been apt to say, “If my aged father, or some venerable Patriarch could rise from the dead and preach, we should all of us turn to God.” That is another way of casting the blame in the wrong quarter. We shall endeavor, if we can, to refute such a supposition as that this morning and affirm most strenuously the doctrine of the text, that, “If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” Let us proceed with this subject.

Suppose a preacher should come from another world to preach to us—we must naturally suppose that he came from Heaven. Even the rich man did not ask that he or any of his compeers in torment might go out of Hell to preach. Spirits that are lost and given up to unutterable wickedness could not visit this earth. And if they did they could not preach the Truth, nor lead us on the road to Heaven which they had not trod themselves. The advent of a damned spirit upon earth would be a curse, a blight, a withering blast—we need not suppose that such a thing ever did or could occur.

The preacher from another world, if such could come, must come from Heaven. He must be a Lazarus who had lain in Abraham’s bosom, a pure, perfect and holy being. Now, imagine for a moment that such an one had descended upon earth. Suppose that we heard tomorrow a sudden piece of news—that a venerable spirit who had been a long time buried, had on a sudden burst his cerements, lifted up his coffin lid and was now preaching the Word of Life. Oh, what a rush there would be to hear him preach! What place in this wide world would be large enough to hold his massive congregations? How would you rush to listen to him! How many thou-

sands of portraits would be published of him, representing him in the dread winding sheet of death, or as an angel fresh from Heaven?

Oh, how would this city be stirred—and not this city only but this whole land! Nations far remote would soon hear the news. And every ship would be freighted with passengers bringing men and women to hear this wondrous preacher and traveler who had returned from the brook unknown. And how would you listen! And how solemnly would you gaze at that unearthly specter! And how would your ears be attentive to his every word! His faintest syllable would be caught and published everywhere throughout the world—the utterances of a man who had been dead and was alive again! And we are very apt to suppose that if such a thing should happen there would be numberless conversions—for surely the congregations thus attracted would be immensely blessed.

Many hardened sinners would be led to repent. Hundreds of halts would be made to decide and great good would be done. Ah, stop! Though the first part of the fairy dream should occur, the last would not. If someone should rise from the dead, sinners would no more repent through his preaching than through the preaching of any other. God might bless such preaching to salvation, if He pleased. But in itself there would be no more power in the preaching of the sheeted dead, or of the glorified spirit, than there is in the preaching of feeble man today. “Though one should rise from the dead, they would not repent.”

But yet, many men would suppose that advantages would arise from the resurrection of a saint who could testify to what he had seen and heard. Now, the advantages, I suppose, could only be three. Some would say there would be advantage in the *strength of evidence which such a man could give to the Truth of Scripture*. For you would say, “If a man did actually come from the pearly-gated city of Jerusalem—the home of the blessed—then there would be no more dispute about the truth of Revelation. That would be settled.”

Some would suppose that he could tell us more than Moses and the Prophets had told us and that there would be an *advantage in the instruction which he could confer*, as well as in the evidence which he would bear. And, thirdly, there may be some who suppose that it would be an advantage gained *in the manner in which such an one would speak*. “For surely,” say they, “he would speak with great eloquence, with a far mightier power and with a deeper feeling than any common preacher who had never beheld the solemnities of another world.” Now, these three points one after another and we think we will settle them.

I. First, it is thought that if one did come from the dead to preach, there would be A CONFIRMATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL and a testimony borne at which jeering infidelity would stand aghast in silence. Stop, we will see about that. We do not think so. We believe that the resurrection of one dead man today to come into this hall and preach

would be no confirmation of the Gospel to any person here present who does not believe it already.

If, my Friends, the testimony of one man who had been raised from the dead were of any value for the confirming of the Gospel *would not God have used it before now?* This shall be my first argument. It is undoubtedly true that some have risen from the dead. We find accounts in Holy Scripture of some men who by the power of Christ Jesus, or through the instrumentality of Prophets, were raised from the dead. But you will note this memorable fact—that they never any of them spoke one word which is recorded—by way of telling us what they saw while they were dead.

I shall not enter into any discussion as to whether their souls slept during the time of their death, or whether they were in Heaven or not. That would be a discussion without profit, only gendering disputes which could yield no fruit. I only say it is memorable that there is not a record of any one of them having given any description of what they saw while they were dead. Oh, what secrets might he have told, who had laid in his grave four days! Do you not suppose that his sisters questioned him? Do you not think that they asked him what he saw—whether he had stood before the burning Throne of God and been judged for the things done in his body and whether he had entered into rest?

But, however they may have asked, it is certain he gave no answer for had he given an answer we should have known it by now. Tradition would have cherished the record. And do you remember, when Paul once preached a long sermon, even until midnight? There was a young man in the third loft named Eutychus who fell asleep and fell down and was taken up dead. Paul came down and prayed and Eutychus was restored to life. But did Eutychus get up and preach after he had come from the dead? No. The thought never seems to have struck a single person in the assembly.

Paul went on with his sermon and they sat and listened to him and did not care one fig about what Eutychus had seen. For Eutychus had nothing more to tell them than Paul had. Of all the number of those who by Divine might have been brought again from the shades of death, I repeat the assertion—we have not one secret told. We have not one mystery unraveled by them all. Now, God knows best. We will not compare our surmises to Divine decision. If God decided that resurrected men should be silent, it was best it should be. Their testimony would have been of little worth or help to us, or else it would have been borne.

But again, I think it will strike our minds at once that if this very day a man should rise from his tomb and come here to affirm the Truth of the Gospel, *the infidel world would be no more near believing than it is now.* Here comes Mr. Infidel Critic. He denies the evidences of the Bible—evidences which so clearly prove its authenticity—that we are obliged to believe him to be either blasphemous or senseless—and we leave him his

choice between the two. But he dares to deny the Truth of Holy Scripture and will have it that all the miracles whereby it is attested are untrue and false.

Do you think that one who had risen from the dead would persuade such a man as that to believe? What? When God's whole creation having been ransacked by the hand of science has only testified to the truth of Revelation—when the whole history of buried cities and departed nations has but preached out the truth that the Bible is true—when every strip of land in the East has been an exposition and a confirmation of the prophecies of Scripture? If men are yet unconvinced do you suppose that one dead man rising from the tomb would convince them?

No. I see the critical blasphemer already armed for his prey. Listen to him—"I am not quite sure that you ever were dead, Sir. You profess to be risen from the dead. I do not believe you. You say you have been dead and have gone to Heaven. My dear man you were in a trance. You must bring proof from the parish register that you were dead." The proof is brought that he was dead. "Well, now you must prove that you were buried." It is proved that he was buried and it is proved that some sexton in old times did take up his dry bones and cast his dust in the air.

"That is very good. Now I want you to prove that you are the identical man that was buried." "Well I am, I know I am. I tell you as an honest man I have been to Heaven and I have come back again." "Well then," says the infidel, "it is not consistent with reason. It is ridiculous to suppose that a man who was dead and buried could ever come to life again and so I don't believe you. I tell you so straight to your face." That is how men would answer him. And instead of having only the sin of denying many miracles, men would have to add to it the guilt of denying another. But they would not be so much as a tithe of an inch nearer to conviction. And certainly, if the wonder were done in some far-off land and only reported to the rest of the world, I can suppose that the whole infidel world would exclaim, "Simple childish tales and such traditions have been current elsewhere. But we are sensible men, we do not believe them."

Although a Churchyard should start into life and stand up before the infidel who denies the Truth of Christianity, I declare I do not believe there would be enough evidence in all the Churchyards in the world to convince him. Infidelity would still cry for something more. It is like the horseleech. It cries, "Give, give!" Prove a point to an infidel and he wants it proved again. Let it be as clear as noonday to him from the testimony of many witnesses, yet does he not believe it. In fact, he does believe it. But he pretends not to do so and is an infidel in spite of himself. But certainly the dead man's rising would be little worth for the conviction of such men.

But remember, my dear Friends, that the most numerous class of unbelievers are a set of people who never think at all. There are a great number of people in this land that eat and drink and everything else ex-

cept think. At least they think enough to take their shop shutters down in the morning and put them up at night. They think enough to know a little about the rising of the funds, or the rate of interest, or something like how articles are selling or the price of bread. But their brains seem to be given them for nothing at all except to meditate upon bread and cheese.

To them religion is a matter of very small concern. They dare say the Bible is very true. They dare say religion is all right. But it does not often trouble them much. They suppose they are Christians. For were they not christened when they were babies? They must be Christians—at least they suppose so but they never sit down to enquire what religion is. They sometimes go to Church and Chapel and elsewhere. But it does not signify much to them. One minister may contradict another but they do not know. They dare say they are both right. One minister may fall foul of another in almost every doctrine.

It does not matter and they pass over religion with the strange idea—"God Almighty will not ask us where we went to, I dare say." They do not exercise their judgments at all. Thinking is such hard work for them that they never trouble themselves at all about it. Now, if a man were to rise from the dead tomorrow these people would never be startled. Yes, yes, they would go and see him once, just as they go and see any other curiosity, the living skeleton, or Tom Thumb. They would talk about him a good deal and say, "There's a man risen from the dead," and possibly some winter's evening they might read one of his sermons. But they would never give themselves trouble to think whether his testimony was worth anything or not.

No, they are such blocks they never could be stirred. And if the ghost were to come to any of their houses the most they would feel would be they were in a fearful fright. But as to what he said—that would never exercise their lead brains and never stir their stony senses. Though one should rise from the dead, the great mass of these people never would be affected.

And, besides my Friends, *if men will not believe the witness of God, it is impossible that they should believe the witness of man.* God spoke from the top of Sinai and by Moses in the Book of the Law. He spoke by the many Prophets in the Old Testament and especially His own Word by His own Son, who has brought immortality to light by the Gospel. If *these* cannot convince men, then there is nothing in the world that can of itself accomplish the work. No, if God speak once but man regards him not, we need not wonder that we have to preach many a time without being regarded. And we should not harbor the thought that some *men* who had risen from the dead would have a greater power to convince than the Words of *God*.

If this Bible is not enough to convert you—apart from the Spirit (and certainly it is not)—then there is nothing in the world that can, apart from His influence. And if the Revelation which God has given of His Son Jesus Christ in this blessed book—if the Holy Scripture is not in the hands of God enough to bring you to the faith of Christ—though an angel from Heaven or the saints from Glory—though God Himself should descend on earth to preach to you—you would go on unwed and unblest. “If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” That is the first point.

II. It is imagined, however, that if one of “the spirits of the just made perfect” would come to earth, even if he did not produce a most satisfactory testimony to the minds of skeptics, he would yet be able to give abundant information concerning the kingdom of Heaven. “Surely,” some would say, “if Lazarus had come from the bosom of Abraham, he could have unfolded a tale that would have made our hair stand upright while he talked of the torments of the rich man. Surely, if he had looked from the gates of bliss he might have told us about the worm that dies not and the fire that never can be quenched—some horrible details, some thrilling words of horror and of terror he might have uttered—which would have unfolded to us more of the future state of the lost than we know now.”

“And,” says the bright-eyed Believer, “if he had come on earth he might have told us of the saints’ everlasting rest—he might have pictured to us that glorious city which has the Lord God for its eternal light—the streets whereof are of gold and its gates of pearl. Oh, how sweetly would he have sung upon the bosom of Christ and the felicity of the blessed. He had been—

***‘Up where eternal ages roll;
Where solid pleasures never die,
And fruits immortal feast the soul.’***

Surely he would have brought down with him some handfuls of the clusters of Eshcol. He would have been able to tell us some celestial secrets which would have cheered our hearts and nerved us to run the Heavenly race and put a cheerful courage on.”

Stop! That is a dream, too. A spirit of the just descending from Heaven could tell us no more that would be of any use to us than we know already. What more could that spirit from Heaven tell us of the pains of Hell than we already know? Is not the Bible explicit enough? Did not the lips of Christ dreadfully portray the lake of fire? Did He not, even He who went over men, did He not in awful language tell us that God would say at last, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?” Do you need more thrilling words than these? “The worm that dies not and the fire that is not quenched.” Do you need more terrible warnings than these—“The wicked shall be cast into Hell, with all the nations that forget God”? Do you want more awful warnings than this?

“Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings.” What? Do you want a fuller declaration than the Words of God? “Tophet is prepared of old. The pile thereof is fire and much wood. The breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone does kindle it.” You cannot want more than Scripture gives of that. Even that you try to run away from and escape. You say the Bible is too horrible and tells you too much of damnation and Hell. Sirs, if you think there is too much there and therefore reject it, would you stand for an instant to listen to one who should tell you more? No. You do not wish to know more, nor would it be of any use to you if you did.

Do you need more details concerning the Judgment—that day of wrath to which each of us is drawing near? Are we not told that the king “shall sit on the Throne of His glory and before Him shall be gathered all people. And He shall divide them the one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats”? Suppose there were one here who had seen the solemn preparation for the great assize—one who had stood where the Throne is to be planted and had marked the future with a more piercing eye than ours. Yet of what good would it be to us? Could he tell us more than Holy Writ has told us now—at least, any which would be more profitable? Perhaps he knows no more than we. And one thing I am sure of—he could not tell us more about the rule of judgment than we know now.

Spirit that has returned from another world, tell me, how are men judged? Why are they condemned? Why are they saved? I hear him say, “Men are condemned because of sin. Read the Ten Commandments of Moses and you will find the ten great condemnations whereby men are forever cut off.” I knew that before, bright Spirit. You have told me nothing! “No,” says he, “and nothing can I tell.” “Because I was hungry and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink. I was sick and you visited Me not. I was in prison and you came not unto Me. Therefore, inasmuch as you did it not unto one of the least of these My Brethren, you did it not to Me. Depart, you cursed!”

“Why, Spirit, was that the word of the King?” “It was,” says he. “I have read that, too. You have told me nothing new.” If you do not know the difference between right and wrong from reading the Scripture—you would not know it if a spirit should tell you. If you do not know the road to Hell and the road to Heaven from the Bible itself—you would never know it at all. No book could be more clear, no Revelation more distinct, no testimony more plain. And since without the agency of the Spirit, these testimonies are insufficient for salvation, it follows that no further declaration would avail. Salvation is ascribed wholly to God and man’s ruin only to man. What more could a spirit tell us than a distinct declaration of the two great truths—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself. But in Me is your help found”?

Beloved, we do solemnly say again, that Holy Scripture is so perfect and so complete, that it cannot want the supplement of any declaration con-

cerning a future state. All that you ought to know concerning the future you may know from Holy Scripture. It is not right to say with Young—

***“My hopes and fears start up alarmed,
And over life’s narrow verge look down,
On what? A bottomless abyss,
A dread eternity.”***

It is not right to say that—as if it were all we know. Blessed be God, the saint does not look *down* upon a bottomless abyss! He looks *up* to the celestial “city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God”!

Nor do even the wicked look down upon an unknown abyss. For to them it is clearly revealed. Though “eye has not seen, nor ear heard” the tortures of the lost, yet has Holy Scripture sufficiently told us of them to make it a well-mapped road—so that when they meet with death and Hell and terror, it shall be no new thing. For they heard of it before and it was distinctly revealed to them. Nothing more could we know that would be of any use. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, if to know more of the future state would be a blessing for us, God would not withhold it. There can be no more told us. If what you know would not persuade you, “Neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

III. Yet some say, “SURELY IF THERE WERE NO GAIN IN *MATTER* THERE WOULD BE A GAIN IN *MANNER*. Oh, if such a spirit had descended from the spheres, how would he preach! What celestial eloquence would flow from his lips! How majestically would he word his speech! How mightily would he move his hearers! What marvelous words would he utter! What sentences that might start us from our feet and make us quiver with their thrilling influence! There would be no dullness in such a preacher. It would be no fatigue to hear *him*. There would be no want of affection in him and surely no want of earnestness. We might well be pleased to hear him every day and never weary with his wondrous speech. Such a preacher earth has never heard. Oh, if he would but come! How would we listen!”—Stop! That, too, is but a dream.

I do believe that Lazarus from Abraham’s bosom would not be so good a preacher as a man who has not died but whose lips have been touched with a live coal from off the altar. Instead of his being better, I cannot see that he would be quite as good. Could a spirit from the other world speak to you more solemnly than Moses and the Prophets have spoken? Or could they speak more solemnly than you have heard the word spoken to you at different times already? O Sirs, some of you have heard sermons that have been as solemn as death and as serious as the grave. I can recall to some of your memories seasons when you have sat beneath the sound of the Word wondering and trembling all the while. It seemed as if the minister had taken to himself, by God’s grace, bow and arrows and was making your conscience the target at which his shafts were leveled.

You have not known where you were—you have been so grievously frightened and smitten with terror that your knees did knock together and

your eyes ran with tears. What more do you want than that? If that solemn preaching of some mighty preacher whom God had inspired for the time—if that did not save you—what *can* save you—apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit? And oh, you have heard more solemn preaching than that. You had a little daughter once. That child of yours had been to the Sabbath-School. It came home and was sick unto death. You watched it by night and day and the fever grew upon it. And you saw that it must die.

You have not forgotten yet how your little daughter Mary preached you a sermon that was solemn indeed—just before she departed she took your hand in her little hand and she said, “Father, I am going to Heaven. Will you follow me?” That was a solemn sermon to you. What more could sheeted dead have said? You have not forgotten how when your father lay dying—(a holy man of God he had been in his day and served his Master well)—you with your brothers and sisters stood around the bed and he addressed you one by one. Woman! You have not forgotten yet, despite all your sin and wickedness since then, how he looked you in the face and said, “My daughter, it were better for you that you had never been born than that you should be a despiser of Christ and a neglecter of His salvation.”

And you have not forgotten how he looked when with solemn tears in his eyes he addressed you and said, “My children, I charge you by death and by eternity. I charge you, if you love your own souls despise not the Gospel of Christ. Forsake your follies and turn unto God and live.” What preacher do you want better than that? What voice more solemn than the voice of your own parent upon the confines of eternity?

And you have not yet escaped from the influence of another solemn scene. You had a friend, a so-called friend. He was a traitor—one who lived in sin and rebelled against God with a high hand and an outstretched arm. You remember him on his deathbed—when he lay near to death and terrors got hold of him. The flames of Hell began to get their grip of him *before* he had departed. You have not yet forgotten his shrieks, his screams—you have not quite got from your vision in your dreams that hand through which the fingernails were almost pierced in agony—and that face, contorted with direful twitching of dismay. You have not escaped yet from that horrid yell with which the spirit entered the realm of darkness and forsook the land of the living. What more of a preacher do you want? Have you heard this preaching and yet have you not repented? Then verily, if after all this you are still hardened—neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

Ah, but you say, you want someone to preach to you with more *feeling*. Then, Sir, you cannot have him in the preacher you desire. A spirit from Heaven could not be a feeling preacher. It would be impossible for Lazarus, who had been in Abraham’s bosom, to preach to you with emotion.

As a perfect being, of course he must be supremely happy. Imagine this morning a supremely happy being preaching to you, about repentance and the wrath of God. Do you see him? There is a placid smile ever upon his brow. The light of Heaven gilds his face—he is talking about the torments of Hell—it was the place for sighs and groans. But he cannot sigh, his face is just as placid as ever.

He is speaking of the torments of the wicked—it is the time for tears. He cannot weep. That were incompatible with blessedness. The man is preaching of dreadful things with a smile upon his face. There is summer on his brow and winter on his lips—Heaven in his eyes and Hell in his mouth. You could not bear such a preacher. He would seem to mock you. Yes, it needs a *man* to preach to a man like yourselves. One who is capable of feeling. We need one who, when he preaches of Christ, smiles on his hearers with love—who, when he tells of terror, quails in his own spirit while he utters the wrath of God. The great power of preaching, next to the power of God's Spirit, lies in the *preacher's feeling* it.

We shall never do much good in preaching unless we feel what we utter. "*Knowing* the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." Now a glorified spirit from Heaven could not feel these things. He could show but little emotion. True, he could speak of the glories of Heaven. And how would his face grow brighter and brighter and brighter—as he told the wonders of that upper world! But when he came to cry, "Flee from the wrath to come," the voice would sound as sweet when he spoke of death and judgment, as when he spoke of glory. And that would make sad discord, the sound not answering to the sense—the modulations of his voice being unfit to express the idea upon the mind.

Such a preacher could not be a powerful preacher even though he came again from the dead. And one thing we may say—he could not preach more closely home to you than you have had the Truth preached. I shall not say that you have had preaching put very close to you from the pulpit. But I have strived to be very personal sometimes—I have not shunned to point some of you out in the congregation and give you a word of rebuke—such as you could not mistake. If I knew that any of you were indulging in sin I have not spared you. I bless God that I am not afraid to be a personal preacher and to shoot the arrow at each separate man when he needs it.

But, nevertheless, I cannot preach home to you as I would. You are all thinking your *neighbor* is intended, when it is yourself. But you have had a personal preacher once. There was a great preacher called at your house one day—his name was Cholera. A terrible preacher he! With grim words and hard accent he came and laid his hand upon your wife. And then he put his other hand on you and you grew cold and well-near stiff. You remember how he preached to you then? He made your conscience ring again and again. He would not let you lie still. He cried aloud concerning

your sin and your iniquity. He brought all your past life to light and set all your evil conduct in review.

From your childhood even up till then he led you through all your wanderings—and then he took the whip of the Law and began to plow your back with furrows. He frightened you with “the wrath to come.” You sent for the minister. You bade him pray. You thought you prayed yourself. And after all that—he had come on a fruitless errand—no good had been done to you. You had been a little startled and a little stirred but you are today what you were then, unsaved and unconverted. Then, Sir, you would not be converted though one rose from the dead.

You have been wrecked at sea. You have been cast into the jaws of the grave by fever. You have been nearly smitten to death by accident. And yet, with all this personal preaching and with Mr. Conscience thundering in your ears you are today unconverted. Then learn this truth—that no outward means in the world can ever bring you to the footstool of Divine Grace and make you a Christian, if Moses and the Prophets have failed. All that can be done now is this—God the Spirit must bless the Word to you. Otherwise conscience cannot awaken you, reason cannot awaken you, powerful appeals cannot awaken you, persuasion cannot bring you to Christ.

Nothing will ever do it except God the Holy Spirit. Oh, do you feel that you are drawn this morning? Does some sweet hand draw you to Christ and does some blessed voice say, “Come to Jesus, Sinner”? There is hope for you. That IS God’s Spirit. Bless Him for it! He is drawing you by the bands of love and the cords of a man. But oh, if you are not drawn and left to yourself, you will surely die.

Brothers and Sisters in the faith, let us lift up our prayers to God for sinners that they may be drawn to Christ. That they may be led to come, all guilty and burdened and look to Jesus to be lightened. And that they may be persuaded, by the quickening power of the Spirit, to take Christ to be their “All-in-All”—knowing that they themselves are “nothing at all.” O God the Holy Spirit bless these words, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen and Amen.

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INCREASED FAITH THE STRENGTH OF PEACE PRINCIPLES NO. 1318

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 15, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The Apostle said unto the Lord, increase our faith.”
Luke 17:5.***

THE sermon of last Sabbath morning, [#1317, *Overcome Evil with Good*] in which I earnestly endeavored to inculcate the doctrine of overcoming evil with good and the frank and full forgiveness of all injuries for Christ's sake, has raised much discussion. I know that it startled a great many of you and that you have a great many questions among yourselves as to whether such precepts are practicable by ordinary Christians. At that I am not at all surprised, because when our Lord preached the same doctrine, His disciples were so astonished that the Apostles exclaimed in surprise, “Lord, increase our faith.”

It is most important in this case to see the connection of the text, or you will fail to see its drift and bearings. It was not for the sake of working *miracles* that the Apostles sought increased faith. It was not in order to bear their present or future trials and neither was it to enable them to receive some mysterious article of the faith. Their prayer referred to a common everyday duty enjoined by the Gospel—the forgiving those who do us wrong—for the previous verses are to this effect, “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother trespasses against you, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. And if he trespasses against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turns again to you, saying, I repent; you shall forgive him.”

And it was upon hearing this that the Apostles cried, “Increase our faith.” If you have been surprised, dear Friends, at the high standard of Christian duty which my Lord has laid down for you, I only trust your surprise may drive you to the same resort as it did those first servants of the Lord and compel you to appeal for help to Him who issued the command. Will He not help us in walking in His ways? When we feel that His commandments are exceedingly broad, to whom should we appeal for aid but to Him who is our Leader in all holy conversion and godliness? He will not set you the task and refuse you His assistance in performing it!

Observe that these Apostles did not, because of their having sinned against this precept in former times, conclude that they had no faith. They did not conclude, because the precept was so much above them that, therefore, they were unbelievers. Despair is no help to Christian duty! To doubt our discipleship will not help us to obey our Lord. If any of you have cut yourselves off from the household of faith because you fall short of the noblest forms of Christian love, I entreat you to begin again and, instead of doubting the existence of your faith, ask to have it increased. There is a

Fountain opened for your past uncleanness—and sanctifying power for your future lives! Apply to Jesus, at once, for the double deliverance, and doubt not that He will deal graciously with you.

Neither did the disciples reject the precept as utterly impossible, nor excuse themselves from it on the ground that in their peculiar circumstances it must be modified. They did not complain that it was too much to expect of human nature, nor did they regard the command as only fit for dwellers in Utopia. No, they respected the precept which surprised them and admired the virtue which astonished them. As loyal followers of the Lord Jesus, they felt bound to follow where He led the way, for they believed that He was too wise to issue an impossible command, too good to teach an impracticable code of morals and too honest to set up a standard to which no mortal could, in any measure, attain. They looked on His command and they felt such confidence in Him that, instead of drawing back, they resolved that it should be obeyed at all costs.

Their resolve was to do His bidding, but feeling that they could not achieve it in their own strength, they began to pray and their prayer was for faith. They felt that only *faith* could work such a wonder of patient love! It was far out of the ordinary line of action—flesh and blood could not accomplish it, mere resolve would not achieve it—faith must do it and even faith, itself, would need strengthening or it would fail in the attempt. They felt, also, that the kind of faith which could forgive to 70 times seven must be supernatural and not such as *they* could grow in their own breasts without Divine assistance and, therefore, they said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” They needed such faith as He could give in order that they might perform such duties as He enjoined.

Beloved, imitate the example of these Apostles! Whenever you feel that you have something to do that is beyond you, stop a moment and breathe a prayer for more strength. If ever the leap is too wide, draw back, take a breath, ask for strength and then, in the name of Him that will surely bear you over it, take your leap and succeed! He has not brought you into a condition in which you shall feel your infirmities so abjectly as to lie down and die, but He does intend you to feel your weakness so much that you may importunately pray for His aid and then, in the strength which you have gained by prayer, may attain to heights of virtue which otherwise had been far above and out of your sight. We are all the more likely to rise to holiness when we have seen our own incapacity for it.

Those who, at the first blush, were somewhat staggered by the high and glorious precepts of Christian forgiveness, of non-resistance and of returning good for evil, are, none the less, likely to become good practitioners of this holy art, but all the more so if their astonishment drives them to pray, “Lord, increase our faith.” Let us then, this morning, in that connection, *consider the prayer of the text*. Let us, secondly, *see how it bears upon the duty of forgiveness*, how the increase of faith can help us to forgive. And then, thirdly let us *note how our Lord Jesus answered this prayer*. O Divine Spirit, lead us into these Truths of God while we meditate together and afterwards help us to show in our lives the mind of Christ!

I. First, LET US CONSIDER THE PRAYER ITSELF. It may help us to see its meaning if we consider, for a moment, *where the Apostles learned to pray like this*. Who suggested to them to say, “Lord, increase our faith”? Now, faith is the *act* of man—truly, it is the *gift* of God—but it is as surely the act of man. God does not believe for us, the Holy Spirit does not believe in our place—the man, himself, believes. This would be clear enough to the Apostles, but they might not so readily learn that Jesus had power to give and to increase faith.

It is assuredly most proper to ask the Lord to increase our faith, but it was not very early in their Christian career that the Apostles did so pray. In fact, it is a very singular fact that I think this is almost the only instance in which, as an Apostolic company, they asked any *spiritual* thing of the Master! They did say, “Lord, teach us how to pray,” but I am afraid they meant to learn a *form* of prayer rather than to be filled with the spirit of prayer. As to spiritual blessings, our Lord might well say to them, “To this point you have asked *nothing* in My name.” But they were, at last, so overwhelmed with a consciousness of their own weakness when they perceived the exceeding breadth and height of the Law of Christian forgiveness, that they felt assured that there must be strength laid up for them somewhere or other! And where could it be but in their Lord? And so they prayed to the Lord, “increase our faith.”

It is not the only time in which a sense of their own personal emptiness has convinced men of the Divine fullness and driven them to it. I think it was Jesus who had taught them to pray so. They must have caught the idea from that which is recorded in the 11th of Mark, at the 22nd verse, where you have much the same passage as the one before us, though expressed in different words. “Jesus answering said unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whoever shall say unto this mountain, Be you removed, and be you cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he said shall come to pass, he shall have whatever he said. Therefore I say unto you, What things you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them. And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any: that your Father also which is in Heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Note that our Lord, according to Mark, commenced this exhortation concerning forgiveness by saying, “Have faith in God,” then showed the power of faith in working wonders, and especially in obtaining answers to prayer, and last of all commanded forgiveness of trespasses. Was not that sentence, “Have faith in God,” the mother of their prayer, “Increase our faith”? Jesus had said, “Have faith,” and now, when they fully understand what it is that He inculcates, they take the words out of His mouth and they say to their Lord, “Add to our faith. We trust we have some of that precious Grace, but add to it yet more and more, we beseech You.”

Our Master, in His teaching, was continually connecting the forgiveness of others with the exercise of faith. In the passage just referred to, and in that which surrounds my text, you have our Lord referring to the faith

which moves mountains, or plucks up sycamore trees by the roots—and coupling with it the forgiving of offenses. Surely this may have led them so to pray! Our Lord had also suggested this prayer for faith from the fact that as He had taught them that there must be faith in prayer, so He had also insisted upon it that prayer must always be connected with a forgiving spirit. In fact, in the model prayer, according to which we are always to shape our petitions, He has taught us to say, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” or, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.”

He has allowed us, as it were, to cut out for ourselves the measure of pardon that we wish to receive—and the measure is to be precisely that which we are prepared to give to others. God will pardon us in proportion as we are prepared to pardon! If you have a trespass which you cannot pardon, God also has an unpardonable sin written in His book against you. I mean unpardonable as long as you are unforgiving. If you will only pardon slowly, and after a niggardly fashion, you shall not, for many a day, enjoy the freeness and the bounty of the unlimited mercy of God! So you see, as our Lord had connected success in prayer both with forgiveness and faith, he had suggested the increase of the one with the view of accomplishing the other.

No man can pray successfully while he is in an unforgiving frame of mind. But a believing man always does pray successfully, therefore a believing man is ready to forgive. As faith increases we become more able to overlook the provocations we endure. I think that the Apostles had also learned this prayer, not only from the Master, but from one who was very much inferior to themselves, but who, nevertheless, had outrun them in the knowledge of the struggles of the heart—I mean the father who had a lunatic child. That was a wonderful prayer of his, when Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” The poor man cried out, “Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief.”

This was a deeply experimental prayer. It showed how familiar he was to the workings of his own soul. He detected unbelief in his own heart and yet he saw faith there, too, whereas a great many Christians, if they discern some unbelief in their hearts, straightway imagine that there cannot be any faith! And if they possess a degree of faith, they fancy that there cannot be any unbelief surviving—whereas the two powers are in one man at the same time and contend within his soul. The Apostles appear to me to have learned a noble lesson from that tried father and now they put his prayer into their own language and use it on their own account. They do as good as confess their lingering unbelief, and yet they acknowledge that they do believe while they pray, “Lord, increase our faith.” So that with the teaching of Jesus and with the example of that poor struggling soul, they had been taught to pray as they should. It is a grand thing when we learn to pray better. And both from the Master’s lips and from the experience of all, His servants are being taught what to pray for as we ought. By the use of such means the Spirit helps our infirmity and teaches us how to prevail with God.

Now let us come a little closer to the prayer itself and notice *what it confesses*. It confesses that they had faith, for they say, "Lord, *increase our faith*." He who asks for faith must *have* some faith, or he would not ask at all. Indeed, it is with faith that we ask for faith. He who pleads, "Add to my faith," acknowledges that he has some, already, to which more is to be added. So that these Apostles, notwithstanding that they were staggered by the duty before them, believed that Christ could help them through it and believed, also, that He could *at once* give them the necessary faith. When you ask for any blessing, always do so in such a way as to acknowledge what you have already received. Do not despise the little faith you have, even though you feel bound to plead for more.

They also confessed that while they had faith they had not enough of it. My Brothers and Sisters, must we not all make the same confession? You believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of your soul, but, Brothers and Sisters, do you believe to the comfort of your heart? You have faith enough to bear the ordinary trials of life, but, dear Brothers and Sisters, have you enough for the superior contests to which you have lately been called? If you have not, then here is the prayer for you, "Lord, increase my faith." Certain it is that no one among us has too much faith, nor even enough should unusual storms arise. We have no faith to spare. God grants it to us always according to our day and He gives more Grace and faith when He *sends more trials*.

Often, when our faith is sorely tried, we are compelled to feel as mere babes in Faith's school and need, indeed, to pray daily, "Lord, increase our faith." But then, by their prayer, the Apostles confessed that they could not increase their own faith. Faith is not a weed to grow upon every dunghill without care or culture—it is a plant of *heavenly* growth and requires Divine watching and watering! He who is the Author of faith and the Finisher of it, is the only One who can increase it. As no man ever obtains his first faith apart from the Spirit of God, so no man ever gets more faith except through the working of that same Divine power! The Spirit which rests upon Jesus must anoint us, also, or the measure of faith will not be enlarged.

Breathe, then, the prayer to God, my Brothers and Sisters, "Increase my faith." This will be a far wiser course than to resolve in your own strength, "I will believe more," for, perhaps, in rebuke of your pride you will fall into a decaying state and even believe less! After having made so vainglorious a resolution, you may fall into grievous despondency! Do not, therefore, say, "I will accumulate more faith," but pray, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief." Herein is your wisdom! The prayer, also, confesses that the Lord Jesus can increase faith. Dear Brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ can increase your faith by the use of common means, through His Spirit. He is able to make all Grace abound towards you! Not by any magical mode, nor by miracle, but even by such things as you have, the Lord can make Little-Faith grow into Greatheart and turn Feeble-Mind into Valiant-for-Truth!

He has the key of faith and can open more of its chambers and fill them with His treasures. He can reveal Truths of God to you which shall cause

you to believe more fully, or the Truth of God already revealed, He can set in clearer light and apply more powerfully to your heart and so can add to your faith. Do not believe, Brothers and Sisters, that you are condemned to lead an unbelieving life! No such necessity exists. Let no one among you sit down and say, "I have a withered arm of faith and cannot stretch it out," or, "I have a weak eye, and shall never be able to see afar off." No, the name of our God is, Jehovah Rophi, and He can heal us of all these ills! God can make you strong, Brothers and Sisters. Do you not know that He gives power to the faint and, to them that have no might, He increases strength?

Present again and again the prayer, "Lord increase our faith," with the full conviction that He can do so to any extent and that He can lift even the most drooping soul among us into the full assurance of faith! May the Lord at this very hour work in you a childlike confidence in His love and faithfulness! And may you never be the victim of mistrust again! I want you to observe who prayed this prayer. It is not often that the Evangelists speak of, "the Apostles," separately, as asking anything. You will perceive in the first verse that our Lord spoke to the disciples. "Then said He to the disciples," but the persons who sought increased faith were the *Apostles*.

"The Apostles said." How is this? Does it not show us that these men who were the leaders of the Christian Church did not think themselves infallible? Fancy the successor of Peter saying, "Lord, increase our faith!" Surely, "His Holiness" needs no increase of faith! He who boasts that he is infallible cannot be unbelieving! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, the Apostles knew nothing of such silly and wicked pretensions! None of them ever in their lives pretended to be the "Head of the Church" or, "Vicar of Christ"—they were ready to cry to their Master for increase of faith just as soon as the rest of the disciples, yes, sooner, too, because they were the first to feel their need! They were the choice of the Lord's flock and, therefore, they were the first to see and to confess their own failures!

No man so soon knows and so much deplures his need of faith as the man who has most of it! It was not the little ones in the Church who said, "increase our faith"—they might well say it—but it was the masters in Israel who had been best instructed by Christ! It was they who had seen His miracles and preached His Word! These were the very ones who cried to their Lord, "Increase our faith." The nearer you live to God and the more full your soul is of faith, the less inclined will you be to be self-satisfied! And the more earnestly will you desire that your faith should be increased! It is somewhat remarkable that the whole of the Apostles thus prayed. They were unanimous in this prayer, though it did not often happen that they were so in anything else!

There were divisions among them and strifes as to who among them should be the greatest. But this time they were all one in the petition to the Lord. A petition which commended itself to the entire college of the Apostles is one which surely all of us may put up to our great Lord in the presence of that supreme duty of which we heard last Sunday morning. In order that we may not resist evil, but overcome evil with good, be pleased, O Lord, to increase our faith! While I am still explaining the prayer, let us

notice, once again, *why they asked for faith*. They said unto the Lord, “increase our faith.” Might they not more fitly have said, “Lord, increase our meekness. Lord, increase our Christian love”? No, but they went to the bottom of the thing—they looked to the mainspring of all Christian Graces—they asked for *faith*.

Sometimes, Brothers and Sisters, we are led to see that if a duty is to be performed at all, it cannot be done in the strength of nature. Now the Grace which deals with the supernatural is faith, therefore we say, “Lord, increase our faith, for since this is supernatural virtue which You do ask of us, be pleased to give us the faculty which deals with supernatural power that we may be enabled to achieve this high and difficult duty.” I know some of you think that faith was given to men of old that they might work miracles and you have admired the faith of Samson when he slew the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass—the faith which “quenched the violence of fire,” the faith which “stopped the mouths of lions”—and so on. Yes, but faith is meant for other matters besides miracles!

The faith which enables a Christian man to live a holy life, especially the faith that will enable you not to be overcome of evil but to overcome evil with good, and to forgive your neighbor to 70 times seven is as great a faith as that which of old stopped the sun and divided the sea! It seems to be thought by some that faith nowadays is only meant to be used to raise money so that we may support orphanages and colleges by obtaining answers to prayer. Well, these are noble deeds and the faith which accomplishes them brings great glory to God. May God give to His servants who are called to such work, more and more success, for such works are a standing testimony to a skeptical world that God *does* hear prayer!

But after all, the feats which the most of you are to perform are neither miracles nor the maintenance of orphanages, but deeds of love in common life! You have not to stop the mouths of lions, but you have the equally difficult task of stopping your own mouths when you are in an angry temper! You are not called to quench the violence of fire, except as it burns in your own wrath! You have to smite no Philistine but your own sins and cast down no walls but your own prejudices! Christian woman, your faith has to work its miracles in the drawing room, in the parlor, in the kitchen, in the chamber. Man of business, your faith is to perform its marvels on the exchange, or in the shop, or in the commercial room. Working man, you are to achieve your wonders at the forge, or by the bench, or in the field, or in the mill.

Here is your sphere of service and you have need to lift to Heaven the prayer of the Apostles—“Lord, increase our faith,” that you may live worthily, righteously, soberly and after a Christian sort.

II. Secondly, I want to show HOW THE INCREASE OF FAITH BEARS UPON OUR POWER TO FORGIVE OTHERS. And I would answer first, that *I think you already see that it does so*, although you cannot explain the mode of its operation. If I were to bring before you a person of whom I might say, “This man is strong in faith,” you would feel certain that he would be a man who would readily forgive the injuries of others. Though

you do not see the connection between the two, you are very conscious that there must be such a connection.

Now, when I tell you of Abraham, how when the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot quarreled, Abraham did not quarrel with Lot, but, finding that they must separate, gave Lot, his junior, the choice as to which way he would go, it seems natural that Abraham should act in that gentle manner. That calm, quiet, believing man of God—you have only to look into his majestic face and feel quite certain that he will act with great gentleness and nobleness of soul. Joseph, the man so full of faith that he gave commandment concerning his bones—when his brothers came before him and he made himself known to them and wept over them and forgave them—you feel that such conduct is just what you might expect from Joseph! The very fact that he was so true a Believer in God makes you feel that he will not seek to avenge himself, though he had been shamefully treated by his unbrotherly brethren.

Moses was so meek, so gentle, that you trace his meekness at once to his faith. And David, when you see him standing over sleeping Saul and hear his companion say, “Let me smite him but this once,” but he will not allow the deed to be done, but leaves his enemy in the hands of God, you say to yourself, “I expected such conduct of David, for he is a truly believing man of God.” Though you have not satisfactorily traced out the connection between the two, yet you know very well that if a man professes to be a Believer in Christ you expect him to be gentle and forgiving—and you are right! And there is an actual connection between the two, which we shall, I doubt not, see directly.

When the Apostles said, “Lord, increase our faith,” they meant, “Increase our confidence in You.” And this is a very material help towards the performance of the duty. First, God must help us so to believe in Jesus that we may not suspect Him of setting us an impracticable task. The Lord has said, “Overcome evil with good,” and has bid us “Forgive 70 times seven times.” Do you not feel ready to say, “This is a hard saying, who can bear it?” Do we not fancy that we shall never get through the world in that gentle fashion? It is our *unbelief* which tells us that we must sometimes bend our fists, or at least sometimes deliver our minds with great vigor of wrath or else we shall be trod down like mire in the streets.

We need to ask for Divine Grace that we may be helped to believe that Christ’s way of forgiveness is, after all, the best way, the noblest way, the most truly manly and the most surely happy way. Their prayer may be read as meaning “Lord, help us to believe that You can enable us to do this. We cannot, by our own unaided nature, be always forgiving, lowly, gentle and loving in temper, but You have said, ‘Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls.’ Therefore, O Lord, give us more faith in You that we may believe that You can make us meek and lowly, even as You are.”

We ought to believe that Jesus can turn our lion-like tempers into lambs and our raven-like spirits into doves. And if we have not faith enough for that, we must pray for it—for do you not see that if a man believes a duty to be impossible, or judges that Grace, itself, cannot enable

him to do it, then he never will do it? But when he obtains a confidence that the command is within his power, or that it can be obeyed by a force which is within his reach, *then* he has won half the battle! In believing in the possibility of a high standard of holiness, a man is already on his way towards that holiness! I therefore earnestly exhort you to ask for more faith, that you may believe the duty of constant forgiveness to be possible of accomplishment through Divine Grace.

But, next, between *faith and forgiveness a very close connection will be seen if we enquire what is the foundation of faith?* Listen a moment. Faith believes that God, for Christ's sake, forgives us—and how much? Seventy times seven? Beloved, God forgives us much more than that! And does the Lord forgive us seven times a day? If seven times a day we offend Him and repent, does He forgive? Yes, that He does. This is to be unfeignedly believed and I believe it! I believe that often as I transgress, God is more ready to forgive me than I am ready to offend, though, alas, I am all too ready to transgress.

Have you right thoughts of God, dear Hearer? If so, then you know that He is a tender Father willing to wipe the tear of penitence away and press His offending child to His bosom and kiss them with the kisses of His forgiving love. The mercy of God lies at the very foundation of our faith—and surely it wonderfully helps us to forgive. Don't you see at once, O forgiven one, that the natural inference is that if the Lord has forgiven you your 10,000 talents of debt, you dare not go and take your brother by the throat for the hundred pence which he owes you! You must forgive him because God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you!

Notice again, that *the joy of faith is a wonderful help to forgiveness.* Do you remember when you were first converted? I remember well the first day in which I believed in Jesus Christ! Do you not, also, remember your own spiritual birthday? Recall, then, the love of your espousals, the happy honeymoon of your spiritual life! Could you forgive your enemy then? Why, you thought nothing of injuries! You were so happy and joyful in the Lord that if anybody tried to irritate you they could not do it! Or if you became a little annoyed for a minute, you soon came back to your moorings again. You were too full of holy joy to indulge in quarrelling. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do you not know that you ought *always* to have retained that love and joy, and that the best thing you can do is to get them back if you have lost them? Therefore, pray today, "Lord, increase my faith, restore unto me once again the joy of Your salvation." When you return from your backsliding and rejoice in the Lord with all your heart, you will find it easy enough to forgive your meanest foe.

Again, it is quite certain that *a spirit of rest is created by faith which greatly aids the gentle spirit.* The man who believes, enters into rest and becomes calm of spirit. And this keeps him from seeking petty revenges. He knows that whatever happens, all is right forever. He knows whom he has believed and he walks in the integrity of his heart and, therefore, he is not a man that is likely to be irritated. It is wonderful when you are sure you are right with how much you can put up with! Good Joseph Hughes of Battersea was one of the founders of the Bible Society and one of the

most earnest workers for it. He was riding on a coach upon a dreadfully cold, bitter winter's day and at his side sat a talkative person, who thought himself a gentleman.

As the coach proceeded, he began talking about religion in general, and denouncing Bible Societies in particular. With a sprinkling of swearing he went on to say that such societies were got up to keep lazy secretaries and other officials. "Those fellows," he said, "get fine salaries and then they go traveling all about the country, enjoying themselves, and charging a pretty penny for their traveling expenses. I understand they always travel in the best style." Mr. Hughes quietly replied, "But what would you say, Sir, if you were informed by one of the secretaries that he never received a farthing for his services and that in order to save money for the Society, he rode on the top of the coach on a cold day like this so that he might not pay so much as he would have to do if he went inside? Now, Sir," said he, "one of them is doing this before your eyes."

Now you can understand how Mr. Hughes could be very cool and allow the talkative man to proceed as long as he liked with his falsehoods, because he knew he had so crushing an answer for him! And so when faith gives perfect rest to the soul, a man is not easily disturbed, for he knows that behind all, there is a blessing which will compensate for present annoyances. Conscious strength removes us from the temptations which surround petty feebleness. May God give you that increased faith which shall fix your heart in the sphere of perfect satisfaction in the Lord and patient waiting for His will and so shall you cease to fret yourself because of evildoers.

Again, *faith, when it is strong, has a high expectancy about it which helps it to bear with the assaults of men of the world.* "What," she says, "what matters that which happens to me here, for I am on my journey, and I shall soon be in the Glory Land, where I shall have a reward for all my travail by being forever with the Lord." A man readily puts up with the little inconvenience of the present when he has great joys in store for the future! If you stay at an inn for a while when you are on a journey, it is only for a night, and though things may not be very comfortable, you say, "Well, I am not going to live here a week, I shall be gone in the morning. It does not matter, I am looking forward to my sweet home at my journey's end."

So does Faith, by its blessed expectation of the future, make the troubles of the present to be very light so that she bears them without fretfulness and anger. May the Holy Spirit cause Faith thus to work in us.

III. But my time has gone sooner than I desired and, therefore, I must close by noticing, in the third place, HOW THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ANSWERED THE PRAYER FOR INCREASED FAITH. He did it in two ways. First, *by assuring them that faith can do anything.* The Lord said, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamore tree, be you plucked up by the root and be you planted in the sea, and it should obey you." I think He meant that to be understood as a proverbial expression, to signify that faith can accomplish anything.

You say, "Ah, my bad temper is rooted in me: as a sycamore tree takes hold of the earth by its roots, so an ill temper has gone into the very depth of my nature. I am constitutionally quick-tempered. From my very birth I have found it hard to forgive." If you have faith, my Brother, you can say to that sycamore tree, or better still, *upas tree* within you, "Be you plucked up by the roots." "But," says one, "With such a nature as mine, such a changeable, excitable, nervous disposition as mine, you cannot expect to plant in me the tree which bears the fruit of calm, quiet forgiveness." What says our Lord? "You shall say to that sycamore tree, be you planted in the sea."

A strange place for a tree to be planted! In the sea! Indeed, it is an impossible thing, because every wave would shake its roots out of their places! The substance is too unsubstantial, the liquid of the sea is too moveable for a single tree to grow in it! Our Lord says, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed it should obey you." You can, by faith, plant a tree in the sea—and so can you plant this fruit-bearing glorious tree of love to God and love to man within your frail nature if you have but faith enough! Brothers and Sisters, we do not need to be moving mountains! If mountains required moving, I have no doubt faith would move them, but the mountains are in the best possible places they can be and, therefore, why should we uproot them?

We do not require to transplant sycamore trees by faith, for there are plenty of workmen to be had to lift them up and carry them carefully to another place. And it would be a pity that we should use faith so as to deprive poor men of their means of livelihood! But I doubt not it would be done if it were necessary. Now, there is room enough in the *moral* and *spiritual* world for Faith and *there* she can work her miracles! We can say to our bad disposition, "Be plucked up by the roots," and it will be done! And if we have faith in God, we can have the right disposition, the quiet, calm spirit implanted in us. Do you believe this? If you do not, then you have not the faith and you shall not see it! But, if you believe, it is possible to you.

Once more, how did Christ answer the prayer? He answered it in a very remarkable manner, as I think, *by teaching them humility*. He said to them in effect, "You think that if you were to forgive to 70 times seven you would be doing a great deal. You fancy that if you were never to return evil for evil, but always to be gentle and loving, you would be somebody and that God would almost be in debt to you!" But it is not so. And then He went on to tell them that the servant, when he is sent to plow or to attend to the cattle is not thanked. While he is doing his labor his master does not come to him and wonder at him as if he were doing some very extraordinary thing.

The master does not hold up his hands in amazement and cry, "How well my servant can plow, how cleverly he feeds the oxen," and he does not go to him and say, "My dear, invaluable Servant, I am sure I do not know what I would do without you, therefore come and sit down, and I will wait upon you." Oh, no, if he works well, he only does his own work and nobody else's. He does what he is bound to do and the master does

not think of praising him and feasting him. So says Christ, “So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”

This mode of increasing our faith reminds me of the hydropath way of strengthening some people by pouring a douche of cold water upon the spine of their backs. The parable of the servant and his lord shows us our true place and the small value which we may attach to our own services. It takes the man who thinks, “Oh, it is a great thing to forgive everybody, and if I were to do it I should be a great saint,” and it pours a torrent of cold water upon his pride by saying, “No, if you did it you would not be anything wonderful—it is only what is your *duty* to do—you would have no reason to go about the world blowing your trumpet and saying, ‘What a wonderful martyr I am.’ You would only then have fulfilled a common duty.”

Well now, it seems to me that this is a wonderful strengthener to my faith. I feel resolved within my spirit thus—My Lord and Master, I will no more say of anything You bid me to do, “this is beyond my reach,” but I will pray, “My Lord, increase my faith till I can do it, till I can live up to Your standard, for even if I should do so, by Your Grace, yet considering what You have done for me, considering what I owe You, considering the power of Your blessed Spirit that dwells within me, considering the richness of the ultimate reward which You will surely give me, though it is of Grace and not of debt, all I could do, if I could be zealous as a seraph and perfect as the saints in Heaven, would be too little, and I should have to confess that I am an unprofitable servant! I should have done no more than it was my duty to have done.”

I pray God the Holy Spirit to let this sermon come on the back of the discourse of last Sunday, that you may not look upon the first as being impracticable, but may gather strength from the second to go and put into practice what you have learned. May God bless you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Matthew 18:19-35; Luke 17:1-10.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—173, 626, 533.

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THE NECESSITY OF INCREASED FAITH

NO. 32

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 1, 1855,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL.

“And the Apostles said unto the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’”
Luke 17:5

VERILY if the Apostles said this, one and all of us had need take up the prayer. If the twelve mightiest in the army of the Lord of Hosts had need of such a supplication, what shall *we* say who are but the interior soldiers—the feeblest saints? If you hope to win the day, does it not well become us to pray, “Increase our faith”?

It is a matter of dispute as to the occasion when these words were uttered. Some think that we must look at the connection of the Chapter for the explanation. Jesus Christ had been teaching His disciples that if their brother should trespass against them seven times a day and seven times a day turned again to them saying, I repent, they were to forgive him. Some say that constrained the Apostles to say, “increase our faith.” They conceived it to be so hard a duty to incessantly pardon and constantly to forgive, that they felt unable to accomplish it without a large increase of faith. Others think—very possibly with greater truth—that the prayer was offered when the Apostles endeavored to cast out the evil spirits from the poor demoniac and failed in the attempt. “And they said to Jesus, why could not we cast him out? And He said, verily, if you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamore tree, be you plucked up by the root and be you planted in the sea and it would obey you.” Then they said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” However, whatever the occasion in this particular instance, we shall always find good enough occasion for presenting the prayer—and I know not but this morning may be a season when each of us may have special necessity to put it up to God, “Increase our faith.” Proceeding at once to the subject, the first thing we shall consider is *the object of their solicitude*. It was their “faith.” Secondly, *the desire of their hearts*—“Increase our faith.” And then, thirdly *the Person on whom they trusted to strengthen their faith*—“They said to the Lord, increase our faith.”

I. First, then, THE OBJECT OF THEIR SOLICITUDE WAS THEIR FAITH. Faith is of the utmost importance to a Christian. There is nothing of which we should have a greater and a more earnest concern than our faith. I shall endeavor to show you this from seven or eight reasons and may God press them to your hearts and send them so home that every-one of us may become deeply anxious as to whether we have a real vital faith which unites us to the Lamb and brings salvation to our souls.

1. We ought, my Friends, to be extremely careful of our faith—both of its rightness and of its strength First of all—when we consider *the position which faith occupied in salvation*. Faith is the salvation Grace. We are not saved by love. But we are saved by Grace and we are saved by faith. We are not saved by courage, we are not saved by patience. We are saved by faith. That is to say, God gives His salvation to faith and not to any other virtue. It is nowhere written—he that loves shall be saved. It is nowhere recorded that a patient sinner shall be saved. But it is said, “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

Faith is the vital part of salvation. If a man lacks faith, he lacks everything. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” If a man has true faith—however little he has of any other virtue—that man is secure. But supposing it possible for a man to possess every virtue in the world. Let him be as much a Christian in his exterior as the Apostle Paul, himself. Let him be as earnest as a seraph. Let him be as diligent in the service of his Master as you could conceive even an angel on high to be, still, “without faith”—and God’s Word declares—“it is impossible to please God.” Faith is the saving Grace—it is the connecting link between the soul and Christ. Take that away and all is gone. Remove faith, you have sawn through the ship’s keel and she must sink. Take away faith, you have taken away my shield and I must be slain. Remove faith and Christian life becomes a nonentity—it is extinct at once, for, “the just shall live by faith”—and without faith how could they live at all? Consider then, that since faith is so important in salvation, it becomes each of us more earnestly to inquire whether we have faith or not. O, my Brothers and Sisters, there are a thousand shams in the world—a thousand imitations of faith. But there is only one true vital saving faith. There are scores of *notional* faiths—a faith which consists in holding a sound creed, a faith which bids men believe a lie by wrapping them up with assurances of their safety when they are still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. There is a faith which consists in presumptuously trusting to ourselves. There are scores of false faiths—but there is only one true one. Oh, As you wish to be saved at last—as you would not be self-deceived and go marching to damnation with your eyes shut—take your faith in your hands this morning and see whether it is genuine sterling coin! We ought to be more careful of our faith than of anything else. True, we ought to examine our conduct, we ought to search our works, we ought to try our love, but, above all, our faith—for if faith is wrong, all is wrong. If faith is right, we may take that as the touchstone of our sincerity. “He that believes on the Son of God has eternal life abiding in him.”

2. Secondly—Be anxious about your faith, *for all your Graces hang upon it*. Faith is the root Grace—all other virtues and Graces spring from it. Tell me of love—how can I love Him in whom I do not believe? If I do not believe that there is a God and that He is the Rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him, how can I possibly love Him? Tell me of patience—how can I exercise patience unless I have faith? Faith looks to

the recompense of the reward—she says that “all things are working together for our good.” She believes that from our distresses the greater glory shall spring and therefore she can endure. Tell me of courage—but who can have courage if he has not faith? Take what virtue you will and you will see that it depends on *faith*. Faith is the silver thread upon which the pearls of the Graces are to be strung. Break that and you have broken the string—the pearls lie scattered on the ground. Nor can you wear them for your own adornment. Faith is the mother of virtues. Faith is the fire which consumes the sacrifice. Faith is the water which nurtures the root. Faith is the sap which imparts vitality to all the branches. If you have not faith, all your Graces must die. And in proportion as your faith increases so will all your virtues, not all in the same proportion, but all in some degree. The man of little faith is the man of little love. The man of great faith is the man of great affection. He that has great faith in God could give himself to die for God. He who has little faith in Him would shrink at the stake because his love would be feeble. Have care of your faith, for on that your *virtue* depends. And if you would cultivate things that are goodly, “things that are lovely, things that are of good repute,” things that are honorable to yourself and pleasing to God, guard well your faith, for on your faith all things must rest.

3. Thirdly—Take heed of your faith, because *Christ thinks much of it*. There are three things in the New Testament which are called precious. One of them you know—the precious blood of Christ. Another is the exceedingly great and precious promises. And faith has the honor of being the third thing—“To them that have obtained like precious faith.” So that faith is one of God’s three precious things. It is one of the things which He values above all others. I was astonished yesterday when I met with an idea of an old Divine concerning the honor which God puts on faith—says he, “Christ takes the crown off His own head to put it on Faith’s head.” Mark you how often our Lord says, “your faith has *saved* you.” Now it is not faith that saves—it is Christ that saves. “Your faith has *healed* you,” says Christ. Now faith did not heal, it was Christ that healed, but Christ did uncrown Himself to crown Faith. He took the royal diadem of salvation from His own head and placed it on the brow of Faith and therein He made Faith “the King of kings”—for it wears the crown which the King of kings, alone, can wear—“the crown of salvation.” Do you not know that we read, “We are justified by faith.” Now, in one sense this is not the fact, for the matter of justification is the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. We are justified by Christ, but Christ arrays faith in His own royal garments and renders it truly illustrious. Jesus Christ always puts faith in the seat of honor. When that poor woman came whose daughter was ill, He said, “O woman, great is your faith!” He might have said, “Woman, great is your love,” for it was great love that made her force her way through the crowd and speak on her daughter’s behalf. Or, “Great is your patience,” for when He called her, “dog,” she still stuck to Him and would not depart. He might have said, “Great is

your courage.” For she said, “Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs.” Or, He might have said, “Great is your wisdom.” For she was a wise woman to extract sweets out of the bitters and to say, “Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs.” But He overlooks all that and says, “Great is your *faith*.” Well, if Christ thinks so much of faith, ought we not to esteem it most highly? Is it possible to think too highly of that jewel which Christ reckons to be the most valuable? If He sets faith in the forefront of the forehead of virtue and if He regards it as the choicest gem in the crown of the Christian, will it not awaken us to see whether we have it or not? For if we have it, we are rich—rich in faith and promises. But if we possess it not, whatever we have, we are poor—poor in this world and poor in the next.

4. Next, Christian, take good care of your faith, for remember, *faith is the only way whereby you can obtain blessings*. If we want blessings from God, nothing can fetch them down except faith. Prayer cannot draw down answers from God’s Throne except it is the earnest prayer of the man who believes. Faith is the ladder on which my soul must walk to ascend to Heaven. If I break that ladder, how can I ever approach my God? Faith is the angelic messenger between the soul and Heaven. Let that angel be withdrawn, I can neither send prayer up nor receive the answers down. Faith is the telegraphic wire which links earth and Heaven—on which God’s blessings move so fast that before we call, He answers and while we are yet speaking He hears us! But if that telegraphic wire of faith is snapped, how can we receive the promise? Am I in trouble? I can obtain help for trouble by faith. Am I beaten about by the enemy? My soul on that dear Refuge leans by faith. But, take faith away—in vain I call on God. There is no road between my soul and Heaven. In the deepest winter, faith is a road on which the horses of prayer may travel—yes, and all the better for the biting frost! But blockade the road and how can we communicate with our great King? Faith links me with Divinity. Faith clothes me with the robes of Deity. Faith engages on my side the omnipotence of Jehovah. Faith gives me the might of God, for it ensures that power on my behalf. It gives me courage to defy the hosts of Hell. It makes me march triumphant over the necks of my enemies. But without faith how can I receive anything of the Lord? Let not him that wavers—who is like a wave of the sea—expect that he will receive anything of God! O then, Christians, watch well your faith! For with it you can win all things, however poor you are—but without it you can obtain nothing. It is said of Midas, that he had the power to turn everything into gold by the touch of his hand. And it is true of faith—it can turn everything into gold. But destroy faith, we have lost our all. We are miserably poor, because we can hold no fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

5. Next, my Friends, take care of your faith perpetually, *because of your enemies*. For if you do not need faith when you are with friends, you will require it when you have to deal with your foes. That good old war-

rior, Paul, once led the Ephesians into the armory and after he had shown them the shoes they were to wear, the belt, the breastplate, the helmet and the sword, he solemnly said, "Above all take the shield of *faith*." Even if you forget the helmet, be quite sure of the shield, for if your helmet should be off, you may ward off a blow with the shield and save it from your head. You had better put on the "shoes of peace and the breastplate of righteousness," but if you omit one of them, take care that you have "the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Wicked One." Well, now, faith makes a man very mighty when he deals with enemies. If a man believes he is right, only taking it in a natural point of view—bring that man before princes and kings, for the sake of Truth, how lion-like will he be! He will say, "I cannot yield, I must not, for I have the Truth on my side." Yes, though others may style it dogged obstinacy, it is a true nobility of soul which bids a man declare, "I will not yield." Much more strong is true spiritual faith. It has taken the martyr to the stake and enabled him to sing when the flames have girdled him. It has led another to the sea. And like he of whom we read in the old martyrologies, it has helped even the aged martyr to cry, "Christ is all yet!" Faith has quenched the violence of the flames, shut the mouth of lions and out of weakness it has made us strong. It has overcome more enemies than the whole host of conquerors. Tell me not of the victories of Wellington. Mention not the battles of Napoleon. Tell me of what FAITH has done! Oh, if we should erect a monument to the honor of faith, what various names should we carve upon the mighty pedestal! We should inscribe, here "The lion's den." There, "The battle of the leopards." Here we should have recorded how faith divided the Red Sea. And there, how faith smote the Midianites. And there, how Jael slew Sisera by faith. What conflicts of faith should we have to engrave? O, Faith! Your banner high shall wave! Your escutcheon is most glorious! Great are you and full of victories! With you, O Faith, I cast the gauntlet to the world, secure of victory. Give me a child to fight with and *without faith*—like poor Peter before the little maid, I should tremble and deny my Master. But that same Peter, *with faith*, fears not to stand before a frowning Sanhedrim—to speak of his Master amid the scoffing of the high priests!

Mary, Queen of Scots, said she was, "more afraid of John Knox's prayers and faith than she was of an army of ten thousand men." And a sensible enemy may well tremble when such invincibles are at war with him. I should not like to have a man of faith opposing me. Tell me the world hates me and I will rejoice at it. But tell me that a man of faith has determined to crush me and I have need to tremble—for there is a potency in that man's arm—his blows strike hard. And when he does smite, he smites home, as with a rod of iron. Tremble, foes of God, for faith must overcome. And O you servants of the living God, guard well your faith, for by this shall you be victorious. And you shall stand like rocks, unmoved amid the storms, unshaken by the tempests of persecution.

6. And now for a sixth reason. Take care of your faith, because *otherwise you cannot well perform your duty*. Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly. But faith is the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well. Without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot and we drag along heavily. With faith I can do all things. Without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. If you would find the men who serve God the best, you will find them the men of the most faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith cannot do great things. Poor Little Faith could not have fought "Apollyon." No, it needed "Christian" to do that. Poor Little-Faith could not have slain "Giant Despair." It required "Great-Heart's" arm to knock that monster down. Little-Faith can get to Heaven very surely but it often has to run and hide itself in a nutshell and to lose all but its jewels. If there are great battles and great works to do, there must be great faith! Assurance can carry mountains on its back—Little-Faith stumbles at a molehill. Great-Faith, like Behemoth, can "snuff" up Jordan at a draught—Little-Faith is drowned in a drop of rain. Little-Faith begins to think of going back at the slightest trouble. Great-Faith can build temples. She can pile castles. She can preach the Gospel. She can proclaim Christ's name before enemies. She can do all things. And if you would be great, indeed, and serve your Master much, as I trust you will, you will seek increased faith! By so doing you will be more diligent in duty. O, you active Christians, be full of faith! You busy Christians, be sure to guard it! For once let that fall, what will you do? As Sunday school teachers, as preachers, as visitors of the sick, or whatever you have to do, rest assured that faith must be your strength and confidence. If that fails, where are you then?

Again—take care of your faith. For *only faith can comfort you in your troubles*. Yes, say some, this is about all we think of, the *uses of faith* to console us in our troubles. Now I never like to laugh at God's people because they desire comfort. I believe that it is a very great proof that they are children—that they like sweet things. If they did not, I should fear they were not God's children at all. But I hear ministers saying, "Ah, you are always saying you need comfort, you need comfort." Yes, to be sure, I say, they do. And they need it because they never get it from you, Sir! I believe God's people do need comfort, though, it is true, they want too much of it when they ought not to have it. But they require a promise very often and they ought to have it. Now faith is the best cordial to the soul. O, how faith will realize a promise at a time when there is great trouble coming! "Ah!" says faith, "God says, 'As your days so shall your strength be.'" "Ah!" says faith, "it is a rough road. The thorns are sharp. The flints are strewn about it, but then, 'your shoes shall be iron and brass.'" And faith looks at the strong old shoes and says, "I will even venture," and off she goes. Little-Faith sits murmuring in a corner—

Great-Faith is singing in the fire. "They shall praise Him aloud in their beds, they shall sing His high praise in the fire." Little-Faith stands desponding, mingling her tears with the flood. Great-Faith says, "When you pass through the river, I will be with you, the flood shall not overflow you. When you pass through the fire, you shall not be burned—neither shall the flames kindle upon you." Would you be comfortable and happy? Would you enjoy religion? Would you have the religion of cheerfulness and not that of gloom? Then seek more faith. You will be saved with ever so little faith but you will not be saved happily. You will be happy hereafter if you believe in the slightest degree. But you will not be happy here unless you fully, habitually and earnestly believe—believe strongly in the faithful promises of Jehovah, in all the glorious dignity of His Person and in all the faithfulness and immutability of His Grace. If you would be Christian larks and not Christian owls, seek to have more faith. If you love darkness and would fly about in it in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith. But if you would mount in sunshine and carol like the bird of day, then seek strong confidence!

One more reason. Take care of your faith, my Friends, for *it is very often so weak that it demands all your attention*. I do not know whether any of you feel that your faith is too strong. I never feel mine strong enough. It seems to be exactly strong enough to bear the day's troubles, but it would not stand cutting in the least degree with the plane. I could not afford to take the least atom off. It is just enough and no more. As for some of us, our faith is so weak that the least trouble threatens to devour it. The goat passes and nips its tender shoot, the winter chills and freezes it—it is almost ready to die. And my faith very often hangs upon the feeblest thread. It appears ready to expire. Take care of your faith, Christian, take care of your faith! Whatever you leave outside at night, do not leave that little child of faith. Whatever plant is exposed to the frost, be sure to put faith inside. Take care of faith, for it is generally so weak it needs well to have a good preservation.

Thus have I tried, as well as I can, this morning, to set forth the great necessity of looking to our faith. And our prayer must be, as it was that of the Apostles, "increase our faith."

II. This brings us, secondly, to consider THE HEART'S DESIRE OF THE APOSTLES. "Increase our faith." They did not say, "Lord keep our faith alive—Lord sustain it as it is at present," but, "Increase our faith." For they knew very well that it is only by *increase* that the Christian keeps alive at all. Napoleon once said, "I must fight battles and I must win them—conquest has made me what I am and conquest must maintain me." And it is so with the Christian. It is not yesterday's battle that will save me today. I must be going onwards. A wheel will remain erect as long as it moves, but when it begins to stand still, it falls. Christian men are saved by progress—constantly going onwards keeps the Christian alive. If it were possible for me to stop, I know not where my life would be. The Christian must be going onward. For the arrow will mount while

still it is in progress, but it stalls the moment the power stops that keeps it aloft. So the Apostles said unto the Lord, "Increase our faith."

First—"Increase our faith," *in its extent*. The extent of what it will receive. Usually, when we commence the Christian life, faith does not grasp much—it only believes a few elementary Doctrines. I find that many young converts have not gone much farther than believing that Jesus Christ died for sinners. By-and-by they get a little advanced and believe Election. But there is very little beyond that they receive—and it is not until many years that they believe the entire Gospel. Some of you, my Hearers, and a great many that are not my hearers are miserable little cramped souls—you have learned a cast-iron creed and you will never move out of it. A certain somebody drew up five or six doctrines and said, "There are the doctrines of the Bible," and you believe these. But you do not want to have your faith increased—for you do not believe a great deal more that is in the Bible. I do not think I differ from any of my hyper-Calvinistic Brothers and Sisters in what I do believe, but I differ from them in what they do *not* believe. I do not believe any less than they do but I believe a little *more*. I think, as we grow, we shall have our belief increased. Not only are there a few cardinal Doctrines that will be enough to steer our ship by, north, south, east, or west, but we shall begin to learn something about the north-west and north-east and that which lies *between* the four points! Many people, when they hear something a little contrary to what they have usually heard, say at once, "That is not sound." But who made *you* a judge of what is sound? And there are some little souls who set themselves up for princes in Israel and think every man must believe as they believe, or else he is decidedly wrong. And they will hold no Christian communication or fellowship with him. I am sure I may pray to the Lord for them—"Increase their faith!" Help them to believe a little more. Help them to believe there may be Christian Wesleyans—that there are good Church people. And not only that Particular Baptists are very good sort of people but that there are some of God's elect *everywhere*. I am sure I pray for all bigots, that they may have a little wider heart. I should like to stretch their hearts a little. But, no, they have reached the *ultima thule*, they have come to the last of the fortunate islands, there cannot be any shore beyond. It is dangerous for a mariner to spread his sails on untried seas. "Up to now," says pious Crisp—and therefore, many fancy, "up to now shall you go and no further." Dr. Gill declares just so much and who shall venture to say more. Or perhaps Calvin is made the standard and what business has any man to think a single thought beyond Calvin? Blessed be God, we have gone a little beyond that. And we can say, "Increase our faith." With all our admiration for these great standard Divines, we are not prepared to shut ourselves up in their little iron cages. We say, "Open the door and let me fly—let me still feel that I am at liberty. Increase my faith and help me to believe a little more." I know I can say I have had an increase of faith in one or two respects within the last few months. I could not, for a long

time, see anything like the Millennium in the Scriptures. I could not much rejoice in the Second Coming of Christ, though I did believe it. But gradually my faith began to open to that subject and I find it now a part of my meat and drink, to be looking for, as well as hastening unto, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! I believe I have only just begun to learn the A B Cs of the Scriptures and will constantly cry to the Lord, "Increase my faith, that I may know more and believe more and understand Your Word far better." "Increase my faith," in its extent.

Next, "Increase my faith," *in its intensity*. Faith needs to be increased in its power, as well as in its extent. We do not wish to act as some do with a river, when they break the banks to let it spread over the pasture and so make it shallower. We wish, while it increases in surface, that it may increase likewise in its depth. Increase "the intensity of our faith!" Faith at first takes God's mercy with an open palm—as it increases, it holds it with her fingers and not more firmly. But when faith grows strong, ah, she takes it, as with an iron vice and grasps it—and death nor Hell could rend a promise from faith's hand when faith is strong. The young Christian at first is not constant in his faith—a little wind comes and he shakes. When he gets to be an old Christian it will take old Boreas, with 50 of his winds, to move him. Do you not feel, my dear Friends, that you need faith to be increased in its intensity? Would you not sing with Watts—

**"Oh, that I had a stronger faith,
To look within the veil;
To credit what my Savior says,
Whose word can never fail!"**

Your poor little faith cannot see many yards before it, for there are clouds of darkness all around. But strong faith can climb the hill that is called, "Clear," and from the top thereof can see the Celestial City and the land that is very far off! Oh, may God increase your faith to such a degree that you may often have visions of Heaven—that you may sweetly sing, as Moses might have done at the top of Pisgah—

**"Oh, the transporting rapturous scene
That rises to my sight!
Sweet fields arrayed in living green,
And rivers of delight!"**

I pray God that you may climb up there, bathe your eyes in splendor, plunge your soul in rivers of bliss and be thoroughly transported and carried away by visions of that state of beatitude which shortly shall be yours. Beloved, let me exhort you to cry to the Lord, "Increase my faith" in its power of realizing Heaven and in every other way.

III. I have no time to dwell upon this, but must close up by very briefly mentioning THE PERSON TO WHOM THE APOSTLES ADDRESSED THEIR PRAYER. The Apostles said to *the Lord*, "Increase our faith!" They went to the right Person. They did not say to themselves, "I will increase my faith"—they did not cry to the minister, "Preach a comforting sermon and increase my faith." They did not say, "I will read such-and-such a

book and that will increase my faith.” No, they said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” Faith’s Author can alone increase it! I could inflate your faith till it turned into presumption but I could not make it grow. It is God’s work to feed faith, as well as to give it life at first. And if any of you desire to have a growing faith, go and take your burden this morning to God’s Throne, crying “Lord, increase our faith!” If you feel that your troubles have been increased, go to the Lord and say, “Increase our faith!” If your money is accumulating, go to the Lord and say, “Increase our faith”—for you will need more faith as you get more prosperity. If your property is diminishing, go to Him and say, “Increase our faith,” so that what you lose in one scale, you may gain in the other. Are you sickly and full of pain this morning? Go to your Master and say, “Increase my faith,” so that you may not be impatient, but be able to bear it well. Are you tired and weary? Go and supplicate, “Increase our faith!” Have you little faith? Take it to God and He will turn it into great faith. There is no hothouse for growing tender plants like a house that is within the curtains—the tabernacle of God—where the Shekinah dwells.

I have been speaking in very great pain. But I would, if possible, close by asking you who are Christians whether you do not think this prayer very necessary to your own state. Let each one ask himself—Do not I need more faith? My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, rest assured, you will never get too much of this precious Grace. If you pay all the way to Heaven, you will never have a penny to spare when you get to Heaven’s Gate. If you live on faith all your journey through, you will not have a pot of manna left. Pray, then, for an increase of faith. You need this Church to stand, do you not? It can stand only in proportion as you are men and women of faith! I know I might exhort you to be men and women of prayer. But *faith* is the foundation stone—prayer comes next. Prayer without faith would be an empty mockery. It would win nothing of God. Do you want us to stand? Do you know how the world speaks of us—how the enthusiasm of the ranting people of Park Street are talked of? How is it to be kept up, except through your faith? How shall your minister’s hands be held up, except by your faith and your prayers? Let faith be the Aaron! Let prayer be the Ur! And faith and prayer can hold up the hands of Moses, while the army below is fighting the enemy. Would you be kept from falling? You must be strong in faith. Little faith falls, strong faith stands. Would you win the day and reign in Heaven with a starry crown more brilliant than you might otherwise expect? Then be you increased in faith! And would you honor God much and enter Heaven, after having fought a good fight and won a crown? Then I will offer the supplication, “increase the faith of my people,” and put up the prayer, “increase my faith.”

But there are some of you, dear Friends, who could not use this petition and dare not. What would it avail you if you did so? Seeing you have *no* faith, how could that be increased which has no existence? Rather, your first need is the possession of the simple germs of faith. Oh, my

Hearers, I marvel what some of you do without the comforts which faith can alone afford! Some of you are very poor people—how do you manage to endure your toils and troubles without faith? Where is your comfort? I do not wonder at your going to get drunk, or rioting in the ale-house, if you have no other comfort in this world. When I have penetrated some of our back streets and seen the poverty of the people, I have thought, “If these people have no religion, what have these to comfort them? They are not like the rich man, who can indulge himself in every way—what have they got in this world worth living for?” I suppose they have some kind of happiness—what sort of a thing it is I cannot tell—it is to me a source of continual inquiry. And you rich men, what will you do without faith? You know that you must leave all your property behind you—surely this will make the idea of death dreadful to you. I cannot understand even your happiness, if you have any. I know this—

***“I would not change my blest estate
For all the earth calls good or great.
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner’s gold.”***

But I want to ask you, what would you do in the next world without faith? Remember, you are standing now upon the edge of the vast gulf of an unknown future. Your soul stands quivering on the verge of the dark abyss—each time your pulse beats, your soul is brought nearer to eternity. Faith gives wings to the soul. But what will you do without wings? There is a narrow gulf dividing earth from Heaven. The Christian flaps his wings and, borne upon them, he flies to Heaven. But what will you do without wings? It will be a leap—a leap into the pit of Hell, to sink forever, without the power of ever recovering yourself. If a Christian could sink on his journey to Heaven, he would not sink far, for he would flap his wings and be up again! But there you will be, perpetually descending through that pit of Hell that has no bottom—struggling to rise, but you cannot, for you have no wings. Once more—oh, Unbeliever, what will you do without faith? For faith gives eyes to the soul. Faith gives us to see things that are not seen—it is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The Christian, when he dies, will enter the land of death with his eyes open—by means of which, goodly hosts of angels shall cheer his vision. But you must die a blind and eyeless spirit. Unhappy is the lot of the blind in this present world, but how infinitely deplorable that eternal blindness which shall prevent a sight of the splendors of Paradise and shut out forever even the feeblest ray of joy or hope!

And, once more—faith is the hand of the soul. The Christian, when he dies, catches hold of Christ’s garment and Christ bears him into Heaven. A bright angel descends—I clasp that angel—and on his wings he wafts me up to bliss. But when the unbeliever dies, the angel would have a useless errand, for he has no hands. Suppose, O Sinner, Christ is there, but you cannot even touch His garments, for you have no hands to do it

with! What will you do in the next world without hands? Do you think God will suffer such deformed souls in Heaven, without hands and without eyes? No, not at all. But how could you get in without hands? You could not open the gates of Heaven. What would you do? You would call on God for mercy—and if the mercy were held out to you, you have not hands with which to lay hold upon it! I do not understand how some of you are happy without religion. I do not know what you mean to do if you die without faith. Go home and think of what you will do if you die without religion—whether you intend to brazen it out before the face of the Eternal—or tamely to submit. Sinner! You cannot enter into Heaven without faith, but what have you made up your mind to do? Do you intend to tear down the gates of Heaven? Do you think you have omnipotence enough to force your way through squadrons of cherubim and legions of angels and so to enter by force? Or what do you design to do? Do you intend to quietly lie down in beds of sulfur? Do you design to be willingly tossed perpetually in that brimstone lake where there is no bottom—where briny tears forever fall?

Will you do that? Will you make your bed in Hell? Sirs, are you so besotted that you are content with such an eternal doom? Is your reason clean gone? Are your senses so benighted that you can thus cast yourselves away? Surely you have resolved to do something! What, then, will you do? Do you fancy that without faith you will enter Heaven, when it is written, “Without faith it is impossible to please God”? And when God has said, “He that believes not shall be damned,” do you think you can reverse the decree? Will you mount the Throne of Jehovah and forswear Jehovah, Himself? Will you change His mandate and admit the Unbeliever into Heaven? No, you cannot! Tremble, then, Unbeliever, tremble! For there awaits you nothing but “a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.” What will you do in the swellings of Jordan without faith to keep your heads above the waters? God give faith to those that have none! And as for others, may He increase their faith!

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

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

GROWTH IN FAITH

NO. 3384

A SERMON
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“The Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.”
Luke 17:5.

THE *Apostles* said this. I have sometimes thought that Paul's speech at Lystra, when he forbade the multitude to worship him and told the people that he was a man of like passions with themselves, has need to be repeated in the ears of many modern Christians, for there is a tendency in the Christian Church to set up the Apostles and other eminent saints upon a platform high above the level of ordinary humanity! I do not say to worship them, but rather to hold them in extraordinary esteem than to regard them as models for imitation. Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ would have us to know that we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He would have us be certain that He, Himself, was tempted in all points like as we are. With equal certainty would He have us to know that the chosen twelve, the leaders of His host, who went forth from Him, were men of like passions with ourselves. We are not to look upon them as though they were unapproachable heroes, a sort of Divine character, or as though they were free from our infirmities and our troubles. They were as we are—and if they excelled us it was by Divine strength, alone, by strength which we also may receive—by Grace which is as free to us as it was to them. If they were here, they would still have to struggle with unbelief and, conscious of their unbelief, would say again, “Lord, increase our faith.”

The Apostles said it and the Apostles *said it to Jesus*. They went to the Strong for strength! It is idle to go elsewhere. In vain would they have said it to one another. In vain would they have searched the whole world to find some eminent saint to whom to address the petition! They would have been like those foolish virgins who said to the wise, “Give us of your oil,” and they would have had the same answer, “Not so, lest there be not enough for you and for us.” The virgins went to those that sold and bought for themselves. The Apostles went to Christ, the Lawgiver, the Author and Finisher of their faith and, lifting up their hearts to Him in

the prayer, “Lord, increase our faith,” they, before long, gained a comfortable answer and became strong in faith, giving glory to God!

Now, I shall need your attention at this time to five or six observations about *faith as a growing thing*. The first observation is this—

I. THE TEXT THROWS A LITTLE LIGHT UPON WHAT FAITH IS.

This is not altogether a dark subject, but still it is one upon which there has been a great deal of controversy. You are aware, perhaps, that in the first flush of the Reformation it was asserted by most Divines that saving faith was full assurance, or, at the least, that full assurance of salvation and of a personal interest in Christ entered into the essence of saving faith—and this has been maintained by a very large number of Divines and is *still maintained* by many Christians that to *personally* believe that Christ died for *me* is saving faith.

Now, we believe this to be an error. We prize full assurance beyond all price. We count it to be a gem beyond all earthly values, but we think it is a distressing Doctrine to some of the weak ones of the flock to say that full assurance is necessary to salvation! We believe it to be necessary to deep joy, necessary to edification, necessary to usefulness—but necessary to salvation we do not believe it to be! We believe there are thousands on the Rock of Ages who sometimes fear they are not there—and tens of thousands who will enter Heaven whose faith never reached beyond the *simple reliance upon Christ*—which we hold to be the essence of saving faith.

The persuasion that Christ died for *me* comes after the exercise of faith and is an outgrowth of that faith. It is faith in full bloom, but it is not necessarily the essence of faith in Christ. Some of those who teach that to believe that Christ died for *me* is faith, teach at the same time that Christ died for everyone! Now, it will strike your mind at once that this kind of faith which they teach is nothing but the belief of a very simple truism, for if He died for everyone, then He must have died for *me*—and my believing that he died for *me* may, as far as I can see, be a simple intellectual operation—having nothing to do with the heart—and certainly not requiring the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for anyone can believe that since as long as Christ died for everyone, he died for *me*! Faith of that sort is a very simple thing and although every Christian is also to perceive that Christ died for him, finally, yet if you *begin* with that, you begin at the wrong end and you may be guilty of presumption instead of exercising the faith of God’s elect!

What, then, is the essence of saving faith? It is *this—trust in Christ—dependence, reliance upon Him*. It is a belief that Jesus Christ is the appointed Savior of the world. That He is also the Atonement for sin. But it is more than that—it is a trusting in the work of Christ to save you. As to whether Christ has died for you in particular or not, that you shall find

out, by-and-by, but faith is coming empty-handed and accepting Christ's fullness. To come naked and take His righteousness to be your glorious dress. To go, vile, to the Fountain which He has filled with blood, to be washed therein—in fact, to have done with all self-confidence and to put your whole reliance in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever has this is saved—whatever else he has not, he is saved! And neither death nor Hell shall ever destroy a man who in simple, honest confidence depends on what Christ has done for the salvation of sinners. If you lay hold upon Christ to be All in All to you and if you say, "Nothing but Jesus do I know—what He has done is all my rest and all my rejoicing," then you have God's promise for it, "He that believes on Him has everlasting life." And you have it and you, therefore, shall never perish!

This, then, is saving faith, and this is the very soul, and essence, and substance of it! It is not, in itself, full assurance, but full assurance grows out of it. In the Helvetic Confession, faith is said to be "a most firm confidence in Christ"—another little mistake! A most firm confidence in Christ is faith and is strong faith—but there may be faith where there is no "most firm confidence," though this may be a very valuable evidence. Faith, however, may sometimes be mixed with unbelief. But where any amount of reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ exists, there is the evidence of *true faith*, although that reliance may not amount to a happy, comfortable, delightful persuasion of one's own personal salvation. Yet it is faith, saving faith, and will save the soul of him who has it! Let that stand as the first observation.

II. Secondly, FAITH, WHEREVER IT IS, IS CAPABLE OF GROWTH.

The Apostles said, "Lord, increase our faith." Faith is the gift of God and it is given us by degrees. Faith is not always the same in degree, even at the time of the new birth. All children are not alike strong when they are born into the world. All faith is not alike strong at first. Sometimes those who are first at the beginning, get last afterwards—and sometimes those who are last at the beginning, outstrip the others! God does not give us all the same endowment of faith when we commence. Some of us are very tender, much troubled and find it very difficult to lay hold even upon the least of God's promises. But the faith is all of the same nature—though it is not all of the same quantity and degree—it is all the same quality. A diamond is a diamond, though it is no bigger than a pea or the point of a pin—it is precisely of the same character as the Koh-I-Noor, though it is not so large. So with faith. Faith as little as a grain of mustard seed is just as much the faith of God's elect as if it were as large as a mountain! It is still living faith. It is the same, though smaller in amount. It is not always the same in quantity when we receive it, but after we have received it, it grows.

This is proved *by the later lives of the Apostles themselves*. Take Simon Peter as an instance. At one time poor Simon, indeed—how he was to be pitied! He sat down to warm his hands at a fire in the High Priest's palace and, as he was sitting there, a pert servant girl said to him, "You, also, were with Him." And so weak was Peter's faith that he actually denied his Master! But not many weeks after that, the Holy Spirit descended on Simon Peter and now the same man who blushed with fear before the flippant maid is standing up before thousands in the streets of Jerusalem and delivering himself with the greatest bravery on behalf of the Gospel of the Crucified Christ! There is now no fear, or trembling, or unbelief in Simon Peter, for Pentecost has come and he is made strong and bold by the Holy Spirit! How wonderfully has he changed! You might almost have thought that there were two Simon Peters, rather than one, so marvelously has he grown in faith and courage!

Further, that faith grows is very clear from the fact that there have been and are *thousands of other persons* who have evidently had more faith than you or I ever had, and yet *who have found that their faith was not always strong*. Look at the martyrs—how they went to their deaths singing hymns on the road. How many of them triumphed in the amphitheater when wild beasts tore them to pieces! How they were thrown into damp, reeking dungeons, where they laid until the mildew grew upon them and there they were left to starve—and yet how there they died with joy in their hearts and songs on their lips! Those were men and women of faith whose shoelaces you and I are not worthy to unloose—they were far, far greater than we! And yet if you had spoken to any of them, they would have said that they were no better than we are when they began, but that God had, by His Grace, nurtured and tended their faith until it had become what it was. Do you know what this growth in faith is? We never become nursing fathers and mothers to any of our Brothers and Sisters or our hearers until we have this growth in faith. I bless God that I have seen many of you grow in faith—and my earnest prayer is that everyone of you may grow to the full assurance of hope unto the end, so that I may have to say of you all, "Your faith grows exceedingly, and your love unto all the saints." Yes, Brothers and Sisters, we do see faith grow in others quite as plainly as we have ever seen the shrubs and the plants growing in the field!

Moreover, *I think you and I are conscious that our own faith has grown*. I know mine has. I know it is weaker, sometimes, for we may grow backwards. Yet I am conscious, taking the run of the years, that my faith is stronger than it was.

I will tell you how faith grows. Sometimes it grows *in intensity*. You believe the same things, but you believe them more firmly. A child has a pearl in its hand. Yes, but now the child has grown up into a man and he

has the same pearl, but how differently he holds it! When, as a little child, he held the pearl, then you might, perhaps, have taken it away from him. But now that he is a man, see how he doubles his fists and grasps the treasure! So it is with the man who grows in faith. He gets such a grip upon eternal Truths of God that you cannot take them from him! He has learned to stand firmly. He is not carried about by every wind of doctrine. He keeps the helm of his soul fixed right to the port where he is bound—let the wind blow and the storm howl and moan as it may!

Faith also grows not only in intensity but *in extent*, so that you believe more than you once did. At first we believe a few great Truths and then knowledge comes to our assistance and instead of only three or four great majestic Truths of God, we learn ten—and as we advance further we learn a hundred! Sometimes, however, we grieve to confess that as our faith grows in extent, it diminishes in intensity, which is a very poor gain. But if we believe more and believe all with the same intensity as we did at first, then is our faith growing, indeed, and we are advancing after a most healthy and happy fashion!

Faith *does* grow—we know it does—in these two respects, for we have, some of us, been conscious of the growth in ourselves. Beloved, *it would be a very strange thing if faith did not grow*. It was a great miracle when Joshua made the sun stand still because that day the sun was the only thing in all the world that did stand still! Everything else was moving. It is part of God's law that every star shall revolve—that there shall be nothing inert. Even the great sun, itself, rolls round and is constantly going on its mighty way. The sun was the only thing that day that stood still and, therefore, it was, indeed, a miracle! Now, if faith did not grow, it would be the only thing in the Christian that stood still and did not grow—for everything else in the whole man certainly grows.

Does not Christ teach us this, again, by His talking of, first, the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear? At another time we are told that we are children and that we think as children, and speak as children—but that when we shall become men, we shall put away childish things. In other places something is said about little children, then about children, and then about young men and then about the fathers. I will not quote all the instances—they are too numerous—in which both by metaphor and by plain speech, we are taught in God's Word that the whole Christian grows and, therefore his faith, which is as his right arm, must surely grow, too!

Faith, then, is a matter of growth. And now thirdly—

III. GROWTH OF FAITH IS VERY DESIRABLE. I said at the first that the very least faith is saving, but then it is not desirable that we should

only have the very least faith. It is exceedingly desirable that we should get the greatest possible faith!

Growth in faith is desirable and it is so, first of all, *because unbelief is a very great sin* and where there is little faith there is evidently lurking unbelief and, consequently, sin—and no true Christian would like to be easy while he is daily committing sin. It is not possible for us to be weak in faith without transgressing. Weak faith may bring us a blessing, but weakness in faith is an evil—and to indulge weakness in faith and not to struggle out of it would only be a willful increase of guilt!

Brothers and Sisters, I do not think that we ever estimate aright what a bitter and an evil thing our unbelief is. It is a question, really, whether there is any other sin which makes so direct a stab at the Truth of God as this does! It is a question whether there is any sin more defiling to us, or more dishonoring to God. Brothers and Sisters, we ought to daily aspire to the highest faith in order that we may expel unbelief—and so be delivered from constant sin!

Growth in faith also *is necessary for our sanctification*. It is by faith that sin is kept down and that all our Divine Graces grow. Unless faith is vigorous, we cannot expect to be making progress towards perfection. Sanctification is a daily and unceasing thing. It is carried on in our thoughts and hearts by the Holy Spirit, but faith in the precious blood is the great means He uses for that sanctifying.

We overcome sin through the blood of the Lamb applied to us day by day by the hyssop of faith. Brothers and Sisters, if you neglect your faith, you will soon find that, struggle as you will, to advance in other Graces, your struggles will be all in vain. Faith, faith, faith—this is the reservoir and if this is not well filled, the pipes will soon run dry!

Again, growth in faith *is necessary to our comfort*. Little-Faith goes to Heaven, but his feet are sore on the road. He gets into the Kingdom, but it is like a leaky vessel that has cast its precious cargo overboard and only just manages to get into port—it almost founders at the harbor's mouth. Little-Faith stumbles at a straw, but *Great-Faith* is very full of comfort. His mind is stored with grateful recollections of past mercies and his eyes beam with the fond anticipations of mercies yet to come—and so Great-Faith makes a Heaven for itself here below—and goes towards the songs of Glory rehearsing some of them on the road! Give me strong faith in God and I need ask for nothing else, for strong faith will turn poverty into wealth, weakness into strength, deep sorrows into lasting joys and monster difficulties into marvelous triumphs! More faith and you shall have plenteous comfort. It is always feast days and feast nights—it is a merry Christmas all the year round to a soul that has an unstaggering faith in the promises of the blessed God!

Strong faith is also *very necessary to our usefulness*. If we go to our work timidly, scarcely knowing our own interest in Christ, we may have a blessing, but it is not likely to be a great one. But when we know whom we have believed and have tasted and handled that the good Word of God is assuredly ours, then what we speak will come with Grace and power—and under the varying unction of the Holy Spirit there are more probabilities of our success when we work with faith than when we work with doubting! Indeed, it is to faith that the blessing comes! I question whether our preaching in unbelief is of much service, but if we preach believing that souls will be saved, then they *will be saved*! If we preach relying on God's promise that His Word shall not return unto Him void, it *will not* return void, but there shall be fruit for the sower according to the assurance of our faithful God!

Brothers and Sisters, I cannot now speak to you at length upon a topic so important, but I leave it with you, being assured that you cannot think too much of it. To have your faith growing exceedingly is desirable above all things. Seek for it, I pray you, and may the Lord grant it to you according to His fullness of mercy. But now let us ponder the joyous truth, that—

IV. GROWTH IN FAITH IS OBTAINABLE.

The Apostles would not have asked for it, would not have been allowed to ask for it, if it had not been possible to receive it! They did ask for it, they did receive it and, therefore, you and I may ask for it and receive it. They exhort us to obtain it—at least they practically do so by their example—therefore we may obtain it. It is always a sad thing and greatly depressing to Christian growth when you picture in your mind's eye great and eminent saints as being far above anything that you can ever be. Brothers and Sisters, let me beseech you, when you read the life of such a man as Dr. Payson, do not say, "He is such a spiritually-minded man! I shall never be like he!" You *shall* be like he by God's Grace! When you turn to the life of Whitfield, young man who is about to enter the Christian ministry, let not the Evil Spirit say, "You cannot be so devoted and so seraphic in earnestness as he was." Why not? Where Whitfield fell short of being perfect, you fall short with him and you will be short, indeed—but why not be as he? The same Master who made him has also put you upon the wheel. The same Spirit who kept him fervent and faithful has promised to dwell in you! Why should not the same results be produced? I know that you sometimes look up to those who are more advanced in the Divine Life than you are. You who have lately been united to the Christian Church envy them—you do not think that you can ever reach their standard. Ah, Beloved, be it your prayer to reach the best in the Church, that if it is the Lord's will, you may feel yourselves to be less than they are and yet to be in reality far fuller of God's Grace and love,

and every good thing than any of them! Aspire, my Brothers and Sisters—do not despair, but *aspire* for God's Glory, to prove to this wicked world that Christianity has not lost its vigor—that it is still possible for us to be as simple-minded and as heroic as the Apostles were. Aspire to what they obtained! Ask for an increase of faith, as they asked for it—and when you have it, be not content even with that, nor think that you cannot by any possibility be as full of faith as they were!

I know that the enemy will tell you that you are placed in a position where you cannot possibly be so full of Divine Grace. Tell the enemy that he is a liar from the beginning! You may be in a position where you cannot be extensively useful. You may be where you are neither called upon nor expected to do many of the works which others perform. But circles are admired and praised not because of their largeness, but their roundness! So you will have honor from God, not according to the size of your sphere, but according to the completeness with which you fill it, doing as unto the Lord who requires of you according to His will and through His Grace. A nursery maid having the care of two or three children, teaching them the sweet story of the love of Christ and seeking to bring their hearts to Jesus may be more faithful than I am with a large congregation continually listening to me. She may do all her work—it will be hard for me to do all mine. You with a little shop and much labor to make both ends meet—and with a large family to bring up in the fear of God—may have more honor from the Master, at last, than many a man whose name is blazoned before the world!

It is not where you are, but *what* you are. And it is not how you are seen, but how you live in the sight of God. That is the thing that matters! Ah, dear Friends, it is possible that in the sphere where you are, to excel as much in faith as Paul did when preaching at Athens! Or Peter, standing in the midst of Jerusalem before the Parthians, Medes and Elamites! Let nothing deter you. Believe that you would not be taught to pray, "Lord, increase our faith," if God would not answer the prayer—and that He will answer it and give you the highest faith that ever man had—even you, so that on the sickbed, or in the midst of poverty you may be as illustrious an example of faith as the best known Believer who has ever adorned the annals of the Church. But to proceed—as this growth in faith is obtainable, so, in the next place—

V. THERE IS A PROPER MEANS FOR OBTAINING IT.

If I might advise you, the first means I would lay down for making faith grow would be that which the Apostles adopted, namely, *prayer*. They said, "Lord, increase our faith." Pray much that your faith may grow. Oh, I am afraid in this naughty age in which we are so busy with a thousand cares, that we are only too deficient at the Mercy Seat and this accounts for the fact that there is so much superficial religion among us.

If you would learn to believe God's promises, go with the promises to God and see them in the light of His Countenance! Plead them with solemn earnestness, not wavering before the Mercy Seat till you have a comfortable assurance that God will be to you what He has said. Let us have more prayer and there will be more faith!

Next to that, *search the Word more*. The more we are familiar with God's Inspired Book, the more likely shall we be to believe it. If I want to believe a story which is current, I shall best strengthen my credence of its truthfulness by hearing it constantly repeated. When I begin to examine a Doctrine and I see that the Doctrine is clear, then I cannot help believing it. Now come to the Word of God, pure and unadulterated, and, as you read it, it will be its own witness. The glory which "gilds each sacred page, majestic like the sun," will flash before your eyes and you will then marvel that you ever could have doubted it. And let me tell you—many a promise which you have passed over before, or thought it to be scarcely worth attention, will shine out in splendor and delight your eyes and enrapture your spirit! Oh, how dead is the Word of God at one time, to what it is at another! You shall read it in the dark without the help of the Holy Spirit and it shall be to you like Christ in the eyes of the unregenerate world—"without form and comeliness." But at another time, when God shines upon it, you shall find it to be marrow and fatness to your soul and you will wonder that you have ever risen from perusing it, so delightful shall it be to your soul!

Search the Word much! Seek to enquire into the facts and Doctrines of the Gospel. There are very few theological treatises issued now-a-days. You do not read theology. You do not care about it! I know what you read—three-volume novels and especially religious tales in magazines! I wish that we were rid of these religious tales. I like irreligious tales much better, for when they are downright irreligious, people will not read the trash—but when these tales are flavored with a little of the spice of godliness, they go down with them and their heads get stuffed up with the silly nonsense they read! And instead of being the better by what they read, they are rather the worse. I wish you would sit down and study some of the good old stuff which your grandmothers used to read. Some of those old men and women used to sit down and when they had put on their spectacles, would read through some treatise on the Doctrines of the Gospel. Those were the grand old women who, when the minister was unsound, soon let him know that they would hear no such old wives' fables, but would only have good Gospel Truth! And their husbands were of the same sort—they read and searched for themselves. Now-a-days I believe that if a man has only a glib tongue, he may preach very much what he likes. There are hundreds of our hearers who today would go after a Calvinist or even a hyper-Calvinist and tomorrow would go and hear

an Arminian—and it would all be good because of the garnishing and because of the little sprigs and flowers all over the dish! God deliver us from such religion as this and give us to know the Truth of God by searching it out! Do, dear Friends, search out the Truth in God's Word. Seek to get a firm grip and deep knowledge of it. It were well for half the Christians in England if they would learn the Assembly's Catechism. They would get a world of knowledge even by that compendium, but getting the Truth by the Word is an even more profitable means of increasing our faith!

Let me say again that faith is very frequently helped to grow *by communion with the saints*. Those of you who are younger will often be helped by talking with the more mature and advanced in the Christian life. Yes, the sickbeds of those who are tried and afflicted are often a school in which young disciples may learn lessons in faith! Here you may be enriched with pearls and gems which can be bought in no other market. And suffering saints—men and women who have been in the furnace and have the smell of the fire upon them, who have become like silver purified seven times, who can bear their witness to help given in days of poverty and of deep sustaining Grace in seasons of sore bodily and mental anguish—these can greatly enrich and, through what they shall give, your faith shall grow!

And your faith will also grow, no doubt, *when God treats you as He has treated them*, for, after all, other people's experience is not of half the value to us as is our own. It is when we feel ourselves in the pinch, when we begin to pass through the fire that we fly to the Eternal God and rejoice that "underneath are the everlasting arms." Ask for the sanctified use of affliction! Pray for the sanctified use of prosperity, too, and so by all Providential means your faith will grow.

Remember, however, that the only real mode of growth in faith *is by the power of the Holy Spirit*. As I said at the commencement of this discourse, Peter's growth in faith came upon him at Pentecost. And it was the same with the others of the twelve—they became new men because the Spirit's power rested upon them. Beloved, if we have more of the power of the Spirit of God, more exercise of His power within us, our faith will increase!

Faith, then, is a growing thing. We ought to desire to have it grow. It can grow and I have told you some of the means by which it may grow. And now two or three minutes upon—

VI. THE WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN HINDER ITS GROWTH.

I say only two or three minutes, though it is a very large subject. You can very easily hinder your growth in faith. You can do it by neglecting faith, by letting your Bible grow dusty, by leaving a ministry which is edifying, by despising the Holy Spirit. You can do it by not exercising what you already have. You cannot lose your faith if it is true faith, but you

can lose much of its comparative power by worldly-mindedness, by giving yourselves up to covetousness, by forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as is the manner of some—by falling into sin, by tampering with the flesh, by indulging in vanity—by anything which will grieve the Holy Spirit! You may also weaken your faith by dwelling far from the sun. Dwellers in lands of snow and ice soon grow cold, and so may it be with us by living far from God and the Sun of Righteousness. As by refraining from meat a man may soon grow weak, so by abstaining from spiritual food and soul nourishing, our faith will soon decay. As a long drought quickly makes the flowers of the garden to droop their heads, so if there is a drought of Divine influence upon you, very soon your faith will begin to wither. By living, however, close to God and simply looking up to Him for everything, your faith may continue to grow until it gets to be the full assurance of faith and, like Abraham, you are “strong in faith, giving glory to God.” And here I shall close by saying, let it be one of the resolute pursuits of our life, that being saved we may—

VII. SEEK AFTER THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF GRACE THAT IS OBTAINABLE.

I have heard of a good woman—a widow—who was once in great trouble when visited by her pastor, but on a second visit she was found to be very happy. “What has happened?” enquired her pastor. “What has made you so cheerful?” She said, “I have been reading that precious word, ‘Your Maker is your Husband.’” “How has that comforted you?” he said. “Why,” she answered, “when my husband was alive, I always lived up to his income. But now that my Maker is my Husband, I will try to live up to His income and oh, what a task I have got before me if I am to live up to the income of God that has no bounds and no limits and knows of no such thing as exhaustion! If I may draw upon Him to the utmost extent of His income, how richly I may live!”

Well, now, let us adopt the good woman’s policy and try to live according to the income of our blessed Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ! Then shall our faith grow exceedingly and our love and all our Divine Graces!

Now I am afraid there are some here who have no faith, who have never trusted Christ. Then, dear Friends, it is our solemn duty to remind you, before we sit down, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*. You have come here, tonight, and I am glad you have—and some of you come often—and I am rejoiced. You are honest, sober, moral, amiable. This is all well, but you would like to please God, would you not? Well, but without faith it is impossible for you to please Him! You may do what you may, but without faith it is impossible to please God! God will never accept anything from any of us unless He sees the blood of His Son with it. If you do not go to Christ, it is no use going to the Father, for “no man comes to the Father,” says Christ, “but by Me.”

What? You have forgotten to trust in Jesus? You have thought that something else would do? You have been trying your fancied good works, your prayers, your feelings? Now, dear Friends, remember what the Apostle Paul did. He went round about for many years to establish his own righteousness, but as soon as he trusted in Christ, he said, "Those things which were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ: yes, doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." Now, I will tell you. You may, perhaps, be a churchman and you feel very pleased to think that you have been so regular in your life. Or you may be a Dissenter and feel proud to think you are such a consistent Nonconformist. Now, if ever you are converted, these things which are gain to you *now*, you will count to be less than nothing! You, too, will count them to be loss as compared with Christ. Yes, and your prayers, your repentance, what you have given to charity and what you have done—this, and that, and the other—you will look upon them all as being less than nothing and take Christ to be everything to you! "What are you doing, now?" said a good old Divine to a Brother who was dying. He said, "I am doing, now, what I have done many times before in health—I am taking all my good works and all my bad works—indeed, they are so much alike that I can scarcely tell which is which—and I am tying them all in one bundle and throwing them overboard as fast as I can! And I am just clinging to Christ with all my heart and all my soul." This is the only way of safety. None but Jesus! Nothing of yours—not one brass farthing—but Christ, Christ, Christ—Christ at the top and the bottom, at the beginning and the end, first, last and throughout!

You must have nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ! And if you do this night depend upon Him, why, my dear Friend, your sins are all forgiven! Just what Christ said to the poor grateful leper, I say to you in Christ's name—if you really do depend upon Him—"Your faith has saved you. Go in peace!" Though your past life may have been ever so vile and you have come in here without God and without hope, yet if you now believe in Jesus Christ and rely alone upon Him, none of your sins shall be mentioned against you any more forever. "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud and, like a thick cloud, your transgressions."

May you have faith given you tonight and then another day, after you have faith, may you pray, "Lord, increase my faith." That is not your prayer tonight—be thankful if you have any faith at all! But you who have faith tonight, pray tonight, and pray always, "Lord increase our faith."

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1893.
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*“But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him, by-and-by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird yourself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you shall eat and drink? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”
Luke 17:7-10.*

THESE words are not addressed to the general congregation. You notice that the chapter begins, “Then said He unto the disciples.” Even they felt as if Christ’s words were too heavy for them and so, when you get to the fifth verse, you read, “And the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith,” as if only the very strongest of them were able to receive His teaching just then—He was describing such difficult duties and prescribing so peculiar a path. Mark you, He was not laying down the way of *salvation*, but pointing out a path of *service* for those who were already saved. We must be saved, first, and must *serve* afterwards. To hope to serve Christ so as to *win* salvation is a fallacy, a delusion of our proud hearts. But to be saved by His Grace as a matter of pure favor and then, afterwards, to serve Him, having gratitude for our great motive, is the right order and a very different thing from self-righteousness. It is to disciples, then, that the words about which I speak, tonight, are addressed.

We must not start back at the sight of the service which is required of us. It is our highest honor that we are allowed to be the servants of our Savior and, being servants, unless we are so only nominally, and not really, we must not be offended at anything that is demanded of us. We must try to fill up the word, “servant,” and show the world what a servant can be! It is the duty of every Christian to turn each common silver word into a golden one. Whatever “husband,” or “father,” or “son,” may mean in reference to ordinary society, it must mean something *more* when it gets into the Church of God! We must fulfill it, we must fill it full! We must make something more of it than it used to be. So with regard to servants,

if we are servants of Christ, let us be servants, as the mathematicians say, “*to the nth degree*”—to the very highest possible degree! Let us elevate and enlarge our calling till, if men want to know what a servant is, they will only have to ask Christ, our Master, and He will *point to us* and say, “These are the kind of servants that My love and My Grace can produce. Money could not buy such and no rate of wages could secure such service as they are prepared to freely render.”

With those two thoughts on your minds, that, being saved, you are servants, and being servants, it is your intense desire to make that word mean all it possibly can mean, follow me while I try to bring out the teaching of the passage before us.

I. First, WE ARE, ADMITTEDLY, THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST.

If the word, *doulos*, is interpreted here, “slave,” as it certainly might be, we are quite willing to be known as the bond-slaves of Jesus Christ. Like Paul, we have no objection, even, to be branded with the mark of a slave, and with him we dare to say, “From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

We are the servants, the slaves of Christ, and we rejoice to be so because in this *lies our deliverance from the bondage of sin*. No man can really be his own master—he will serve either one lord or another. We are such dependent creatures that we must give ourselves up to be either the servants of sin, or the servants of righteousness. We were once the servants of sin. We were “children of wrath, even as others.” We found ourselves born into hereditary bondage which we also freely chose, for the iron entered into our will and our will chose the bondage of evil passions and corrupt desires. One way or another, though each of us differently, we resolved to be the servants and the serfs of the Prince of Darkness, that Evil One who still rules over the children of disobedience! Now that we have become the servants of Christ, we are freed from the bondage of sin—His service is our freedom! There was no other method of setting us free from the bondage of the black prince than that of bringing us under a Divine and blessed servitude to Immanuel, the Prince of Holiness and Peace. We therefore rejoice in being His servants because it means deliverance from an older servitude, even the service of sin and Satan!

Our being Christ’s servants is *the absolute result of redemption*. We are bought with a price—therefore we are not our own. Standing on Calvary and gazing with wonder at those purple founts from which flow our salvation and eternal life, we feel that, “if One died for all, then all died,” and that, inasmuch as Jesus Christ there bought us with His precious blood, we are His inalienable property and belong to Him—body, soul and spirit—forever. Such a price, paid by such an One, in the midst of such circumstances of shame and derision, binds us as His forever and ever! We do not want to be our own—our purchase by Christ is our delight and we willingly yield ourselves up to Him who has paid for us a price infinitely more than we could ever be conceived to be worth! Hence our service is founded upon our deliverance from the bondage of sin and it is also the direct result of our redemption by the blood of Christ.

Moreover, as you sang just now, you helped me to another point—we are Christ's by our own pledge. You remember your declaration—

**“Tis done! The great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's and He is mine.”**

You added to that the further resolve—

**“High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear—
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”**

If we were not Christ's, tonight, we would not rest an hour until we were! We wish to be His, we wish to be perfectly His—our prayer is that every thought may be brought into captivity to Him. Our soul pines after the perfect liberty of complete subjection to the will of God in Christ Jesus! Is it not so, Brothers and Sisters? Have you not lifted your hand to Heaven so that you cannot go back? And what is more, has not every desire to go back ceased out of your heart? If you had been mindful of the place from where you came out, you might have had abundant opportunity to return—but you desire something beyond—your motto is, “Onward, upward, homeward, *heavenward*.” You want to get away from the place from where you came. You belong to Christ! You confess the impeachment, tonight, wondering much that you should have the joy of *daring* to feel that you belong to Christ! Have you any sweeter hymn in the whole repertoire of your heart than this—

**“Oh! I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved's mine”?**

Do you not sing that in your happiest moments, in the quiet of your spirit? If so, then you are admittedly the servant of Christ.

We regard this service as a great gift of the Free Grace of God. We look back to the eternal counsels and we see the Father choosing us in Christ Jesus—and giving us to His dear Son before the foundation of the world! We see our Lord Jesus undertaking, on our behalf, to present us faultless to the Father in the day of His appearing—and it is a great delight to us to feel that it is because God willed it that we are now the property of Christ. God decreed it. God laid plans for it. It was in the purpose and Covenant of *unchangeable Grace* that we should belong to Christ. In this we rejoice, not as a bondage imposed, but as a Grace given! Oh, what would we not have given, years ago, when first we were awakened, if we could have even *hoped* that we belonged to Christ? And now that we know that we are His, and none other's, and that He will keep us to the end—it is the highest delight of our spirit! Do not think, dear Friends, any of you, that we consider ourselves demeaned by submitting to a very slavery to Christ! We wish to make the bondage as tight as it can possibly be—we desire not to have any will, or any wish, or even any *imagination* that would go flying over the Divine boundaries of God's will! We would be wholly His—that is our honor, our crown—God's best gift to us!

More than that, we find that *the service of Christ is its own reward*. What if He never smiled on me? If He would let me serve Him, I would count the fact of service to be a smile! If He should drive me from His

Presence, if He would only let me glorify Him, I would be satisfied to make that my Heaven! To be completely given up to live for God and to glorify Christ—what larger happiness could a redeemed creature desire? There is reward enough to us in being permitted to unloose the laces of His shoes, or to be engaged in His farm-work, as the text says, plowing, or feeding cattle, so long as it is but done for Him!

Besides, *there is a rich reward in store for the righteous* and we may look for it. We remember how Moses “had respect unto the recompense of the reward” and, without being mercenary, we may anticipate our reward. God will not let His people work for nothing and though the reward is not of debt, but of Grace, yet verily there is a reward for the righteous! In that day when Christ shall come in the Glory of His Father, He will award to His saints their several crowns. To those who have been faithful, He will give according to the measure of their faithfulness. “You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.” We count it a high honor not to be in the civil service, but to be in the Divine service! How ardently some young men are looking forward for a place, “under government.” That is exactly what I have—it is just what every child of God has—a place under Divine Government! We do not wish for anything better than this. O you glorified saints, if we may but come among your thrones, or even lie at your feet, we will make no choice, so that we may but see our Lord’s face and, meanwhile, if it shall be our lot to do the dishwasher’s work in Christ’s kitchen, we will count it most honorable employment—and we will do it as unto Him.

This servitude to Christ is to us unutterable freedom. We are never free till Christ binds us. Here I stand, tonight, He has bound my heart and fastened it to Himself! He has bound my hands and they must serve Him! He has bound my feet and they must run in the way of His commands. He has bound my tongue, too. It sometimes speaks amiss, but yet it longs to speak only and wholly for Him. My Master, tie my eyes and my eyelids, too, and bind every filament of my nature, every nerve, and every muscle of my body, and every hair of my head—and let me be wholly Yours—in absolute bondage unto You and then shall I cry, “O God, truly I am Your servant! I am Your servant, You have loosed my bonds!” We never have our bonds loosed until, like the Psalmist, we can twice over mark the absolute servitude to Himself into which Christ has brought us.

That is my first remark on the text and there is much in it—we are, admittedly, the servants of Christ.

II. Secondly, OUR SERVICE IS NOT FINISHED—“Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him, by-and-by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?”

Observe, first, that *our service may have been long and arduous*. We may have been plowing. I speak to some here who have had a very hard bit of plowing—instead of breaking the soil, you have, sometimes, thought that you would break the plow and many a time the bullocks, unaccustomed to the yoke, have been very difficult to drive—and some of them that are accustomed to the yoke have taken to kicking every now and

then. You have not found plowing to be playing! I am sure no plowman ever does. He finds that it is tough work. He earns his living well who earns it by his plowing and, if some of the gentlemen in London who quarrel with their wages, had to do a plowman's work, and to get a plowman's wages, I guarantee you that they would think themselves better off at the work they have to do now! A good day's plowing is about as hard a day's toil as a man can have.

Well, some of us have been plowing, for the Master has given us difficulties. He has given us trials, He has given us cares and we have also had to feed cattle. I cannot say that I have been *literally* feeding cattle but I have found it more trouble to feed some of you than I should have had in feeding cattle! I had an old friend who was 40 years a shepherd and he lived to be 80 years old. During the last 40 years of his life he was a minister and he said, one day, "I have had two flocks. The first 40 years I fed sheep and the second 40 years I fed men—and the second flock was a deal more sheepish than the first." I can vouch for the latter part—not that *all* of you are like sheep, for there are some of you who are easily fed—but there are others who are not. I remember a young man who left the Church because he said that I never gave him a bit of bone on which he could try his teeth. Well, now, I thought that if I took out the bone and gave meat, alone, I was doing the best thing possible. But this foolish youth wanted a bit of gristle, not that he could digest it, but he wanted something that he could *not digest*. I could have given him plenty of that sort of stuff—I had no end of it at home—but I save that for my dogs and bring the meat for the people I have to feed.

You can never please everybody and there are some people who are like those described in Psalm Sixty-Seven. I think that David said that they were fools, but I will not say that. And further he says of them, "Their soul abhors all manner of meat." There was no feeding them! I would rather feed cattle than feed them. Cattle will eat what you give them, as a general rule, but we have some in our congregations, dear souls, that are afraid to feed on the promises of God, afraid to feed, even, on the Bread of Life. They are not worthy, they say, which is quite true—but then we are not fed according to our worthiness in the Covenant of Grace! This feeding of cattle, this feeding of men, is not the easiest thing in the world.

The text also teaches that *our service may change its form*. Some of you have been at Sunday School work. Others of you have been at slum work. Some have been visiting the lodging houses—others have stood in the streets and preached for Christ. You have had a good long day of plowing and feeding cattle, but your work is not done. Oh, by no means! When the man mentioned by our Lord had been out all day in the field and then came home, he had just to tidy himself up and do a little domestic service, for, in the East, the manservant, after plowing in the field, had to gird his loins and prepare his master's dinner—and serve at the table waiting upon his lord. Well, now, dear Friends, after a good long day's work you shall have a change of occupation, but you shall still go on working! You have not finished your service yet. Have you had 40 years of it? Well, that

is a long day, but you have not done work yet—there is something else for you to do! If you cannot go out plowing, you shall go down into the kitchen and do some cooking! And if you cannot feed the cattle, you shall bring up a dish of food for your master. This is a change of work for you, but you are to keep on as long as you live.

I said, one Sabbath morning, that I feared I might not be able to keep on preaching, meaning that I feared that I should soon be laid aside by illness, which I hope may not now occur—and somebody said that I was not going to preach anymore, I was going to retire. I shall “retire” when four men carry me on their shoulders to the grave, but not till then, by God’s Grace! As long as there is breath in our body and we are able to say a word for Christ, we certainly shall not give up our service! Nor will any of you, I hope, ever talk about retiring from your Master’s work. If any of you young men ever think of doing so, I beg you to remember what came to Jonah when he “retired” from his Master’s business—and whales are scarcer, now, than they were then! You had better go down to Nineveh and work away in your Master’s service as long as you have health and strength. There may be change of service, but no *retiring* from service!

Next, *the servant came to service which required greater care*. When he was only plowing, or feeding cattle, he could do that in a rough way, with unwashed hands. But now that he has to wait on his master, do you not see how he smartens himself up, how he has washed his hands and face? He would not be properly waiting on his master if he had any filth on his clothes or on the plates. And he attends to this service with all his wits about him—he does not fall asleep over it. If the Lord calls you to be His body-servant, to wait upon Him in close attendance and high communion with Him—if He gives you more to do with the souls of men, more to do with the Church of God, as He may do, promoting you to higher service—yet remember that you are still a *servant* and you are to prove that you are still a servant by working with greater care, with more of the spirit of a servant than you ever had before.

Dear Friends, is it not a mercy for us that our service is not ended? Why should it be finished? *Our dependence upon our Master is not ended*. We burn His candles, so we ought to do His work. Every morning’s breakfast and every day’s meals are His gifts to us—and the clothes on our back are from Him—should we not, then, continue to serve Him? When you can do without Christ, He can do without you. But that will not be, “by-and-by.” You are *always* depending upon His daily bounty, therefore be thankful that your service is not ended.

And remember this, also—it is a blessed thing that our service is not ended because it shows that the Lord still has pleasure in His servant. There is a prayer put into verse, that you and I may constantly offer—

“Dismiss me not Your service, Lord!”

Suppose that He had dismissed us and said, “Go and sit down to meat, I do not need you anymore. I have no poor child for you to nurse, I have not even anymore cattle for you to feed—there is not even a lamb among My flock for you to carry in your bosom”? That would show that He did not

love us with the love of complacency, or take such delight in us as He once did. But as long as He gives us something to do, we will gratefully do it, because we will take it as a token of His continual delight in us and, therefore, delighting in us, He gives us something to do for Him. That is my second point—our service is not ended.

III. And next, WE DO NOT WISH TO BE TREATED AS IF IT WERE—“Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him, by-and-by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?”

That would show that his service was ended. But we do not wish our Master to treat us so. I mean this—*we do not expect freedom from trial*. Do you? We read of Abraham as being sorely tried and wonderfully prevailing. And then we come upon this text, “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt (that is, try, or test) Abraham.” Yes, and after all your years of service, after you have been honored in bringing souls to Christ, you will have to still be tried. He will not say, “Go and sit down to meat,” but He will bid you gird yourselves and come and serve Him.

Also, dear Friends, *we are not to expect honor here*. After many years of preaching the Gospel, one might be tempted to say to himself, “I have a name and some esteem among men. I must take care of them.” That is a temptation from Satan—throw it all away. Serve your Lord and care nothing about your honor, or your reputation, for it is not for Him to say to you, “Go and sit down to meat.” If He still calls you to do some service for Him in the defense or proclamation of His Truth, do not ask Him to treat you otherwise.

Then, *we are not to think that we cannot do anymore*. Do I speak to any Christian who has come in here, tonight, saying, “I really think that I must give up this service and give up that”? Do no such thing, I pray you! Hold on to it as for dear life. Your engagement to your Master is not a five years’ service, like that of a soldier, but you are His for *life*. Yours is a life-long bondage to Him, a happy apprenticeship to your Lord and Master throughout the whole term of your natural—no, of your *spiritual* life! Say not that you can do no more—there is much yet remaining for you to do! Pick up a new thread and begin to spin, and He will find you more. Take up a bit of iron you have never tried to fashion, put it in the fire, and see whether you cannot make some fresh instrument there. Give yourself up continually to serve your Lord yet more and more, and think not that your work is finished.

And, Beloved, *we must not be beginning to look for our reward here*. If you think to have Heaven this side the Jordan, you are greatly mistaken. Heaven is to be hereafter, but Heaven is not, “by-and-by.” This is the place for *fighting*—out with your sword! This is the field for *labor*—get you to your plow! If such a wish could come to you in Heaven, you might desire to get back, again, to the service of earth, that you might do still more for your Lord. When I get to Heaven and you get to Heaven, if we know that false doctrine is spreading in the world, we shall long to go back and confront the adversary, again, if such wishes are permitted in Heaven. While

souls are perishing for lack of knowledge, let none of us want to be away from the earth—so long as men need us to tell them the way of salvation, let us gladly continue at our work—let us serve God, my Brothers and Sisters, while we have the opportunity—

***“In works which perfect saints above
And holy angels cannot do.”***

Now is our time for preaching! Now is your time for teaching the children! Brothers, seven heavens could not find us another pulpit when once we get to Glory—we might almost wish that they could. What opportunities of praying with the sick and instructing ignorant children you now have! You will not have them when once you are in the other world. Therefore use the golden hours you have while you are here below. Your service is not finished, so do not wish to be treated as though it were. Ask not honor from men. Ask not even for honor from God, if that were meant to exempt you from further shame, from further suffering, from further reproach for Christ’s dear sake. The further we go in His service, the more resolved we are to give up everything for Him. When we first started, we may have thought of making some reserve, but now we have gone so far into the river of consecration that we find “waters to swim in” and we can truly say—

***“Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I’d love my God with zeal so great
That I should give Him all.”***

May you not only sing it, but may you *mean* it and practice it, for Christ’s sake!

IV. Now we go a step further. WE ARE ALWAYS TO PUT OUR MASTER FIRST. We are servants and our work is not done—neither ought we to wish to be treated as though it were. We are not ourselves to sit down to meat, but we are to hear our Master say, “Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird yourself, and serve Me, till I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you shall eat and drink.” I will very hurriedly mention these points.

First, *we are to prefer service to rest.* Service is feeding our Master—rest is refreshing ourselves. If we may have a choice, we must always choose that which will be for His Glory. If it is necessary to rest for His Glory, rest. But if you can better serve Him by continued activity—even unto death—select the service.

Next, *we must put His pleasure before our own.* I must not want what will please me, but what will please Him. It ought always to please us to have the opportunity of pleasing Him. Did not Abraham run unto the herd, to fetch a calf, tender and good, that he might feed the blessed ones when, under the tree, they came to favor him with a visit? What an honor is put upon us when we are permitted to feed Christ and to wait upon Him till He has eaten and drunk! I can hardly conceive of myself as having the high honor, on bended knee, of waiting on my Lord. If He would but once come to my house, what would I not do for Him? So have I often

said, yet the whole of our life should be an entertainment of Christ, our blessed Prince. We should always be seeking to gratify Him, to give Him to drink that which He thirsts for in the salvation of the souls of men—and to give Him to eat of that which He delights in, namely, the holiness and consecration of His people. His pleasure is to be put before our pleasure.

And, next, *His people are to be preferred before ourselves*. His people are His body—therefore think more of His body than of your own body. Let the poor saints be very near your heart—let the man in whom you see anything of Christ be loved because of your Lord's likeness which you see in him. Always put Christ's people before yourself.

And *put His name before your own name*. I want you to dwell upon that. There is always a tendency among us to want to keep up our own respectability and, if we are ministers, to keep up our own name. The temptation has come to men who have been eminently useful to found a denomination for the preservation of their name. George Whitefield was saved from that—when some people wanted him to set up a new sect to be called by his name, he said—“No, let my name perish, but let Christ's name stand forever.” So say I, let sect go, and let my name go, and let everything go—but let Christ and His Truth be preserved! Make no reckoning between a grain of Christ's Glory and a ton of your own. Always think that everything you have has already gone and that you, yourself, have gone, a living sacrifice, wholly given up to your Lord. If you must be made as the off-scouring of all things, as the rubbish on the dunghill, so let it be, so that Christ Jesus may be glorious and every particle of His Truth may be set on high in the hearts of men!

This is the meaning of the text here—you are not to sit down to meat as yet. You are to gird yourself and serve your Lord and your eating and your drinking shall be glorious, indeed, “by-and-by.” This same Gospel has a phrase in it which has often staggered me. I mean that passage where Christ says that He will gird Himself and come forth and serve His servants who girded themselves to serve Him. The high reward reserved for you ought to brace you up to the most arduous service as long as you live! God help you to render such service for Christ's sake!

V. I close with this remark, **WE ARE TO TAKE OUR PLACE LOW DOWN**. Read the latter part of the text—“Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.” I feel inclined to laugh as I read this verse, “Does he thank that servant?” Only imagine the Lord Jesus Christ thanking you or thanking me for anything that we might do, even if we did all that He commanded us! For Him to thank us for what we do, even if we did all we ought, seems utterly absurd!

And then, how could He thank us for what we have not done, for we have not done the things which were commanded us? We have left many of them undone and we have done the things we ought not to have done. What thanks do we deserve? None, I think. Then, besides, dear Friends, if we had done all, Christ's thanks, if they were given to us, would be for so little service compared with His due. We are, at our best, unprofitable ser-

vants. Think of what He has done for us and do not set, side by side with that, anything that we have ever done for Him who loved us to the life and to the death—who loved us eternally and infinitely. What have we done for Him compared with what He has done for us? Our service put beside Christ's is like one single grain of dust put in comparison with the mighty orb of the sun! There is but poor comparison there, but there is no comparison at all between the little we do for Christ and the great, the immeasurable service that He has rendered to us! Truly, we are unprofitable servants to Him.

And then, Beloved, whatever we have done has all been done in us *by Him*. Whatever fruit we have, Christ can say to us, "From Me is your fruit found." If there is any virtue, if there is any praise, if there is any love, if there is any faith, if there is any zeal, if there is any holiness—was it not all *given* to us? Are we not all the greater debtors to God, the more we have done? What have we ever profited Him? Growing saints think themselves nothing. Full-grown saints think themselves *less* than nothing! You may guess your real weight by the depths to which you sink in self-abasement. You may estimate your true value in the market of Heaven by the low estimate you put upon yourself. May the Lord give us, therefore, to be His willing, ardent, earnest servants!

Oh, never let us have a single lofty thought as to the service that we have rendered, because, you know, if we once begin to think that we are very fine servants, we shall not like to do some of the work which He puts upon us. We shall be too proud for that service and there is many a servant of God who is too tall, too big for his place and, therefore, he is not likely to do much for his Master. There is much to be done that flesh and blood will not do, especially in dealing with some of the Lord's people who are ill-mannered and foolish. But we must learn to clean the saucepans, to do the drudge's work, the servile work, if we are to be true servants for Christ. We must even *select* that sort of service and prefer it, if we would be like our Master and desire to take the highest place in the ranks of the Believers. "These are hard things," you say. They are, to flesh and blood, but the Lord can give us of His Spirit that we may conquer flesh and blood.

Do any of you here say, "I am no servant of Christ and I do not want to be one"? The day will come when you would give your eyes to be His servants, even though you had to serve Him in the dark throughout your life! I would sooner be the Lord's dog than the devil's darling! It is better to have the lowest place in Christ's house than to have the highest place in the tents of wickedness. If any here are unconverted, I can tell them that the sorrows of Christ are better than the pleasures of sin. Christ's blacks are whiter than your whitest things. Christ's servitude is more heavenly than the world's heaven. A blow from Christ is better than a kiss from the lips of sin. Oh, if you had but one glance, if you could even have but a glimpse at the Glory that Jesus has, you would come to Him and beg Him, first, to save you, and then to let you serve Him, for it is better to serve

Christ in the meanest capacity than to be the Czar of all the Russias, or even empress of the whole world!

God give me but to have a place where, washed in His blood, I may wear the white garments of an everlasting servitude to Him and He shall have the praise for it, world without end! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 17:1-10.**

Verse 1. *Then said He unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come.* We are so strangely made that even good men do not always agree and there are so many bad men about that they will cast a stumbling block in our way if they can.

1, 2. *But woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.* To do grievous damage to the soul of the very least of Christ's people is a great and ruinous sin—nothing can be worse. God grant that we may not do this even inadvertently! Let not the strong indulge in that which would be unsafe for the weak, lest the weak be led into sin through that which the strong Brother might find lawful, but which certainly would not be expedient. May none of us ever willfully grieve any child of God!

3. *Take heed to yourselves: If your brother trespass against you, rebuke him; and if he repents.* You shall not believe in His penitence? "No, surely," you say, "that is incorrect." Yes, it is incorrect, but that is what many of you do. I was only reading as things generally are—but that is not Christ's direction.

3, 4. *Forgive Him. And if He trespass against you seven times in a day.* That is seven times too often.

4. *And seven times in a day turn again to you, saying, I repent; you shall forgive him.* Do you say, "That is too many times in a day to forgive him"? Let me ask—"How many times in a day have you sinned? How many times in a day does God forgive you?" Ah, the seven times a day that you have to forgive your brother are but a small number compared with the innumerable forgivenesses granted to you by our ever-gracious God.

5. *And the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.* For this kind of patient forgiving seemed too much for them, unless they had a larger stock of faith and, therein, they were right. Strength of faith gives strength of love and strength of love makes forgiveness easy.

6. *And the Lord said, If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamore tree, Be you plucked up by the root, and be you planted in the sea; and it should obey you.* Now, if faith as a grain of mustard seed can do this, what cannot strong faith do? What a mercy it is for us that there is so much power in such little faith! A very small piece of dynamite can work great wonders. And within the tiniest morsel of faith—if it is no bigger than a grain of mustard seed—there lies concealed almost Omnipotent force! Why do we not exercise that faith more? Nothing

is impossible to him that believes. We could blast the very strongholds of Satan with this powerful powder if we would but try it!

7, 8. *But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him, by-and-by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird yourself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you shall eat and drink?* See, Brothers and Sisters, our position as Believers—we are here as *servants*. It is not yet the time for feasting. Whatever work we have done, even if it is getting towards the evening of our life's day, we must not think of sitting down and expecting our Master to wait upon us. No, we must go on with our service and reckon it to be our highest privilege, still, to gird ourselves and wait on Him. This is not the place of resting or of feasting—this is the day of our holy servitude. Let us work on, plowing while we have strength for it, and when the sun goes down at eventide, *then* waiting, like servants, at the table of their lord.

9. *Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.* Do you take off your hat to your servants and say, "I am very grateful to you for doing your duty"? Not so. And even he who serves God best, may he expect honor as his due? Ah, no—he shall have honor because of the Grace of his Master—but it is not his place to *look* for it, much less is it right for him to *expect* it as his due.

10. *So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.* And who shall praise us for that? The most self-denying servant of the Savior, the most ardent laborer for the Lord will expect nothing of God except to be blessed by His abounding Grace! What can we deserve of the dear hands of Him who bought us with His blood? Are we not the bondservants of Christ? "You are not your own; you are bought with a price." Therefore, whatever service you can render is *due* to Him! And unto Him let it be freely given without one thought of self-praise or pride because it is done so well.

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UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS NO. 1541

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 6, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness:
there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
Matthew 25:30.***

***“So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things
which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable
servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”
Luke 17:10.***

***“His lord said unto him, Well done, you good and faithful servant.”
Matthew 25:21.***

THERE is a narrow path between indifference and morbid sensibility. Some men seem to feel no holy anxiety—they place their Master's talent in the earth, leave it there and take their pleasure and their ease without a moment's compunction. Others profess to be so anxious to be right that they come to the conclusion that they can *never* be so and fall under a horror of God, viewing His service as a drudgery and Himself as a hard master—though probably they never say so. Between these two lines there is a path, narrow as a razor's edge, which only the Grace of God can enable us to trace. It is free from carelessness and from bondage and consists in a sense of responsibility bravely borne by the help of the Holy Spirit.

The right way usually lies between two extremes—it is the narrow channel between the rock and the whirlpool. There is a sacred way which runs between self-congratulation and despondency which is a very difficult track to find and very hard to keep. There are great perils in the consciousness that you have done well and that you are serving God with all your might, for you may come to think that you are a deserving person, worthy to rank among the princes of Israel. The danger of being puffed up can hardly be overestimated—a dizzy head soon brings a fall. But perhaps equally to be dreaded, on the other side, is that sense of unworthiness which paralyzes all exertion making you feel that you are incapable of anything that is great or good.

Under this impulse have men fled from the service of God into a life of solitude. They felt that they could not behave valiantly in the battle of life and, therefore, they fled from the field before the fight began—to become hermits or monks—as if it were possible to do the Lord's perfect will by doing nothing at all and to discharge the duties to which they were born by an unnatural mode of existence! Blessed is that man who finds the straight and narrow way between high thoughts of self and hard thoughts of God, between self-esteem and a timid shrinking from all effort. My de-

sire is that the Spirit of God may guide our minds into the golden median where holy Graces blend and the contending vices, equally natural to our evil hearts, are all excluded.

May the Spirit of God bless our three texts and the three subjects suggested by them, so that we may be put right and then, by infinite mercy, may be *kept* right until the great day of account. Let us read Matthew 25:30. “And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

I. In this, our first text, we have THE VERDICT OF JUSTICE upon the man who did not use his talent. The man is here styled an “unprofitable servant” because he was slothful, useless, worthless. He did not bring his master interest for his money nor render him any sincere service. He did not faithfully discharge the trust reposed in him as his fellow servants did. Notice, first, that this unprofitable person was a *servant*. He never denied that he was a servant. In fact, it was by his position as a servant that he became possessed of his one talent and to that possession he never objected.

If He had been capable of receiving more, there is no reason why he should not have had two talents, or five, for the Scripture tells us that the master gave to every man according to his ability. He acknowledged the rule of his master even in the act of burying the talent and in appearing before him to give an account. This makes the subject the more heart-searching for you and for me, for we, too, profess to be servants—servants of the Lord our God. Judgment must begin at the house of God, that is, with those who are in the house of the Lord as children and servants. Let us, therefore, look well to our actions.

If judgment first begins with us, “what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God?” “If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” If this in our text is judgment upon *servants*, what will be the judgment upon *enemies*? This man acknowledged that he was a servant even to the last. And though he was impertinent and impudent enough to express a most wicked and slanderous opinion about his master, yet he neither denied his own position as a servant, nor the fact that his talent was his lord’s, for he said, “Lo, there you have what is yours.”

In thus speaking he went rather further than some professing Christians do, for they live as if Christianity were all eating the fat and drinking the sweet and not *servicing* at all—as if religion had many privileges but no precepts and, as if, when men were saved, they became licensed loiterers to whom it is a matter of honor to magnify Free Grace by standing idle all day in the market place. Alas, I know some who never do a hand’s turn for Christ and yet call Him Master and Lord! Many of us acknowledge that we are servants—that everything we have belongs to our Master and that we are bound to live for Him. So far, so good. But we may get as far as that and yet, in the end, we may be found *unprofitable* servants and so be cast into outer darkness where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Let us take heed of this.

This man, though a servant, thought ill of his master and disliked his service. He said, “I knew that you are an hard man, reaping where you

have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.” Certain professors who have stolen into the Church are of the same mind—they dare not say that they regret their having joined the Church and yet they act that all may conclude that if it could be undone they would not do the same again. They do not find pleasure in the service of God, but continue to pursue its routine as a matter of habit or a hard obligation.

They get into the spirit of the elder brother and they say, “Lo, these many years have I served you; neither transgressed I at any time your commandments and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends.” They sit down on the shady side of godliness and never bask in the sun which shines full upon it. They forget that the father said to the elder son, “Son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours.” He might have had as many feasts, as many lambs and kids as he desired—he would have been denied no good thing. The presence of his father ought to have been his joy and his delight—and better than all merry-makings with his friends. And it would have been so if he had been in a proper state of heart.

The man who hid his talent had carried the evil and petulant spirit much further than that elder brother, but the germs are the same and we must be careful that we crush them at the beginning. This unprofitable servant looked upon his master as one that reaped where he never sowed and used the rake to gather together what he had never scattered—he meant that his master was a hard, exacting and unjust person whom it was difficult to please. He judged his lord to be one who expected more of his servants than he had any right to look for and he had such a hatred of his unjust conduct that he resolved to tell him to his face what he thought of him.

This spirit may readily creep over the minds of professors. I fear it is brooding over many even now, for they are not content with Christ. If they want pleasure, they go outside the Church to get it—their joys are not within the circle of which Christ is the center. Their religion is their *labor*, not their delight. Their God is their dread, not their joy. They do not delight themselves in the Lord and, therefore, He does not give them the desire of their hearts and so they grow more and more discontented. They could not call Him, “God, my exceeding joy,” and so He is a terror to them. Devotion is a dreary engagement to them—they wish that they could escape from it with an easy conscience. They do not say as much to their secret selves, but you can read between the lines these words—“What a weariness it is.”

It is no wonder when things come to this pass that a professor becomes an unprofitable servant, for who can do a work, well, which he hates to do? Forced service is not desirable. God needs not slaves to Grace His Throne. A servant who is not pleased with his situation had better leave—if he is not content with his master, he had better find another, for their mutual relationship will be unpleasant and unprofitable. When it comes to this, that you and I are discontented with our God and dissatisfied with His work, we had better look for another lord, if any such will have us, for we shall certainly be unprofitable to the Lord Jesus from our lack of love to Him.

Note next, that, albeit this man was doing nothing for his master, he did not think himself an unprofitable servant. He exhibited no self-depreciation, no humbling, no contrition. He was as bold as brass and said unblushingly, "Lo, there you have what is yours." He came before his master with no apologies or excuses. He did not join with those who have done all and then say, "We are unprofitable servants," for he felt that he had dealt with his lord as the justice of the case deserved. Indeed, instead of acknowledging any fault, he turned to accusing his lord!

It is even so with false professors. They have no idea that they are hypocrites. The thought does not cross their minds. They have no notion that they are unfaithful. Hint at it and see how they will defend themselves! If they are not living as they ought to do, they claim to be pitied rather than blamed—the blame lies with Providence! It is the fault of circumstances! It is the fault of anybody but themselves. They have done nothing and yet they feel more at ease than those who have done everything. They have taken the trouble to dig in the earth and hide their talent and they as good as ask—"What more do you want? Is God so exacting as to expect me to bring more to Him than He gave me? I am as grateful and prayerful as God makes me—what more will He require?"

There is, you see, no bowing in the dust with a sense of imperfection, but an arrogant casting upon God of all blame and this, too, under the pretense of honoring His Sovereign Grace! Ah me, that men should be able to torture the Truth of God into such presumptuous falsehood! Mark well that the verdict of justice, at last, may turn out to be the very opposite of that which we pronounce upon ourselves. He who proudly thinks himself profitable shall be found unprofitable and he who modestly judges himself to be unprofitable may, in the end, come to hear his Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

So little are we able, through the defects of our conscience, to form a right estimate of ourselves, that we frequently reckon ourselves to be rich and increased in goods and having need of nothing when, indeed, we are naked and poor and miserable. Such was the case with this unfaithful servant—he wrapped himself up in the conceit that he was even more just than his lord and had an argument to plead which he thought would exonerate him from all blame. It should give rise to much searching of heart when we notice what this unprofitable servant did, or, rather, what he did *not* do. He carefully deposited his capital where no one was able to find it and steal it—and that was the end of his service.

We ought to observe that he did not spend that talent upon himself, or use it in business for his own benefit. He was not a thief, nor in any way did he misappropriate moneys placed under his charge. In this he excels many who profess to be the servants of God and yet live only to themselves. What little talent they have is used in their own business and never upon their Lord's concerns. They have the power of getting money, but their money is not made for Christ—such an idea never occurs to them. Their efforts are all for themselves, or, to use other words to express the same thing—for their families.

Yonder is a man who has the gift of eloquent speech and he uses it, not for Christ, but for himself, that he may win popularity; that he might ar-

rive at a respectable position. The one end and objective of his most earnest speech is to bring grist to his own mill and gain to his own estate. Everywhere this is to be seen among professors, that they are living to themselves—they are not adulterers or drunks, far from it—neither are they thieves or spendthrifts. They are decent, orderly, quiet sort of people but, still, they begin and end with *self*. What is this but to be an unprofitable servant? What is a servant to me if he works hard for himself and does nothing for me?

A professing Christian may toil till he becomes a rich man, an alderman in the city, a Lord Mayor, a member of Parliament, a millionaire—but what does that prove? Why, that he could work and did work well for himself and if all this while he has done little or nothing for Christ, he is all the more condemned by his own success! If he had worked for his Lord as he worked for himself, what might he not have accomplished? The unprofitable servant in the parable was not so bad as that and yet he was cast into outer darkness. What, then, will become of some of you? Furthermore, the wicked servant did not go and misspend his talent. He did not waste it in self-indulgence and wickedness as the prodigal son did, who spent his substance in riotous living.

Oh no, he was a much better man than that! He would not waste a halfpenny! He was all for saving and running no risks. The talent was as he received it, only wrapped up in a napkin and hidden in the earth—put into a bank, in fact—but a bank which gave no interest! He never touched a penny of it for a feast or a revel and, therefore, could not be accused of being a spendthrift with his lord's money. In fact, he was superior to those who yield their strength to sin and use their abilities to gratify the guilty passions of themselves and others. I grieve to add that some who call themselves servants of Christ lay out their strength to undermine the Gospel they profess to teach! They speak against the holy name by which they are named and thus they use their talent against their Master.

This man did not do that. He was bad enough in heart for anything, but he had never openly become so base a traitor. He never employed learning in order to raise needless doubts, or to resist the plain doctrines of the Word of God. This has been reserved for Divines of these latter days—days which produce monsters unknown to less educated times. This man's talent had not been wasted under his hand—it was as he had received it and he, therefore, reckoned he had been faithful. Ah, but this is not what Christ calls faithfulness—just to stay where we are! If you think you have gifts and only keep what you have, without obtaining *more*, it will be hiding your talent in the earth and keeping it a barren thing. It is not enough to retain—you must advance. The capital may be there, but where is the interest? To be living without aim or purpose beyond that of keeping up your position is to be a wicked and slothful servant, condemned already.

While meditating upon this subject, may we, each one, say to himself, "Lord, is it I?" His lord called this servant "wicked." Is it, then, a wicked thing to be unprofitable? Surely wickedness must mean some positive action! No. Not to do right is to be wicked! Not to live for Christ is to be wicked! Not to be of use in the world is to be wicked! Not to bring glory to the name of the Lord is to be wicked! To be slothful is to be wicked! It is

clear that there are many wicked people in the world who would not like to be called so. “Wicked and slothful”—these are the two words which are riveted together by the Lord Jesus, whose speech is always wise.

A schoolboy was asked by his master “What are you doing, John?” He was called up and thought to be quite clear by saying, “I was doing nothing, Sir.” But his master answered, “That is the very thing for which I called you out, for you ought to have been doing the lesson which I set before you.” It will be no excuse, at the last, for you to cry, “I was doing nothing, Sir.” Were not those on the left hand made to depart with a curse upon them because they did nothing? Is it not written—“Curse you Meroz, said the Angel of the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” He who does nothing is a “wicked and slothful servant.”

This man was condemned to outer darkness. Notice this! He was condemned to be as he was, for Hell, in one light, may be described as the great Captain’s saying, “As you were.” “He that is unjust, let him be unjust, still. And he that is filthy, let him be filthy, still.” In another world there is permanence of character—enduring holiness is Heaven but continual evil is Hell. This man was outside of the family of his lord. He thought his lord a hard master and so proved that he had no love to him and that he was not really one of his household. He was outside in heart and so his lord said to him, “Remain outside.” Besides that, he was in the dark—he had wrong notions of his master, for his lord was not an austere and hard man. He did not gather where he had not scattered, nor reap where he had not sown. Therefore his lord said, “You are willfully in the dark: abide there in the darkness which is outside.”

This man was envious. He could not endure his master’s prosperity. He gnashed his teeth at the thought of it. He was sentenced to continue in that mind and so to gnash his teeth forever. This is a dreadful idea of eternal punishment, this permanence of character in an immortal spirit—“He that is unjust, let him be unjust, still.” While the character of the ungodly will be permanent, it will also be more and more developed along its own lines—the bad points will become worse and, with nothing to restrain them—evil will become still viler. In the next world, where there are no hindrances from the existence of a Church and a Gospel, the man will ripen to a more hideous maturity of enmity against God and a more horrible degree of consequent misery.

Sorrow is bound up with sin—abiding in sinfulness, a man must necessarily abide in wretchedness—for the wicked is like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. What must it be to be forever outside the family of God? Never to be God’s child? Forever in the dark? Never to see the light of holy knowledge and purity and hope? Forever to gnash one’s teeth with painful contempt and abhorrence of God, whom to hate is Hell? O for Grace to be *made* to love Him, whom to love is Heaven! The unprofitable servant had a dreadful wage to take when his master reckoned with him, but who can say that he had not well earned it? He had the due reward of his deeds. O our God, grant that such may not be the lot of any one of us!

II. I must now call your attention to the second text—"So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). This is THE VERDICT OF SELF-ABASEMENT given forth from the heart of servants who had laboriously discharged the full work of the day. This is a part of a parable intended to rebuke all notions of self-importance and human merit.

When a servant has been plowing or feeding cattle, his master does not say to him, "Sit down and I will wait upon you, for I am deeply in your debt." No, his master bids him prepare the evening meal and wait upon him. His services are due and, therefore, his master does not praise him as if he were a wonder and a hero. He is only doing his duty if he perseveres from morning light to set of sun and he by no means expects to have his work held up to admiration or rewarded with extra pay and humble thanks. Neither are we to boast of our services, but think little of them, confessing that we are unprofitable servants.

Whatever of pain may have been caused by the first part of the discourse, I trust it will only prepare us the more deeply to enter into the spirit of our second text. Both these texts are engraved on my heart as with an iron pen by a merciless wound inflicted when I was too feeble to bear it. When I was exceedingly ill in the South of France and deeply depressed in spirit—so deeply depressed and so sick and ill that I scarcely knew how to live—one of those malicious persons who commonly haunt all public men and especially ministers, sent me anonymously a letter, openly directed to "That unprofitable servant, C. H. Spurgeon."

This letter contained tracts directed to the enemies of the Lord Jesus, with passages marked and underlined—with notes applying them to myself. How many Rabshekahs have, in their day, written to me! Ordinarily I read them with the patience which comes of use and they go to light the fire. I do not look for exemption from this annoyance, nor do I usually feel it hard to bear, but in the hour when my spirits were depressed and I was in terrible pain, this reviling letter cut me to the quick. I turned upon my bed and asked—Am I, then, an unprofitable servant? I grieved exceedingly and could not lift up my head or find rest.

I reviewed my life and saw its infirmities and imperfections, but knew not how to put my case till this second text came to my relief and answered as the verdict of my bruised heart. I said to myself, "I hope I am not an unprofitable servant in the sense in which this person intends to call me so, but I am assuredly so in the other sense." I cast myself upon my Lord and Master once again with a deeper sense of the meaning of the text than I had felt before—His atoning Sacrifice revived me and in humble faith I found rest. By the way, I wonder that any human being should find pleasure in trying to inflict pain upon those who are sick and depressed, yet are there persons who delight to do so. Surely, if there are no evil spirits down below, there are some up above and the servants of the Lord Jesus receive painful proofs of their activity!

Let me, then, if you have felt any pain from the first text, lead you to the point at which I personally arrived when, at last, I could thank God for that letter and feel that it was salutary medicine to my spirit. This which

is put into our mouths as a confession—that we *are* unprofitable servants—is meant to rebuke us when we think we are somebody and have done something worthy of praise. Our text is meant to rebuke us if we think that we have done enough, that we have borne the burden and heat of the day a long time and have been kept at our post beyond our own watch. If we conclude that we have achieved a fine day's work of harvesting and ought to be invited home to rest, the text upbraids us. If we feel an inordinate covetousness after comfort and wish the Lord would give us some present and striking reward for what we have done, the text shames us. This is a proud, unchildlike, unservantlike spirit and it must be put down with a firm hand.

In the first place, in what way can we have profited God? Eliphaz has well said, "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous? Or is it gain to Him that you make your ways perfect?" If we have given to God of our substance, is He our debtor? In what way have we enriched Him to whom all the silver and gold belongs? If we have laid our lives out with the devotion of martyrs and missionaries for His sake, what is that to Him, whose Glory fills the heavens and the earth? How can we dream of putting the Eternal in debt to us? The right spirit is to say with David, "O my Soul, you have said unto the Lord, You are my Lord: my goodness extends not to You; but to the saints that are in the earth and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." How can a man place his Maker under an obligation to him? Let us not dote so blasphemously!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we ought to remember that whatever service we have been able to render has been a matter of *debt*. I hope our morality is not fallen so low that we take credit to ourselves for paying our debts! I do not find men in business priding themselves and saying, "I paid a thousand pounds this morning to such an one." "Well, did you give it to him?" "Oh no, it was all owing to him." Is that any great thing? Have we come to such a low state of spiritual morals that we think we have done a great deal when we give to God His due? "It is He that made us and not we ourselves." Jesus Christ has bought us, "we are not our own," for we are "bought with a price."

We have also entered into covenant with Him and given ourselves over to Him voluntarily. Were we not baptized into His name and into His death? Whatever we may do is only what He has a right to claim at our hands from our creation, redemption and professed surrender to Him. When we have persevered in the hard work of plowing till no field is left untilled; when we have done the pleasant work of feeding the sheep and when we have finished by spreading the table of communion for our Lord—when we have done all—we have done no more than was our duty to have done! Why do we boast, then, or cry for a discharge, or look for thanks?

Over and above this there is the sad reflection that, alas, in all we have done we have been unprofitable through being imperfect. In the plowing there have been baulks; in the feeding of the cattle there have been harshness and forgetfulness; in the spreading of the table the viands have been unworthy of such a Lord as we serve. How must our service appear

to Him of whom we read, "Behold, He put no trust in His servants and His angels He charged with folly." Can any of you look back upon your service to your Lord with satisfaction? If you can, I cannot say I envy you, for I do not sympathize with you in the least degree, but tremble for your safety!

As for myself, I am compelled to say with solemn truthfulness that I am not content with anything I have ever done. I have half wished to live my life over again, but now I regret that my proud heart allowed me to so wish, since the probabilities are that I should do worse the second time. Whatever Grace has done for me I acknowledge with deep gratitude, but so far as I have done anything *myself*, I beg pardon for it. I pray God to forgive my prayers, for they have been full of fault. I beseech Him to forgive even this confession, for it is not as humble as it ought to be. I beseech Him to wash my tears and purge my devotions and to baptize me into a true burial with my Savior that I may be quite forgotten in myself and only remembered in Him. Ah, Lord, You know how far we fall short of the humility we ought to feel. Pardon us in this thing. We are, all of us, unprofitable servants, and if You should judge us by the Law we must be cast away.

Once more, we cannot congratulate ourselves at all, even if we have had success in our Lord's work, since for all that we have done we are indebted to our Lord's abundant Grace. If we had done all our duty, we should not have done anything if His Grace had not enabled us to do it! If our zeal knows no respite, it is He that keeps the fire burning! If our tears of repentance flow, it is He that strikes the rock and fetches the waters from it! If there is any virtue, if there is any praise, if there is any faith, if there is any ardor, if there is any likeness to Christ, we are His workmanship, created by Him and, therefore, to ourselves we dare not take a particle of the praise!

Of Your own have we given unto You, great God! So far as anything has been worth Your accepting, it was Your own beforehand. Therefore the best are still unprofitable servants! If we have special cause of regret because of some evident error, we shall be wise to go in a lowly spirit and confess the fault and then go on doing the work of each day in a plodding, hopeful spirit. Whenever you get distressed because you cannot do what you would. Whenever you see the faultiness of your own service and condemn yourself for it, the best thing is to go and do something more in the strength of the Lord. If you have not served Jesus well up to now, go and do better!

If you make a blunder, do not tell everybody and say that you will never try again, but do *two* good things to make up for the failure. Say, "My blessed Lord and Master shall not be more a loser by me than I can help. I will not so much fret over the past as amend the present and wake up for the future." Brothers and Sisters, try to be more profitable and ask for more Grace. The servant's business is not to hide himself in a corner of the field and cry, but to go on plowing. You are not to bleat with the sheep, but feed them and so prove your love to Jesus. You are not to stand at the head of the table and say, "I have not spread the table for my Master as well as I could have desired." No? Go and spread it better!

Have courage, you are not serving a hard Master and, though you very properly call yourself an unprofitable servant, be of good cheer, for a gentler verdict shall be pronounced upon you before long. You are not your own judge—either for good or bad—another Judge is at the door and when He comes He will think better of you than your self-abasement permits you to think of yourself. He will judge you by the rule of Grace and not by Law and He will end all that dread which comes of a legal spirit and hovers over you with vampire wings.

III. Thus we have arrived at the third text—“His lord said unto him, Well done, you good and faithful servant” (Mat. 25:21). I shall not try to preach upon that cheering word, but shall only say a word or two upon it. It is much too grand a text to be treated upon at the end of a sermon. We find the Lord saying to those who had used their talents industriously, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” This is THE VERDICT OF GRACE. Blessed is the man who shall acknowledge himself to be an unfaithful servant—and blessed is the man to whom His Lord shall say, “You good and faithful servant.”

Observe here that the, “Well done,” of the Master is given to *faithfulness*. It is not, “Well done, you good and brilliant servant” for, perhaps, the man never shone at all in the eyes of those who appreciate glare and glitter. It is not, “Well done, you great and distinguished servant” for, it is possible that he was never known beyond his native village. He conscientiously did his best with his “few things” and never wasted an opportunity for faithfully doing good and, thus, he proved himself. The same praise was given to the man with two talents as to his fellow servant with five. Their stations were very different, but their reward was the same. “Well done, good and faithful servant,” was won and enjoyed by each of them.

Is it not very sweet to think that though I may have only one talent, I shall not, thereby, be debarred from my Lord’s praise? It is my *faithfulness* on which He will fix His eyes and not upon the number of my talents! I may have made many mistakes and have confessed my faults with great grief, but He will commend me as He did the woman of whom He said, “She has done what she could.” It is better to be faithful in the infant school than to be unfaithful in a noble class of young men. It is better to be faithful in a hamlet over two or three score of people than to be unfaithful in a great city parish, with thousands perishing in consequence! It is better to be faithful in a cottage meeting, speaking of Christ Crucified to 50 villagers than to be unfaithful in a great building where thousands congregate.

I pray you are faithful in laying out all that you are and have for God. As long as you live, whatever faults you have, be not half-hearted or double-minded, but be faithful in intent and desire. This is the point of the Judge’s praise—the servant’s faithfulness. This verdict was given of Sovereign Grace. The reward was not according to the *work*, for the servant had been “faithful in a few things,” but he was made “ruler over many things.” The verdict itself is not after the rule of works, but according to the law of Grace! Our good works are evidences of Grace within us! Our faithfulness, therefore, as servants—will be the evidence of our having a loving spirit

towards our Master—evidence, therefore, that our heart is changed and that we have been made to love Him for whom once we had no affection.

Our works are the *proof* of our love and, therefore, they stand as evidence of the Grace of God. God first gives us Grace and then rewards us for it! He works in us and then counts the fruit as *our* work. We work out our own salvation, because “He works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” If He shall ever say, “Well done” to you and to me it will be because of *His own rich Grace* and not because of *our* merits! And, indeed, this is where we must all come and where we must all stay, for the idea that we have any personal merit will soon make us find fault with our Master and His service as being austere and hard.

I have sometimes admired how men who have denied the doctrine of Salvation by Grace, as a matter of theology, have, nevertheless, admitted it in their devotions. They have entered into controversy against it and yet unconsciously they have believed it! An extreme case is that of Cardinal Bellarmine, who was one of the most inveterate enemies of the Reformation and a renowned antagonist of the teaching of Martin Luther. I will quote from one of his works (Inst. Do Justification, Lib. v., c. 1). He says, in summing up, “On account of the uncertain nature of our own works and the danger of vain-glory, it is the safest course to place our whole trust in the mercy and loving kindness of God.”

You have said well, O Cardinal! And since the safest course is that which we would choose, we will place our whole trust in the mercy and loving kindness of God! It is reported and, I believe on excellent authority, that this great man who had, all his life, been crying up salvation by works, when dying, breathed a prayer in Latin, the translation of which would be something like this—“I beseech God, who weighs not our merits, but graciously pardons our offenses, that He would receive me among His saints and His elect.” Is Saul, also, among the Prophets? Does Bellarmine, at the last, pray like a Calvinist? Such a case makes one hope that many others may be saved in an apostate church! Thank God many are a great deal better than their creed and in their hearts believe what, as polemical theologians, they deny. However this may be, I know that if I am saved or rewarded it must be of Grace alone, for I can have no other hope. As for those who have done much for the Church, we know that they will disclaim all praise, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and give You meat; or thirsty and give You drink?” All the Lord’s faithful servants will sing, “Non nobis domine.” Not unto us. Not unto us!

Lastly, Brothers, with what infinite delight will Jesus fill our hearts if, through Divine Grace, we are happy enough to hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Oh, if we shall hold on to the end despite the temptations of Satan and the weakness of our nature and all the entanglements of the world! Oh, if we can keep our garments unspotted from the world, preaching Christ according to our measure of ability and winning souls for Him, what an honor it will be! What bliss to hear Him say, “Well done!” The music of these two words will have Heaven in them to us. How different it will be from the verdict of our fellow men who are often finding fault with this and that, though we do our best. We never could please them, but we have pleased our Lord!

Men were always misinterpreting our words and misjudging our motives, but He sets all right by saying, "Well done!" Little will it matter, then, what all the rest have said—neither the flattering words of friends nor the harsh condemnations of enemies will have any weight with us when He says, "Well done!" Not with pride shall we receive that eulogium, for we shall reckon ourselves, even then, to have been unprofitable servants. But oh how we shall love Him for setting such an estimate upon the cups of cold water we gave to His disciples and the poor broken service we tried to render Him! What condescension to call that well done, which we feel was so ill done!

I pray God's servants here, who, this morning first began with searching themselves and then went on to confess their imperfections, will now close by rejoicing in the fact that if we are believing in Christ Jesus and are really consecrated to Him, we shall conclude this life and begin the next with that blessed verdict of, "Well done!" Mind, however, that you are those who are doing all and are faithful. I hear some people speak against self-righteousness, to whom I would say, "You need not say much about that matter, for it does not concern you, since you have no righteousness to be proud of."

I hear persons speak against salvation by good works who are in no danger of falling into that error, since good works and their lives have long parted company. What I do admire is to see a man like Paul who lived for Jesus and was ready to die for Him, yet saying, at the close of his life, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Go on, Brothers and Sisters, and think not of resting till your day's work is done. Serve God with all your might! Do more than the Pharisees who hope to be saved by their zeal. Do more than your brethren expect of you and then, when you have done all, lay it at your Redeemer's feet with this confession, "I am an unprofitable servant." It is to those who blend faithfulness with humility and ardor with self-abasement that Jesus will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter you into the joy of your Lord."

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

“And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.”
Luke 17:12-14.

SEVERAL interesting topics might fairly be found in these verses. We see here the abounding fruit of sin, for here were 10 lepers in a group and the abundance of Divine power to meet it, for they were all cleansed. So, also, we see how Christ must come first and ceremonies second—first the work of Grace—and then the outward showing of it. The Lord's tenderness toward outcasts, His attention to prayers from a distance and His regard for the ceremonial Law so long as it was in force, might, each one, yield an instructive meditation. I have, however, only one thought which I wish to bring under your notice and to press upon you, perhaps, almost to repetition and monotony. That thought I would engrave as with an iron pen upon the hearts and minds of all here present who desire to find eternal salvation. May the Holy Spirit imprint it upon every living soul!

These 10 lepers were required by the Savior to perform an act of faith in Him before they had the slightest evidence in themselves that He had worked a good work upon them. Before they began to feel their foul blood cleansed—before the horrible dryness of leprosy had yielded to healthy perspiration—they were to go towards the house in which the priest lived to be examined by him and to be pronounced clean. They were to exhibit faith in Christ Jesus' power to heal them by going to exhibit themselves as *healed*, though as yet they were in the same condition as before! They were to start to the place where they should be examined by the priest, believing that Jesus had healed them, or *would* heal them, though, as yet, they had no internal evidence, whatever, that their flesh would become as that of a little child!

This is the point I wish to dwell upon—that the Lord Jesus Christ bids sinners believe in Him and *trust* their souls to Him, though they may not yet discern in themselves any work of His Grace! Just as these men were lepers and nothing but lepers, so you may be sinners and nothing but sinners—and yet *you* are bid to exhibit faith in Jesus Christ while you are just what you are! As these men were to start straight away to the priest with all their leprosy white upon them and to go there as if they felt they were already healed, so are *you*, with all your sinnership upon you and

your sense of condemnation heavy on your soul, to believe in Jesus Christ just as you are and you shall find everlasting life on the spot!

This is my point and it is of the first importance. Sinners, as sinners, are to believe in Jesus for everlasting life! The voice to each one of them is, "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you life." Now, first, I shall notice what signs are commonly looked for by unconverted men as reasons for believing in Christ, which, indeed, are no reasons at all! Then, secondly, I shall try to show what is the *real* ground and reason for faith in Christ. And, thirdly, what will be the issue of a faith in Christ similar to that of the lepers.

I. First, then, I say that we are to believe in Jesus Christ—to trust Him to heal us of the great disease of sin—though as yet we may have about us no sign or token that He has worked any good work upon us. We are *not* to look for signs and evidences within ourselves before we venture our souls upon Jesus. The supposition is a soul-destroying error and I will try to expose it by showing **WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT ARE COMMONLY LOOKED FOR BY MEN**. One of the most frequent is a consciousness of great sin and a horrible dread of Divine wrath leading to despair. Strange to say, we constantly meet with persons who say, "I could believe in Jesus Christ if I felt more burdened by a sense of sin. I could trust Him if I were driven more entirely to despondency and to despair. But I am not depressed enough! I am not brokenhearted enough! I am sure I am not brought low enough and, therefore, I cannot trust Christ."

Strange notion, that if the night were darker we should see better! Strange idea, that if we were nearer death we should have better hope of life! Now, my Friend, you are speaking and acting in distinct disobedience to Christ, for He would have you trust Himself, not on the ground of your *feeling* much or little, or on the ground of your feeling *anything* at all, but simply because you are sick and He has come to heal you and is abundantly able to work your cure. If you say, "Lord, I cannot trust You unless I feel this or that," then you, in effect, say, "I can trust my *own feelings*, but I cannot trust God's appointed Savior." What is this but to make a god out of your *feelings* and a savior out of your inward griefs?

Is your own heart to save you by its dark insinuations against Divine love? Is unbelief, after all, to bring you salvation because you refuse to believe your God? And despair, wicked despair, which gives the lie to God—is that to be trusted in and not the Savior whom God has sent into the world to save sinners? Is there, then, a new Gospel, and does it run, "He that denies the power of Jesus and despairs of His love shall be saved"? You know that Jesus justifies the ungodly and cleanses the wicked from their sin through His precious blood—and though you know this to be true, you say—"I cannot trust the Crucified. I cannot rely upon His full Atonement unless I feel my guilt to be unpardonable and disbelieve my God."

I pray that you may never feel as you foolishly think you ought to feel, for feelings of despair dishonor the Lord and vex His Spirit—and certainly cannot be good for you. It comes to this—you are making a god of your despair and a Christ out of your horrors—and so you are setting up an

antichrist in the place where Christ, alone, should be! Come, young Friend, though you have not been terrified and alarmed and heart-broken to the extent of some, will you trust Christ with your soul and ask no questions? I pray you, trust Jesus once and for all—

**“Cast your guilty soul on Him!
Find Him mighty to redeem!
At His feet your burden lay,
Look your doubts and cares away.
Now by faith the Son embrace,
Plead His promise, trust His Grace.”**

That is the point. Can you trust Jesus? for that is what He bids you do. How strange it seems that anyone should raise a question about trusting HIM! How insane and insulting to be willing to trust our feelings and not trust the Savior!

These 10 lepers felt no change whatever worked upon them when Jesus bade them go off to be examined by the priest, yet away they went, and as they went they were made whole! Trust Jesus Christ just as you are, without those feelings which you have supposed to be necessary as a sort of preparation! Trust Him at once and follow Him—and He will make you whole before you have taken many steps in the path of faith and obedience! O Lord God, lead all my hearers and readers to trust Your Son at once!

Many other persons think that they must, before they can trust Christ, experience quite a blaze of joy. “Oh,” says one, “I heard a Christian say that when he found the Savior he was so happy that he did not know how to contain himself and he sang, like a whole band of music in one—

**‘Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away.’**

Oh that I could be as full of joy as these ‘happy day’ people!” Just so. But what mischief will you make out of that? Are you going to find evil in our delights? Will you feed your unbelief on the joy of the Lord? What strange perversity! “Why,” you say, “must I not be happy before I can believe in Christ?” What? What? Must you have the joy *before* you exercise the faith? How unreasonable! Because we tell you that such-and-such a root produces a sweet fruit, will you say that you must have the fruit before you will accept the root? Surely that is bad reasoning!

We who have experienced this joy came to Christ in order to obtain it and did not wait until we *found* it, or else we should have waited until now! We came to Jesus just as we were—some of us were very wretched, but we came just as we then were and trusted Christ and were made whole. Then *followed* joy and peace, but if we had waited till we felt joy and peace before we came, we should have been standing out against the Gospel plan which is that men are to trust the Savior *before* they feel the slightest benefit from Him. O Sinner, is not this commonsense? Must we not take medicine before we are cured by it? Must we not eat bread before it removes our hunger? Must we not open our eyes before we see? Before the Lord Jesus has either comforted you or healed you, consciously, you are to come and do just what He bids you and trust in Him to save you. Neither the gloom of horror nor the blaze of delight is to be looked for be-

fore *faith!* Faith is to precede all and that faith is a simple, humble reliance upon Christ.

We have known others who have expected to have a text impressed upon their minds. A kind of superstition has grown up that a special Scripture must, somehow or other, hover over the mind and continue there, so that you cannot get rid of it—and then you may hope that you are saved! In old families there are superstitions about white birds coming to a window before a death and I regard with much the same distrust the more common superstition that if a text continues upon your mind day after day you may safely conclude that it is an assurance of your salvation. I hope I have never taught you to draw any such a conclusion! Far be it from me to assist you into a confidence which has so questionable a foundation!

The Spirit of God often applies Scripture with power to the soul, but this fact is never set forth as the rock for us to build upon. Will you find anything in the Bible to support the supposition that the vivid recollection of a text is a seal of conversion? It has often happened that some Word of God does greatly comfort the soul, but why should you demand the same? Have you any right to say, “I will not believe God’s Word unless He impresses it upon me”? Is it a lie, then? “No, it is true,” you say. Remember, if it is not true, an impression upon your mind would not make it true—and if it is true, why do you not believe it? If it is true, accept it! If there is any force about a promise, pray God to make you feel its force and power! You ought to feel its force and power, but if you do not, sin lies at your door.

As a reader of the Scriptures you must not fall into the idea that you are to wait till some Scripture burns its way into your soul. You must read attentively and believe what the Lord God says to you. Furthermore, I would have you remember it is not reading the Scripture that saves you—it is believing in Christ. What did Christ, Himself, say? He said to the Bible readers of His day, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; but you will not come unto Me that you might have life.” Good as the searching of Scripture is, it is nothing without coming to Christ! You will only read your own condemnation in the Bible if you remain out of Christ. Even the Bible, itself, may be made into a stumbling block if you substitute Bible-reading for closing in with Christ and putting your trust in Him. Your immediate business is to trust Jesus and no measure of reading will compensate for neglect of faith.

What if no special text of Scripture were ever laid home to your heart at all, yet here it stands, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” That is your business, my dear Hearer, if you are to get peace at once! And I earnestly hope that some of you are going to get it before this sermon is over. I have asked your souls of my God and I have got them for a prey tonight. They shall be David’s spoil and you shall be led in chains of Grace to Jesus! Who among you will put His trust in Jesus? For, if you do so, you shall surely find eternal salvation the moment you believe in His dear name!

There is another way in which some men try to get off believing in Christ and that is, they expect an actual conversion to be manifest in them before they will trust the Savior. Now, understand that Christ has worked salvation in no man who is unconverted. There must be a perfect turning round of us—a complete conversion from sin to holiness. That is salvation—not a preparation for salvation. Conversion is the manifestation of Christ's healing power. But you are not to have this *before* you trust Him—you are to trust Him for this very thing. When a man with a disease goes to an eminent physician, does he say, "Doctor, I will trust you with my case when I have reached a certain stage"? "No," says the physician, "if you have reached that state you will be in a fair way of healing and you won't need me." Your wisest plan is to go to your physician just as you are—and if you can be sure that he is an infallible healer, just put yourself into his hands as if you knew nothing and he knew everything—and as if you would not have a will or way in it, but would leave yourself entirely with him.

That is the thing to do with the Lord Jesus, the Infallible Physician of the souls of men! Why, you poor wretched sinner, you say, "I am not a saint. I cannot be saved." Who said you were a saint? It is Christ's work to *make* you into a saint! "Oh, but I do not repent as I should." It is Christ's work to *make* you repent as you should and to Him you must come for repentance! "Oh, but my heart won't break." It is Christ who is to break your heart—not you who are to break it and then come to Him when it is broken. Come to Jesus just as you are, with your hard, stony, senseless heart—and trust that and everything else to His saving power! "I do not seem to even have a strong desire," says one. Christ Himself gives every spiritual desire by His Holy Spirit. He is a Savior that begins the alphabet of mercy at A. He does not ask you to get as far as B, C, D and then promise to meet you—He begins at the beginning.

The good Samaritan, when he found the man beaten by the thieves, went to where he was. That is what Jesus does. He does not say, "Now, then, you wounded man, get up and come to Me, and I will pour the oil and wine into you." No, but He goes where the wounded one lies in utter helplessness, stoops over him, removes his rags, cleanses his wounds, pours in the oil and wine and lifts him up and bears him to the house of mercy. Poor soul! My Master is not a half Savior, but a whole one! And if you are lying at the gates of death, hard by the doors of Hell, He is as able to save you as if you were sitting on the doorstep of Heaven! Just *where* you are and *as* you are, trust Christ to save you and you shall be saved! Do not look for conversion *first*, but expect it as the *result* of faith.

We have known some who have had a very curious idea which I can hardly put into words, namely, that if they were to be saved they would experience some very singular sensation. They could believe in Christ if they felt in a mysterious fashion! It is rather difficult to understand people, but when I have been talking to some enquirers I have thought that they expected even a *physical* sensation—a sensation within their bodies. I remember one saying to me, "Sir, I was quite sure I was saved, for I felt so light." Poor simpleton, what does it matter whether you felt light or

heavy? What has that to do with it? Perhaps you were light-headed, or half out of your mind with absurd excitement. Beware of such nonsense! To feel light may be interpreted into being weighed in the balances and found wanting—it is a sensation which may frighten as much as console.

“Oh,” says one, “but I felt so singular.” Yes, and many who are now in Bedlam could say the same. What does it matter what you *felt*? It is not *feeling* that will save you! Believing on Jesus will bring you the blessings of Grace, but strange feelings may be produced by what you have eaten, or by the weather, or by hysteria, or a hundred other things! Do you not know that when politics are being discussed, or when some other subject is under dispute, an earnest orator will often stir men with excitement till their flesh creeps? But what of that? Excitement does not save anybody! Many are melted to tears by a novel or a play, but of what benefit is that? You may be moved with religious excitement and half the emotion may be purely physical—there may be nothing of the Grace of God in it.

The wiser way is to sit down calmly and say, “Here is God’s way of salvation—salvation through His crucified Son, Jesus Christ. And He has promised that if I trust His Son, He will save me from sinning, make a new man of me and heal me of my spiritual diseases. I will trust Him, for I am sure that the witness of God is true.” By that simple and deliberate act of faith you are saved! The power to believe your God is the evidence that the cure has begun and begun well! If you have, indeed, trusted Him, Jesus has undertaken your case and He will save you! The very fact that you can and do believe has, within it, the essential force by which you will be delivered from the alienation of your mind. He that believes God is no longer an enemy to Him. Those whom we trust, we soon learn to love. This, you see, demands no singular sensation or excitement—this is plain and clear enough.

“But must we not be born again?” asks one. Yes, truly, and he that believes in Christ *is* born again. Though as yet he knows it not, the first mark of life is within his soul, for the first sure token of spiritual life is trusting Jesus Christ, alone. The best evidence is not trusting marks, signs, evidences, inward feelings, impressions and so on—but just getting out of that and trusting Jesus! *There* lies the essence of the saving change—the getting from self to the Lord God in Christ Jesus!

A certain mariner has a fine anchor, one of the best constructed anchors ever used in the navy. He has it on board his ship and yet it is not a pennyworth of use to him! While he has it on board his ship, it does not answer the purpose of an anchor! His vessel drifts with the anchor on board. He drags it out upon the deck and looks at it. What an anchor! Would not that hold in the day of storm? He admires his anchor as if it were a mass of gold! The winds howl and the waves roar, but he feels safe with his anchor on board. Fool! This anchor is of no use to you while you can see it. A ship’s anchorage cannot be in the ship, itself!

“Suppose I hang the anchor from the side of the vessel.” It is of no use there! What must you do with it? Fling it overboard! Let it down into the deep, even to the bottom. It is gone! You cannot see where it is. All right! That will do. Now, Soul, fling your anchor of trust overboard! Do not let it

hang to your feelings, or to your impressions, or to anything that is in *you*, but let it go overboard, deep into the waters of infinite love—and let it get a grip on Jesus! Outside of you, your hope must be, for as long as your confidence is *within* you, or has any dependence upon yourself, it is like an anchor on board which can only increase the weight of the ship, but certainly cannot help it in the day of storm. There is the Truth of God. God grant you Grace to accept it.

II. And now, secondly, and as briefly as I can, I want to bring forward WHAT THE REASON IS FOR OUR BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST. What reason have I, as a sinner, for trusting myself with Jesus Christ? No reason whatever within ourself need be looked for. The warrant for our believing Christ lies in this—first, there is God’s witness concerning His Son, Jesus Christ. God, the Everlasting Father, has set forth Christ “to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sin of the whole world.” God the Father says to men, “I am able to forgive you justly through the death and righteousness of My Son. Trust Me and I will save you.”

What do you need more than that? He that believes not has made God a liar because he has not believed His witness concerning His Son. Why, surely, if God declares a thing, you do not need further evidence! “Let God be true and every man a liar.” What can be firmer than the voice of God, who cannot lie? Beloved Hearers, I feel as if I really ought not to bring any other evidence before you. It looks so like insulting the Lord by trying to defend Him, as if His perfect Truth needed *my* testimony to support it! Angels never doubt God. Those bright and glorious beings never suspect their Maker. Worms of the dust! Worms of the dust, how can *you* doubt the God that made you? Oh, let it not be so! And when His testimony is that He is a God ready to pardon the guilty, waiting to forgive all those that trust His Son, why should we doubt such a gracious declaration? My Soul, I charge you, trust your Savior and raise no further question, but let the matter be assured and established within you!

The next warrant for our believing is Jesus Christ, Himself. He bears witness on earth as well as the Father and His witness is true. Consider who this Christ is whom we are bid to trust. Look at His Person. He is God, “very God of very God.” Can we doubt Him? He is perfect Man and He has taken perfect manhood upon Himself for our sakes. Can we doubt Him? He has lived a perfect life. When did He ever lie? Who can charge Him with falsehood? He has died, “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” And God has accepted the Sacrifice of His dear Son. What surer proof of His truthfulness can He give us than His death for us? O trembler, why will you refuse your confidence to One so worthy of it? Can you doubt Calvary? Will you despise the Cross?

Will you say, “I need some other reason for trusting Christ besides His own Person and His finished work”? I feel almost ashamed to be pleading for such a thing as this! Tell me when my Lord was ever false. O sons of men, tell me when once He refused to receive a sinner that came to Him! You know that He is risen from the dead and that He has gone into Heaven and sits, now, at the right hand of God and will shortly come. And

do you dare treat Him as a mere pretender? Can you not trust Him? Can you dare distrust Him? Do you need signs and wonders over and above those which are in Himself? If one should rise from the dead you would not believe, if you do not believe Jesus, for you have more than Moses and the Prophets when you have Christ, Himself, risen from the dead! Will you not trust Him?

I would like to get you by the hand, my Brothers and Sisters, and put it personally to you—Do you mean it, that you suspect my Savior and cannot trust your soul with Him? Do you mean it? No, with tears I entreat you, do not treat Him so badly, but cast your soul on Him at this instant and believe Him just as you are and He will save you! He will not run back from His word, but He will wash out your guilt in His own blood if you will consent to be cleansed. Still, to put this in another shape, you want to know *why* you are to believe—your warrant for believing lies in the fact that God *commands* you to believe! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

And this *commandment* we have received from our Master—that we preach this Gospel unto every creature under Heaven—and we preach it in His name, commanding you in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that you believe in Him! This Divine command is reason enough for you. If God commands you to do it, you need not ask, “*May I do it?*” Nobody needs permission to keep the Light of God—the command includes a permit! When the Law of the Gospel comes from God, Himself, dear Hearer, what is there to do but to obey it and believe at once? The door is open, enter! The feast is spread, eat! The fountain is filled, wash!

Moreover, there is the *promise* made to you and to every creature, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “He that believes in Him is not condemned.” Do you hear that? “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” He has *eternal life*, he has it now! These are promises rich and free for you. What more do you want? Oh, I know not what more I can say—when Jesus *commands* you, when Jesus *invites* you—how can you stand back? O blessed Spirit, make this plain to men and lead them to believe!

I will only add this one more thing—I dare say these poor lepers believed in Jesus because they had heard of other lepers whom He had cleansed. Now, here stands one before you, a representative of many more in this place, who, if this were a fit time, would stand up and say the same. I came to Jesus full of sin, guilty and lost, with a hard heart and a heavy spirit—and I looked to Him, trusting Him, alone, to save me—and He *has* saved me! He has changed my nature. He has blotted out my sin and He has made me love Him and love all that is good and true and generous, for His sake. It is not I, even I, that am left, alone, to tell you, but, as I have said, there are thousands in this Tabernacle, at this very hour, upon whom the same miracle of Divine mercy has been worked! Therefore trust my Lord Jesus and you shall feel the same miracle worked upon you!

Where are you, Friend, you who need so much persuading for your own good? If I have money to give away, I do not find that I have to persuade anybody to have it! Jingle a guinea and what ears men have! How soon they will rush where the coin gives forth its golden notes! Give bread away in a cold winter, or even a little soup—how the poor will crowd to get it! But when it is, “Trust Jesus and your sin shall be forgiven you, and your nature shall be changed, and you shall be saved from sinning, and you shall be made pure and holy,” oh, my Master, what are they thinking that they need calling so often? Men not only require calling, they need *compelling* to come in—

**“Dear Savior, draw reluctant hearts!
To You let sinners fly
And take the bliss Your love imparts
And drink, and never die!”**

III. I must now close with the third point which shall not occupy many minutes. It is this, WHAT IS THE ISSUE OF THIS KIND OF FAITH THAT I HAVE BEEN PREACHING? This doctrine of, “only trust Jesus”—what does it lead to? This trusting in Jesus without marks, signs, evidences, tokens—what is the result and outcome of it? The first thing that I have to say about it is this—that the very existence of such a faith as that in the soul is evidence that there is already a saving change! “Oh,” you say, “I do not see that. How can it prove that I am a new man because I trust myself with Christ?” Consider a little—it will be an evidence of a saving change already worked, for it will show that you have come to be obedient to Jesus—and obedient upon a matter which your proud will has long struggled against.

Every man, by nature, kicks against simply trusting in Christ. And when, at last, he yields to the Divine method of mercy, it is a virtual surrender of his own will, the ending of rebellion, the establishment of peace. Faith is obedience! Faith is the evidence that the warfare has been ended by unconditional surrender! They said to Jesus in olden times, “What shall we do that we may work the works of God?” And He answered, “This is the work of God—the most godlike work that you can do—that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent.” It is even so—in one sense faith is not a work at all—and in another sense it is the most grand of all works! Here is where God and you are at issue—this is the central point of the quarrel! You want to be saved by something in yourself, but God says that He will save you if you trust in Christ!

Now, if you trust Christ just as you are, it will be an evidence that you have been made obedient to God and so obedient that a complete, deep-seated, radical renewal of your nature has evidently taken place. It will be an evidence, also, that you are humble, for it is *pride* that makes men need to *do* something, or to *be* something in their own salvation. Or to be saved in some wonderful way that they may tell other people how wonderfully they were saved. When you are willing to be saved like a poor, good-for-nothing sinner that you are, then you are already saved from pride! I will not compliment you—you *are* a good-for-nothing wretch of a sinner and if you will trust Jesus, as a man must do who truly bears that char-

acter—it will prove that you are humble and this will be good evidence that a change has passed over your spirit!

Again, faith in Jesus will be the best evidence that you are reconciled to God, for the worst evidence of your enmity to God is that you do not like God's way of salvation. You so much dislike God that you will not have Heaven on God's terms! You, the sinner, are so much at war with God that you will go to Hell rather than be saved in God's way! That is what it comes to. And when you give that up and say, "Lord, as long as I can be *made* whole—as long as I can be *made* to love You—I am willing to be saved," there will be evidence of a great change in you. When you cry, "Lord, I will be saved in Your way and I will, therefore, trust Christ as you have bid me," then God and you are reconciled upon a point of the chief importance! There is no battle between you, now, for you are of one mind about trusting Christ. God has trusted His honor in Christ's hands and you are trusting your soul in His hands, so that God and you are now agreed to honor Jesus. The moment you have trusted Christ, that simple thing becomes, in itself, a distinct admission and indisputable proof that a great change has been worked in your relation to God and in your feelings in reference to Him.

Now, mark you, before long, sooner or later, you will become delightfully conscious of the fact that you are saved. Many a man is saved and, for a time, he questions the truth of the gracious work. But in due time the blessing is made clear to him. When a man trusts Jesus as these 10 lepers did and acts upon His trust, good always comes of it. See the 10 men! They are going towards the priest though they have not yet felt that they are healed! They are acting upon Christ's authority and He will not make fools of them, for they that trust in Him shall not be ashamed nor confounded! They must start on their walk before they feel the healing, but as they are going they shall feel it! And you, too, trusting Christ without any sense of any good thing, shall not be long before you shall feel His blessed power upon your heart.

I wish to speak my own experience simply to help those who are coming to Jesus. While I was coming to Christ, I did not know that I was coming. And when I looked to Christ, I scarcely knew whether it was the right sort of look or not. But when I felt, at last, that Jesus had healed me, then I knew what I had done. Many a blessing God has given me as to which I have not found out that I had it till some time after my reception of it! I have read the feelings of certain good men and I have said, "I wish I felt like they" and some time after, when I looked back, I perceived that I was actually moving in their orbit and passing through the same experience!

Many a man wishes he was humble and he *is* humble because he does not think he is humble! Many a person sighs, "I wish I had a tender heart," but I am sure that his heart *is* tender because he mourns its hardness! He longs to be deeply sensitive before the Lord and it is clear that he *has* a tenderness which he does not, himself, recognize. His ideal of tenderness is very high and properly so—and, therefore, he dreads falling short of it. O my dear Friend, if you trust Jesus in the dark, you shall one day enter into the light! And if you never should enjoy comfort, you

would still be safe—if all the way between this place and Heaven you should never have a consciousness of being saved—yet if you have trusted Christ, you must and shall be saved, for He cannot possibly allow faith in Him to be exercised in vain!

Before long, if you trust Jesus, you shall know His love. Trust Him as you sink and you shall swim. Trust Him as you feel yourself dying and you shall live. If you trust Him before you feel any work of Grace upon you, you shall soon discover that there *was* a work upon you, though you discerned it not. If you trust the Lord, you are already the subject of a Divine power, for nothing short of Omnipotent Grace could have led you to believe and live! The state and act of faith are simplicity itself, but to bring us into that simplicity, God, Himself, must new create us. To put all in one, if you are ready to come to Christ and trust Him without any miracles, signs, or evidences, but will simply trust Him, alone, you have within you a power which will carry you through life and preserve you in holiness even to the end.

This morning I spoke about David's encouraging himself in God. [No. 1606. "*Ziklag—Or David Encouraging Himself in God.*"] When Ziklag was burnt, his wives taken captive and his men talked of stoning him, David fell back on God alone. This is a high attainment and yet it is one which has its parallel in the very dawn of faith in the sinner. It is a grand start in life for you, a poor sinner, to begin by trusting Christ, alone, saying, "I, without anything good in me whatever, without anything that I can lay hold of as a hope for me, do cast myself, whether I sink or swim, upon Christ Jesus the Savior of sinners. And I if I perish, I perish."

This is a glorious beginning! To many a saintly life, such a faith in the Lord, alone, has been a crowning act, and yet you, poor Sinner, may exercise this same faith while yet you are a babe in Christ! You will often have to trust in this fashion in future life and, therefore, it is well to begin as you will have to keep on. You will be brought in business, in the family and in the various trials of life, into such a condition that you will have to exercise a faith just of the same sort as that which you begin with. I would, therefore, have you learn the lesson while you are young. You will have to say, "Though I am weakness, itself, and poverty, itself, and do not see how I may be provided for, yet as the ravens and the sparrows are fed, so shall I be. And therefore I cast my nakedness upon God for clothing, my hunger upon God for food and my very life I cast upon Him that He may preserve it to me between the jaws of death."

This is grand faith and you must begin there, for if you do not, you have not begun to build on the Rock. Your first course must be the live Rock, or else all will be insecure. To begin well is half the battle—mind that you get a foundation which can never be moved—for life has many trials, and woe to the man whose foundation fails him. This is grand faith to die with as well as to live with. The curtains are drawn and the light of the sun is shut out. The voices of friends begin to fail, the ears are dull and the eye-strings break. My Soul, you are now about to launch into the unseen world! What will you do now? What, indeed, but faint into the arms of your Father and your God!

Oh, my dear Hearer, if you have learned to trust, at the very first because of what Jesus is, and not because of what *you* are, then you will know how to die! Standing there, in the prospect of the great account—or rather, lying there, upon the bed in prospect of the Lord’s coming—fears will come, doubts will come and terrors will come if you are looking within, or looking back upon your past life and trying to find a reliance. But if you can say, “My Savior, into Your hands I commit my spirit: my naked soul I put into Your pierced hands, again,” then may you breathe your last in peace, knowing whom you have believed and being persuaded that He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him until that day! When John Hyatt lay a-dying, one of his friends said, “Mr. Hyatt, can you now trust your soul with Jesus?” “Man,” he said, “trust Him with *one* soul? That is nothing! I could trust Him with a million souls if I had them! I know that He is able to save all who trust Him.”

I want you to begin, then, as these poor lepers did—by just taking Christ at His word—and going your way in the strength of that word before you feel any hopeful change within. In this fashion, when you come to die, you may look out for Glory and expect it, though the brilliance has not yet transfigured you! You may look out for the eternal crown; look out for the harp; look out for the face of the Well-Beloved and the bliss unspeakable—and expect them even though the clouds gather around you! Before you pass the gates of pearl, or cross the chilly sea, you may enjoy the sight of the Beatific Vision by an unstaggering faith!

Hope that is seen is not hope, but glorious is the faith which sees Him who is invisible and grasps the substance of the things not seen as yet! By this power I even now anticipate the joys of the upper skies. Try, Beloved, to do the same. O for more faith! It will be grand to know all Heaven, though you have not seen it and felt it, because you knew and trusted the Lord of Heaven! Up to now you have found the promise true—now trust the Lord for Glory as once you trusted Him for Grace—and you shall find, before long, that His richest promises are sure! God save you, every one of you, Beloved, and may He do so at this very, this very hour, for His dear Son’s sake. Amen.

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

“WHERE ARE THE NINE?”—OR, PRAISE NEGLECTED

NO. 1935

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY,
DECEMBER 20, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1886.**

*“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not 10 cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found that returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner? And He said to him, Arise, go your way: your faith has made you whole.”
Luke 17:15 -19.*

You have often heard the leprosy described—it was a very horrible disease, I should think the worst that flesh is heir to. We ought to be much more grateful than we are that this fell disease is scarcely known in our favored country. You have also heard what an instructive symbol it is in human flesh of what sin is in the human soul, how it pollutes, how it destroys. I need not go into that sad subject. But here was a sight for the Savior—10 men that were lepers! A mass of sorrow, indeed! What sights our Lord still sees every day in this sin-defiled world! Not 10 men that are sinners, nor even merely 10 millions are to be found all the world over, but on this earth there are a thousand millions of men diseased in soul! It is a miracle of condescension that the Son of God should set foot in such a lazar house as this.

Yet observe the triumphant Grace of our Lord Jesus to the 10 men that were lepers. It would make a man’s fortune, it would crown a man with lifelong fame to heal *one* leper—but our Lord healed 10 lepers at once! So full a fountain of Grace is He, so freely does He dispense His favor, that the 10 are told to go and show themselves to the priests because they are healed—and on the way to the priests they find it is so! None of us can imagine the joy they felt when they perceived that they were healed. Oh, it must have been a sort of new birth to them to find their flesh made fresh as that of a little child! It would not have been amazing if the whole 10 had hurried back and fallen at Jesus’ feet and lifted up their voices in a tenfold Psalm! The sad thing about it is that nine of them, though they were healed, went on their way to the priests in the coolest possible manner—we never hear of their return—they drop out of the story altogether.

They have obtained a blessing, they go their way and that is an end of them.

Only one of them, a Samaritan, returned to express his thanks. Misery has strange bedfellows and so the nine lepers of the seed of Israel conorted with an outcast Samaritan—and he, strange to tell it, was the only one who, seized by a sudden impulse of gratitude, made his way to his Benefactor, fell down at His feet and began to glorify God!

If you search the world around, among all choice spices you shall scarcely meet with the frankincense of gratitude. It ought to be as common as the dewdrops that hang upon the hedges in the morning but, alas, the world is dry of thankfulness to God! Gratitude to Christ was scarcely enough in His own day! I had almost said it was 10 to one that nobody would praise Him, but I must correct myself a little—it was nine to one! One day in seven is for the Lord’s worship, but not one man in 10 is devoted to His praise! Our subject is *thankfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ*.

I. I begin with the point that I have already touched upon, namely, THE SINGULARITY OF THANKFULNESS.

Here note *there are more who receive benefits than ever give praise for them*. Nine persons healed, one person glorifying God. Nine persons *healed of leprosy*, mark you, and only one person kneeling down at Jesus’ feet and thanking Him for it! If for this surpassing benefit, which might have made the dumb to sing, men only thank the Lord in the proportion of one in 10, what shall I say of what we call God’s common mercies—only common because He is so liberal with them, for each of them is inestimably valuable? Life, health, eyesight, hearing, domestic love, the continuance of friendships—I cannot attempt a catalog of benefits that we receive every day—and yet is there one man in 10 that praises God for these? A cold, “Thank God!” is all that is given. Others of us do praise Him for these benefits, but what poor praises! Dr. Watts’ hymn is sadly true—

**“Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.”**

We do not praise the Lord fitly, proportionately, intensely. We receive a continent of mercies and only return an island of praise. He gives us new blessings every morning and fresh ones every evening—great is His faithfulness—and yet we let the years roll round and seldom observe a day of praise. Sad is it to see God all goodness and man all ingratitude! The tribe who receives benefits may say, “My name is legion,” but those who praise God are so few that a child may write them.

But there is something more remarkable than this—*the number of those who pray is greater than the number of those who praise*. For these 10 men that were lepers *all prayed*. Poor and feeble as their voices had become through disease, yet they lifted them up in prayer and united in crying—“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” They all joined in the litany, “Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us!” But when they came to the *Te Deum, magnifying and praising God*, only one of them took up the note! One would have thought that all who prayed would praise, but it is not so. Cases have been where a whole ship’s crew, in time of storm, has prayed, and yet none of that crew have sung the praise of God when the storm has become a calm. Multitudes of our fellow citizens pray

when they are sick and near to dying, but when they grow better, their praises grow sick unto death! The angel of mercy, listening at their door, has heard no canticle of love, no song of thankfulness. Alas, it is too sadly true that more pray than praise!

I put it in another shape to you who are God’s people—*most of us pray more than we praise*. You pray little enough, I fear, but praise, where is that? At our family altars we always pray, but seldom praise. In our closets we constantly pray, but do we frequently praise? Prayer is not so heavenly an exercise as praise—prayer is for time, but praise is for eternity! Praise, therefore, deserves the first and highest place, does it not? Let us commence the employment which occupies the celestials. Prayer is for a beggar, but I think he is a poor beggar who does not also give praise when he receives an alms. Praise ought to naturally follow upon the heels of prayer, even when it does not, by Divine Grace, go before it. If you are afflicted, if you lose money, if you fall into poverty, if your child is ill, if chastisement visits you in any form, you begin to pray and I do not blame you for it. But should it be all praying and no praising? Should our life have so much salt and so little sweet in it? Should we get for ourselves so often a drink from the rock of blessing and so seldom pour out a drink offering unto the Lord Most High? Come, let us chide ourselves as we acknowledge that we offer so much more prayer than praise!

On the same head, let me remark that *more obey ritual than ever praise Christ*. When Jesus said, “Go show yourselves to the priests,” off they went, all 10 of them! Not one stayed behind. Yet only one came back to behold a personal Savior and to praise His name. So today—you will go to Church, you will go to Chapel, you will read a book, you will perform an outward religious action, but oh, how little praising God, how little lying at His feet and feeling that we could sing our souls away for gratitude to Him who has done such great things for us! External religious exercises are easy enough and common enough, but the *internal* matter, the drawing out of the heart in thankful love—how scarce a thing it is! Nine obey ritual where only one praises the Lord!

Once more, to come yet closer home, *there are more that believe than there are that praise*, for these 10 men did believe, but only one praised the Lord Jesus. Their faith was about the leprosy and, according to their faith, so it was unto them. This faith, though it only concerned their leprosy, was yet a very wonderful faith. It was remarkable that they should believe the Lord Jesus though He did not even say, “Be healed,” nor speak a word to them to that effect, but simply said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” With parched skins and death burning its way into their hearts, they went bravely off in confidence that Jesus must mean to bless them. It was admirable faith—and yet none of the nine who thus believed ever came back to praise Christ for the mercy received! I am afraid that there is much of faith, better faith than theirs, which concerns spiritual things which has yet to flower into practical gratitude. Perhaps it blooms late in the year, like the chrysanthemum, but certainly it has not flowered in springtime like the primrose and the daffodil. It is a faith which bears few blossoms of praise!

I chide myself, sometimes, that I have wrestled with God in prayer, like Elijah upon Carmel, but I have not magnified the name of the Lord like Mary of Nazareth. We do not laud our Lord in proportion to the benefits received! God's treasury would overflow if the revenue of thanks were more honestly paid. There would be no need to plead for missions and stir up God's people to self-denial if there were praise at all proportionate to our faith. We believe for Heaven and eternity and yet do not magnify the Lord as we should for earth and time! It is real faith, I trust—it is not for me to judge it—but it is faulty in result. Faith was only real in these lepers so far as their leprosy was concerned. They did not believe in our Lord's Divinity, or believe for eternal life. So also among ourselves, there are men who get benefits from Christ, who even hope that they are saved, but they do not praise Him. Their lives are spent in examining their own skins to see whether their leprosy is gone. Their religious life reveals itself in a constant searching of themselves to see if they are really healed. This is a poor way of spending one's energies. This man knew that he was healed. He had full assurance upon that point and the next impulse of his spirit was to get back to where Jesus stood who had been his glorious Physician, to fall at His feet and praise Him with a loud voice, glorifying God! Oh, that all my timorous, doubting hearers may do the same!

I have said enough, I think, upon the scantiness of thanksgiving. Let us go over those points again. More receive benefits than praise God for them. More pray than praise. More obey ritual than praise God with the heart and more believe and receive benefits through faith, than rightly praise the Giver of those benefits.

II. I have a great deal to say and little time to say it in, therefore, briefly let us note THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE THANKFULNESS. This man's simple act may show the character of praise. It does not take the same shape in everybody. Love to Christ, like living flowers, wears many forms—only artificial flowers are all alike. Living praise is marked by *individuality*. This man was one of 10 when he was a leper, but he was all alone when he returned to praise God. You can sin in company, you can go to Hell in company—but when you obtain salvation, you will come to Jesus all alone. And when you are saved, though you will delight to praise God with others if they will join you, yet if they will not, you will delight to sing a solo of gratitude! This man quits the company of the other nine and comes to Jesus. If Christ has saved you and your heart is right, you will say, “I *must* praise Him! I *must* love Him!” You will not be kept back by the chilly state of nine out of 10 of your old companions, nor by the worldliness of your family, nor by the coldness of the Church. Your personal love to Jesus will make you speak even if Heaven, earth and sea are all wrapped in silence.

You have a heart burning with adoring love and you feel as if it were the only heart under Heaven that had love to Christ in it and, therefore, you must feed the heavenly flame. You must indulge its desires, you must express its longings. The fire is in your bones and must have vent. Since there is an individuality about true praise, come, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us praise God, each one, in his own way!—

“Oh, may the sweet, the blissful theme,

**Fill every heart and tongue,
Till strangers love Your charming name,
And join the sacred song!”**

The next characteristic of this man’s thankfulness was *promptness*. He went back to Christ almost immediately, for I cannot suppose the Savior lingered at the village gate for hours that day. He was too busy to be long in one spot—the Master went about doing good. The man was soon back and when you are saved, the quicker you can express your gratitude the better. Second thoughts are best, they say, but this is not the case when the heart is full of love to Christ! Carry out your first thoughts. Do not stop for the second, unless, indeed, your heart is so on fire with heavenly devotion that second ones consume the first! Go at once and praise the Savior. What grand designs some of you have formed of future service for God! What small results have followed! Ah, it is better to lay one brick, to-day, than to propose to build a palace next year! Magnify your Lord in the present for present salvation. Why should His mercies lie in quarantine? Why should your praises be like aloes which take a century to flower? Why should praise be kept waiting at the door, even for a night? The manna came fresh in the morning, so let your praises rise early! He praises twice who praises at once, but he who does not praise at once never praises.

The next quality of this man’s praise was *spirituality*. We perceive this in the fact that he paused on his way to the priests. It was his duty to go to the priests—he had received a command to do so—but there is a proportion in all things and some duties are greater than others. He thought to himself—“I was ordered to go to the priests, but I am healed and this new circumstance affects the order of my duties. The first thing I ought to do is to go back and bear witness to the people, glorifying God in the midst of them all, and falling down at Christ’s feet.” It is well to observe the holy law of proportion. Carnal minds take the ritualistic duty first—that which is external outweighs, with them, that which is spiritual. But love soon perceives that the substance is more precious than the shadow—and that to bow at the feet of the Great High Priest must be a greater duty than to go before the lesser priests! So the healed leper went first to Jesus. In him the spiritual overrode the ceremonial. He felt that his main duty was to adore *in person* the Divine Person who had delivered him from his fell disease. Let us go first to Jesus! Let us in spirit bow before HIM. Ah, yes! Come to our services, join in our regular worship, but if you love the Lord, you will need something besides this—you will pine to get to Jesus, Himself, and tell Him how you love Him! You will long to do something for Him by yourself, by which you can show forth the gratitude of your heart to the Christ of God!

True thankfulness also manifests itself in *intensity*. Intensity is perceptible in this case. He turned back and with a loud voice glorified God. He could have praised, could he not, in a quieter way? Yes, but when you are just cured of leprosy and your once feeble voice is restored to you, you cannot whisper out your praises! Brothers and Sisters, you know it would be impossible to be coolly proper when you are newly saved! This man, with a loud voice, glorified God! And you, too, feel forced to cry—

**“Gladly would I sound it out so loud
That earth and Heaven could hear!”**

Some of our converts are very wild, at times, and they grow extravagant. Do not blame them! Why not indulge them? It will not hurt you. We are, all of us, so very proper and orderly that we can afford to have an extravagant one among us now and then. Oh, that God would send more of that sort to wake the Church up that we, also, might all begin to praise God with heart and voice, with soul and substance, with might and main! Hallelujah! My own heart feels the glow!

In true thankfulness, next, there is *humility*. This man fell down at Jesus’ feet. He did not feel perfectly in his place until he was lying there. “I am nobody, Lord,” he seemed to say and, therefore, he fell on his face. But the place for his prostration was, “at His feet.” I would rather be nobody at Christ’s feet than everybody anywhere else! There is no place so honorable as down at the feet of Jesus! Ah, to lie there always and just love Him wholly—and let self die out! Oh, to have Christ standing over you as the one figure overshadowing your life from this day on and forever! True thankfulness lies low before the Lord.

Added to this there was *worship*. He fell down at Jesus’ feet, glorifying God and giving thanks to Him. Let us worship our Savior! Let others think as they like about Jesus, but we will put our finger into the print of the nails and say, “My Lord and my God!” If there is a God, He is God in Christ Jesus to us. We shall never cease to adore Him who has proved His Godhead by delivering us from the leprosy of sin! All worship be to His supreme majesty!

One thing more about this man I want to notice as to his thankfulness and that is, *his silence as to censuring others*. When the Savior said, “Where are the nine?” I notice that this man did not reply. The Master said, “Where are the nine? Were there not any found that returned to give Glory to God, except this foreigner?” But the adoring stranger did not stand up and say, “O Lord, they are all gone off to the priests! I am astonished at them that they did not return to praise You!” O Brothers and Sisters, we have enough to do to mind our own business when we feel the Grace of God in our own hearts! If I can only get through my service of praise, I shall have no mind to accuse any of you who are ungrateful. The Master asks, “Where are the nine?” but the poor healed man at His feet has no word to say against those cruel nine! He is too much occupied with his personal adoration!

III. I have not half done and yet you cannot possibly stay beyond the appointed hour of closing. Therefore I must compress my third division as closely as I possibly can—let us consider THE BLESSEDNESS OF THANKFULNESS. This man was more blessed, by far, than the nine. They were healed, but they were not blessed as he was. There is a great blessedness in thankfulness. First, because it is right. Should not Christ be praised? This man did what he could and there is always an ease of conscience and a rest of spirit when you feel that you are doing all you can in a right cause, even though you fall far short of your own desire. At this moment, my Brethren, magnify the Lord—

“Meet and right it is to sing,

***In every time and place,
Glory to our heavenly King,
The God of truth and Grace.
Join we, then, with sweet accord,
All in one thanksgiving join!
Holy, holy, holy Lord,
Eternal praise be Yours.”***

Next, there is this blessing in thankfulness, that it *is a manifestation of personal love*. I love the Doctrines of Grace, I love the Church of God, I love the Sabbath, I love the ordinances, but I love Jesus most. My heart never rests until I can glorify God, personally, and give thanks unto the Christ, personally. The indulgence of personal love to Christ is one of the sweetest things out of Heaven and you cannot indulge that personal love so well as by personal thankfulness both of heart and mouth and act and deed!

There is another blessedness about thankfulness—*it has clear views*. The thankful eye sees far and deep. The man healed of leprosy, before he went on glorifying God, gave thanks to Jesus. If he had thanked Jesus and stopped there, I would have said that his eyes were not well open. But when he saw God in Christ and, therefore, glorified God for what Christ had done, he showed a deep insight into spiritual truth. He had begun to discover the mysteries of the Divine and Human Person of the blessed Lord. We learn much by prayer. Did not Luther say, “To have prayed well is to have studied well”? I venture to add a rider to what Luther has so ably said—“To have praised well is to have studied better.” Praise is a great instructor! Prayer and praise are the oars by which a man may row his boat into the deep waters of the knowledge of Christ.

The next blessedness about praise is that it *is acceptable to Christ*. The Lord Jesus was evidently pleased. He was grieved to think the other nine did not come back, but He was charmed with this one man that he did return. The question, “Where are the nine?” bears within it a commendation of the one. Whatever pleases Christ should be carefully cultivated by us. If praise is pleasant to Him, let us continually magnify His name! Prayer is the straw of the wheat, but praise is the ear. Jesus loves to see the blade grow up, but He loves, better, to pluck the golden ears when the harvest of praise is ripe.

Next, notice that the blessedness of thankfulness is that *it receives the largest blessing*, for the Savior said to this man what He had not said to the others, “your faith has made you whole.” If you would live the higher life, be much in praising God! Some of you are in the lowest state as yet, as this man was, for he was a Samaritan—but by praising God he rose to be a songster rather than a stranger! How often have I noticed how the greatest sinner becomes the greatest praiser! Those that were farthest off from Christ, hope and purity—when they become saved they feel that they owe the most and, therefore, they love the best. May it be the ambition of every one of us, even if we are not, originally, among the vilest of the vile, to feel that we owe Jesus most! And then we will praise Him most and thus shall we receive the richest blessing from His hands!

I have done when I have said three things. Let us learn from all this to *put praise in a high place*. Let us hold Praise Meetings. Let us think it as great a sin to neglect praise as to restrain prayer.

Next, *let us pay our praise to Christ Himself*. Whether we go to the priests or not, let us go to *Him*. Let us praise Him personally and vehemently! Personal praise to a personal Savior must be our life’s objective!

Lastly, if we work for Jesus and we see converts who do not turn out as we expected, do not let us be cast down about it. *If others do not praise our Lord, let us be sorrowful, but let us not be disappointed*. The Savior had to say, “Where are the nine?” Ten lepers were healed, but only one praised Him. We have many converts who do not join the Church. We have numbers of persons converted who do not come forward to Baptism or to the Lord’s Supper. Numbers get a blessing, but do not feel love enough to acknowledge it. Those of us who are soul-winners are robbed of our wages by the cowardly spirits who hide their faith. I thank God that of late we have had many avowing their conversion, but if the other nine would come, we would need nine Tabernacles! Alas for the many who have gone back after professing their faith! Where are the nine?

So you that hold Cottage Meetings; you that go round with tracts—you are doing more good than you will ever hear of! You do not know where the nine are, but even if you should only bless one out of 10, you will have cause to thank God.

“Oh,” says one, “I have had so little success. I have had only one soul saved!” That is more than you deserve. If I were to fish for a week and only catch one fish, I would be sorry, but if that fish happened to be a sturgeon, a royal fish, I would feel that the quality made up for lack of quantity. When you win a soul it is a great prize! One soul brought to Christ—can you estimate its value? If one is saved, you should be grateful to your Lord and persevere! Though you wish for more conversions, you will not despond so long as even a few are saved and, above all, you will not be angry if some of them do not thank you personally, nor join in Church fellowship with you. Ingratitude is common towards soul-winners.

How often a minister has brought sinners to Christ and fed the flock in his early days! But when the old man grows feeble, they want to get rid of him and try a new broom which will sweep cleaner! “Poor old gentleman, he is quite out of date!” they say, and so they get rid of him, as gypsies turn an old horse out on the common to feed or starve, they care not which! If anybody expects gratitude, I would remind them of the benediction, “Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they will not be disappointed.” Even our Master did not get praise from the nine—therefore do not fret if you bless others and others do not bless you! Oh, that some poor soul would come to Christ, tonight—some leper to be healed of sin-sickness! If he does find healing, let him come out and, with a loud voice magnify the Lord who has dealt so graciously with him!

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

“WHERE ARE THE NINE?” WHERE?

NO. 2960

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1905.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.**

***“And Jesus answering said, Were there not
ten cleansed? But where are the nine?”
Luke 17:17.***

THE whole narrative connected with the text is worthy of your careful reading. There were 10 men, lepers who, according to the old proverb that “birds of a feather flock together,” had made a company and seemed to have lived in greater amity through kinship of suffering than they would have done had they been healthy and competent to share the fragrance of each other’s joys. Mutual woe may have softened some of their natural jealousies, for we find that there was at least one in the company who was a Samaritan, while the others were Jews. Now, “the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans,” yet, when both are placed beyond the pale of society—in their sickness an intimacy springs up between them. So does common calamity bring about strange friendships. These men, who, under any other circumstances, would have been mortal enemies, became comfortable companions—at least, so far as their disease would allow them the thought of comfort.

Do you not observe everywhere how sinners congregate together? Drunks are gregarious creatures—they will not often drink alone. The lascivious song is hardly sweet unless it thrills from many tongues. In most sorts of merry-making that are not wise, we know that it is company that gives the zest and yields the main gratification. Men seem to have a sort of anticipation of the time when they shall be bound up in bundles—they gaily forestall their gloomy doom as they bind themselves up in bundles while they are yet living! Oh, that Christians would adhere as closely to one another as sinners do! That they would forget their differences, whether they are Jews or Samaritans, and walk in friendship and love! If common sickness made the lepers a band, how much more should common mercy bind us to one another?

Well, it so happened that all these 10 lepers, at one time, agreed to go to Christ the great Healer. Oh, what a mercy it is when a whole hospital full of sinners will agree to go to Christ at once! I recollect—I can never look back but with pleasure upon the time when a whole company of friends who were simply worldly, irreligious people, and were accustomed to meet together constantly, were all moved with a desire to come up to the House of God. And it pleased God to so direct the shot that the most of them were brought under the Divine Power! Some of them who are

sitting here, now, will recollect right well when they used to issue invitations for their convivial parties on Sunday evenings! But now they are with us and are some of the most useful and vigorous church members that we have! It is a fine thing when the 10 lepers all agree to come together—it will be a grander thing when the ten lepers are all healed and not one left to mourn that he has been neglected!

These lepers become an example to us, for they went to Jesus. Their disease was foul and loathsome. They felt it to be so. Their own society could not stand them—they needed health and nothing else but perfect health would content them. How did they go to Jesus? They first of all went directly, for it is written in the narrative that as Christ entered into a village, these lepers began to cry out. They did not wait until He got into the nearest house and had sat down and taken some refreshment. No, but they meet Him at the village gates! They waylay Him at the very portals. They cannot stop—no delay, no procrastination for them! O leprous Sinner, go to Christ at once! Go now, tarry not until you have left the sanctuary! Wait not until the sermon is over! It is written, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Young man, at the threshold of your life, seek Christ! Go now, you who have begun to be sick. Go now, young woman, now that your cheeks begin to be blanched with consumption. Go now, go at once, go instantly to meet the healing Savior!

They went humbly. They stood afar off—note that. They felt that they had no right to come near. So must we go to our Lord for mercy—conscious that we have no claim upon Him and standing, just as the publican did, afar off, scarcely daring to lift our eyes to Heaven, we must cry—“God be merciful to me a sinner.” William Dawson once told this story to illustrate how humble the soul must be before it can find peace. He said that at a revival meeting, a little lad who was used to Methodist ways—I do not tell the story for the sake of Methodism, but for the sake of the moral—the little boy went home to his mother and said, “Mother, John So-and-So is under conviction and is seeking for peace. But he will not find it tonight, Mother.” “Why, William?” she asked. “Because he is only down on one knee, Mother, and he will never get peace until he is down on both knees.” Now the moral of that story, using it metaphorically, is true. Until conviction of sin brings us down on both knees—until we are completely humbled, until we have no hope, no merit, no proud boasting left—we cannot find the Savior! And we must be willing not to embrace Him like sanctified Mary, but to stand at a distance like the unclean lepers.

Observe how earnestly they sought Him. They cried with a loud voice, or, rather, “They lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” They emulated one another. One cried with all his might, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” And another seemed to say, “That is not loud enough.” And so he shouted, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” And so each one strained his voice that he might reach the ear of the Savior. There is no winning mercy without holy violence. “The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” You recollect

that blind man who was sitting on the bank, one day, when Jesus went by and, as he heard a great noise of a mob passing along, he said, “What is all the noise?” They said, “Jesus of Nazareth passes by.” The man, with quick perception, perceived that here was an opportunity for him, so he shouted with all his might, “You Son of David, have mercy on me!” Now Christ was in the middle of a sermon and some of the Apostles, as some of our good deacons might do when there was a little disturbance—slipped out of the crowd to say, “Hush, don’t make that noise! You will disturb the Preacher.” But he cried, “You Son of David, have mercy on me!” “Hold your tongue! The Master cannot attend to you.” And other zealous friends gathered round and would have put him out of the way, but he cried the more a great deal, “You Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Well, now, it is just thus that we must pray if we would get the mercy! Cold prayers court refusal. Heaven is not to be obtained by lukewarm supplications. Heat your prayers red-hot, Brothers and Sisters! Plead the blood of Jesus! Plead like one who means to prevail—and then you shall prevail!

Not to tarry where there is plenty of room for long observations, let me turn your attention to the way in which Christ cured these 10 lepers.

There is a singular variety in Christ’s methods of cure. Sometimes it is a touch. Another time, clay and spittle. At other times, a word. This time He said to them, “Go show yourselves unto the priests.” They were not clean and they might, therefore, have turned round and said, “What a foolish errand! Why should we go and exhibit our filthiness to priests? Master, will You cure us or not? If You will cure us, we can *then* go to the priests. If You will not, it is a vain errand to go to the priests to be again doomed to seclusion.” They did not ask questions, however. They were too wise for that. They did just what they were told and though they were white, and far from being like men whose flesh is sound, the whole 10 set off on their pilgrimage to go to the priests. And, as they went, suddenly the cure was worked and they were, every one of them, clean! Oh, what a beautiful picture is this of the plan of salvation! Jesus Christ says, “Believe on Me and live.” Oh, be not foolish! Do not say, “But, Lord, make me whole and *then* I will believe.” Do not say, “Lord, give me a tender heart and *then* I will come.” “Lord, forgive my sin and *then* I will love You.” But do as He bids you. He bids you trust Him, so, do as He bids you—trust Him! And while you are trusting Him—while you are going to Him with the white leprosy still in your skin, while you are yet upon the way—He will heal you! You know that we are not to be saved, first, and to believe in Christ afterwards—that may be the order of God’s covenant revelation, but it is not the order of our spiritual apprehension! We are to first *believe*, just as we are—

**“All unholy and unclean,
Being nothing else but sin”—**

I am to believe that Jesus Christ is able to save me. I am to trust my soul with Him that He may save it. And, in the act of so doing I shall find salvation! Be not, I pray you, so foolish as to say, “Lord, I object to this

method of procedure." Seek no needless preparation! Do not hesitate and stop until you feel ready to come to Him—

***"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream.
All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him—
This He gives you!
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."***

Let us now fix our attention more closely on the text. I think I see those 10 men—they are trudging along the road and as they go they are obliged to wear a veil and to cry, as they march along—"Unclean, unclean, unclean," so as to warn the party that lepers are on the road. Suddenly, while they are marching on, one of them turns to his fellow sufferer, and says, "I am clean." And the next says, "So am I!" And the whole 10 turn round and look at one another and each man, as he looks first at his own flesh and then at his fellows, comes to the conclusion that the whole 10 have been healed in an instant! "What shall we do?" says one of them. "Why," say the others, "we had better go on to the priests and get officially cleansed as soon as possible." "I have a farm," says one, "I have been a long while away from it and I should like to get back." "Ah," says another, "and I have not seen my wife for many a day. Let me be off to the priest and then go home to her." "Ah," says another, "there are my dear little children—I hope soon to take them on my knee." "Yes," says another, "and I want to join my old friends—to get back to my former companions."

But there is another who says, "You don't mean to say you will go on, do you? I think we ought to go back and thank the Man that has made us whole. This is God's work and if we are to go and thank God in the Temple, I think we ought first to go and thank God in the Man who has done us this benefit, the Man, Christ Jesus. Let us go back to Him." "Oh!" says another, "I think we had better not. If we don't go to the priest at once, our friends will not know us again and it will be a disgrace to us, in later years, if they say, 'That is John the leper. That is Samuel the leper. I think we had better go to the priest at once, get the thing done and then get back as soon as we can. Let's see, you go to Bethsaida and you go to Capernaum. Let us get back as quietly as possible and hold our tongues about it. That, is our policy.'" "What?" says the other man—and he was a Samaritan—"What? Do that? Never has such love been heard of as that which has been shown to us, and such a gift as we have received ought to meet with something like gratitude. If you will not go back, I will," he said. And they turn round, perhaps, and laugh at him for his over-zeal and one of them says, "Our Samaritan friend always was fanatical." "Fanatical or not," he says, "I have received such a favor that I never could repay it, even if I counted out my life's blood in drops and, therefore, I will go back to Him and fall at His feet, and adore Him as God, seeing he has worked a Divine work in me." Away he goes! Down he falls at Jesus' feet, adores Him as God and with as loud a voice as once he cried, "Lord, have mercy on me," he cries now, "Glory, glory, glory be

unto Your name.” Jesus answers, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?”

I am going to use the Savior’s question, with that picture before you, and I hope we may give a satisfactory account of the nine. Gratitude is a very rare thing. If any of you try to do good for the sake of getting gratitude, you will find it one of the most profitless trades in the world. If you can do good, expecting to be *abused* for it, you will get your reward, but if you do good with an expectation of gratitude in return, you will be bitterly disappointed. If anybody is grateful for anything you do, be surprised at it, for it is the way of the world to generally be ungrateful. The more you do, the more you may do and when you have done your best, your friend will forget it. *Alas, that this should be true, in a spiritual sense, with regard to Christians!* I shall take that class first. How many are there in this House of God whose sins have been forgiven? They owe to Christ a healing far more wonderful than that of being cleansed from leprosy! The Lord has made them clean—they are saved from death and Hell. But, of the saved people in the world, how many there are who never make even an open profession of their being saved at all? A few there are who come—shall I say only one out of ten? They are baptized, we give them the right hand of fellowship, we thank God—this is well, “but where are the nine?” “Where are the nine?”

Every now and then a Brother who has been made a partaker of Sovereign Grace comes forward and says, “I am on the Lord’s side.” Bless God for that! But are there not many who are hiding themselves, like Saul, among the stuff? “Where are the nine?” Walk through the streets. Travel this great city of London—are we to believe that there is no more Christianity in London than that which is apparent in our congregations? *I cannot think so!* I hope that there are multitudes of true Christians who never did come out and say, “I am a follower of the Lamb.” But is this right? “Where are the nine?” Are they where they are doing good? Are they not in the coward’s place? Are they not skulking like deserters? “Where are the nine?” How it is that they bring no glory to God! Purchased with Christ’s blood, why do they not acknowledge that they are His? Being one with Him secretly, why do they not become one with Him publicly? He said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” O, you nine, where are you?

But *out of those who do make a profession*, to come closer home to most of you, *how few there are that live up to it!* The profession is made and they call themselves the people of God. And there are some Christians—especially some in the humbler walks of life—whose daily walk is the best sermon upon religion that can possibly be preached. With what satisfaction have I often looked upon many a poor girl struggling hard to earn her daily bread with her needle, but adorning the Doctrine of God even more than a bishop on the bench! And how have I seen some of you in other ranks, too, and marked your consistency of life, the incorruptibility of your honesty—how you will stand out against temptations and are neither to be moved by bribes, nor to be subdued by

threats! Now this is true of many Christians. You will meet with them every now and then—men who are like pillars of light, as the saintly Basil desired to be—men who reflect the image of Christ. As soon as you see them, you have no need to ask, “Whose image and superscription is this?” They live like Jesus! Their holiness, their loving spirit, their prayerfulness, their gentleness all betoken that they are like the Savior. Ah, this is true of some—“but where are the nine?” “Where are the nine?”

That shop-counter can tell where some of them are—cheating the public. “Where are the nine?” Some of them inconsistent in their walk—worldly with the worldly, frothy with the light and trifling, as giddy and as fond of carnal pleasure as anybody! “Where are the nine?” O Brothers and Sisters, if all who profess to be God’s people really lived up to what they profess, what a grand world this would be! How changed world trade would become! How different your merchandise and your traffic! How altered the appearance of everything! How blessed the poor, how happy the rich! Where would be your pride? Where your striving after high gentility? Where your longing after so much creature respect and earthly grandeur? The whole thing would be done away with if we became like Christ! In the case of some few, they are delivered from this present evil world according to the will of God. “But where are the nine?” “Where are the nine?” Let their conscience answer.

And in our churches, too, *how few there are who, making a profession of religion, are fervent in it!* If you want good people who go regularly to church or chapel, subscribe a little, sometimes—do not mind walking through the Sunday school once in a year. Feel a good deal for the poor and needy, only do not feel in their pockets! If you want good people who wish all sorts of good things, but never do them—I can find them as readily as I can find birds’ nests in winter time when the leaves are stripped off the trees! But if you want those who give body, soul and strength to God’s cause—if you would have women who can break the alabaster box of precious ointment for Jesus, as Mary did—if you would have those that love much because much has been forgiven, I hardly think you will find one in ten! And very likely that one in ten will be a Samaritan—one who, in her former state, was full of sin or a man who, before his conversion, was one of the vilest of the vile! You will often find pure and perfect love there when you may not find it anywhere else. I thank God that in this congregation there are many who consistently and cheerfully give up their substance to the Lord—one in ten—“but where are the nine?” I thank God that in this congregation there are many earnest workers, so that the Sunday schools in the neighborhood are mainly supplied with our congregation. This is good, but, “where are the nine?”

I thank God for those men who stand in the street and preach, and for those Brothers and Sisters who distribute tracts, or in other ways seek to serve their Master. This is noble of you—but, how many do it? “Where are the nine?” Summon the church members, march them all along and let the officer’s eyes run down the ranks and he will say, “Yes, there is one there who serves his Master well. Stand out. One, two, three, four,

five, six, seven, eight, nine—you may go on.” Here comes another—“Yes, this man *does* live for the cause of Christ. You can stand out, too. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—you may go on—you do nothing at all.” I am afraid the average is even less in some churches and I might, if I were addressing some congregations, not only say “Where are the nine?” but, “Where are the ninety-nine?” For 99 out of a hundred among *some* professors do not live to God with zeal, with fire, with earnestness and with fervor! No, my Brothers and Sisters, when you fetch out such men as Brainerd. When you bring into the front ranks such men as Henry Martyn, such evangelists as Whitefield and Wesley, such toilsome missionaries of the Cross as Robert Moffat or John Williams, you may say, after you have looked at them, “Yes, these do well. They owe much to God and they live as if they felt it.” But where are the ninety-nine? Where are the nine hundred and ninety-nine? *We* all owe as much as they, but oh, how little we do! The ground has been plowed as much, watered as much and sown as well, but we do not bring forth twenty-fold, while they bring forth a hundred!

“Where are the nine?” Come now, I should not like to leave this point until I have found out some of the nine. Are there not some of my own church members who are doing nothing? You do not help the Sunday school. We require a number of young men and women to go to Kent Street Ragged Schools to teach on Sabbaths and that is one reason why I want to find out where the nine are. There is a noble field of labor amidst the poverty and degradation of Kent Street and I think we, as a church, ought to look after that locality. “Where *are* the nine?” Am I not addressing some who are doing nothing for Christ? When Brothers and Sisters, now and then say to me, “Well, Sir, what *shall* we do?” I usually suspect that they are rather lazy, for an industrious person soon finds plenty to do in such a city as this! But if there are any of the nine present, let me call them out. For your own comfort’s sake, for the world’s sake, for Christ’s sake, for your soul’s sake because men are dying, time is flying, eternity is hastening, come, I pray you, come forth, you that are of the nine! One feels, sometimes, in prospect of death, like the venerable Bede, who, when he had nearly translated the Gospel of John, said to the young man who was writing from his dictation, “Write fast, write fast, for I am dying. How far are you now? How many verses remain?” “So many.” “Quicker, quicker,” he said, “write more quickly, for I am dying.” When at length he said, “I have come to the last verse,” the good old man folded his arms, sang the Doxology and fell asleep in Jesus! Quickly, Brother, quickly! You will never get through the chapter if you do not work and write quickly! Quickly, quickly, your time of dying is so near and then, when you have done, if you have worked quickly for Christ though it is not of debt but of Grace, you will be able to say, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace,” and with the Doxology on your quivering lips you will go to sing the Doxology in sweeter strains above!

Having thus somewhat roughly handled professors of religion, I am going to address *those who have received special favors from God*. Like

the 10 lepers, there are many in the world who have had very special favors. How many are present tonight who have had fever, cholera, or some sickness which appeared to be unto death? I bless God that when I was last sitting to see enquirers, a very considerable number traced their conversion to sickbeds. They were there awakened and they afterwards came up to God’s House—

**“To pay the vows
Their souls in anguish made.”**

Yes, those are the ones typified by the Samaritan! “But where are the nine?” Is there not one of them under the gallery there, to the right, he who was nearly drowned at sea and, just then, oh, how he vowed that if God would spare him, he would live to God’s service? But he is one of the nine. Have I not another, yonder, who was given up by the doctor and, like Hezekiah, turned his face to the wall and said, “Lord, only let me live, and I will be a different man”? But if there is any difference, he has been rather worse than better! There is another of the nine. I need not go out to find the other seven—they are all here. They have, some of them, been sick, some of them have suffered from some “accident,” some have undergone operations, some have passed through imminent peril both on land and sea and some have had their lives preserved—I think I see them now—to a very advanced period of life. “Where are the nine?” There is one of the nine here—he has passed his threescore years and ten and while some of his age have been brought to know the Lord by reason of His goodness and kindness in thus lengthening their span, he still remains and does not give glory to God. O souls, to lie to God is to lie with a vengeance! To promise Him and to not perform—what? Is God to be played with? Will you play fast and loose with Him? Dare you befool yourself with the Most High and promise Him this and that, and then break your vow? In the name of God, you nine, I cite you to make your appearance at the last great bar except you now turn from the error of your ways! May the Spirit of God turn you, for otherwise, when the question is asked, “Where are the nine?” you must be dragged forward and your vows, and bonds, and privileges shall be all urged against you and shall be swift witness against you forever!

“Where are the nine? “I may remind you of *the common mercies that we all enjoy*. Fed each day by Divine bounty, clothed by Heaven’s charity, supplied with breath by God, there are some who live to praise Him, some who give back that breath in praise which God prolongs in mercy, who spend that life to His honor which His long-suffering permits to last. But these are but one in ten, shall I say one in ten thousand? “Where are the nine?” Here are some of them—men who live upon God, but never live to God! Men who go from morning to night without prayer—who roll out of bed in the morning and get to their labor—and roll into it at night, fall asleep again, but never utter, never feel a “God be thanked for this day’s favor”! Never a breathing of the heart towards the God who is in Heaven! Like brutes they live and like brutes they will die. Only, unlike brutes, they will rise again and receive, for the deeds done in the body, the due reward of the evil that they have done! “Where are the nine?” Let

the question provoke you to weep over your ingratitude and lead you to turn to God.

Then again, to use the question another way, *where are the nine who have listened to the Gospel?* Lately the Lord has been very gracious to our city. Our preachers have not been quite so dead and dull as they once were. The theatres have echoed with the name of Jesus! Men like Radcliffe, and North, with Richard Weaver, chief and foremost, and Mr. Denham Smith, have preached the Word with power and from among the crowds who have gone in and out of the theatres, some have been converted to God—but “where are the nine?” “Where are the nine?” And in this house, too, with its aisles and its seats thronged so constantly—how many thousands listen to our voice? Yes, I thank God, some not in vain, for some of all sorts, of every rank and condition have believed in Jesus—but, still, “where are the nine?” Christians, here is a solemn question for you! There is much good being done in London just now, but we question whether all the Evangelical labor in London is carried on by so much as one in ten. Then, “where are the nine?”

When I was in some of the back streets in the neighborhood of Kent Street last week, I was very pleased, as I went along, to notice in one little house, “Cottage meetings held here.” A little further on, a Ragged School. A little further on, “a Prayer Meeting held here twice a week.” I could hardly see a street, however low, that seemed to be without some traces of religious effort and action! You could not have stated this seven years ago. I believe the signs of the time are favorable, but yet the effort put forth is not at all commensurate with the dire necessity of the age. You do much. The City Mission does much. Your tract-distributing, despite all that is said against it, does much. Your street-preaching does much more than critics will allow. I believe that there is more good being done by the preaching in the streets than by the preaching within walls, with some few exceptions. Go on with what is being done, but multiply your agencies, for let this question goad you on, “What of the nine? What of the nine?”

O dear Friends, if we could but hope that one in ten in this great city was converted, we might set the bells ringing far more merrily than when the Princess passed through the streets! But I fear we have not got to that. However, if we had, it would be a solemn question for us to ask, “What of the nine?” I am afraid some of that nine come here. You are here tonight unconverted. O dear Friends, do you remember when you were young? There were 10 of you—you are the only one left. What of the nine? They are all dead. As far as you know, they are all lost and you are the only one left. Oh, that God would make you His tonight! Or it may be that you have been listening a long time to the Word of God and you have seen one converted, and another converted, but there you are and your other companions still unblessed! Oh, that you, the nine, might be brought in! We must pray to God to convert the nine! We cannot let Him go with the one—we must have the nine brought in! The day will come when Christ shall sit on the Throne of His Glory and there shall come up

before Him the ones—and He shall say, “Come, you blessed”—but after He has done that, He may well say, “I gave breath to more than these! I sent the Gospel to more than these! I was merciful to more than these! Where are the nine?” And then, you nine, you must make your appearance. And He will say to you, “I fed you, but you lived not to Me. I called you, but you would not come. I invited you, but you would not turn. And now, you nine, depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

But, “hope,” is the word for tonight, even for the nine! May God be pleased to give you hope within while I utter hope without! Jesus died. His death is your life! Trust Him and you are saved! Rest on Him with your whole weight! Throw yourself flat upon Him—have nothing to do with standing in your own strength, but prostrate at the foot of His dear Cross, lay yourself down and you shall not be numbered with the nine, but you shall return to give glory to God, even though, up to now, you may have been a Samaritan, a stranger, the chief of sinners! May God add His blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:*
ACTS 27:11-44.

*[This Exposition belongs to Sermon #2952, Volume 52—THE CHURCH—THE WORLD’S HOPE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeons.org>. There was no space available for its publication there.]

Paul had advised the captain not to set sail for a while.

Verses. 11-13. *Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to depart at once, if by any means they might reach Phoenix and winter there; which is a harbor of Crete, and lies toward the southwest and northwest. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they sailed from there close by Crete. He is very unwise who trusts the winds and equally so is he who sets his confidence upon any earthly thing, for fickle as the wind that blows are all things beneath the moon!*

14, 15. *But not long after, there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. You may have a calm at one moment and a storm at the next! And unless your protection is from above and your confidence in something more stable than can be found in this world, woe betide you! Sometime it is well to yield to the stress of circumstances. If you have struggled hard and can do no more, it is well to leave the result with God.*

16-21. *And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty. When they had taken it on board, they used cables, undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quicksand, struck sail and so were driven. And we, being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship; and when*

neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken awry. But after long abstinence. They had not the time or the heart to eat and perhaps scarcely thought of doing so while they were in such imminent peril of their lives.

21. *Paul stood forth in the midst of them. A prisoner, but the freest man there! Despised and yet the most honored among them. The bravest heart of all that company of soldiers and sailors.*

21-24. *And said, Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you out of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you. Oh, what a privilege it would be if God would say the same to us! If, in the night of trouble, when you are tossed to and fro, mother, father, the Lord should say to you, “Fear not, I have given you your whole family—they shall all be saved.” You would not mind how fiercely the storm might rage if you could be sure of that! And how happy would my heart be if all that sail in this big vessel were given to me! I should not be satisfied even then—I should want a great many more than that—but still, what a blessed thing it would be to have every soul that sails with us saved!*

25-27. *Therefore, Sirs, be of good cheer for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country. They could hear the roar of the breakers.*

28. *And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. They found that the water was very quickly becoming shallow, so they knew that they were getting near the shore.*

29. *Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. Then they “wished for the day.” And how often the Christian throws his great anchor out and wishes for the day—waiting “till the day break and the shadows flee away.” Well, it will not be long! If night lasts through the whole of this life, the morning comes—the everlasting morning!*

30. *And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense they were putting out anchors from the prow. These cowardly sailors meant to get away and leave the prisoners and passengers and soldiers to perish.*

31. *Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved. Yet God had said that they should be, so that it is quite consistent to believe in Divine Predestination and yet to see the utility, no, the necessity, of the use of means! “Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved.”*

32. *Then the soldiers cut the ropes of the skiff and let her fall. So that the sailors could not get away.*

33, 34. *And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that you have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Therefore I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. What a grand speech this is! It is the utterance of faith. Talk of eloquence! This is real eloquence—for Paul to be addressing the people in a storm-tossed ship as calmly as if he were safely on shore.*

35. *And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. He would not eat without giving thanks to God. There are some who do, even as the swine do, but the Christian finds it good at all times, before he eats, to bless the God that gave the food to him! It is a Christian habit which should not be given up. Paul gave thanks when it was most inconvenient to do so—when a great storm was raging and when there were only two or three on board who sympathized with him.*

36. *Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. Courage is contagious, as well as timidity. The holy bravery of one good man may make many others brave.*

37-39. *And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and cast out the wheat into the sea. And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. They wanted to let her go ashore and break up, and so save their lives.*

40-42. *And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground, and the forepart stuck fast, and remained immovable but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape. The soldiers were responsible for them. It would be required at their hands if a prisoner escaped, so, with that cruelty and yet that obedience to law which was characteristic of the Roman legions, “the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape.”*

43, 44. *But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land. So God had said, “and so it came to pass.”*

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

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

AND WHY NOT? NO. 1323

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOV. 12, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And He said unto the disciples, The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you shall not see it”
Luke 17:22.***

WHILE the Lord was yet on earth the days of the Son of Man were but lightly esteemed. The Pharisees spoke of them with a sneer and demanded when the kingdom of God should come. As much as to say, “Is this the coming of your promised kingdom? Are these fishermen and peasants your courtiers? Are these the days for which Prophets and kings waited so long?” “Yes,” Jesus tells them, “these are the very days. The kingdom of God is set up within men’s hearts and is among you even now. And the time will come when you will wish for these days back again. And even those who best appreciate them, shall, before long, confess that they thought too little of them, and sigh in their hearts for their return.”

This suggests the remark that *we are bad judges of our present experiences*. Those days of which we think very little while they were passing over us come, by-and-by, to be remembered with great regret. Have you not found it so in your own lives? Has it not been so that the very experience which caused you anxiety while you were passing through it was, afterwards, appeared to be so excellent in your eyes that you have wished to have it back again? I have said unto my soul sometimes, “How heavy you are! How are you bowed down! How little do you rejoice in the Lord! It is sad that you should fall into this condition.”

The period of heaviness has passed away and then I have chided my heart in another way, saying, “Soul, how careless and unfeeling you are! It were better for you if you were as heavy, now, as you were a little while ago, for then you were in earnest—then you were driven to mighty and prevailing prayer—but now you are steeped in lethargy! You have lost your fervency and are scarcely alive at all!” This stage has gone by and I have again had to look back and feel that when I thought myself insensible I was really very spiritual and sensitive—and that my fears of falling into carnal ease were sure proofs that I was carefully upon the watch. Thus are we delivered from carnal security by being made to see more beauty in past experiences than in those now passing over us.

Holy anxiety, when it broods over us, is often mistaken for unbelief. Full assurance is suspected to be presumption and joy is doubted and stunted for fear it should be pride and self-deception! When our spiritual spring is with us, we are fearful of its March winds and April showers. But when it is gone and we are parched with summer heat, we wish we had the winds and showers back again. So, too, when autumn comes, we mistake ripening for decaying and mournfully wish the roses of summer would return—while all through winter we are sighing for those summer

hours we once enjoyed and those mellow autumn fruits which were so sweet to our taste. Thus, Brothers and Sisters, we continue, if we permit ourselves to do so, to judge each state in which we have been to be better than that in which we are, and to shed useless tears of regret over times and seasons which are gone past recall!

While they are with us, we see their deficiencies. When they are gone, we remember only their excellencies. It were wiser if we took each time and season, and state and experience, while yet it was on the wing, turned it to the best account for God's Glory and rejoiced in it! It will be time, enough, to mourn when it is gone from us. After all, each season has its fruits and it were a pity to wither them with idle regrets. Let us turn to good account the old worldling's motto, and live while we live. Let us live one day at a time, enjoy the present good and leave yesterday with our pardoning God. The days of the Son of Man, of which the Apostles thought comparatively little, they afterwards sighed for. And these present days, of which we are complaining, may yet come to be regarded as among the choicest portions of our lives.

Our second remark is a very commonplace one, you have heard it a thousand times—we seldom value our mercies till we lose them. We best appreciate their excellence when we have to deplore their absence. This has been so often said that I wish it did not continue to be true, for it is an atrocious piece of folly that, after all, we should be obliged to lose our blessings in order to learn gratitude for them! Are we such dolts that we never shall know better than this? Such conduct is only worthy of the idiot or the insane! Can we not put away such childishness and thus remove one occasion for our sorrows? Would it not be well to resolve, in God's strength, to estimate the blessing while we have it, and so to use it that when it is gone we may remember that we turned it to the best account for our soul's profit, for the benefit of others, and for God's Glory?

We cannot call back the sun and lengthen out these shortening days, but we can, at least, so live that every flying hour shall carry with it, tidings of our zealous industry in our Master's cause. Come, dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever is our present condition is good, let us bless God for it now and use at once its peculiar opportunities and advantages, lest haply, in some future day we should rue our foolish neglect and desire too late to see more of such days. This morning, as the Holy Spirit may help me, I intend to use the text, first, by explaining *its immediate interpretation*. Then, secondly, by giving *an interpretation adapted to Believers at the present day*. And then, thirdly, by urging home *another interpretation*, much after the same import, *adapted to unbelievers at this time*.

I. First, let us consider THE IMMEDIATE INTERPRETATION of our text. The first meaning ought always to have the preference in every discourse. We must always mind the mind of the Spirit. Did not our Savior mean two things, first, that the day would come in which His disciples would look back regretfully upon the past, wishing that they could have Him walking among them again? And, secondly, that they would anxiously look forward to the future, wishing that they might, if it were only for one day, behold Him in His Glory, enthroned in power, as He shall be in the latter days, when He shall stand a second time upon the earth?

Looking either backward or forward, the one thing they sighed for was to have their Lord personally and visibly with them. First, then, I say, our Lord meant *that they would look back regretfully upon the days when He was with them*. In a short time His words were true enough, for sorrows came thick and threefold. At first they began to preach with uncommon vigor and the Spirit of God was upon them so that thousands were converted in a single day. Then they saw how expedient it was that their Lord should go and that the Spirit should be given. Persecution, however, soon arose and they were scattered abroad. And many of them, doubtless, mourned those quieter days when their Lord's Presence shielded them.

Still, in all their scattering, the power of the Spirit rested upon them and they increased and multiplied—and the joy of the Lord was their strength. But by-and-by the love of many waxed cold and their first zeal declined. Persecution increased in its intensity and the timid shrank away from them. Evildoers and evil teachers came into the Church. Heresies and schisms began to divide the body of Christ and dark days of lukewarmness and half-heartedness covered them. In such circumstances many and many a time did the true servant of Christ say, “O for an hour with the Lord Jesus! O for one of the days of the Son of Man, when the arm of the Lord was revealed among us! O that we might go to Him and tell Him all our problems and ask his guidance and entreat Him to put forth His power!”

I can imagine that all the first generation, and the next, and the next, after our Lord had ascended, had often upon their lips the sigh, “Would to God we could see one of the days of the Son of Man! Oh, where is He that trod the sea and made the waves of the lake of Galilee lie still at His feet? Oh, where is He that chased the demons and met our foes at every point?” They must often have felt a strong desire to see one of those grand days of miracles when even the devils were subject to them. It has often occurred to us to desire the same. Though it is now 1,800 years ago and more since the Lord went into His Glory and though He has given us the blessed Spirit to abide with us in His place, yet we have fondly wished, but wished in vain, that we could, for one day, at least, see Him healing the sick and raising the dead!

See here, the scoffers tell us that God is dead, or that if there is a God, He has no influence in this world, but has laid aside His powers and handed it over to certain rigid laws with which He has nothing to do. Oh, if we could have the Incarnate God among us but for a day to work His wonders of Grace, to feed the hungry, to open blind eyes, to unstop deaf ears, to make the lame man leap like a rabbit and cause the tongue of the dumb to sing! Have you not desired it? Your desire will not be gratified. “You shall not see it.” It would not be of much service if you *did* see it. It could only happen in *one* place upon any *one* day and you who already believe would be confirmed by what you saw, but not so unbelievers.

We should only have to begin a new battle with infidels, who would as readily deny that which happened today as that which happened almost 2,000 years ago! Only those who saw the miracle would ever believe that it occurred and a large proportion of these would begin to say, “This was probably done by sleight of hand,” or they would ascribe it to magnetism,

or electricity, or some newly-discovered force. Miracles will not convince when men are resolved to disbelieve! Faith is not born of sight, nor can it be nourished by it. It is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit—and we err if we believe that even Christ's bodily Presence and the repetition of His miracles would be of any value! He who believes not Moses and the Prophets, neither would he believe though he were to be dazzled with miracles! The kind of faith which merely outward signs would produce would not be the faith of God's elect.

Then, too, we have been wearied with fierce disputing upon this doctrine and upon that, and one has said, "This is the Master's mind," and another has said, "No." One teacher has denounced his fellow and has been answered by an excommunication from his opponent. In these controversies have we not wished that we could go to Jesus with all questions and say, "Master, give us one Infallible Word, untie or cut these knots with one word of Your lips. Then will Your poor Church be no longer disquieted with debates." Brothers and Sisters, Jesus is not here! Instead of His Presence, we have that of His Spirit, and though you may wish for His bodily Presence, it would not be of much service to you in the matter for which you desire it, for, strange to say, if our Lord were to speak again, men would begin to dispute tomorrow about what He meant today, even as they now quarrel over His Words of 1,800 years ago!

His language in this Book is already so very plain that I do not know, if He were to speak again, that He could speak more clearly than He has done. At any rate, His hearers said of Him, in the days of His sojourn here, "Never man spoke like this Man," and I suppose if He were to speak again, He would not improve upon what He has already spoken, nor would He teach us much more. For us to hear Him speaking, again, would only be to create a new opportunity for a fresh set of controversies—and we should have among us the Old School Christians, and the Christians of the Later Revelation, which would double the confusion and make bad worse! No, my Brethren, we need the Holy Spirit to enlighten us as to what our Lord has already spoken, but it is idle to wish that He would teach among us again.

We ignorantly desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but Divine Providence kindly denies us our wish and tells us plainly, "You shall not see it." "Ah," but you have said, "Only to see our blessed Lord once! Just to cast eyes upon His beloved Person for a moment! To hear but once the tones of His heart-moving voice! Oh, if I might but once unloose His sandals or kiss His feet, how would my spirit feel confidence and joy all her days! How would faith grow if she could but have a little actual and intimate communion with the Well-Beloved! I would gladly give all that I have for one glance of His eyes." I know you have indulged that thought, for I have often had it myself, but dear Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord Jesus were to come upon earth, I am not sure that you could have much of His company, because there are so many of His people—and each one would wish to entertain Him.

He could, as a Man, be but in one place at one time, and you might get to see Him, perhaps, once in the year, but what would you do all the rest of the year, when you might not be able to hear His voice because He

would be in America or in Australia? How much better off would you be? Surely none at all! It is far better for you to continue to say, "Whom not having seen we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, the great battle of the Lord has to be fought out upon the lines of *faith* and, for us to see with our eyes would spoil it all. That sight of the eyes and hearing with the ears which we desire, just to break the monotony of the walk of faith, would, in fact, spoil it all, and amount to a virtual defeat.

Our God is saying to us, "My Children, can you trust Me? Can you obtain the blessing of those who have not seen and yet have believed? Abraham trusted Me, but he heard Me speak with an audible voice. Moses trusted Me, but he saw My wonders in Egypt and in the wilderness. Can you trust Me without voice or miracle?" The Lord has spoken to us by His Son, who is better than all voices or wonders! Can we now believe Him? Is the spiritual life within us strong enough to believe the Lord without any further evidence? Can we honor Him by resting upon His sure Word without seeing signs or wonders? We, upon whom the ends of the earth have come, are set to work out the great problem of defeating the powers of darkness and walking throughout an entire life by simple, undiluted faith—can we accomplish it? By the Spirit's help we can!

I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, say unto the Lord, "Lord, increase our faith, and grant that we may so trust You that from now on we may neither ask for sight nor sound, nor anything else that would prevent our resting on Your bare Word." You have fallen into that mistaken condition and wished for one of the days of the Son of Man, but you shall not have it, for your heavenly Father has reserved some better thing for you, that you, to the end, with simple, unalloyed faith in Him, should endure and conquer through the blood and the power of your unseen Redeemer, who is really with you, though you see Him not!

Our second reading of the text was that these disciples would *look forward, sometimes, with anxious expectation*. "If we cannot go back," they would say, "Oh that He would hurry on and quickly bring us the predicted era of triumph and joy! Oh for one of the days of the Glory of the Son of Man!" They would gladly have a drop of the Glory before the shower of the Millennium. They would hear one blast of His trumpet before it shall sound to raise the dead and see one flash of the eternal morning before whose dawning the shadows shall forever flee. Have you not, sometimes, desired the same? I know when I stood at the foot of the so-called Holy Staircase at Rome and saw the poor deluded creatures crawling up and down the steps, in hopes of obtaining remission of sins by their prayers, I wished the Lord would flash forth His power a moment upon those horrible priests who had degraded their people by such superstition!

One of the days of the Son of Man with the scourge of small cords would effect a great change in the Church of Rome, but one of the days of the Son of Man with the iron rod would be better, for there are plenty of potter's vessels around the Vatican that need dashing to shivers! Our indignation would anticipate the judgment and put a speedy end to Anti-christ. We long to see the millstone dashed into the flood from the angel's

hand, never to rise again! In all this indignant impatience there is much that needs repressing. Our Lord says to us, "My Children, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come."

We know not what spirit we are of, for in reality we are wanting to give up the battle on the present lines and see it fought out in another way! Or, in other words, we consent to a defeat, so far as faith goes, and would console ourselves with victory obtained in another manner. Suppose we wish for one of the days of the Son of Man to break down the idols of the heathen and the images of the Papists—to overthrow all systems of error and to establish straight away, by force of Omnipotence the kingdom of Christ? Now, if our wish could be granted, what would it all amount to? It would only manifest what is clear enough, already, namely, the power of God in the world of *matter*! But it would not prove His greatness in the moral and the *spiritual* worlds.

If you will think of it, awhile, you will see that the Omnipotence of God is not the question. It is clear that any act of power can be performed by the Lord at once. He could, beyond all doubt, in a moment, confound His enemies and utterly destroy their errors by crushing the advocates of them. But that is not the point. The question is—can the force of love and truth by the Gospel of Jesus win men's hearts? Can Christ, in His people, conquer sin, falsehood and hatred by purely *spiritual* means? Can sinful creatures, such as we are, continue faithful to God under temptation and allurements? Will God, by the feeble instrumentality of men and women living and teaching the Gospel of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is a purely *spiritual* power, be able to break down the works of Satan, abolish the false gods, scatter infidelity and Antichrist—and establish the kingdom of Grace, peace and righteousness?

Do you not see, Brothers and Sisters, that to invoke the interference of mere power is to spoil the experiment? The glory of the latter days befits the period of triumph, but not the time of conflict! To snatch from the future a day of its splendors would be to alter the conditions of the great fight and so to accept a defeat! The result is safe enough! The battle is the Lord's and He will win and, therefore, do not let us give way to these misplaced pipedreams and longings. "Ah," says one, "I wish He would come, now, and divide the sheep from the goats." Why? Are not the sinners better among the saints for awhile, that the Gospel may the more easily reach them? Remember, also, that the farmer would not have the tares divided from the wheat till the harvest came.

"Oh, but we wish the Lord would come and put an end to sin." Is it not better that His long-suffering should patiently wait, calling men to repentance and culling out His elect from the sons of men throughout many a generation? The waiting is dreary to *you*, but it is not long nor dreary to His infinite patience. "Oh, but this delay is tedious, and infidels are demanding, 'Where is the promise of His coming?'" Brothers and Sisters, of what consequence is it what unbelievers say? Are Heaven's affairs to be arranged to meet their foolishness? "He that sits in the heavens does laugh; the Lord does have them in derision." Would it not be better for you, also, to scorn their scorning? Who are they that we should be afraid of their reviling?

“Ah,” you say, “but error has so long prevailed and it grows worse and worse.” What if it does? It shall still be overruled for the Lord’s Glory! God is still on the Throne. He is in no hurry. Remember the infinite leisure of the Eternal! What would a million, million ages be to Him? Truly He comes *quickly*, but you must not read that, “quickly,” after *your* rendering, for, “quickly,” with Him may be slowly enough for us. We cannot measure the paces of the Infinite, for the whole history of man is but a pin’s point to His eternity! Our judgments of Jehovah’s going forth are sure to err—He *walks*, we are told, upon the wings of the wind—He is only walking when He moves as swiftly as the tempest! We may as readily err upon the other side and think Him slow, when in reality, He rides upon a cherub and does fly! A thousand years to Him are as one day, and one day with Him is as a thousand years!

No, we will not beseech the Lord, as yet, to divide the sinners from the saints by His Infallible Voice—we will not expect Him, yet, to say, “Depart, you cursed,” and, “Come, you blessed.” We will not beg Him to display at once His great power and to put down all the principalities of evil with His rod of iron. We will wait and fear not! Faith is now the watchword and the order of the day. Sight is for unbelievers, but patient trust is for the saints. This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith. This it is which glorifies God and overthrows the powers of evil! Believe, and so shall you wax valiant in fight and put to flight the armies of the aliens. Believe, and so shall you be established. Ask not to see, for sight is wisely denied you. Heaven will be the brighter and eternity the more glorious because we hope for what we see not, and do with patience wait for it.

II. Secondly, I am going to give, with much solemn earnestness, AN ADAPTED INTERPRETATION SUITABLE TO BELIEVERS AT THIS PRESENT MOMENT. “The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you shall not see it.” That is to say, first, I call our *days of holy fellowship with Jesus* days of the Son of Man. And these may pass away to our deep sorrow. We have known days when our faith in Christ has been strong and real and our hearts have drawn very near to Him. Our ears have not heard Him speak and yet He has spoken into our soul. Our eyes have not seen Him and yet our heart has been ravished with His beauties! Oh, the delights, the heavenly joys which we have, then, experienced!

Perhaps I speak to some who are experiencing all that bliss at this present time and this has lasted with them for months, perhaps for years. Happy Brothers! Happy Sisters! To abide in such a state of mind as this! But cast not aside my word of jealous counsel this morning, for I speak in purest love. Take heed lest the day come when you shall desire to have one of these days, again, and not see it! While the Beloved is with you, hold Him and do not let Him go. “I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor awake my love until He pleases.” Remember, the Lord Jesus is a jealous Savior. He will depart if He finds you love any earthly thing more than Himself. He will hide Himself if you begin to pride yourself upon your gifts and think that, surely, you must be someone or else your Lord would not so sweetly reveal Himself to you.

He will up and away, also, if you grow cold and negligent, if you despise the means of Grace and especially if you decline in private prayer and if His Word shall become a dry bone to you. Ah, when the Lord is gone, what a vacuum remains in the soul! It is the best thing I can say for it—I hope that the dreary vacuum will be mourned over and lamented. I hope that the heart will never rest till Jesus returns, but mourn and lament—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew
In union with my Lord?
Where is my heart’s refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?”***

But, Beloved, the Lord Jesus need not go and you need not depart! He will abide with you even as He did with the disciples at Emmaus when they constrained Him, if you are but eager for His company. He will pitch His tent with you and be no more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home! Only take heed that you grieve Him not by sin and He will remain with you till the day breaks and the shadows flee away! And you shall evermore abide in His love and your soul be filled with His joy.

But take the kindly warning of this morning, for if you walk loosely, carnally, carelessly, proudly, forgetfully, the days shall come when you shall wish for one of the days of the Son of Man and you shall not see it. Turn the text another way, and learn again. Beloved Friends, we have enjoyed days of delightful *fellowship with one another* as well as with our Lord. In the days of the Son of Man the disciples were so united in heart that when He had ascended, “they were all with one accord in one place.” Now, it is a great joy for Believers when we are all knit together in love and when Christian brotherhood is a matter of fact and not of mere talk. Those are blessed days when the family circle is gracious, when husband and wife and children can speak together of the things of God and there is no division or coldness at home.

Those are happy times when your bosom friends are Christ’s bosom friends! When those with whom you talk familiarly hold converse with God. It is no small bliss to go up to the House of God in company with those who keep holy day and to feel that they are of one mind with us in the things of God. Happy is it, also, for us when in the Church there is undivided fellowship in prayer, when everybody seems to be in a praying frame of mind—when there is fellowship in praise and eyes glance joy to eyes with a delight that is common because of the Lord’s blessing—when there is fellowship and agreement, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one Spirit is in all and upon all. Those are, indeed, the days of the Son of Man! Something like this we have known for years—by His Grace these days have been common with us.

Brothers and Sisters, I hope we shall never know the loss of them, but we easily may. The Church may soon allow her fellowship to be broken. And how? Why, some do a world of mischief in this matter by denying that there is any fellowship at all and asserting that love and zeal have died out. Did I hear a Brother say that there is very little Christian love nowadays? You are a very good judge of *yourself*, Brother, for remember you are speaking for yourself! Another says, “Oh, Christian fellowship. I never see any.” Very likely, Brother. Again I say you are speaking for yourself

and you are the gentleman who is likely to put an end to anything like fellowship in others by your acid spirit and bitter talk.

In other ways, also, joyful fellowship may be wounded. Let there be a lack of holy walking, a lack of zeal, or an absence of humility. Let there arise in the Church the desire in each one to be the greatest, and let there be small care about the Glory of God. Let every man become proud and lifted up and there will soon be an end of Christian fellowship! Do you, dear Brother, neglect *private* prayer and become as cold as an iceberg? Wherever you go you will chill other people—and there will be frosts wherever you are found. It is one of the easiest things in the world, when the devil and a knot of prejudiced people agree about it, to spoil the fellowship of the saints! But if we labor that love may be promoted and increased, we shall not have to sigh for the days of the Son of Man without finding them, but they shall be continued to us all our lives.

Again, certain times may be aptly called the days of the Son of Man when there is *abundant life and power present in the Church of God*. We know what this means in this Church. I wish we knew it more fully. And we know what the contrast means by having observed many dead and decaying Churches. What wretched communities some Churches are, where the soul of religion is absent! There is a company of people called a Christian Church and a man called a minister who gives them a pious essay every Sunday morning. And they go in and out and go home—and there is an end of the whole thing! Meanwhile their neighbors are perishing for lack of knowledge, but they care nothing. The heathen are dying without Christ, but they heed it not. So much is given to the cause of God as must be paid out of sheer necessity for the maintenance of outward ordinances, but there is no zeal, no consecration, no fervor of love. May we never come down to this!

O my Beloved, I long to see among us yet more and more abundantly, the spirit of Divine life, energetic life, fervent, self-denying life—life which consumes everything to achieve God's Glory! Beloved, you have this and may have more of it, but you may also lose it. Life and power may soon depart! Pastor and people may, alike, sleep in spiritual sloth! And then, at such times, the power, having gone from the Church, its energy is no longer felt among the unconverted. A living Church grasps with a hundred hands all that comes near to it! It is a mighty soul-saving institution, which, with its far-reaching nets, draws thousands from the sea of death! A living Church attracts even the Sabbath-breaker and awakens the infidel. It startles those whom it does not save. When the Church is in this state, her converts are plenteous! Then her teaching and preaching are with power and the Truth of God pushes down its adversaries.

I have been in my inmost soul bowed before the Lord with awful dread lest these days of the Son of Man which we have enjoyed in great measure so long should be taken away from us. I tremble lest we should go to sleep and do nothing! I am alarmed lest there should be no conversions and nobody caring that there should be any and yet, everything seeming to be prosperous. I know that people may be growing more respectable and appearing to be more pious than ever they were, and yet everything may be going backwards! God forbid that the dry rot of indifference should seize

upon the heart of the Church while she yet appears to be sound and strong! Before that occurs may God be pleased to take me Home!

Many of you wish the same for yourselves, and well you may, for I trust that we have lived too long in the atmosphere of zeal to be able to endure the cold, frigid condition of a careless Church! Yet it would soon be our lot if the Spirit of God were withdrawn. O Holy Spirit, do not depart from us! While His power is with us, Brothers and Sisters, let us be all at it and always at it, with our whole souls serving the Lord Jesus, and so the cloud of blessing shall be long detained. Again, "The days will come, when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man." This may be true with regard to *a powerful ministry*, for in the days of the Son of Man the Gospel was faithfully preached by Christ and His Apostles and Evangelists.

It is not for me to exalt my office, if by that I am supposed to imply any exaltation of myself. But still, I believe that to any Church and people, an earnest, plain, simple, faithful ministry is a blessing of untold value. Yet the Lord may readily take it away from His Church, or He may paralyze its power so that it may no longer be a blessing. This you well know. The Lord may in anger take the candlestick out of its place and then what would happen? Death may silence the earnest tongue and there will be mourning. He who was a spiritual nursing father and a leader in Israel may be removed, and what then? Are we sufficiently thankful for ministers and pastors while we have them? Are not many of the faithful taken away because they have never been valued as they ought to have been? God's servants are precious in His sight and He would not have us despise them.

It may be that in this land of ours, in years to come, Gospel ministers will become scarce enough. If the popery which now abounds in the Church of England is to go on increasing, the day may come when the voice of Christian ministry will be silenced by Law and persecution allowed to rage. For, be not deceived, Rome has not changed her views! Just let her once get power, again, and all the penal laws will be re-enacted and you Protestants who are today flinging away your liberties as dirt cheap, will rue the day in which you allowed the old chains to be fitted upon your wrists. Popery fettered and slew our sires and yet we are making it the national religion! Or if it should never come to be a matter of Law that ministries should be silenced, yet they may become fewer and fewer, till a little child may number them.

We have none too many faithful ministers of Christ even now, but even these may be called away. The Lord may say to this guilty people, "You did not hear them while you had them. Behold, I will call back My Prophets and my messengers. You did not regard them when they cried morning and noon and night unto you, and bade you lay hold on Jesus Christ and be saved and, therefore, behold, I will remove your teachers and take them away from you, and you shall not see their faces anymore." Are you prepared for this? What are Sabbaths to some Christians I know of but days of bitter disappointment? They go to their places of worship as a matter of duty, but they are not fed, nor comforted, nor stirred up! They

gather no Divine encouragement! They find no influences in the ministry to help them on their way.

Are there not hundreds of unedifying preachers and hundreds of congregations where the Sunday service is a weariness and a misery? God grant you may never have to mourn and lament the happy days in which the Gospel was preached among you in simplicity and earnestness! But remember, if they are not valued, they may speedily come to an end. Infirmities of body and frequent sicknesses are not only admonitions to the preacher but to his hearers, also.

III. My last promise was to give A MEANING ADAPTED TO THE UN-CONVERTED. To them let me say these two or three things. To some of you, now present, who have heard the Gospel for years and yet have rejected it, my text will, one day, become solemnly true. "The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you shall not see it." Perhaps you will emigrate. You will wander into the backwoods of America or into the bush of Australia where the sound of Church bells will never again reach you—where ministers and sermons and services will be unfamiliar things.

Then it may be you will say, "Would to God I had used my Sabbaths while I had them, and that I had constantly heard the Gospel when I might." Or if you should remain in England, yet in a certain time, shorter or longer, you will lie upon the bed of sickness. And it will become clear to all around that it is your last bed and your last sickness. And then you will begin to say, "O God, are there no more Sabbaths for me? No more preaching of the Gospel for me? Oh, that I had them over again!" Will you not, then, be willing to give all that you possess to be able, once again, to hear the voice of God's minister proclaiming pardon through the blood of Jesus? You know you will!

At such a time it may be there will be an end to the emotions which you now occasionally feel, for oftentimes God's arrows stick fast in your conscience and you are wounded. There will be no arrows to wound you, then, with tender wounds of hopeful penitence, but remorse will tear you with poisoned fangs! You will be going down to Hell filled with hardness of heart! Emotions, which you aforesaid quenched, will not come back. You resisted the Spirit and He will leave you to yourself. And yet there will be enough, perhaps, of conscience left to make you wish that you were again at some of those earnest meetings—that you could, again, feel as once you felt when you were almost persuaded to be a Christian!

At such times, it may be, you will look back upon your mother's entreaties with great remorse and wish she could be at your bedside to love you again and weep over her dying child. "Ah," you will say, "would God Mother could speak to me about Jesus as she once did, but she is gone." And sisters and friends that once, you said, worried you about religion, you will wish for them, also, but they are gone. They will never worry you anymore with their Psalm singing! You will never again be tired, and wearied, and bored with their entreaties! You may be sure about that, for they are in Heaven, and you are dying without hope! You are going down to the grave, now, and will never again have to complain of dull Sundays and prosy ministers! You will not be annoyed with street preachers and mis-

sionaries. No more warnings, no more entreaties, no more prayers, no more revival services!

You are now passing into another region. I wonder whether you will be of a different mind towards these things from what you are now? Will you, then, remember my warnings and call yourselves fools for rejecting them? I am but giving you an outline of what I wanted to have said, and said with much more earnestness, but I do beseech you think over these things, yourself, in the quiet of your room this afternoon. Within a short time there will be an end to all the opportunities and means of Grace you now enjoy. Within a short time, at the very longest, there will be an end of all exhortations, invitations, warnings, entreaties and, it may be when they come to an end you will wish to have them back again.

Would it not be far better that you should use them *now*? Escape and find life in Christ, for the lamp of life shall never be kindled, again, to give you a second opportunity! While yet Mercy's gate stands open, enter in and find eternal life, for if it is once shut, it will never move upon its hinges again, and you shall be shut out, world without end! God grant His blessing upon these feeble words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Luke 17:20-37; 18:1-14.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—136, 914, 972.**

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REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE

NO. 1491

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 24, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"Remember Lot's wife."
Luke 17:32.*

IT was the purpose of God always to maintain a testimony for truth and righteousness in the midst of this ungodly world. For this end of old He set apart for Himself a chosen family with whom He had fellowship. Abraham was the man whom God chose, that in him and in his household the witness might be preserved. This chosen family was called out and separated from its ancestors and led to dwell apart as wayfaring men in the land of Canaan. They were not to go into the cities and mingle with other races, but to dwell in tents, as a separate tribe, lest their character should become polluted and their testimony should be silenced. It was the Lord's intent that the people should dwell alone and not be numbered among the nations.

Abraham, being called, obeyed and went forth, not knowing where he went. His separated life gave great exercise to his faith and so strengthened it that it became a calm, unstaggering assurance and this enabled him to enjoy a quiet, sublime and happy career, dependent only upon God and altogether above as well as apart from man. With him was his nephew, Lot, who also left Haran at the Divine call and shared with the Patriarch his wanderings in Canaan and in Egypt. He was not a man of so noble a soul, but was greatly influenced by the stronger mind of his Uncle Abraham. He was sincere, no doubt, and is justly called righteous Lot, but he was more fit to be a *follower* than a leader. He also sojourned in tents and led the separated life until it became necessary for him to become an independent chieftain because the flocks and herds of the two families had so greatly multiplied that they could not well be kept together.

Then came out the weak side of Lot's character. He did not give Abraham the choice in selecting a sheep walk, but like all weak natures, he selfishly consulted his own advantage and determined to go in the direction of the cities of the plain of Jordan where well-watered pastures abounded. This led to his dwelling near the cities of the plain, where crime had reached its utmost point of horrible degradation. We read that "he pitched his tent toward Sodom." He found it convenient to be near a settled people and to enter into friendly relations with them, though he must have known what the men of Sodom were, for the cry of them had gone forth far and wide. Thus he began to leave the separated path.

After a while he went further, for one step leads to another. He was a lover of ease and, therefore, he gave up the tent life, with its many inconveniences, and went to live with the townsmen of Sodom—a thing to be wondered at as well as deplored. He did not cease to be a good man, but he did cease to be a faithful witness for his God. Abraham seems to have given him up altogether from that day, for we find that noble Patriarch

enquiring of the Lord concerning his *heir*, saying, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" And the Lord said, "This shall not be your heir." Now, this enquiry would have been needless had Lot been still reckoned to belong to the chosen seed, for naturally Lot was the heir of Abraham—but he forfeited that position and gave up his portion in the inheritance of the elect house by quitting the separated life.

Lot, although he dwelt in Sodom, was not happy there. Neither did he become so corrupt as to take pleasure in the wickedness of the people. Peter says that God delivered just Lot vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. He tried to bear his protest in the place, but signally failed, as all must do who imitate him. His witness for purity would have been far more powerful if he had kept apart from them, for this is the protest which God demands of us when He says, "Come you out from among them, be you separate." In the midst of the world, which lies in the Wicked One, Lot lived on—not without greatly degenerating in spirit—until the kings came and carried him away captive. Then by the intervention of Abraham he was delivered from the captivity which threatened him and brought back again.

This was a solemn warning and you would have thought that Lot would have said, "I will go back to Abraham's way of living. I will again become a sojourner with God. Sodom's walls without God are far less safe than a frail tent when God is a wall of fire around it." His vexation with the conversation of the lewd townsmen ought to have made him long for the sweet air of the wild country, but it was not so. He again settles down in Sodom and forgets the holy congregation which clustered around the tent of Abraham. Being, still, a man of God, he could not be allowed to die in such society—it was not to be endured that "just Lot" should lay his bones in the graveyard of filthy Sodom.

If God would save a man, He must fetch him out from the world—no man can remain part and parcel of an ungodly world and yet be God's elect one, for this is the Lord's own words to the enemy at the gates of Eden—"I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed." Did He not also say to Pharaoh, "I will put a division between My people and your people?" The Lord will sooner burn all Sodom down than Lot shall continue to be associated with its crimes and dragged down by its evil spirit. And so it came to pass that Lot was forced out—he was placed in such a strait that he must either run for his life or perish in the general burning.

Happy had it been for him if he had lived all the while in the holy seclusion of Abraham. He would not, then, have lost the inheritance for his seed, nor have passed away under a dark, defiling cloud, nor have missed his place among the heroes of faith of whom Paul writes in the famous chapter of Hebrews—"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Here I must pause, or you will think that I have misread my text and that I am preaching from the words—"Remember *Lot*"—and, indeed, I might profitably do so, for there is much of warning in the history of Lot himself. If Christian men are so unwise as to conform themselves to the

world, even if they keep up the Christian character in a measure, they will gain nothing by worldly association but being vexed with the conversation of the ungodly—and they will be great losers in their own souls—their character will be tarnished, their whole tone of feeling will be lowered and they themselves will be wretchedly weak and unhappy. Conformity to the world is sure to end badly sooner or later—to the man himself it is injurious and to his family ruinous.

But the text says, “Remember Lot’s *wife*” and, therefore, I must let the husband go and call your attention to her, who, in this case, is “his worse half.” When the time for separation arrived, Lot’s wife could not tear herself away from the world. She had always been in it and had loved it and delighted in it. Though associated with a gracious man, when the time came for decision, she betrayed her true character! Flight without so much as looking back was demanded of her, but this was too much—she did look back and thus proved that she had sufficient presumption in her heart to defy God’s command and risk her all—to give a lingering love-glance at the condemned and guilty world. By that glance she perished.

That is the subject of our discourse. The love of the world is death. Those who cling to sin must perish, whoever they may be. Do not omit to notice the connection of the text, for there our Lord bids us hold the world with a loose hand and always be ready to leave it all. When we are called to it, we are to be ready to go forth without a particle in our hands. “In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him, likewise not return back.” They were not to hold life, itself, dear, but to be ready to lay it down for His sake, for He said, “Whoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.”

To be divided from the world—its possessions, its maxims, its motives—is the mark of a disciple of Christ and, in order to keep up the feeling of separateness among His followers, our Lord bade them, “Remember Lot’s wife.” She is to be a caution to us all, for God will deal with us as with her if we sin as she did. “The thing which has been is the thing which shall be.” If our hearts are glued to the world, we shall perish with the world! If our desires and delights look to the world and if we find our comfort in it, we shall have to see our all consumed and shall be *ourselves* consumed with it in the day of the Lord’s anger. Separation is the only way of escape—we must flee from the world or perish with it!

“Depart you, depart you, go you out from there, touch no unclean thing; go you out of the midst of her; be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.”

I. “Remember Lot’s wife.” And our first point shall be—REMEMBER THAT SHE WAS LOT’S WIFE. She was the wife of a man who, with all his faults, was a righteous man. She was united to him in the closest possible bonds and yet she perished! She had dwelt in tents with holy Abraham and seemed to be a sharer in all the privileges of the separated people—and yet she perished! She was dear to one who had been dear to the father of the faithful and yet, for all that, she perished in her sin!

This note of warning we would strike very loudly, for, commonplace as the truth is, it needs often to be repeated that ties of blood are no guarantees of Divine Grace. You may be the wife of the saintliest man of God and yet be a daughter of Belial. Or you may be the husband of one of the

King's daughters and yet be, yourself, a castaway! You may be the child of a prophet and yet the curse of the prophet's God may light upon you! Or you may be the father of a most gracious family and yet still be an alien to the commonwealth of Israel. No *earthly* relationship can possibly help us if we are personally destitute of the spiritual life.

Our first birth does not avail us in the kingdom of God, for that which is born of the flesh is, at its very best, flesh, and is prone to sin and will certainly perish. We must be born again, for only the new birth, which is of the Spirit and from above, will bring us into Covenant bonds. O you children of godly parents, I beseech you look to yourselves that you be not driven down to Hell from your mother's side! O you relatives of those who are the favorites of Heaven, I beseech you look to yourselves that you die not within sight of Heaven in spite of all your advantages! In this matter, remember Lot's wife.

Being Lot's wife, remember that she had, since her marriage, shared with Lot in his journeys and adventures and trials. We cannot tell exactly when she became Lot's wife, but we are inclined to the belief that it was after he had left Haran, for when Abraham left Haran we read that he took "Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son," but we do not read of Lot's *wife*. The name of Abraham's wife is given, but of Lot's wife there is no mentioning whatever. Again, we read, "Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south." "And Lot, also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents." But nothing is said about his having a wife.

She must have been a person of very small consideration, for even when it is certain that Lot was married, when he was taken captive and afterwards rescued by Abraham, all we find is this—"And Abraham brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people." We suppose that Lot's wife is included under the word, "the women." Now the Holy Spirit never puts a slight upon good women—in connection with their husbands they are generally mentioned with honor—and in this book of Genesis it is specially so.

Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel have each an honorable memorial and as no mention is made of Lot's wife we may infer that she was not worthy to be mentioned. She could hardly have been an inhabitant of Sodom, as the Jewish traditions asserts, unless she was a widow, as they say, and the daughters mentioned were hers by a previous marriage. For at the destruction of Sodom, Lot had marriageable daughters and it would not seem that Lot had then been separated from Abraham for many years. True, the women of Sodom may have been given in marriage at an earlier age than was usual with the Abrahamic stock and, if so, Lot's wife may have been a native of Sodom, for it is possible that he dwelt there for 20 years.

More probably, however, either in Canaan or in Egypt, Lot married a Canaanite or an Egyptian woman—a person utterly unworthy to be taken into the holy household and, therefore, the marriage is not recorded. It was the custom of that elect and separated family, as you know, to send back to Padanaram to fetch from there some daughter of the same house, that the pure stock might be preserved and that there might be no connection with the heathen. It was Abraham's desire for Isaac and he

charged his steward to carry it out, saying, "And I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of Heaven, and the God of the whole earth, that you shall not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but you shall go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac."

This also was Isaac's desire for Jacob, for we read, "And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, You shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take you a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother." It seems to me that Lot had married a heathen woman and so her name is omitted. Whether it is so or not, it is certain that she had shared with Lot in the capture of the city of Sodom—she had seen the ruthless sword slay the inhabitants and she, herself, with her husband, had been among the captives—and she had been delivered by the good sword of Abraham. So you see that she had been a partaker of her husband's trials and deliverance and yet she was lost.

It will be a sad, sad thing if there should come an eternal severance between those united by marriage bonds—that we should live together, work together, suffer together and should be delivered, by the Providence of God, many a time together—and should see our children grow up together and yet should be torn asunder at the last, never to meet again! This is a prospect which we dare not think upon. Tremble, you whose love is not in Christ, for your union will have an end! What says the Savior? "I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." It matters not how close the association, the unbeliever must be divided from the living child of God! If you cling to the world and cast your eyes back upon it, you must perish in your sin, notwithstanding that you have eaten and drunk with the people of God and have been as near to them in relationship as wife to husband, or child to parent. This makes the remembrance of Lot's wife a very solemn thing to those who are allied by ties of kindred to the people of God.

Lot's wife had also *shared her husband's privileges*. Her husband had not forgotten his association with Abraham and he could not have failed to communicate this knowledge to her. The one God was worshipped and Lot's wife was present. She knew of the gracious Covenant which God had made with His separated people and she knew that her husband was one of the families. She had apparently cast in her lot with the chosen people of God though her heart was not in it but she, nevertheless, joined their sacred songs and their holy prayers. She saw the daily provision which God made for His people and the joy which Abraham had in abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. Even in Sodom her husband kept up such separateness as he could in such an evil place and she saw the goodness of the man with all his mistakes.

When Sodom must be destroyed, the angels came to their house and she, herself, helped to entertain them. She received the merciful warning to escape as well as her husband and she was urged as much as he to flee from the wrath so near at hand. Thus is it with many of you who are enjoying all sorts of Christian privileges and are yet unsaved! You come to

the Lord's Table and eat and drink of the memorials of His body and blood—and yet you remain unsaved. You seem to be part and parcel of the Church of God and if there is any privilege or advantage, a share of it is set before you. If there is any fellowship you are not excluded—if there is any joy it is not denied you. You will have to say at last, “Lord, Lord, we have eaten and drunk in Your Presence and You have taught in our streets,” and, oh, how wretched it will be to hear Him say, “I never knew you! Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity.” It must be so if your souls are clinging to sin and you are casting a yearning eye to the ungodly world! It must be so and if you need proof, “remember Lot's wife.”

Lot's wife had *shared in her husband's errors*. It was a great mistake on his part to abandon the outwardly separated life, but she had stayed with him in it and, perhaps, was the cause of his so doing. I suppose he thought he could live above the world spiritually and yet mingle with its votaries, even as some now do who enter into worldly company and yet hope to walk with God in spirit. He said to himself, “It is very uncomfortable to wander alone in this deserted wilderness and to dwell in these temporary tents. I wish I had a more abiding dwelling and could mingle on peaceable terms with those around me.” He ceased to look for the city which has foundations whose Builder and Maker is God and he wanted to take up citizenship in the world. I should not wonder if Lot's wife influenced him in that way. He was a man of weak mind and while his uncle had him under his wing, he was right enough, except that even then he had what a writer calls, “a lean-to religion”—he did not stand alone, but leaned upon Abraham.

When he was married it is probable that his wife assumed the ruling place and guided the way of his life. She began to think that it was a pity that the family should live in such separation, so unfashionable, so rigid, so peculiar and all that. She tossed her head and cried, “Really, people must mix with society and not keep up old-fashioned, strait-laced ways! You might as well be dead as be shut out from life.” When her husband had an opportunity of getting out of that rigid style by leaving his uncle, she said she would like to go down Sodom way because it would be nice for the girls and give them a taste of something liberal and refined. The old style was all very well for such an antiquated couple as Abraham and Sarah, but Lot and herself belonged to a younger generation and were bound to get into a little society and find eligible matches for their young people. It would be well for them to dress better than they could learn to do if they always kept roaming about like gypsies.

You see, Abraham's people did not study the fashions at all and were a very vulgar sort of shepherds who had no ideas of refinement and politeness. And it was pity that people in Lot's station in life should always associate with mere sheep-shearers, drovers and the like. If they got to Sodom there would be nice parties, dances and all sorts of things! Of course the people were a little loose and rather fast—they went to plays where modesty was shocked and gathered in admiration around performers whose lives were openly wanton—but then you see one must be fashionable and wink at a good deal! We cannot expect all people to be saints and, no doubt, they have their good points. By some such talk Mistress Lot gained her husband over to her way of thinking.

They did not mean to actually go into the worst society of Sodom, but they intended to make a careful selection and go only a little way. Surely they could be trusted to know where to stop. So they pitched the tent towards Sodom where it was within an easy walk of the town—a little separated, but not far. If anything did happen that was very bad they could move away and no harm would be done—but until they saw the harm of it they liked the neighborhood and the ways of the townsfolk. It was no doubt wise, they said, to go and see Sodom and know the people, for it would be ridiculous to condemn what they had not seen! They would therefore try it and give the young people some idea of what the world was like.

Very sweet the city life became. The free and easy ways of Sodom came to be enjoyable. Not the gross part of Sodom life—Lot could not bear that—and it made Mistress a bit uncomfortable at times, but the liberal spirit, the fine free bearing of the people, their gaiety and artistic culture were quite to her mind and so she was right glad when her husband put away the old tent, had a sale of the sheep and lived as a retired grazier in the west end of the city. I think I am not mistaken in the conjecture that Mistress Lot's influence brought her husband there and when there, introduced him to the best families and found suitors for the daughters who had been fully imbued with the liberal ideas of the place. At any rate, whatever were Lot's faults, she was a partaker in them. She was with him in the choosing the plain of Jordan; with him in the pitching of the tent towards Sodom; with him in actually settling in Sodom and I could almost hope with him in bearing as good a protest as they could against the vilest of Sodom's sins—but certainly with him in giving up the strictness and severity of the separated life.

Yet at last she was separated from him forever! For his errors, notwithstanding their grievous mischief to him, did not utterly destroy the life of God in his soul. As for her, she never *had* any spiritual life and now, when she is called to leave Sodom, she shows her love to it by a distinct disobedience to God and an open turning to the doomed city. And so she perishes. Oh, you that are Christian people because your friends are Christian people! You that associate with us because it happens to be the way in which you were brought up! The time will come when the secret attachment of your hearts towards a giddy world will show itself most clearly and in a fatal moment you will give a look of love towards sin which will prove you do not belong to the people of God! Then will it happen to you according to the word of the Apostle, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

II. And now, secondly, "Remember Lot's wife" and remember that SHE WENT SOME WAY TOWARDS BEING SAVED. Mistress Lot so far believed the message that came to her about the destruction of the city that she was awakened. She rose early as her husband did and she prepared to leave the house. She ran down the streets; she passed the city gate; she reached the open plain along with her husband. She was willing, for a while, to run with him, following his example. She did so for a considerable distance till she began to think over what she was doing and to consider what she was leaving. And then she slackened her pace and lingered behind.

Remember, then, that she *did* go part of the way towards safety and yet she perished! And so many may go part of the way towards Christ and they may go a little way out of the world—but if their hearts still linger with the ungodly, they will perish, notwithstanding all. There is one very solemn thought and that is that the angels' hand had pressed her wrist. When they said, "Up, get you gone" and Lot lingered—the men laid hold upon his hand and the hand of his wife. So it is expressly said. An angel's hand had pressed her wrist to draw her forth to safety and she had gone a little way under that sacred constraint—and yet she perished.

Some of you may have had spiritual touches upon the conscience and heart which you will never be able to quite forget and the responsibility of this will cling to you, though you have drawn back from godliness and your heart cries after vanity and lusts after its idols. This woman was actually out of Sodom and she was almost in Zoar, the refuge city, and yet she perished! How near she was to the little city of escape, I cannot tell, but she was certainly almost there and yet she perished. *Almost saved, but not quite.* Let me repeat those words, for they describe some of you who are present at this hour—and they may be your epitaph if you do not mind what you are about—"ALMOST SAVED, BUT NOT QUITE." Escaped from the vilest form of sin, but not truly in Christ! The mind not weaned from its idols, iniquity not given up in the soul, though perhaps given up in outward deed!

O you who are ALMOST SAVED, BUT NOT QUITE, "Remember Lot's wife."

III. This brings me to a third point of remembrance, which is this—remember that though she went some way towards escape, SHE DID ACTUALLY PERISH THROUGH SIN. The first sin that she committed was that *she lingered behind.* Moses tells us, "Lot's wife looked back from behind him." That is, the good old man was making such haste as he could, but she, though she had run side by side with him, lingered in the rear—I should not wonder but what the same angel had one of them by the right hand and the other by the left while the other angel brought the two daughters on behind. But Lot's wife slackened her pace and fell behind.

That is the first sin with most people who profess religion, but are not true to God—they begin to backslide by creeping along very slowly—they are not half so earnest as they used to be, so they lag behind. One service a day is sufficient. A very little reading of the Bible contents them. They do not quite give up the appearance of *prayer*, but still there is very little of it. They do not see the good of being in such a hurry over religion. They do not see why they should exercise any sacred violence to take the kingdom by force. They linger. It is because, after all, the world is master of their hearts! They would, if they dared, be as worldly and as ungodly as others—and they finally prove their true character by slackening their pace.

Having slackened her pace, the next thing she did was *she disbelieved* what had been told her. You must remember that their flight out of Sodom was to be an act of *faith*, for the angel said, "Look not behind you." That Sodom was to be destroyed did not appear at all likely, for it was a bright morning. They were to fly with as much haste as if they could see the fire-shower falling, but they were not to see it. Their flight was to be urged forward by faith in the angels' words. Faith may be as well exhibited by *not* looking as by looking. Faith is a look at Christ, but faith is a *not*

looking at the things which are behind. Lot's wife saw the sun rising, so we are told—"the sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar."

She saw the bright dawning and everything lit up with it and it came across her mind—"It cannot be true! The city is not being destroyed. What a lovely morning! Why are we thus running away from house, goods, friends and everything else on such a bright, clear morning as this?" She did not truly believe—there was no real faith in her heart—and therefore she disobeyed the law of her safety and turned her face towards Sodom. Yet, mark you, she had received the angels in her house; she had seen them blind the wicked mob around her door; she had heard their majestic words of persuasion and felt their kind compulsion—she had plenty of evidence that God was speaking—but she doubted the truth of His Word and here was the very essence of her sin!

What if some of you that have mingled with the godly—and have been numbered with them and have participated in their worship, should—nevertheless come short because of unbelief? It is by no means improbable, for out of all that came out of Egypt there were only TWO that entered into Canaan! They could not enter in because of unbelief—their carcasses fell in the wilderness. May it never come to pass with any of us that we shall leave our carcasses outside of the eternal hope because we, too, do not believe in Him who is invisible, but must walk according to the sight of the eyes! Having gotten so far as lingering and doubting, her next movement was a direct act of rebellion—she turned her head—she was told not to look, but *she dared to look*.

Rebellion is as much seen in the breach of what appears to be a little command as in the violation of a great precept. Our fall at the first came from the plucking of forbidden fruit—and this woman's death came by a look! Take care of little things. There is *life* in a look and here is a case in which there was *death* in a look. She looked, but *why* did she look? I suppose it was this—her heart was that way. She loved Sodom and she abhorred the separated life. She had led her husband and her children away from the peculiar people of God, for she felt that she would rather mix with the reprobate multitude than with the chosen few! She was not of the spirit that could walk with God, alone—she clung to society and to sin. Though she was running for her life, she thought of her household stuff and of the ease of Sodom—and she looked back with lingering eyes because she wanted to be there.

And it came to this, that as her eyes went back, her whole body would have gone back if time had been allowed. She already lingered. She would have soon *turned*. That one glance betrayed which way her soul was going! A little thing in professors may show what they are and we may readily betray the inward turning of the soul by an act as simple as that of turning the neck to look towards Sodom. This was her sin. Now, dear Friends, let us remember Lot's wife, each one of us, by learning a personal lesson. Here is a hard thing—we must go outside the camp or utterly fail. Can you maintain the life of God and walk with Christ and be separate from the world?

Many of you cannot. You may pretend to do so, but you cannot, it is beyond you. I fear that the number of true Christians in the world is very much less than we suppose. We are encumbered with a host of people

who call themselves Christians, but are as much of the world as other people—whose inheritance is in the world, whose pleasure is in the world, whose speech is worldly—and who are altogether of the world. And because they are of the world the world loves its own and, therefore, there is little or no strife between them and the world! Alas, I fear the Church is not true to itself and, therefore, the world begins to love it. It says, “You have come to live with us and do as we do. You do not bear your awkward protests as you used to do and so we need not to burn you as we did your fathers. You are hail fellows well with us and, therefore, we will treat you kindly.”

Only let us live as Christ lived and we shall find the dogs of this world howling at us as they used to do at our forefathers! My Hearers, can you live the separated life? If you can, God help you and bless you in it! But if you cannot, remember though you do not so go into Sodom as to indulge in its most gross sins, yet the very *looking* at it, the *wishing* for it, the *desiring* to be there shows where your heart is and your heart's tendency is your true character. You will be judged according to the going of your *heart*. If your heart goes toward the mountain to escape and if you have desired to be with Christ to be His separated follower, you shall be saved.

But if your heart still goes after evil and sin, his servants you are whom you obey and from your evil master you shall get your black reward!

IV. Here comes our remembrance of Lot's wife in the fourth and most solemn place and that is—remember that HER DOOM WAS TERRIBLE. “Remember Lot's wife.” Remember that she perished with the same doom as that which happened to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah *but that doom befell her at the gates of Zoar*. Oh, if I must be damned, let it be with the mass of the ungodly having always been one of them! To get up to the very gates of Heaven and to perish *there* will be a most awful thing! To have lived with God's people. To have been numbered with them and to be joined to them by ties of blood—and then, after all, to perish—will be horrible, indeed! To have heard the Gospel. To have felt the Gospel, too, in a measure, and even to have amended one's life because of it. To have escaped from the filthiest corruption of the world and to have become moral, amiable, excellent and yet to still not have been weaned from the world, not to have been divorced from sin and so to perish—the thought is intolerable!

That same brine and brimstone which fell upon the inhabitants of the four cities overtook Lot's wife! She was on the margin of the shower and as it fell she was salted with tar—she was turned into a pillar of salt where she stood! Dreadful doom! On the verge of mercy to be slain by justice! On the brink of salvation to be the victim of eternal wrath! This came upon her all of a sudden, too. What a picture! She stops as she is fleeing—she turns her head! She scarcely looks! The gaze is not long enough to single out her own house—and, lo, she is turned into a pillar! The fire-salt has fallen on her! She will never move again! She had not time to start or turn and, with her neck just as it was, she stands as a statue of salt—a warning to all who should pass that way.

I do not suppose Lot's wife to be standing there *now*, as some travelers have imagined—the pillar was not even there in Christ's day, for if it had been, as Bengel very properly remarks, our Lord would have said, “See Lot's wife.” But as she was not there, He said, “*Remember*” her. Her doom

came all of a sudden, without a further warning or a moment's time to consider. What if sudden death should strike some of you down at this moment? You professors who still love the world—what if you now fell dead? You professed Christians who sneak in among the ungodly to have a suck at their pleasures, suppose you should be struck down in the theater one of these days! You that pretend to be Christians and frequent the dance saloons—suppose you should fall dead there! It would not be a new thing under the sun, for God deals severely with those who profess to come under His Covenant—He has jealous laws for those who join His Church and yet have not the Grace of God in their hearts.

These men die not the death of common men, but are often overtaken by strange punishments that the world may see that the Lord has set a wall of fire around His Church which none may break through on peril of their lives. Ananias and Sapphira entered the Church, but they could not live there—a glance of Peter's eyes and they fell dead before him! Such judgments still purge the ranks of the professing Church as all that observe must know, for the Lord will be sanctified of them that come near to Him. "For this cause," says the Apostle, "some are sickly among you, and many sleep," because the discipline of God goes on in the midst of His visible Church. He lets the world alone till the fire-shower comes, but to those that profess to be His people, He is always a jealous God. I speak strong things—strong things are needed in these compromising days. May the Holy Spirit impress these weighty facts on all your hearts.

The worst point, perhaps, about the perishing of Lot's wife lay in that *she perished in the very act of sin* and had no space for repentance given her. In the instant she turned her head she was a pillar of salt. It is a dreadful thing to die in the very *act* of sin—to be caught away by the justice of God while the transgression is being perpetrated! Yet such a thing may happen and let those who profess to be Christians and yet parley with sin, "remember Lot's wife" and how swift God is to deal out His judgment against professors who betray His holy name and cause. I cannot help going back to the text I started with, which was one of my own making, and that is, "Remember Lot." Though Lot himself was a righteous man and escaped from the doom of the wicked city, yet I cannot help tracing the death of Lot's wife, in some degree, to her husband.

When a man walks with God and imitates God, he gets to beget character—that is Abraham. When a man walks with a holy man and imitates *him* he may rise to be a good character but he will be a weak one—that is Lot. But when one walks with Lot, the weak character, and only copies *him*, the result will be a failure—that is Lot's wife. It is like the boy's copy book. If he will copy the top line, the boy makes an Abraham line. But if the next time he does not look at the top line, but imitates the second—that makes a Lot line—very far short of the first. If he next copies No. 3, the Lot line, the result will be a poor affair—that is Lot's wife. Beloved, we are to live having the perfect Father for our example, looking and following in His steps! And if we do so by the power of the Spirit, we shall reach a grand, noble, Abrahamic character.

But suppose you get to imitate some good man and *he* is your standard? You will make a second-rate Christian! It will be a weak affair, like Lot. And then if your wife and children get to copying you, oh, the mischief that must come of it! Lot ought to have been firmer, more steadfast,

more thorough. He had no business going to Sodom. If he had said to his wife, "No, my Wife, we belong to a chosen people. God called us out of Haran and away from the gods of our fathers that we might live a separated life. And here I am going to stay and you must stay with me," she would have had to obey, or else if she had not done so, Lot was not to do evil to please his wife. She could not have learned the ways of Sodom—she might have given her heart, still, to the world, but she could not have been so clearly mixed up with it and her daughters could not have been so evil as they were if he had resolved to live apart from the town's people.

I Believe that fathers and husbands ought to take the lead in the management of their families and parents are bound to arrange their households after a godly fashion. Do not say, "Oh, we cannot manage our families." You must do it! Eli failed in this and, instead of being firm, he timidly said, "Do not do this, my sons." Poor dear old Eli—he did not like to get into trouble with his sons by finding fault with them. But what did his softness cost him? The Lord smote his family because he had not ordered his household aright. If Christian men leave their families to go anyway they choose, they will soon find the Lord has a quarrel with them. And if the children and if the wife should, after all, perish, it will be a horrible thought for the head of the household, even if he is a saved man, that it was his ill example which caused their ruin.

It was partly Lot's own doing that his wife became what she was. If Lot had never gone to Sodom, his wife would not have perished near it. Look to yourselves lest you lead others astray! Keep near to God and you will be blessed and become a blessing to others. Abraham did not have this trouble with Sarah, nor Isaac with Rebekah, for they walked with God and their influence was felt in their tents. Live near to God and let your own life be according to the command which God gave the Patriarch—"Walk with Me and be you perfect," and you shall see that He will bless your household and your children after you.

But if you do not thus walk before the Lord, you will have to "remember Lot's wife." May God add His blessing on these words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW

NO. 856

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 21, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint, saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.”
Luke 18:1-8.

REMEMBER that our Lord did not only inculcate prayer with great earnestness, but He was Himself a brilliant example of it. It always gives force to a teacher's words when his hearers know that he carries out his own instructions. Jesus was a mighty Prophet both in deed and in word, and we read of Him, “Jesus began both to do and to teach.” In the exercise of prayer, “cold mountains and the midnight air” witnessed that He was as great a Doer as a Teacher. When He exhorted His disciples to continue in prayer and to “pray without ceasing,” He only bade them follow in His steps. If any one of all the members of the mystical body might have been supposed to need *no* prayer, it would certainly have been our Covenant Head, but if our Head abounded in supplication, much more ought we, the inferior members!

He was never defiled with the sins which have debased and weakened us spiritually. He had no inbred lusts to struggle with. But if the perfectly pure drew near so often unto God, how much more incessant in supplication ought we to be! So mighty, so great and yet so *prayerful*! O you weak ones of the flock, how forcibly does the lesson come home to you! Imagine, therefore, the discourse of this morning is not preached to you by *me*, but comes fresh from the lips of One who was the great master of secret prayer, the highest paragon and pattern of private supplication—and let every word have the force about it as coming from such a One.

We turn at once to our text and in it we shall notice, first, *the end and design of the parable*. Secondly, we shall have some words to say upon *the two actors in it*, whose characters are intentionally so described as to give force to the reasoning. And then, thirdly, we shall dwell upon *the power which in the parable is represented as triumphant*.

I. First, then, consider our LORD'S DESIGN IN THIS PARABLE—"Men ought always to pray and not to faint." But can men pray *always*? There was a sect in the earlier days of Christianity who were foolish enough to read the passage *literally* and to attempt praying without ceasing by continual repetition of prayers. They, of course, separated themselves from all worldly concerns—and in order to fulfill one duty of life neglected every other! Such madmen might well expect to reap the due reward of their follies.

Happily there is no need in this age for us to duplicate such an error! There is far more necessity to cry out against those who, under the pretense of praying always, have no settled time for prayer at all and so run to the *opposite* extreme. Our Lord meant, by saying men ought always to pray, that *they ought to be always in the spirit of prayer*—always ready to pray. Like the old knights, always in warfare—not always on their steeds dashing forward with their lances in position to unhorse an adversary—but always wearing their weapons where they could readily reach them and always ready to encounter wounds or death for the sake of the cause which they championed. Those grim warriors often slept in their armor. So even when we sleep, we are still to be in the spirit of prayer, so that if perhaps we wake in the night we may still be with God.

Our soul, having received the Divine influence which makes it seek its heavenly center, should be evermore naturally rising towards God Himself. Our heart is to be like those beacons and watchtowers which were prepared along the coast of England when the invasion of the Armada was hourly expected, not always blazing, but with the wood always dry and the match always there—the whole pile being ready to blaze up at the appointed moment. Our souls should be in such a condition that ejaculatory prayer should be very frequent with us. No need to pause in business and leave the counter and fall down upon our knees—the spirit should send up its silent, short, swift petitions to the Throne of Grace.

When Nehemiah would ask a favor of the king, you will remember that he found an opportunity to do so through the king's asking him, "Why are you sad?" But before he gave him an answer he says, "I prayed unto the King of Heaven." Instinctively perceiving the occasion, he did not leap forward to embrace it, but he halted just a moment to ask that he might be enabled to embrace it wisely and fulfill his great design in it. So you and I should often feel, "I cannot do this till I have asked a blessing on it." However impulsively I may spring forward to gain an advantage, yet my spirit, under the influence of Divine Grace, should hesitate until it has said, "If Your Spirit goes not with me, carry me not up."

A Christian should carry the weapon of all-prayer like a drawn sword in his hand. We should never sheathe our supplications. Never may our hearts be like an unloaded gun, with everything to be done to it before it can thunder on the foe! But it should be like a primed cannon, loaded and ready, only requiring the fire that it may be discharged. The soul should be not always in the exercise of prayer, but always in the *energy* of prayer.

Not always actually praying, but always *intentionally* praying. Further, when our Lord says men ought always to pray, He may also have meant that *the whole life of the Christian should be a life of devotion to God—*

**“Prayer and praise, with sins forgiven,
Bring down to earth the bliss of Heaven.”**

To praise God for mercies received both with our voices and with our actions, and then to pray to God for the mercies that we need, devoutly acknowledging that they come from Him—these two exercises in one form or other should make up the sum total of human life.

Our life psalm should be composed of alternating verses of praying and of praising until we get into the next world, where the prayer may cease and praise may swallow up the whole of our immortality. “But,” says one, “we have our daily business to attend to.” I know you have, but there is a way of making business a part of praise and prayer. You say, “Give us this day our daily bread,” and that is a prayer as you utter it. You go off to your work and as you toil, if you do so in a devout spirit, you are actively praying the same prayer by your lawful labor. You praise God for the mercies received in your morning hymn. And when you go into the duties of life and there exhibit those Graces which reflect honor upon God’s name, you are continuing your praises in the best manner.

Remember that with Christians to labor is to pray, and that there is much truth in the verse of Coleridge—

“He prays best who loves best.”

To desire my fellow creatures’ good and to seek after it. To desire God’s Glory and so to live as to promote it is the truest of devotion. The devotion of the cloisters is by no means equal to that of the man who is engaged in the battle of life. The devotion of the nunnery and the monastery is at best the heroism of a soldier who shuns the battle—but the devotion of the man in business life who turns all to the Glory of God, is the courage of one who seeks the thickest of the fray and there bears aloft the grand old standard of Jehovah-Nissi! You need not be afraid that there is anything in any lawful calling that need make you desist from vital prayer!

But, oh, if your calling is such that you cannot pray in it—you had better leave it! If it is a sinful calling, an unholy calling, of course, you cannot present *that* to God! But any of the ordinary avocations of life are such that if you cannot sanctify them, it is a lack of sanctity in yourself and the fault lies with you. Men ought *always* to pray. It means that when they are using the lap stone, or the chisel. When the hands are on the plow handles, or on the spade. When they are measuring out the goods. When they are dealing in stocks—whatever they are doing—they are to turn all these things into a part of the sacred pursuit of God’s Glory. Their common garments are to be vestments. Their meals are to be sacraments. Their ordinary actions are to be sacrifices and they themselves a royal priesthood, a peculiar people zealous for good works.

A third meaning which I think our Lord intended to convey to us was this—men ought always to pray—that is, *they should persevere in prayer.*

This is probably His first meaning. When we ask God for a mercy once, we are not to consider that now we are not further to trouble Him with it, but we are to come to Him again and again. If we have asked of Him seven times, we ought to continue until 70 times seven. In temporal mercies there may be a limit and the Holy Spirit may bid us ask no more. Then must we say, “the Lord’s will be done.” If it is anything for our own personal *advantage*, we must let the Spirit of submission rule us, so that after having sought the Lord thrice, we shall be content with the promise, “My Grace is sufficient for you,” and no longer ask that the thorn in the flesh should be removed.

But in *spiritual* mercies and especially in the *united prayers* of a Church, there is no taking a no for an answer! Here, if we would prevail, we must persist! We must continue incessantly and constantly and know no pause to our prayer till we win the mercy to the fullest possible extent. “Men ought always to pray.” Week by week, month by month, year by year—the conversion of that dear child is to be the father’s main plea. The bringing in of that unconverted husband is to lie upon the wife’s heart night and day till she gets it! She is not to take even 10 or 20 *years* of unsuccessful prayer as a reason why she should cease—she is to set God no times nor seasons—but so long as there is life in her and life in the dear object of her solicitude, she is to continue, still, to plead with the mighty God of Jacob.

The pastor is not to seek a blessing on his people *occasionally* and then in receiving a measure of it to desist from further intercession—he is to continue vehemently without pause, without restraining his energies—to cry aloud and spare not till the windows of Heaven are opened and a blessing is given too large for him to house! But, Brethren, how many times we ask of God and have not because we do not wait long enough at the door? We knock a time or two at the gate of Mercy and as no friendly messenger opens the door, we go our ways. Too many prayers are like boys’ runaway knocks—given and then the giver is away before the door can be opened. O for Divine Grace to stand foot to foot with the Angel of God—and never, never, never relax our hold—feeling that the cause we plead is one in which *we must* be successful, for souls depend on it, the Glory of God is connected with it, the state of our fellow men is in jeopardy!

If we have given up in prayer our own lives and the lives of those dearest to us, yet the souls of men we cannot give up! We must urge and plead again and again until we obtain the answer—

**“The humble suppliant cannot fail
To have his needs supplied,
Since He for sinners intercedes
Who once for sinners died.”**

I cannot leave this part of the subject without observing that our Lord would have us learn that *men should be more frequent in prayer*. Not only should they always have the spirit of prayer and make their whole lives a

prayer and persevere in any one object which is dear to their souls, but there should be a *greater frequency* of prayer among all the saints. I gather that from the parable, “lest by her continual coming she weary me.”

Prayerfulness will scarcely be kept up long unless you set apart times and seasons for prayer. There are no times laid down in Scripture except by the example of holy men, for the Lord trusts much to the love of His people and to the spontaneous motions of the inner life. He does not say, “Pray at seven o’clock in the morning every day,” or “pray at night at eight, or nine, or 10, or eleven.” He says, “Pray without ceasing.” Yet every Christian will find it exceedingly useful to have his regular times for retirement, and I doubt whether any eminent piety can be maintained without these seasons being very carefully and scrupulously observed.

We read in the old traditions of James the Apostle, that he prayed so much that his knees grew hard through his long kneeling. And it is recorded by Fox, that Latimer, during the time of his imprisonment, was so much upon his knees that frequently the poor old man could not rise to his meals and had to be lifted up by his servants. When he could no longer preach and was confined within stone walls, his prayers went up to Heaven for his country, and we in these times are receiving the blessing! Daniel prayed with his windows open daily and at regular intervals. “Seven times a day,” says one, “will I praise You.” David declared that at, “evening and morning, and at noon,” would he wait upon God. O that our intervals of prayer were not so distant, one from the other! Pray that God will grant us Grace that on the pilgrimage of life the wells at which we drink are more frequent!

Our Lord means, to sum up the whole, that *Believers should exercise a universality of supplication*—we ought to pray at all times. There are no canonical hours in the Christian’s day or week. We should pray from cockcrowing to midnight, at such times as the Spirit moves us. We should pray in all circumstances—in our poverty and in our wealth, in our health and in our sickness, in the bright days of festival and in the dark nights of lamentation. We should pray at the birth and pray at the funeral. We should pray when our soul is glad within us by reason of abundant mercy and we should pray when our soul draws near unto the gates of death by reason of heaviness. We should pray in all transactions, whether secular or religious. Prayer should sanctify everything.

The Word of God and prayer should come in over and above the common things of daily life. Pray over a bargain. Pray over going into the shop and coming out again. Remember in the days of Joshua how the Gibeonites deceived Israel because Israel enquired not of the Lord. Be you not deceived by a specious temptation, as you may well be if you do not daily come to the Lord and say, “Guide me! Make straight a plain path for my feet and lead me in the way everlasting.” You shall never err by praying too much! You shall never make a mistake by asking God’s guidance too often! But you shall find this to be the gracious illumination of your

eyes, if in the turning of the road where two paths meet which seem to be equally right, you shall stay a moment and cry unto God, "Guide me, O great Jehovah." "Men ought always to pray." I have enlarged upon it from this pulpit—go and expound it in your daily lives.

II. In enforcing this precept, our Lord gives us a parable in which there are TWO ACTORS, the characteristics of the two actors being such as to add strength to His precept. In the first verse of the parable there is a *judge*. Now, here is the great advantage to us in prayer. Brethren, if this poor woman prevailed with a judge whose office is stern, unbending, untender, how much more ought you and I to be instant in prayer and hopeful of success when we have to supplicate a Father!

Far other is a *father* than a *judge*. The judge must necessarily be impartial, stern—but the father is necessarily partial to his child, compassionate and tender to his own offspring. Does she prevail over a judge, and shall not we prevail with our Father who is in Heaven? And does she continue in her desperate need to weary him until she wins what she desires—and shall not we continue in the agony of our desires until we get from our heavenly Father whatever His Word has promised? In addition to being a judge, he was *devoid of all good character*. In both branches he failed. He "feared not God." Conscience was seared in him—he had no thoughts of the great Judgment Seat before which judges must appear.

Though possibly he had taken an oath before God to judge impartially, yet he forgot his oath and trod justice under his feet. "Neither did he regard man." The approbation of his fellow creatures, which is very often a power, even with naturally bad men either to restrain them from overt evil, or else to constrain them to righteousness—this principle had no effect upon him. Now, if the widow prevailed over such a wretch as this! If the iron of her importunity broke the iron and steel of this man's stubbornness, how much more may we expect to be successful with Him who is righteous and just and good—the Friend of the needy, the Father of the fatherless, and the Avenger of all such as are oppressed?!

O let the Character of God, as it rises before you in all its majesty of truthfulness and faithfulness, blended with loving kindness and tenderness and mercy, excite in you an indefatigable ardor of supplication, making you resolve with this poor woman that you will never cease to supplicate until you win your case! The judge was a man so unutterably bad that he *even confessed his badness to himself*, with great contentment, too. Without the slightest tinge of remorse, he said within himself, "Though I fear not God, neither regard man." There are few sinners who will go to this length. They may neither fear God nor regard men, yet still they will indulge in their minds some semblance of that which is virtuous and cheat themselves into the belief that, at least, they are not worse than others.

But with this man there was no self-deception. He was as cool about this avowal as the Pharisee was concerning the opposite, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are." To what a brazen impertinence must

this man have come! To what an extent must he have hardened his mind, that knowing himself to be such, he yet climbed the judgment seat and sat there to judge his fellow men! Yet the woman prevailed with this monster in human form who had come to take pleasure in his own wickedness and gloated in the badness of his own heart! Over this man importunity prevailed—how much more over Him who spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all? How much more over Him whose name is Love, whose Nature is everything that is attractive and encouraging to such as seek His face? As we look at him, the more evil this judge appears, and he could scarcely have been painted in blacker colors, the more does the voice of the Savior seem to say to us, “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”

Note with regard to the character of this judge that he was one who *consciously cared for nothing but his own ease*. When at last he consented to do justice, the only motive which moved him was, “lest by her continual coming she weary me. “She *stun* me,” might be the Greek word—a kind of slang, I suppose, of that period, meaning lest “she batter me,” “she bruise me,” and as some translate it, “blacken my face with her incessant constant battering.” That was the kind of language he used—a short quick sentence of indignation at being bothered, as we should say, by such a case as this! The only thing that moved him was a desire to be at ease and to take things comfortably.

O Brothers and Sisters, if she could prevail over such a one, how much more shall we speed with God whose delight it is to take care of His children? Who loves them even as the apple of His eye! This judge was *practically unkind and cruel* to her, yet the widow continued. For awhile he would not listen to her—though her household, her life, her children’s comfort—were all hanging upon his will. He left her by a passive injustice to suffer. But our God has been practically kind and gracious to us—up to this moment He has heard us and granted our requests. Set this against the character of the judge, and surely every loving heart that knows the power of prayer will be moved to incessant importunity!

We must, however, pass on, now, to notice the other actor in the scene—the *widow*, and here everything tells again the same way—to induce the Church of God to be importunate. She was apparently *a perfect stranger to the judge*. She appeared before him as an individual in whom he took no interest. He had possibly never seen her before. Who she was and what she wanted was no concern to him. But when the Church appears before God she comes as Christ’s own bride. She appears before the Father as one whom He has loved with an everlasting love. And shall He not avenge His own elect, His own chosen, His own people? Shall not their prayers prevail with Him, when a stranger’s importunity won a suit of an unwilling judge?

The widow appeared at the judgment seat *without a friend*. According to the parable, she had no advocate, no powerful pleader to stand up in the court and say, “I am the patron of this humble woman.” If she prevailed,

she must prevail by her own ardor and her own intensity of purpose. But when you and I come before our Father, we come not alone, for—

**“He is at the Father’s side,
The Man of love, the Crucified.”**

We have a Friend who ever lives to make intercession for us! O Christian, urge your suit with holy boldness! Press your case, for the blood of Jesus speaks with a voice that must be heard! Be not, therefore, faint in your spirit, but continue instant in your supplication. This poor woman came *without a promise to encourage her*, no, with the reverse—with much to discourage! But when you and I come before God, we are *commanded* to pray by God Himself, and we are promised that if we ask it shall be given us, if we seek we shall find!

Does she win without the sacred weapon of the promise and shall not we win who can set the battering rams of God’s own Word against the gates of Heaven—a battering ram that shall make every timber in those gates quiver? O Brethren, we must not pause nor cease a moment while we have God’s promise to back our plea! The widow, in addition to having no promise whatever, was even *without the right of constant access*. She had, I suppose, a right to clamor to be heard at ordinary times when judgment was administered, but what right had she to dog the judge’s footsteps—to waylay him in the streets, to hammer at his private door—to be heard calling at nightfall, so that he, sleeping at the top of his house, was awakened by her cries?

She had no permission so to importune, but *we* may come to God at all times and all seasons! We may cry day and night unto Him, for He has bid us pray without ceasing! What? Without a permit is this woman so incessant? And with the sacred permissions which God has given us and the encouragement of abounding loving kindness, shall we cease to plead? She, poor soul, every time she prayed, *provoked the judge*! Lines of anger were on his face. I doubt not he foamed at the mouth to think he should be wearied by a person so insignificant! But with Jesus, every time we plead we please Him rather than provoke Him! The prayers of the saints are the music of God’s ears—

**“To Him there’s music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear.”**

We, speaking after the manner of men, bring a gratification to God when we intercede with Him. He is vexed with us if we restrain our supplications. He is pleased with us when we draw near constantly. Oh, then, as you see the smile upon the Father’s face, children of His love, I beseech you faint not, but continue, still, without ceasing to entreat the blessing!

Once more, this woman had a suit in which the *judge could not be himself personally interested*. But ours is a case in which the God we plead with is more interested than we are! For when a Church asks for the conversion of souls, she may justly say, “Arise, O God, plead Your own cause.” It is for the honor of Christ that souls should be converted! It brings Glory to the mercy and power of God when great sinners are

turned from the error of their ways! Consequently we are pleading *for* the Judge *with* the Judge—for God we are pleading *with* God! Our prayer is virtually for Christ as *through* Christ, that His kingdom may come and His will may be done.

I must not forget to mention that in this woman's case *she was only one*. She prevailed though she was only one! And shall not God avenge His own elect, who are not one, but tens of thousands? If there is a promise that if two or three are agreed it shall be done, how much more if in any Church hundreds meet together with unanimous souls anxiously desiring that God would fulfill His promise? These pleas cast chains around the Throne of God! How they, as it were, hem in Omnipotence! How they constrain the Almighty to arise out of His place and come in answer to His people, and do the great deed which shall bless His Church and glorify Himself!

You see, then, whether we consider the judge, or consider the widow, each character has points about it which tend to make us see our duty and our privilege to pray without ceasing.

III. The third and last point—THE POWER WHICH, ACCORDING TO THIS PARABLE, TRIUMPHED. This power was not the woman's eloquence, "I pray you avenge me of my adversary." These words are very few. They have the merit of being very expressive, but he that would study oratory will not gather many lessons from them. "I pray you avenge me of my adversary."

Just eight words. You observe there is no plea, there is nothing about her widowhood, nothing urged about her children, nothing said about the wickedness of her adversary, nothing concerning the judgment of God upon unjust judges, nor about the wrath of God upon unjust men who devour widows' houses—nothing of the kind. "I pray you avenge me of my adversary." Her success, therefore, did not depend upon her power in rhetoric, and we learn from this that the prevalence of a soul or of a Church with God does not rest upon the elocution of its words, or upon the eloquence of its language!

The prayer which mounts to Heaven may have but very few of the tail feathers of adornment about it, but it must have the strong wing feathers of intense desire! It must not be as the peacock, gorgeous for beauty, but it must be as the eagle, for soaring aloft, if it would ascend up to the seventh heavens. As a rule, when you pray in public, the shorter the better. Words are cumbersome to prayer. It often happens that an abundance of words reveals a scarcity of desires. Verbiage is generally nothing better in prayer than a miserable fig leaf with which to cover the nakedness of an unawakened soul.

Another thing is quite certain, namely, that the woman *did not prevail through the merits of her case*. It may have been a very good case—there is nothing said about that. I do not doubt the rightness of it, but still, the judge did not know nor care whether it was right or wrong. All he cared about was that this woman troubled him. He does not say, "She has a

good case and I ought to listen to it.” No, he was too bad a man to be moved by such a motive—but, “she worries me”—that is all. “I will attend to it.” So in our suit—in the suit of a sinner with God, it is not the merit of his case that can *ever* prevail with God. You have no merit! If you are to win, Another’s merit must stand instead of yours and on your part it must not be merit but *misery*. It must not be your righteousness but your importunity that is to prevail with God!

How this ought to encourage those of you who are laboring under a sense of unworthiness! However unworthy you may be, continue in prayer. Black may be the hand, but if it can but lift the knocker, the gate will open! Yes, though you have a palsy in that hand. Though, in addition to that palsy, you are leprous and the white leprosy is on your forehead, yet if you can but tremblingly lift up that knocker and let it fall *by its own weight* upon that sacred promise, you shall surely get an audience with the King of kings! It is NOT eloquence! It is NOT merit that wins with God—it is nothing but IMPORUNITY!

Note with regard to this woman, that the judge said first she troubled him. Next he said, she came continually and then he added his fear, “lest she weary me.” I think the case was somewhat after this fashion. The judge was sitting one morning on his bench and many were the persons coming before him asking for justice—which he was dealing out with the impartiality of a villain—giving always his best word to him who brought the heaviest bribes. When presently a poor woman uttered her complaint. She had tried to be heard several times, but her voice had been drowned by others. But this time it was more shrill and sharp and she caught the judge’s eye. “My lord, avenge me of my adversary!”

He no sooner sees from her poverty-stricken dress that there are no bribes to be had, than he replies, “Hold your tongue! I have other business to attend to.” He goes on with another suit in which the fees were more attractive. Still he hears the cry again, “My lord, I am a widow, avenge me of my adversary.” Vexed with the renewed disturbance, he bade the usher put her out because she interrupted the silence of the court and stopped the public business. “Take care she does not get in again tomorrow,” he says, “she is a troublesome woman.” Long before the morrow had come, he found out the truth of his opinion.

She waited till he left the court, dogged his footsteps and followed him through the streets, until he was glad to get through his door, and bade the servants fasten it lest that noisy widow should come in, for she had constantly assailed him with the cry, “Avenge me of my adversary.” He is now safely within doors and bids the servants bring in his meal. They are pouring water on his hands and feet. His Lordship is about to enjoy his repast, when a heavy knock is heard at the door, followed by a clamor, pushing and a scuffle. “What is it?” he asks. “It is a woman outside, a widow woman, who wants your Lordship to see justice done her.” “Tell her I cannot attend to her, she must be gone.”

He seeks his rest at nightfall on the housetop, when he hears a heavy knock at the door and a voice comes up from the street beneath his residence, "My lord, avenge me of my adversary." The next morning his court is open, and, though she is forbidden to enter, like a dog that will enter somehow, she finds her way in and she interrupts the court continually with her plea, "My lord, avenge me of my adversary." Ask her why she is thus importunate and she will tell you her husband is dead and he left a little plot of land—it was all they had and a cruel neighbor who looked with greedy eyes upon that little plot, has taken it as Ahab took Naboth's vineyard. And now she is without any meal or any oil for the little ones and they are crying for food.

Oh, if their father had been alive, how he would have guarded their interests but she has no helper and the case is a glaring one. And what is a judge for if he is not to protect the injured? She has no other chance, for the creditor is about to take away her children to sell them into bondage. She cannot bear that. "No," she says, "I have but one chance. It is that this man should speak up for me and do me justice. And I have made up my mind he shall never rest till he does so. I am resolved that if I perish, the last words on my lips shall be, 'Avenge me of my adversary.'" So the court is continually interrupted. Again the judge shouts, "Put her out! Put her out! I cannot conduct the business at all with this crazy woman here continually dinning in my ears a shriek of, 'Avenge me of my adversary.'" And it is no sooner said than done.

But she lays hold of the pillars of the court so as not to be dragged out and when at last they get her in the street, she does but wait her chance to enter again. She pursues the judge along the highways. She never lets him have a minute's peace. "Well," says the judge, "I am worried out of my very life. I care not for the widow, nor her property, nor her children. Let them starve, what are they to me? But I cannot stand this, it will weary me beyond measure. I will see to it." It is done and she goes her way. Nothing but her importunity prevailed.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, you have many other weapons to use with God in prayer, but our Savior bids you not neglect this master, all-conquering, instrument of *importunity*! God will be more easily moved than this unjust judge if only you are as importunate as this widow was. If you are sure it is a right thing for which you are asking, plead now! Plead at noon! Plead at night! Plead on—with cries and tears spread out your case! Put your arguments in order! Back up your pleas with reasons! Urge the precious blood of Jesus! Set the wounds of Christ before the Father's eyes! Bring out the atoning sacrifice—point to Calvary—enlist the crowned Prince, the Priest who stands at the right hand of God! And resolve in your very soul that if Zion does not flourish, if souls are not saved, if your family is not blessed, if your own zeal is not revived, you will die with the plea upon your lips and with the importunate wish upon your spirits!

Let me tell you that if any of you should die with your prayers unanswered, you need not conclude that God has disappointed you. With one story I will finish. I have heard that a certain godly father had the unhappiness to be the parent of some five or six most graceless sons. All of them, as they grew up, imbibed infidel sentiments and led an evil life. The father, who had been constantly praying for them and was a pattern of every virtue, hoped at least that in his death he might be able to say a word that should move their hearts. He gathered them to his bedside, but his unhappiness in dying was extreme, for he had lost the light of God's Countenance and was beset with doubts and fears. And the last black thought that haunted him was, "Instead of my death being a testimony for God, which will win my dear sons, what if I die in such darkness and gloom that I shall confirm them in their infidelity and lead them to think that there is nothing in Christianity after all?"

The effect was the reverse. The sons came round the grave at the funeral and when they returned to the house, the eldest son thus addressed his brothers—"My brothers, throughout his lifetime our father often spoke to us about religion and we have always despised it. But what a sermon his deathbed has been to us! For if he, who served God so well and lived so near to God found it so hard a thing to die, what kind of death may we expect ours to be who have lived without God and without hope?" The same feeling possessed them all, and thus the father's death had strangely answered the prayers of his life through the Grace of God.

You cannot tell but what, when you are in Glory, you should look down from the windows of Heaven and receive a double Heaven in beholding your dear sons and daughters converted by the words you left behind. I do not say this to make you cease pleading for their immediate conversion, but to encourage you. Never give up prayer, never be tempted to cease from it. So long as there is breath in your body and breath in their bodies, continue to pray, for I tell you that He will avenge you speedily though He bear long with you. God bless these words for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 18:1-30.

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WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

NO. 2519

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“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”
Luke 18:1.

MY mind alights with great joy upon the simple Truth of God which gleams on the very surface of our text—then, *man may pray!* If men ought to pray, they *may* pray. Whatever a man ought to do, it is clear that he has the right and the privilege to do—and though this may seem a very common-place truth to those of us whose hearts are at ease through faith in Jesus and who enjoy daily communion with God in prayer—yet there is an exquisite sweetness about this fact to a man who fears that he may not pray. He has come into such a miserable state of heart that he feels as if he could not pray and he fears that he *may not pray*. Satan tells him that the door of mercy is shut against him, that his day of Grace is over and that the time of hope for him is now past and gone. But our text says, “Men ought always to pray.” Then, men *may always pray!*

Your knees may be bent before the altar of God, though they are stained through many a fall into sin. Though it is many years since you ever thought of praying, yet you may pray! Though, perhaps, you have even denied that there is a God, still you may pray! Though you have ridiculed the very notion of prayer, you may pray—God does not refuse to you the permission to come to His Mercy Seat. Though you have committed every crime in the catalog of sin, you may pray. And though you have gone on in those crimes and involved yourself yet more and more deeply in iniquity, you may pray! Though you are within a few days of death and of damnation unless the Grace of God shall visit you, yet you may pray! It is clear that you may pray because men ought always to pray, and what they *ought* to do they *may* do! Grasp that Truth of God, O despairing one, and grip it fast, and say to your despair, “Get away from me! It is not possible that I am denied the right of praying unto the Lord while such a text as this still stands in Holy Writ, ‘Men ought always to pray.’”

Now, look at the text again, and lay stress upon the first word of it—“*Men* ought always to pray.” I feel so grateful to the Holy Spirit that this text does not say, “*Saints* ought always to pray,” because then I might ask myself, “Am I a saint?” And, perhaps, I might have to answer, “No, I am far from it.” But the text does not say, “saints,” and it does not even say, “Tender-hearted, penitent persons who are in a very gracious state ought always to pray.” No, there is no description of character given in the text—for which I am deeply grateful. Those exhortations that leave

the character as wide as possible are all the more full of Grace and condescending love!

Who ought always to pray, then? “Men.” And the word, “men,” is generic and includes the *race*. “Men.” That is, men and women and children—old men and fathers, young men and maidens—all who belong to the race of mankind ought always to pray! Perhaps you say, “So-and-So is not a good man.” No, but he *is* a man, and *men* ought always to pray! “He is a long way from being a commendable man, a man of mark, a man of note, a nobleman in the truest sense of that term.” Ah, but he is a *man*, and men ought always to pray! Go down the back streets into the dark alleys where there are men who scarcely seem to be men, and women who are scarcely women, and tell even them that they are still included under this head, “Men ought always to pray.” Go upstairs and stand by the bed where Death has his victim by the throat—the man yet living is still a *man*—that poor creature lying there is not yet a corpse, but still a man! Say to him, “Men ought always to pray.” They who curse and swear ought always to pray. They who live without any regard for God, or even in disbelief of His existence, and detestation of His Gospel, yet they ought always to pray! And, as I said at the beginning, the “ought” implies a *permission*, for, what a man ought to do, he *may* do and, therefore, whoever you may be, if you are in the shape of a man, you ought to pray!

If you have a head on your shoulders and lungs that heave, and a heart that palpitates—if you are still in the land of the living and can be numbered among the sons of men—to you this text rings out a grand and glorious Gospel! Even though it seems to be put in the form of a Law of God by the use of that stern word, “ought,” yet it really is in the form of the Gospel—you may pray if you are either man or woman, if you are of the race of mankind, for, “men ought always to pray.”

Oh, that some poor heart might catch at this sweet Word of God! That woman talked of throwing herself over London Bridge—yet even *she* may pray! That man thought of crossing the Atlantic and hiding himself from his fellow men, leaving his kith and kin to get away from the place where he has dishonored his name. Do not think of such a thing, my dear Sir, but pray, for you may pray! There is not in Heaven or earth anything that forbids you to pray! There is an act of amnesty and oblivion passed in the court of God and you are not excepted from it. There is no Book Inspired of Him that denies you a place at the Mercy Seat! There is no messenger sent of God who will say to you, “Thus says the Lord, You shall not pray,” but, on the contrary, bringing before you the living and Inspired Word of the living Christ of God, we say to you, “Men ought always to pray!” Therefore you ought to pray and, therefore, you *may* pray!

Now let us turn the text around a little and put the emphasis on another word. “Men ought *always* to pray.” Therefore, men may pray *now*. If they ought *always* to pray, they ought to pray *now*, and if they ought to pray now, they may pray now! Is not that a precious, blessed Truth of God? Here you sit, poor Sinner, and I am talking to you. Never mind that very respectable person who is sitting next to you. I am not, just now, thinking of her, I am not speaking to him—I mean *you*, poor, sad, guilty

one! Perhaps you say, "I do not feel in a state of mind in which I can pray. I hardly know why I came in here. I am very sad, I am very troubled, I am very sinful, I am very hard-hearted." But, my dear Friend, *you may pray!* Let me stop a minute. In this solemn silence, you may breathe your first prayer to God. May God help you, my poor Brother, to say for the first time, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" May He help you, my dear Sister, who has lived so long without prayer, to say now, "Lord, receive me, and forgive me, and let me be Your daughter, Your child, henceforth and forever!"

Do you not see this? If men—and you are in that category—if *human beings ought always to pray*, then they *may* always pray! And, "always," must include this present moment! So you may pray *now!* You *ought* to pray now, for you are in the list of men! Therefore, pray now, for, "now," must be included in the word, "always." "Well," someone says, "I will hasten home and pray." Do not do that! Sit where you now are and let your soul breathe itself out to God. "But I would like to get down on my knees." Yes, I would like that you should if it were fit and proper, but there is no need of it. Get on the knees of your soul! Many a time, when the body is on its knees, the soul is not really praying—and there is a way in which the soul can be prostrate before God even though the body stands. Even now, into the very dust I throw my own spirit before the thrice-holy God and, prostrate before Him, I pray, "Lord, help some who are here to pray, *now*, to You! For the first time in their lives, even now, while these words are escaping from my lips, may their hearts confess their sin and cry unto You, great Father, for the exercise of Your infinite mercy!" Why should it not be so? I believe that the Spirit of God is at work here at this moment and is leading some of you into this blessed act of prayer. It so, let His name be praised for it!

There is one thing more to be noticed before I plunge into the text and that is, "Men ought always to pray, *and not to faint.*" Then it is clear that prayer is always—if it is true prayer—an effectual and profitable exercise to any man who prays, for, if men ought to pray, it is plain that there is something in prayer that is helpful to the spirit, for men ought not to do that which is a mere vain and empty thing. God cannot require us to do that which will end in smoke, or which will be a mere nothing! God does not ask any of us to go and talk to the winds and whistle to the waves! There must be some *reality* in prayer—it must be His intention to hear and to answer prayer or else He would not put it thus—"Men ought always to pray."

Would He give us permission to do a thing that would have no value in it, whatever? No. Would He *exhort* us to do it, would He *command* us to do it when He knew that, if we did it, it would just be a mere form? Does God send us to act like the daughters of Danaus, to fill a bottomless vessel with leaking buckets? Does He tell us, like Sisyphus, to spend our lives rolling a huge stone up the hill which will only roll back, again, upon us? Does He make fools of us? Has He spoken in secret and said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face in vain"? It cannot be! I hold that if God does not hear and answer prayer, it is a piece of foolery. And I cannot conceive that God would set any of us to do what would be an in-

sane, or at least an idiotic thing. No, if men ought always to pray, there is something real in prayer and, when the Lord says that we ought to pray, it is because He stands ready to grant the desire of our hearts and to send us away with a blessing.

I. With this preface, dear Friends, we come to our text, and I notice concerning it, first, here is A PERPETUAL DUTY, OR PRIVILEGE, OR BOTH. "Men ought always to pray."

It means, of course, first, that men *ought to pray habitually*. There should be—and where the Grace of God is there will be—the habit of prayer. There will be the prayer at set times. It is necessary to mark out the plots in the garden, to keep them from the path where you walk, so that growing plants may not be trod down by the busy feet of toil. We need some set times, some little enclosures, some hours and periods marked off for prayer. These should be regularly attended to. Our private prayers—it is a great loss to our souls if these are ever neglected. Our family prayers—I am sure it is a grievous injury to a Christian household if it is not gathered regularly for prayer. Our prayers in the House of God among our Brothers and Sisters, too, must not be forgotten. We love the assemblies for prayer—we have given heed to the Apostolic injunction, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." All these things ought you to do, yet there is a habit of *prayer* that is higher than all this! The Jews prayed three times a day. There have been some holy men who have prayed at least seven times a day, but I take it that the man who lives near to God could not tell how many times a day he prays, for, whether he has three or seven times of special and notable prayer in word, he will have 70 times seven times in a day in which his heart speaks with God about everything that occurs. I think that it is well before every action to breathe a prayer, and during every action to breathe a prayer, and after every action to breathe a prayer.

"Salt," says the Old Testament, "without prescribing how much." So is it to be with prayer—prayer, without prescribing how much. You can never overdo it. Possibly those matters which appear to require least prayer are the very things which require most prayer. "Men ought always to pray." You do not have to leave off your business to pray, or turn aside from domestic labor or public service—all of which must be attended to. You can do that and pray just the same—and this is the way in which Christians always should pray.

But I do not think that this text so much intends to teach the continuity of prayer as the pertinacity of prayer. I mean not so much the *always* praying as the *keeping on praying for any particular thing that you have asked for*. You are to continue to pray! Let me try and open this up a little. "Men ought always to pray," that is, to pray *under all circumstances*. Whatever the difficulty or the trouble is, pray about it. It is a domestic trouble—pray about it. It is a business trouble—pray about it. It is a Church difficulty—pray about it. I wish to bear my personal witness upon this matter. I have had and I still have, more burdens to bear, I think, than any other man who lives—heavy burdens, not my own, but for others and for God's Glory—that which daily comes upon me, the care not only of this huge Church, but of so many other Churches as

well. And I have found that I never have a burden of any sort but it is my wisdom at once to—

“Take it to the Lord in prayer.”

I have had burdens that have so troubled me that I have been quite baffled. I have thought my best and I have done my best, but the trouble has remained and, at last, I have taken it bodily and put it up on the shelf. And I have said to the Lord, “I will never touch that trouble again, I will leave it in Your hands, my blessed Master.” I believe that, generally, it has been the best mode of dealing with it, to put it entirely into His hands. There are certain things for which, after having done all else that can be done, the only remedy is prayer.

Let it be definitely accepted among us Christian people that whatever the difficulty is, whatever shape it takes, secular or sacred, “Men ought always to pray,” that is, they ought to *pray about everything*. This is the remedy that will cure all diseases. This is the sword that shall cut the Gordian knot if it cannot be untied. This is the key that fits the wards of every lock in the prison house of our sorrow. We shall get clean out if we do but know how to use the key of prayer! “Men ought always to pray.” There may be a Brother who is likely to make discord—shall I go and battle with him? No, I will tell the Lord about him—He will deal with him better than I can. Oh, but that man has begun to preach flat heresy! Shall I have a fight with him? Well, I may controvert with him if I am driven to it, but I will *first* tell the Lord about him. The Lord can settle him far better than I can. “Straight ahead makes the best runner.” Instead of going round to the servant and trying to curry favor with him, go straight to the Master! Go at once to headquarters about everything. “Men ought always to pray.” Oh, to learn this lesson well!

And, dear Friends, we ought to pray *under all oppositions to prayer*. Sometimes we say to ourselves, “Really, I could not pray about *that* matter.” Well, then, if you cannot pray about it, do not have anything to do with it—it is a sure sign that there is a leprosy in it, so touch it not! The cankerworm of Hell is in it if you cannot pray about it. Flee from it as you would from Hell, itself. It must be a foul and filthy thing if you cannot pray about it. No, Beloved, there cannot be such a thing, but, whatever seems to be in the way of your praying, believe that whenever it is hardest to pray, it is most necessary to pray! Whenever it seems to you that you cannot pray, then you must say, “Now I have seven times more need to pray about this thing than I have about other matters in which prayer comes more easy to me.” It is a danger signal when you cannot pray. It is the rattle of the rattlesnake when you cannot pray—there must be some deadly mischief near at hand. Whatever the difficulty in prayer, you must, by the help of the Divine Spirit, break through all barriers, for you must pray.

“Men ought always to pray.” Then they ought to pray *even if there has been a long delay in answers to their prayers*. I object very greatly to the practice of some of whom I have read, who have given God a certain time limit during which they will pray. I have heard of a woman who said that she would pray for her husband for 20 years and, according to the story, at the end of 20 years he was converted, but if he had not been converted

just then, it would have been at her peril to leave off prayer, even at the end of the 20 years! Our dear Brother, Mr. George Muller, has on his “prayer book” the name of a Brother for whom he has prayed, I think I heard him say, some 36 years. That was some years ago, so it must be a longer time than that, now, unless, indeed, the prayer has been answered. But he has the inward persuasion that this person will yet be brought to the Savior’s feet and, therefore, he daily mentions the case before God in prayer. By the way, he tells us of a very admirable plan of his for booking his requests in prayer and marking them off as they are answered—and those that are not answered he lets stand until, in process of time, he finds that some of them were not proper requests and he puts that against them. But he finds that God does hear prayer and he likes to keep a record of it. If we did the same, we would have much more holy commonsense confidence in God, and our praying would be a more business-like matter as, indeed, it ought to be. But do not say to yourself, “I shall pray just so long for this thing.” If what you are asking for touches the Kingdom and the Glory of Christ, persevere in the prayer with this text to encourage you, “Men ought always to pray.”

If it is something which concerns only *your own personal comfort*, then God’s Spirit may teach you to limit your prayers. “Concerning this thing,” said Paul, “I besought the Lord thrice.” Yes, and then he had not the answer that he desired, but he had one with which he was perfectly satisfied! The Lord did not take away the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, but He said, “My Grace is sufficient for you.” Paul still had to bear the trial, but he received from the Lord the Grace to enable him to bear it! Ask with bated breath when you are asking something temporal for yourself, for you are but as a silly child in that which relates to yourself. A boy might fall in love with his father’s razors or wish to eat some delicacy that would be most dangerous to his health—and you would not have your child persisting in asking for that which would injure him! You are not angry with him for asking, for he knows no better, so you say, “My child, that would not be good for you!” If your son is a good child, he will not ask again, or, asking, he will not be angry if he is refused.

And, often, you know not what is good for you. If God had really put it within our reach to have whatever we chose to ask for, it would be a very dangerous power, indeed! If the Lord should say to me, “You may have whatever you wish for,” I would straightway get to my chamber and say, “O my Father, divest me of this dangerous privilege! I ask You, of Your tender mercy, never to give me anything which Your great wisdom does not see to be good for me. Do not trust me with so dangerous a power as this! You are Omniscient and I am foolish. You are altogether good and Your will for me is better than my will for myself can ever be! Not, then, as I will, but as You will, let it be done to me.” But if it is anything concerning the Kingdom of Christ, anything for the Glory of God, continue in prayer, even though it is for 50 years—and let this little sentence cheer you—“Men ought always to pray.”

Pray on, also, dear Friends, *despite all temptations and all personal difficulties*. When you feel, “My prayer is dull and feeble,” still pray. When

Satan says, "There is no use in praying about *that* matter," still pray. When others round about you say, "It is not a fit subject for prayer," still pray. When at last it seems to be despairing work and you have to cry, "Has God forgotten to be gracious.? Has He in anger shut up the heart of His compassion?" still pray, for, "Men ought always to pray."

II. Now I must say just a few words upon THE GROUND OF THIS OBLIGATION "Men ought always to pray."

Well, we ought always to pray because *we have always some sin to confess, we have always some good thing for which to bless God and we have always some need that needs to be supplied.* I must admit that I have never yet been in a condition in which I did not need to pray. He who is down in the valley needs prayer that he may be able to climb the hill. He who is up the hill needs to pray twice as much that his head may not grow dizzy—and that he may not fall from his high position. He who has not should pray till he has and he who has should pray that he may be blessed in the having. If your cup is empty, pray the Lord to fill it. If your cup is full, pray God to make your hand steady that you spill not its contents. If you cannot see your way, pray God to guide you. If you can see your way, pray God to help you to follow it. Are you young? Pray God to help you against the sins of youth. Are you in the middle of life? Pray God to help you in the middle passage, where trials are so numerous. Are you almost into Heaven with age? Pray that you may enter Heaven with prayer.

"Men ought always to pray." It is always an incumbent duty for one or other of these reasons. Men ought always to pray *because God commands them to pray.* "Pray without ceasing" is a clear, clean-cut command. There is no getting over that passage, "Pray without ceasing." It lies wrapped up within the heart of the First Commandment of the Law of God—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength."

"Men ought always to pray." *It is always the wisest thing they can do.* "Men ought always to pray." It is sometimes the *only thing* that they can do. "Men ought always to pray," or else they take the matter out of God's hands. "Men ought always to pray," for they always need God's help, whether they think they do or not.

III. I will not go into further reasons, though there are very many for this obligation, but I shall close by noticing THE ALTERNATIVE—"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." If you do not pray, you will faint.

There are some who faint fatally. They set out upon the Christian profession. Perhaps there are some here who once did that. Years ago you were a member of a church—where are you now? Years ago you used to speak, sometimes, on the village green in the name of Christ—you do not do that now. How have you come to be where you are—either not even making a profession of religion, or certainly doing nothing in Christ's service? I shall not make a guess, but I shall pronounce a certainty—you went wrong and you began to faint in your spiritual course because you restrained prayer. You fainted because you did not pray! Ah, a religion that does not begin with secret prayer is not worth the label you put on it! A religion that is not sustained by *secret* prayer is a lie! A religion that

does not grow through secret prayer may be puffed up, but it is not truly *built up* by the hand of God. No, no, young man, if you seek to join a Church, to be baptized, to come to the Communion Table and, all the while, you do not pray, your religion is but the baseless fabric of a vision and will disappear! We have had a great many men whom I have seen and known at different times who could speak very fluently and did labor in the service of God for a while, but the great mischief with them was that they did not live to God in private! If it is so with any of you, your religion may be built up very loftily, like some high tower, but it will come down very speedily because the foundations have been badly laid. You must either pray or you will faint!

If you are a child of God, the same alternative lies before you. You will either pray or faint—that is to say, sometimes *you will get bewildered*. I do. I wish to do the right thing, but scarcely know which is right out of 20 things. I would deal with this Brother kindly, but with that other Brother firmly. How shall I mix firmness and kindness? If you are pastor of a Church—and you may be, my dear Friend—you know how many puzzles we have before us in dealing not only with our own poor human nature, but with the human nature of God’s people, for there is a lot of human nature even where there is spiritual nature—and there are very odd ways even in good men! What are you to do in such cases? Well, if you cannot go back within the veil, and speak with the Holy Oracle, you will faint.

I have told you before that when I was coming to London, there was a strange old man in the Prayer Meeting who, when the people were praying that I might have a blessing in going, asked the Lord that I might be helped to “swallow bundles of brush crossways.” That I have done many a time. Another prayed that I might be “delivered from the bleating of the sheep” and, for the life of me, I could not make out what he meant. I am not sure that he understood it himself, but I quite understand it now. There is no leader of the flock who will not occasionally wish to be delivered from the bleating of the sheep, for they bleat such different tunes sometimes. You may listen to the bleating of one sheep and another—some, perhaps, that are not bleating in the right style, but it is a great thing to feel, “Now, I am not going to be guided by the way these sheep bleat. I am set to guide them, rather than to let them guide me, but I am going to be guided by a higher voice than the bleating of the sheep, namely, the voice of the Great Shepherd.” I believe that every man who seeks to win souls—and I am addressing many who are in charge of Bible classes, or at the head of Missions, or in some way serving the Lord—will faint, I am sure he will—in the management of his work unless he gets right out of it sometimes into prayer and lays it all before the Lord and waits upon Him. “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” in their ministry for God, in their service on behalf of the souls of their brethren. They will faint from very bewilderment if they do not pray.

And you will be sure to faint, at times, *through weariness and depression of spirit, through a sense of your own powerlessness*. “Oh,” you say, “would God I could give it all up! Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!” It is a great mercy that the wings do not

grow when we ask for them, for they would be of no use to us—what should we do, flying away like doves? If God had a message for us to carry like a pigeon, He would give us the wings and then it would be right for us to fly. But what we generally mean is that we want to get away from hard work, we are looking for Saturday night. How do you like the workman who says, on Tuesday morning, “O Sir, I wish it were Saturday night!” And when it gets on towards Thursday, he meets you and says, “Good morning, Sir, I wish it was Saturday night?” “Oh!” I think you would say, “next Saturday night will be the last I shall want to see you.” You need a better workman than that—and if we get to fainting in that style, we should say to ourselves, “Come, this will not do! I must go and tell the Lord all about my difficulty and my trouble.” Wait upon Him for fresh strength and then you will come out as though you had bathed your face in the dew of Heaven, the Light of God had entered your eyes and you had come fresh from a vision of angels to talk with men with new tongues as the Spirit gave you utterance! “Wait, I say, on the Lord,” for this it is that will keep you from fainting and make you to renew your strength like the eagle’s!

I have come to deal with God’s people in the close of my subject, but I almost wish I had not—that I could have kept on in the first strain and talked with those who are beginning to pray. Dear Friends, do begin tonight, I pray you, with your eye on my Lord on yonder Cross, all stained with the streaks of crimson blood flowing down His precious body. Look at Him! There is life in a look at Him. Look at Him as He dies for you and you shall live! God help you to do so, for Christ’s sake! And when you have believed in Him, come and be baptized in His name, as these dear friends are about to be. God bless you all! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” —145 (PART 1), 978, 977.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 145.

I am going to preach about prayer, [the exposition was always at the beginning of the service] so we will read “David’s Psalm of Praise.” Thus we shall have two parts of true worship.

Verses 1, 2. *I will extol You, my God, O king; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever.* Notice how long David expected to praise God. He was going to praise God forever—and then after that, “forever and ever.” “Every day will I bless You”—that is, when I do not seem to be partaking of any choice temporal blessing, I will still bless You. When I sit like Job on the dunghill, ‘every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name’—Your Character, all that has to do with You, ‘forever and ever.’” The first two verses are the preface of the Psalm. Now the Psalmist begins his music.

3. *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.* He is great without bounds. Let Him be praised without end. There is no end to His greatness; let there be no end to our adoration.

3, 4. *And His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.* The fathers shall be the preachers to their sons and the sons shall be the preachers to their sons. The flaming torch of Jehovah's praise shall be passed from hand to hand all down the centuries. As long as men shall live, God shall have the praise of the godly. "One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts."

5. *I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty.* This is a beautiful expression—"I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty." It is a heaped-up expression. David was in an ecstasy of delight when he wrote it. He did not know how sufficiently to express his adoration of God. Other men might praise God for themselves, but that was not enough for David—he must take his own turn at the blessed business! "I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty."

5, 6. *And of Your wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts: and I will declare Your greatness.* "And I will declare." Yes, in comes David's personal note again! He cannot leave the praises of God alone, He must take his full share in this heavenly task. I wish that whenever there was work to do for God, or prayer to be offered or praise to be given to the Lord, you and I would always interject this personal pronoun, "and I." You know, perhaps, dear Friends, that you never find Bartholomew's name by itself in any of the Gospels—it is always somebody else "and *Bartholomew*." It is well to be a good helper of other people. And when others are praising the Lord, it is good to come in as David did with the personal resolve and confession, "and I will declare Your greatness."

7. *They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness.* Mark every word in this choice expression—"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness." They shall see this goodness and they shall appreciate it as *great* goodness! They shall remember it and so have the memory of God's great goodness and then they shall speak of it. "They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness" and when they have done so, they shall do it again and again! "They shall *abundantly* utter the memory of Your great goodness."

7, 8. *And shall sing of Your righteousness. The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion.* He has no passion, but He is full of compassion! What a mercy that is for us! Sometimes we hear persons say that God cannot do this or that—that He cannot feel and cannot suffer. That is not true, for He can do anything that He likes. A god who has no feeling is a poor god—of no service whatever to us—but "*the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.*"

8. *Slow to anger, and of great mercy.* Oh, what a blessing it is for you and for me that He is slow to anger!

9. *The LORD is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works.* Whether you search for the far-distant with a telescope, or peer into the minute with the microscope, the Lord's tender mercies are found everywhere! Like the light, without which you see nothing, so is the mercy of God—it enlightens everything! "His tender mercies are over all His works."

10. *All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You.* “Standing in the inner circle, ‘Your saints’ shall mingle their love with their praise and so ‘shall bless You.’ Theirs shall be a choicer, more tender worship than that of all ‘Your works’ besides.” The works of God are like a great organ, but it is man who puts his fingers upon the keys and brings forth all the music. Man is the interpreter of the universe—he praises God as the inanimate creation can never do.

11. *They shall speak of the glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.* I wish we did speak more of such subjects and talk more upon these sacred themes. I do not think there is ever any deficiency of talk, but I am afraid there is a very great lack of such talk as this—“They shall speak of the glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.”

12. *To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His Kingdom.* See how David keeps to the subject with which he began the Psalm—“I will extol You, my God, my king.” Yes, and he sings about the King all through this Psalm. His great objective is to make us see that there never was such a King as the infinitely-glorious Jehovah, who surpasses all the kings of the earth!

13. *Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom.* Other kingdoms come and go. They last during their little day and then they vanish away. Look, for instance, at the kingdom of Alexander the Great, who only reigned for about 12 years and when he died left no successor. We talk of great earthly monarchs—they are but monarchs of an hour compared with the Kingdom of Jehovah. Well might David say to Him, “Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom.”

13. *And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.* What kind of a King is this whose Kingdom is everlasting and what are the acts that make Him famous? Notice the first thing He is said to do.

14. *The LORD upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that are bowed down.* This is His glory! This is the majesty of the King of kings, that He takes notice of the poor and weak! The compassion of God is, to a great extent, the glory of God. That He has such tender mercies toward the unworthy is the subject of the loudest of our songs! “Jehovah upholds all that fall,” that is, such as *would* fall were it not for His upholding! Jehovah lifts up all those who have fallen and raises up those who are bowed down. Blessed be His holy name!

15. *The eyes of all wait upon You.* What a King is this who must feed all His subjects and who must have all His subjects depend upon Him alone! “The eyes of all wait upon You.”

15. *And You give them their meat in due season.* It is an act of Grace, not of debt—“You give them their meat.” Did you ever think of the vast variety of the separate sorts of food that the Lord provides for each of His creatures He has formed? The meat that feeds an elephant would not feed a lion. That which feeds a lion would not feed a sparrow. That which feeds a sparrow would not satisfy the fish of the sea. To every creature God gives its own food. “You give them their meat in due season.” The fruits of the earth do not ripen all at once, but the various harvests succeed each other. Notice how each of the many flowers is full of honey just at the time when the particular insect which is to come down into the

flower-bell is needing that nectar to feed upon. It is marvelous to see how God has timed creation to the ticking of a watch—and when the flower is ready, then comes the fly, the bee, the butterfly, or the moth that shall be fed thereby. “You give them their meat in due season.”

16. *You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.* As men feed doves in their courtyard, carrying down to them their little handful of food and opening the hand to pour it out, so does God feed all living creatures readily and easily enough by the simple opening of His hand. But He does it. He satisfies the desire of every living thing and He will satisfy your desire, dear Soul, if you take it to Him. You say, perhaps, that you are very poor. Well, then, cry to Him! He has never failed His creatures, yet, and He will not fail you! He hears the young ravens when they cry and He will hear you, a man created in the image of God, when you cry to Him.

17, 18. *The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His work. The LORD is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.* As the Omnipresent Deity, the Lord is not far from any of us, but there is a peculiar nearness of God to His people—a nearness of knowledge, a nearness of affection, a nearness of heart by which He looks upon them as His own special portion, His own peculiar heritage. “Jehovah is near unto all them that call upon Him.” That is the name of His people—they are a *calling people*, they are a *praying people*—and they pray to Him “in truth.” There are some who offer the mockery of pretended prayer, but God is not near to them in the special sense in which He “is near unto all them that call upon Him in truth.”

19. *He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him.* “He will fulfill”—He will *fill full*—“the desire of them that fear Him.” If You fear Him, you need not fear any need! You have nothing at all that you need to fear.

19, 20. *He also will hear their cry, and will save them. The LORD preserves all them that love Him: but all the wicked will He destroy.* These two things always go together—as surely as the Lord does the one, He will do the other. While He preserves His saints, He will certainly destroy the wicked.

21. *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord.* God move us, each one, to do this! Then with the Psalmist we may fitly say—

21. *And let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.*

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A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 21, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERSHAM BAPTIST CHAPEL,
IN NOVEMBER, 1857.

“And shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?”
Luke 18:7.

YOU remember this is the conclusion of the parable of the importunate widow. Her husband was dead. He had left her, perhaps, a little property, but some adversary, very probably a lawyer, seized hold of it and took from her all that she had. What was she to do? She went straightway to the judge, the appointed minister of justice in the city. The first time she went, she met with a cold repulse. She went a second time—her poverty drove her, her necessity compelled her to face the man again. Now the judge “neither feared God, nor regarded man,” but at last, seeing the vehemence of the woman, feeling that he should be exceedingly troubled by her constant importunity, he granted her request and he did avenge her of her adversary. Jesus used this to show the power of importunity—“Hear what the unjust judge said”—“And if the unjust judge did this, shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him?”

Now, in trying to discuss this text this evening, I shall first show what I believe to be *the primary application of it*. And, secondly, I shall try to enlarge upon *the general principle involved in it*—that importunity is very prevalent with God.

I. To begin, then, WHAT WAS THE ABSOLUTE AND CLEAREST MEANING THAT OUR SAVIOR WOULD CONVEY TO HIS DISCIPLES BY THE PARABLE?

Well, now, I think the whole sense of the parable, as far as we can make any special application of it, hinges upon the meaning of that word, “avenge.” What is it that Christ’s Church is always praying for? The answer is they are praying *spiritually* for that which the poor widow prayed for *actually*—they are praying to be avenged of their adversary. Now what did this mean in the poor woman’s case? For, in some degree, it means just the same in the Church’s case. I do not believe that that poor widow, when she went to the judge, went for mere vengeance’s sake. I cannot conceive that our Savior would have exhibited the perseverance of malice as an example to His people. I do not think that when she applied day after day to the court of the judge, to be avenged, she applied to

have her adversary punished for the mere sake of his being punished. It strikes me there was no revenge whatever in the poor woman's spirit and that what she went for was simply this—her husband was dead, he had left her a little property, it was all she had to bring his babes up and support herself—someone had seized this property and what she needed was that the property might be restored to her.

Her request was that that which had been unlawfully taken from the weak by the mighty, might at once be taken from the clutches of the strong and restored unto the rightful owner. I think any intelligent person reading the passage would at once conceive that that was what she was seeking. Now the Church of Christ is seeking the very same thing. Those that can cry day and night in Heaven before the Throne of God do not cry out of a spirit of revenge. The saints, when they pray to God on earth and girdle the globe with supplication, do not pray against the wicked out of a spirit of hatred. God forbid that any of us should ever fall on our knees and ask God to avenge us of our adversary in the common acceptation of that phrase! I am sure there is no Christian actuated by the Spirit of Christ who would ever ask for vengeance, even on the head of the bloodiest persecutor. For if he should do so, I think the lips of Jesus might rebuke him, for we know what Jesus said when He was dying—He did not wish to be avenged, for He said—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Christ's Church is seeking after just what the poor widow was seeking and we are to understand our text, “Shall not God avenge His own elect?” in that modified sense which the parable would convey to us. The fact is, Christ's Church is a widow. It is true her Husband is alive but she is in a widowed state because He has departed from her. Our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Bridegroom, was once with His people and the Church could not mourn or fast when the Bridegroom was with her. But He said, “The day shall come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away, and then she shall fast.” These are the days—“Our Jesus has gone up on high”—He is not with us in Person, now—He has left His Church in the wilderness. It is true He has left the Comforter with her, but His own absolute, personal Presence is not vouchsafed to her. He is not yet come a second time without a Sin-Offering unto salvation. Well, then, taking advantage of the absence of Christ, the Church's Husband, the kings, the princes, the rulers and spiritual wickedness in high places have sought to rob the Church of her rights and her privileges! And what the Church is always crying for is that God would restore her, her rights—that He would give to her the portion which her Husband left her in His last legacy and which, in due time, when God shall have answered her prayers, He shall restore unto her. And what is that legacy?

My Brothers and Sisters, there are many things that Christ has left to His Church of which the world has robbed us. The Church was once a united Church. When Christ was in this world, His prayer was that they all might be one, even as He and His Father were One. Alas, the world has robbed us of our unity and now behold the Church cries day and night, “Restore, O Lord, the scattered of Israel, and bring us into one

fold, and let us have one Shepherd!" The spirit of the world has crept into our midst and split us into many denominations. God's children are not now called Christians, but they are called Baptists and Independents, Churchmen, Dissenters and such-like names of distinction. Their oneness, although it really exists in the heart, is lost, at least in the outward appearance of it and, to some degree, it is entirely lost. But the Church is crying for it every day—the true hearts in the midst of God's Zion and the glorified spirits above are crying day without night, "O Lord, make Your Church one!"

Again, the Church was sent into this world to bring the world to a knowledge of the Truth of God and, one day the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. We may say that all the world is Christ's, though heathenism has a part of it, Mohammed has another and the Pope another. The world is divided into different sections, under different false systems of religion, but all the world belongs by right to Christ. We can cast our eyes around the world from the river even to the ends of the earth and we can say, "The kings of the isles shall bring tribute; the princes of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; kings shall yet be the nursing fathers of the Church, and queens the nursing mothers." But the world has robbed us of this—the different false religions have spoiled the Church's inheritance, the wild boar of the woods wastes her and devours her borders. Zion's banner should wave everywhere in every kingdom, but instead thereof the priests, the kings, the idol gods have taken the kingdoms unto themselves.

Now this is the great thing, I believe, that the Church is praying for. You know the Church is one day to wear a crown. Christ's Church is Christ's royal bride and she is to have a crown. But she can never have it until her prayer has been heard, until her Lord comes to revenge her wrongs. For, lo, the Church of God is trampled on and despised! The precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold—how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the workings of the potter! God's chosen people are counted as the off-scouring of all things, instead of being as, indeed they are, considered as the blood royal of the universe—the princes among men! Now, because of these lost rights, Christ's Church cries day and night unto God, crying out, "O Lord, avenge us of our adversary, and restore unto Your widowed Church her rights!"

Put the Jew wherever you may, and he will always declare that the promised land belongs to his nation. There is a pride about the Jew, wherever he may be—he believes himself to still belong to that chosen family whose were the Covenants and the oracles. That is true of the Christian—he may be ever so poor, ever so despised, but knowing himself to belong to the chosen body, he claims that all things are his own. You may clothe him in fustian and you may feed him on bread and water, but he will still say, "All things are mine." You may thrust him into a dungeon and let no light come to him except through iron bars, but he will still declare, "Mine are the valleys and the hills! Mine by sacred right—my Father made them all." There is a royalty in a Christian which persecution cannot burn out, which shame cannot crush, which poverty

cannot root up! There it is and there it must be forever—conscious of his high rights and distinctive privileges, the Christian, the Believer, will never cease to cry unto Christ that he may yet have his rights and possess what his God gave him.

Now, dear Friends, very often we are low-spirited and down-hearted. Sometimes the Christian minister goes back from his pulpit and says, “Ah, the Gospel seems to be making very little progress I do not see how the kingdoms of this earth are to belong to Christ.” The Sunday school teacher goes home from his class and says, “This is weary work. If things go on as they do now, we shall always have to say, ‘Who has believed our report,’ and how can the Church prosper if things are so?” And there are times with each of us—when a kind of sickness seizes our spirits—we look at everything with a sad eye and we say, “Ah, the millennium is many years off.” Indeed, unbelief says it is quite impossible! “How shall the heathen bow before Him? How shall they that dwell in the wilderness lick the dust?” Now, you who have thought thus and you who are thinking so now, hear the Savior’s argument for your consolation, the argument couched in the text—The Church of God is crying unto Him day and night! There where the burning lamps of Heaven perpetually light the skies—high in the seventh heaven, above the stars, where angels cast their crowns before the Most High, the saints forever cry to God, “O Lord, avenge Your own elect!” for prayer is made in Heaven. The saints under the altar cry aloud, “O Lord, how long?” There is never a moment when the saints cease to pray. They have—

***“Vials full of odor sweet,
And harps of sweeter sound.”***

And we remember that the saints on earth are always in prayer. You meet together in the evening for prayer. You scatter to your houses and then your family fires begin to burn. And when your family fires are put out and your private devotions have ceased, the sun is just rising in the other land across the western sea and there they are beginning to pray again! And when the sun has set, then it rises somewhere round the world in the far east, there by the Ganges river, there by the Himalaya steeps—and the saints of God begin again. And when the sun winds on its course and again shines somewhere else, then the saints of the Lord offer incense and a pure offering, so that there is never an hour when this world ceases to offer its incense—not one moment, even in the darkest shades of midnight—when prayer does not ascend from this lower world! And it would be ill for the world if there were a moment when prayer should be suspended, for remember what a poet says, “Perhaps the day when this world shall be consumed will be a day unbrightened by a prayer.” Perhaps it may be so, but certainly such a day as that has not yet rolled over the world, for day without night the world is girdled with prayer and one sacred belt of supplication winds the whole globe!

Now, said Christ, if God’s elect in Heaven and on earth are day without night without ceasing, crying to God to give the Church her empire, her reign, her splendors, her victories—rest assured the Church shall have what it asks for! Shall not God avenge His own elect that cry day

and night unto Him? Yes, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, we may not live to see it, though sometimes I think there are some alive in this world who will live to see that bright day. And yet, if we live not to see it, the day shall come when Christ, who is the Truth, shall have all power given unto Him under Heaven even as He really has even now—He shall then have it given to Him in the form and symbol and fashion of it also. The day is coming when Christ shall come in the clouds of Heaven to reign upon this earth in the midst of His people. Then, when He shall come, the kingdoms of this world shall be converted to Him—all people shall flock to His colors! Every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue confess that the Lord is God!

I have sometimes thought that I may yet live to see that day, and perhaps some of you. We cannot tell when Christ shall come. We are very apt to forget that He comes as a thief in the night, in such an hour as we think not. It is a pleasing thought, sometimes, to remember that there may be some standing here that will not die, for we know the Scripture says, “Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump.” When Christ shall come, we shall be alive and remain, perhaps, some of us, for He may come tomorrow, He may come tonight! Before the word I am speaking reaches your ears, the trumpet of the Resurrection and Jubilee may startle us all and we may behold Christ come in the clouds of Heaven! But whether He comes or not in our lifetime, there will be some alive when He shall come and they, if they are His people, shall not die—they shall be changed—“the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we always be with the Lord.”

O work on, minister! Toil on, teacher! Weep on, mourner! Pray on, intercessor! Hope on, Believer, the hallowed day is coming! Some of the streaks of the gray light already mark the horizon. Some of the sweet tidings of the Master’s coming have already been announced to God’s favorite people! Some that have dwelt high on the mountaintop of communion have declared that the time is approaching. The chariot wheels of Christ are drawing near! But be it near, or be it far off, it must come. It shall come! The Church shall triumph—the world shall be subdued beneath her feet. God shall avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him. Now, I take *that* as the absolute meaning of the passage, the nearest and most appropriate way of explaining it.

II. And now I am going to try to work out THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TEXT. It is this—*Importunity will prevail*. Now you must not smile while I give you two pictures—the pictures that Christ gave His disciples, worked out a little, so as to be more plain to you. Jesus Christ says if you need anything of God, if you do not get it the first time, try again. And if you do not get it then, continue in prayer, for continuing long in prayer, you will prevail with God. And He gives you two pictures that we have had this evening.

The first is the good man who had no bread in his house when his friend came. You may picture the scene. He says, "I am very glad to see you, but I have not a morsel of food in the house. If I had the richest dainties in the world, you could have them all but I have not any." "Well, but," says his friend, "I have come a good many miles this day. I cannot go to rest without something to eat. I shall faint." "Well, but," he says, "I have nothing for you." "My dear Friend," says the other, "cannot you obtain a morsel? I am famished by the way—I expected to have got to my resting place at noontide, and now it is midnight. I have been travelling these twelve hours and have had nothing at all to eat." "Well," says his friend, "I have something for your horse to eat, but I cannot give you anything." But at length he says, "There is a friend of mine who lives down the street. I will go and get something from him. You shall not starve. I will not come away till I get something."

Away he goes and finds his friend asleep. He gives a loud knock. The man is upstairs in bed and he says, "My wife and my children are with me in bed." He does not want to hear that knock and so he just sleeps on. Then there comes another tremendous knock. Says the man, "I cannot think who that can be." The question is asked by those who are upstairs, but he does not feel at all inclined to get out and look. It is a cold night and why should he get up? Then there comes another rap. "Well," he says, "there is somebody at the door." He still turns in his bed and will not get up. He doesn't see why he should rise at such an untimely hour as that. Besides, it may be only some drunken fellow going home late. Then there comes another tremendous knock. He goes to the window, puts his head out and asks what is the matter. "Oh," says the man, "I need some loaves of bread. A friend of mine has come to see me and I have nothing for him." "Why do you come to me for at such an hour as this? I cannot come down; my wife and my children are with me in bed; I cannot give you bread at this hour of the night." "But," says the other, "I must have it and I hope you will give it to me. What a friend you have been to me in times past!" "Friend or no friend," he says, "I shall not give you anything at this time of night."

He will not rise and give to him just because he is his friend. Then what does the poor man do? He says, "I will not go back." He thinks he sees that poor hungry man and he cannot bear the thought of going back and saying that he has nothing for him. That was the only house where he could get bread and so he knocks again. "Oh, dear me, says the man—I thought I had got rid of that fellow. I told him I couldn't get up at this hour and I won't!" But then there comes another rap—a tremendous one and a child says "Father, we can't go to sleep! Hadn't you better go and give that man his bread?" But the father says, "No, I shall not! Why does he trouble me in this way?" Then there comes another rap and he goes to the window in great anger and asks him, "What do you want, coming here knocking in this way? I tell you once and for all, I shall not give you anything!"

"Well," says the man, "you must give me bread. I cannot go till you do! If you do not give me any, I mean to stay here and knock all night."

“Well,” says Jesus, “I tell you, though he will not arise and give it to him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him what he needs.” So he comes downstairs, gets the loaves, opens the door and says to the man, “Here, take as many as you need, and be off with you, and never come to disturb me any more at night.” So off he goes—and importunity gets what even friendship could not obtain!

Well, then the Savior gives another picture. Importunity can get what even justice ought to get, but cannot. There is the poor widow—she is robbed of all she has. She had a little plot of ground and a little cottage with just enough to keep her children through the winter. And there was a little field, or two, that she could let out for sufficient rent to keep her all the year—but now it is all pounced upon. She does not know what she is to do. Somebody will come in to claim it who has no right to it. She is turned out of house and home—and she and her poor children are on the streets! She goes off to the judge’s house to see him—a rather wild errand, that, for when she gets there, there stand the porters at the door, and the men with long spears and they say, “Woman, what do you want?” “I want to see the judge.” “You cannot see the judge. He has got plenty to do without seeing you.” “But I must see him! There is a man who has been taking...” “I do not want to know anything at all about it! You cannot see him.” “But I must see him,” says the woman and, somehow or other, though the porters repulse her all day long, she manages to get into court! And just when some witness steps down, up comes the woman and begins, “My Lord.” “What case is this, Sergeant?” asks the judge. “Oh, it has nothing to do with the court business today, my Lord!” “Get down with you,” says the judge to the woman. “O my Lord,” she replies, “there is a man that has come and taken away...” “Now, you have no right here, I tell you, you must go!”

And she steps down, sad at heart. But the next morning she comes again. As soon as ever the court house is open, there is the woman at the door! Before anybody can be found to enter, there she is! She had established herself there as soon as the people came to get the place ready. Well, before they can begin the business of the day, the woman begins crying out, “O my lord, my husband is dead.” “Did you not come here yesterday?” asks the judge. “Yes, my Lord.” “Well, I thought I told you this was not the proper time and place to apply. I cannot attend to you.” “O my Lord, if you would but just hear my case a little!” “Bring up the next case,” says the judge, and there is a case brought up, and the judge proceeds. There happens, however, to be an interlude in the business, such as the poor widow has been looking for a long time. And his Honor is just going out of court for a little refreshment. And as he is leaving, the woman steps up and says, “My Lord.” “Now take that woman away! She is always coming here and disturbing me.”

The poor woman is taken away, but she returns, and all day long the poor soul is there. She comes the next day, and when the judge arrives, there is the apparition of this poor woman to startle him again. What is to be done all day long? He knows that at every possible opportunity she can get, she will be down upon him to ask him to avenge her of her ad-

versary. At length he says, "Well, what is your case?" And as soon as it is stated, he thinks to himself, "I know that man very well, that has taken away her property. He is a friend of mine. I shall not interfere in the case. I neither fear God, nor regard man, but as a friend of mine has got her property, I shall not interfere." And then, addressing the woman, "I absolutely forbid you ever to come to this place again."

But she comes again, and again, and again, until one day she steps into the witness box, and says, "My lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit." "Now I do not want any more of that! You are always giving me your long sermons in court." "My lord," continues the woman, "I will have a hearing today. I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have been here many times before and you have sent me away when I ought to have had justice at your hands. And now this day, unless I am dragged out of court by force, I will stop until I get justice!" Well, the judge thinks to himself a moment or two and says, "If I were just to decide this woman's case, I would get rid of her. Well, come, my good Woman, let us hear about it." So she tells the whole history of the case. The judge sends the officer of the court to enquire into it and, at last he says, "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her of her adversary." He accordingly sets all her accounts square and she goes home to her cottage with a joyous heart—and her children are fed and all is happy, for the judge has set her free from all her dilemmas!

Now, Friends, there you have a case of importunity even going before the claims of justice, as in the other case it went before the claims of friendship.

Now what are these two pictures to teach the sinner? They are to teach the sinner that if the importunate woman could prevail with an unjust judge, you will prevail with a loving Savior! They are to teach you that if by constant knocking, the friend who at first would not rise, at last did rise and give bread, by your repeated prayers you shall at last find the salvation that you need! I am certain that somewhere within the compass of my voice, there is one who has been for weeks and months seeking the Savior, but he or she has never yet found Him. Satan has perhaps whispered, "God will never have mercy on *you*. You may as well give up prayer—prayer is a useless employment if it has no answer! Never attend the House of God again—there is no mercy for you. Never again come to the Throne of Grace, for God's ears are deaf to you—He will not hear *your* supplication."

Now, poor Heart, listen not to the temptation of the devil, but listen to this that I have to say to you! Go again seven times and if that suffices not, 70 times seven! God has not promised to answer you the first time! He will answer you, however, at the end, so continue your prayers. When, with deep anxiety of spirit I sought the Savior, I prayed many months before I could get an answer. And I heard my mother say, one day, that there never was a man in the world, she believed, so wicked as to say that he had sought God truly and earnestly in prayer, and God had not answered him. "Many black oaths," she said, "have been sworn,

but I never heard of any man who was allowed to utter a sentence so derogatory to the love and mercy of God as that, 'I have sought God and He would not save me.'" At once the thought struck me, "I will say that, for I know I have sought God and I feel He has not heard me." I resolved that I would say it and that she should hear me, for I felt my spirit vexed within me. I had sought God and, I thought, with all my heart, and He had never vouchsafed to hear me. But then it occurred to me, "Would it not be better to try again before saying it?" That time I sought as I had not sought before and that time I found and rejoiced in hope of the Glory of God, because my supplication had been answered in my own heart, to my own soul's comfort!

Now, if you are in the same position and are laboring under the same temptation, try again. If your knees have been bent 70 times in vain, remember you have 70 times the fewer to pray in vain, so try again! You are so much nearer the appointed number which you must reach before God will hear you! Do not give up your efforts. In fact, I know you neither will nor can give up if God, the Holy Spirit, has taught you praying, for that is one of the things that Satan cannot do—he cannot effectually stop a praying tongue! He cannot forever quench the desire of the soul, though he may for a time do it by despondency and despair, yet he cannot do it in the end. I want, before I have done, to take the hand of that young man, or that young woman who is tonight seeking the Savior, but, as yet, without having found Him to his heart's joy. And I want to say a kind word to him. Dear Brother, Sister, God *will* hear you! Be of good courage, but, in the meantime, to keep your spirits up, I will tell you a few things.

Consider what a great Being God is, and what a little creature you are, and then you need not wonder that you have to wait. Why poor people, when they go to see a rich man, will stay in his hall for hours! And if they are going to see a great lord, they will not mind waiting in the ante-chamber where there is no fire till their feet are cramped with cold, so long as they have a hope that they shall get an audience at last. The pertinacity of the beggar in the streets is sometimes astonishing—you cannot get rid of him! You walk a little faster and he walks a little faster, too! He keeps talking to you about his wife who is sick, and tells you that he is a poor man, that you will never miss what you give him, that God will bless you and all that. Well, if a beggar will wait upon his fellow worm, if we would be content to wait upon the great of the earth for so long a season, oh, we need not murmur against God if He bids us wait in His halls, for we are poor miserable sinners who are good for nothing and He is the eternal God! There is such a distance between Him and us that we need not murmur if He keeps us waiting.

Besides, let us recollect what a great blessing it is we are asking for. The beggar will stay at your door half an hour with the hope of getting, perhaps, a crust of bread. And men will go and wait in the halls of princes just to get a word. But ah, my Friends, that which we are seeking is more than that! We are seeking for the salvation of our souls! We are seeking for the blood of Christ, for the pardon of sin, for a seat in Para-

dise, for deliverance from the flames of Hell! And for such a gift as this it were worthwhile waiting a thousand years if we might be sure of getting it at last!

But again, poor Soul, be willing to wait because, let me tell you this, you are sure to get what you seek. "Oh," cries one, "I would not mind what I did if I thought I could be saved at last." Well, you will. There was never a soul that perished praying, never one who sought the Savior who was at last cast away! Oh, if the Lord should keep you waiting till your head is silvered over with gray, His mercy would not come too late! He would be sure at last to give an ear to your supplication and bestow upon you the blessing. Therefore be patient. Though the promise tarries, wait for it, for it will be sure to come. But while you are waiting, do not do as some people have done. I once had a hearer who used to tell me that he was waiting and I could never get him out of that idea, say what I would, until at last I had to use a good illustration in order to prove to him that he was *not* waiting.

"Now," I said, "suppose I came to your house one day to tea and you said to me, 'My dear Sir, how late you are! We have been waiting for you.' And suppose there was no fire in the grate, no kettle singing on the hob, and no tea made? I would say, 'I do not believe you.'" Waiting implies being ready! If a man is waiting for another, he is ready for him. If you are waiting for the coach, why, you have your hat on and great coat and your gloves, and your bag is packed and you are ready to start. If you are waiting for the train, you are standing on the platform and looking for its arrival. And when a man is waiting for Christ, he is ready for Christ. But when they say they are waiting and they fold their arms in unconcern, it is a gross lie! They are waiting for God to destroy them, and nothing else!

When men do really wait for the Lord, this is the way they wait—they go where they hope to meet Him. If they hear that Jesus is in the House of God, they go there. If they hear that He is to be found in the reading of the Word, they read it day and night. If they hear that some minister has been especially blessed in the salvation of souls, they will go many miles to hear him in order that they may see Jesus. They will go where Jesus goes and when they get near Jesus, they will cry after Him. They will do as the blind man did when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth passed by! Let us describe that scene, for a moment. A poor man sat by the wayside one day. He could see nothing, but he heard a great noise and a lot of people coming his way, so he said to some of the crowd, "What is that?" And they replied, "It is Jesus of Nazareth that passes by." That, he thinks, is a fine opportunity, and he cries out as loud as ever he can, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus Christ is preaching to the crowd as He walks along, working miracles, and He takes no notice of the cry. Then there is another shout, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The disciples come and tell him to be quiet, that he is disturbing Christ in His preaching and that he must not make so much noise—but so much the more, a great deal, he cries, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And that shout prevailed over the voice of Christ and the tramping of the feet of the multitude!

Then Christ stood still and looked at the blind man, opened his eyes and gave him sight! Now you must do the same—you must cry to Christ, you must agonize in prayer and wrestle on your knees before Him when you think that you are near to Him. Above all, study His promises and read His Word. And if this suffices not, hear, then, the last advice and the best—go to your chamber, tonight, you that have sought the Savior long and, as you think, sought Him in vain—go to your chamber, shut your door, fall on your knees, open His Holy Word, turn to that passage which describes the death of Jesus and when you have meekly and reverently read through the story of the Crucifixion, shut the Book, sit down and picture in your mind's eye the hill of Calvary—see the Cross in the midst of those two other crosses of the thieves. Picture to yourselves the Lord Jesus with the crown of thorns on His head, with His hands all dropping blood, with His side distilling a purple torrent. Don't think of anything else!

The first thing that will happen, God the Holy Spirit helping you, will be that you will begin to weep. Tears will run down your cheeks at the sight of the dear bleeding Man and, after a while, faith will begin to kindle and the thought will arise, "Many souls have been saved by trusting in Him that died upon the Cross—and why not I?" And it may be that you shall come down from that chamber of yours with a light heart and gladsome countenance, singing as you come down the stairs—

***"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His sin-aton-ing blood!
With Divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God!"***

There is no other way of getting peace like that. O you that have sought often, adopt this last resource! You can but perish coming to Jesus! You will perish if you do not come! But at His feet never a sinner died and never a sinner shall! "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You sin-bitten, conscience-stricken sons of men, hear the Gospel—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, that Christ died for sinners. Believe the Gospel and your soul shall live! You shall be saved and rejoice in everlasting Glory!

Christ died for real sinners. You ask a man, "Do you take God's name in vain?" "No." "Do you honor other gods before the Lord Jehovah?" "No." "Do you ever break the Sabbath?" "No." "Do you always honor your father and mother?" "Yes, all these things have I kept from my youth up." Well then, Jesus Christ did not die for you at all—you are too good to go to Heaven! You are not the sort of person the Gospel is preached to! Jesus Christ says, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He came to save him whose aching heart and bleeding spirit and tearful eyes betray the man who feels himself a sinner!

Now, may I write the word SINNER in great capital letters and ask, "Who is the man that this word depicts?" Suppose I were to do it? Are there not some of you who would get up and say from your hearts, "O Sir, that is my name! You may put that on me, I the am chief of sinners."

Well then, Jesus died for you! “But,” says one, “if I had a few good works, I should *then* think He died for me.” Then you would have no reason to think so! Your reason for believing that Christ died for you must be grounded *on your sins*. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*”—that must be your only groundwork. “It is hard,” says one, “to draw white from black.” Yes, but though it is hard, that is what faith must do. You must infer the good from the seeming evil. You know Martin Luther’s logic. He says, in his book on Galatians, that Satan once came to him and said, “Martin, you are a great sinner. You will be damned.” “No,” said he, “Satan, the first is true—I am a great sinner. The second is not true, for, because I am a great sinner, (and I thank you for telling me of it), and because I feel it, I shall be saved, for Christ came to save sinners! And so I cut your head off with your own sword.” The greatest saints on earth often have come to this. “Oh,” said the heir of Heaven, “I am afraid I am no child of God.” And the shortcut to comfort is this, “Well, if I am not a child of God, I am a sinner and—

**“A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Spirit has made him so.”**

And straightway he comes to Christ, and cries—

**“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling!”**

Poor Sinners, that is believing on Christ, believing that He died for you when there is no evidence that He did except your own sense of *sin*. Then, casting your black soul into the fountain, bringing your naked soul to the heavenly wardrobe—then do you prove the power of faith and then are you thus manifested to be the children of God in verity and truth.

May the Lord add His blessing! If there are any careless souls here, may He awaken them, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

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THE SEARCH FOR FAITH

NO. 1963

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 15, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”
Luke 18:8.***

IT is absolutely certain that God will hear the prayers of His people. From beneath the altar, souls cry unto Him day and night to vindicate the cause of Christ, the cause of truth and righteousness—and to cast down His adversary—these shall be answered speedily. Here on earth, scant though the supplication may be, yet there is a remnant according to the election of Grace who cease not to importune the Almighty God to make bare His arm and display the majesty of His Word. Though for wise and gracious purposes the answer to those prayers may be delayed, yet it is absolutely certain. Shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him though He keeps their case long in hand? Assuredly He will, for those prayers are inspired by the Spirit who knows the mind of God! They are for the Glory of God and of His Christ and they are presented by our great High Priest! Long-suffering keeps back the advent and the judgment for a while, for the Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But He will *not* forever delay the long-expected end! The Lord Jesus, Himself, gives us this personal assurance, “I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.” No doubt remains when Jesus says, “I tell you.” The Lord will come and, according to His own reckoning, He will come *quickly*. His reckoning is according to the chronology of Heaven and this, the heirs of Heaven ought gladly to accept—it is meet that even now we keep celestial time.

Brothers and Sisters, let not your hearts fail you as to the ultimate issue of the present conflict. “The Lord shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!” He shall utterly abolish the idols. Antichrist shall be overthrown—like a millstone cast into the sea, it shall fall and be no more. The heathen shall be our Lord’s inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth shall be His possession. He must reign until all enemies shall be put under His feet. If the present contest should be continued, century after century, be not weary! It is only long to your impatience. It is a short work to God! So grand a volume of the book as this, which contains the history of redemption, may well require a long time for its unrolling—and to such poor readers as we are, the spelling of it out, word by word, may seem an endless task! But we shall yet come to its close and then we shall find that, like the Book of Psalms, it ends in hallelujahs.

The matter to be questioned is not what God will do, but what *men* will do. Faithfulness is established in the very heavens—but what of faithfulness upon the earth? The part that God allots to us is that we believe His Word, for so shall we be established. It is the child's part to trust his father; it is the disciple's part to accept the teaching of his Master. Alas, how little there is of it at this moment! Knowing the feebleness of the faith of those around Him and foreseeing that future generations would partake of the same folly, the Savior gave utterance to this memorable question, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" God is faithful, but are *men* faithful? God is true, but do we believe Him? This is the point and it is upon this that I shall speak this morning as the Holy Spirit shall help me.

I. I notice with regard to our text, first, that IT IS REMARKABLE IF WE CONSIDER THE PERSON MENTIONED AS SEARCHING FOR FAITH—"When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

When Jesus comes, He will look for precious faith. He has more regard for faith than for anything else that earth can yield Him! Our returning Lord will care nothing for the treasures of the rich or the honors of the great. He will not look for the abilities we have manifested, nor the influence we have acquired—He will look for our faith! It is His Glory that He is "believed on in the world" and to *that* He will have respect. This is the jewel for which He is searching. This heavenly Merchant counts faith to be the pearl of great price—faith is precious to Jesus as well as to us.

The Last Day will be occupied with a great scrutiny and that scrutiny will be made upon the essential point—where is there faith and where is there no faith? He that believes is saved. He that believes not is condemned. A search warrant will be issued for our houses and our hearts. And the enquiry will be—Where is your faith? Did you honor Christ by trusting His Word and His blood, or did you not? Did you glorify God by believing His Revelation and depending upon His promise, or did you not? The fact that our Lord at His coming will seek for faith should cause us to think very highly of faith. It is no mere act of the intellect—it is a Grace of the Holy Spirit which brings glory to God and produces obedience in the heart. Jesus looks for it because He is the proper object of it and it is by means of it that His great end in His First Advent is carried out. Dear Hearers, conceive for a minute that our Savior is searching for faith right now. "His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men." This is the gold He seeks after amid the quartz of our humanity. This is the objective of His royal quest—"Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

When our Lord comes and looks for faith, *He will do so in His most sympathetic Character.* Our text asks not, "When the Son of God comes," but, "When the *Son of Man* comes, will He find faith on the earth?" It is peculiarly as the Son of Man that Jesus will sit as a Refiner to discover whether we have true faith or not. He, also, as the Son of Man, displayed faith in God. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is mentioned as one of the points in which He is made like unto His brethren, that He said, "I will put My trust in Him." The life of Jesus was a life of faith—faith which cried, "My God, My God," even when He was forsaken! His was, on a grander

scale than ours, the battle of faith in the great Father waged against all the rebellions influences which were in array against Him. He knows what fierce temptations men experience, for He has felt the same. He knows how want tries the faithful and what faith is needed to be able to say, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live."

He knows how elevation tests the soul, for He once stood on the pinnacle of the Temple and heard the infernal whisper, "Cast Yourself down: for He shall give His angels charge over You." He knows what faith means in contradistinction to a false confidence which misreads the promise and forgets the precept altogether. He will not err in judgment and accept brass for gold! He knows what it is to be tempted with the proffer of honor and gain—"All these things will I give You," said the fiend, "if You will fall down and worship me." He knows how faith puts all the glory of the world away with its one brave and prompt utterance, "Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."

Beloved, when Jesus comes as the Son of Man, He will recognize our weaknesses, He will remember our trials! He will know the struggle of our hearts and the sorrow which an honest faith has cost us. He is best qualified to put the true price upon tried faith, self-denying faith, long-enduring faith. He will discern between the men who presume and the men who believe—the men who dote upon vain delusions and those who follow the plain path of God's own Word.

Further, I would have you note well that *the Son of Man is the most likely Person to discover faith if it is to be found*. Not a grain of faith exists in all the world except that which He has, Himself, created! If you have faith, my Brother, my Sister, the Lord has dealt with you—this is the mark of His hand upon you! By faith He has brought you out of your death in sin and the natural darkness of your mind. "Your faith has saved you," for it is the candlestick which holds the candle by which the chamber of your heart is enlightened. Your God and Savior has put this faith in you! Now, if faith in every instance is our Lord's *gift*, He knows to whom He has given it. If it is the work of God, He knows where He has produced it, for He never forsakes the work of His own hands. If that faith is only as a grain of mustard seed and if it is hidden away in the most obscure corner of the earth, yet the loving Jesus spies it out, for He has an intimate concern in it since He is its Author and Finisher! Our Lord is also the Sustainer of faith, for faith is never independent of Him upon whom it relies. The greatest Believer would not believe for another *moment* unless Grace were constantly given him to keep the flame of faith burning. Beloved Friend, if you have had any experience of the inner life at all, you know that He that first made you live must keep you alive, or else you will go back to your natural death! Since faith from day to day feeds at the table of Jesus, then *He* knows where it is! It is well for us that we have One looking for faith who, on account of His having created and sustained it, will be at no loss to discern it!

Besides, *faith always looks to Christ*. There is no faith in the world worth having, but what looks *to Him and through Him to God for everything*. On the other hand, Christ always looks to faith—there was never yet an eye of faith but what it met the eye of Christ! He delights in faith. It is His joy to be trusted. It is a great part of the reward of His death that the sons of men should come and shelter in Him. If faith looks to Christ and Christ looks to faith, He is sure to find it out when He comes—and that makes the text so very striking—“When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

The Son of Man will give a wise and generous judgment in the matter. Some brethren judge so harshly that they would tread out the sparks of faith, but it is never so with our gracious Lord. He does not quench the smoking flax, nor despise the most trembling faith. The question becomes most emphatic when it is put thus—the tender and gentle Savior, who never judges too severely, when He comes, shall even *He* find faith on the earth? What a sad and humbling question it is! He who is no morose critic but a kind interpreter of character. He who makes great allowances for feebleness. He that carries the lambs of faith in His bosom and gently leads the weak ones—when even *He* shall come to make a kindly search, will He be able to find faith on the earth? Unbelief is rampant, indeed, when He who is Omniscient can scarcely find a grain of faith amid the mass of doubt and denial! Ah me, that ever I should have to explain the question, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

Once more—I want to put this question into a striking light by dwelling on *the time of the scrutiny*. “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” Look, Brothers and Sisters, the ages are accumulating proofs of the truth of Christianity—and the search takes place when this process has reached its climax. Whatever may be said about the present torrent of doubt, which no doubt is exceedingly strong, yet the reason for doubt grows weaker and weaker every year. Every mound of earth in the East contributes a fresh testimony to the accuracy of the Word of God. Stones are crying out against the incredulity of skeptics! Moreover, all the experiences of all the saints, year after year, are swelling the stream of testimony to the faithfulness of God! You that are growing gray in His service know how every year confirms your confidence in the eternal verities of your God and Savior. I know not how long this dispensation of long-suffering will last, but certainly the longer it continues, the more wantonly wicked does unbelief become! The more God reveals Himself to man in ways of Providence, the more base is it on man’s part to belie His solemn witness. But yet, my Brothers and Sisters, at the winding up of all things, when Revelation shall have received its utmost confirmation—even *then* faith will be such a rarity on the earth that it is a question if the Lord, Himself, will find it! You have, perhaps, a notion that faith will go on *increasing* in the world—that the Church will grow purer and brighter—and that there will be a wonderful degree of faith among men in the day of our Lord’s appearing. Our Savior does not tell us so—instead, He asks the question of our text about it! Even concerning the dawn of the golden age He asks, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

I want you to notice the breadth of *the region of search*. He does not ask shall He find faith among philosophers. When had they any? He does not confine His scrutiny to an ordained ministry or a visible church—He takes a much wider sweep—“Shall He find faith *on the earth?*” As if He would search from throne to cottage, among the learned and among the ignorant, among public men and obscure individuals and, after all, it would be a question whether among them all—from the pole to the equator and again, from the equator to the other pole—He would find faith at all. Alas, poor Earth, to be so void of faith! Is there none in her vast continents, or on the lone islets of the sea? May it not be found in some of the countless ships upon the deep? What? Not upon the whole earth? Not with Jesus, Himself, to look for it?

I have tried to set forth the question as distinctly as I can, that it may have due effect upon your minds. It sounds through the chambers of my soul like the death of many a grand hope and pleasant imagination. Lord, what is man, that centuries of mercy can scarcely produce a single fruit of faith among a whole world of the sons of Adam? When thousands of summers and autumns have come and gone, shall there be no harvest of faith upon the earth except for a few ears of corn, thin and withered by the east wind?

II. Let us somewhat change the run of our thoughts. Having introduced the question as a remarkable one, we will next notice that IT IS EXCEEDINGLY INSTRUCTIVE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PARABLE OF WHICH IT IS PART. It is wrong to use the Bible as if it were a box full of separate links and not a chain of connected Truths of God. Some pick sentences out of it as a crow picks worms out of a plowed field! If you tear words from their connection, they may not express the mind of the Spirit at all. No book, whether written by God or man, will bear to be torn, limb from limb, without being horribly mutilated. Public speakers know the unfairness of this to themselves and Holy Scripture suffers even more. The *connection* settles the drift and directs us to the true meaning—a meaning which may be very different from that which it seems to bear when torn from its surroundings. Let us carefully note that this passage occurs in connection with the parable of the importunate widow pleading with the unjust judge and, therefore, it is to be interpreted in connection with it.

Therefore it means, first of all—When the Son of Man comes, will He find upon the earth *the faith which prays importunately* as this widow did? *Now* the meaning is dawning upon us! We have many upon the earth who pray, but where are those whose continual praying is sure to prevail? I thank God that the Prayer Meetings of this Church are well sustained by praying men and women, but where are the Jacob-like wrestlers? I am afraid it cannot be said of many churches that their Prayer Meetings are at all what they should be, for among many, the gathering for prayer is despised and men say, “It is only a Prayer Meeting!” As if that were not the very crown and queen of all the assemblies of the Church, with the sole exception of that for the breaking of bread! Brethren, I will not judge with severity, but where are those who offer effectual, fervent, much-prevailing prayer? I know that there are many here who do not neglect private and

family devotion and who pray constantly for the prosperity of the Church of Jesus Christ and for the salvation of souls. But even to you I put the question—If the Son of Man were now to come, how many would He find among us that pray with a distinct, vehement, irresistible importunity of faith?

In the olden days there was a John Knox whose prayers were more terrible to the adversary than whole armies because he pleaded in faith—but where shall we find a Knox at this hour? Every age of revival has had its men mighty in prayer—where are ours? Where is the Elijah on the top of Carmel who will bring down the rain upon these parched fields? Where is the Church that will pray down a Pentecost? I will not decry my Brothers in the ministry, nor speak little of deacons and elders and other distinguished servants of my Lord—but still, my Brothers and Sisters—taking us all round, how few of us know what it is to pray the Heaven-overcoming prayer which is necessary for this crisis! How few of us go again and again—and again to God with tears, cries and heart-break—pleading as for our own lives for the increase of Zion and the saving of the ungodly! If the Son of Man comes, will He find much of such praying faith among our own churches? Ah me, that I should have to ask such a question—but I do ask it—hanging my head in shame!

The importunate widow waited with strong resolve and never ceased through sullen doubt. If the judge had not yet heard her, she was sure he must hear her, for she had made up her mind that she would plead until he did! A waiting faith is rare. Men can believe for a time, but to hold out through the long darkness is another matter. Some soldiers are good at a rush, but they cannot form a square and stand fast hour after hour. When the Son of Man comes, will He find many who can believe in a delaying God and plead a long-dated promise—waiting, but never wearying? When we have a revival and everybody is crying, “Hosanna!” certain eager folk are sure to be in the front. But when the popular voice growls out its, “Crucify Him!” where are they? Where are even Peter, John and the rest of the disciples? Go, learn to plead on when no answer comes and to press on when repulsed—this is the test of faith.

It is so easy to be a Believer when everybody believes! But to be a Believer when *nobody* believes and to be, none the less, a firm Believer because nobody believes with you—this is the mark of the man valiant for the Truth of God and loyal to Jesus. Brothers and Sisters, is it, after all, a matter of counting heads? Can you not dare to be in the right with two or three? Can you not be like rocks which defy the raging waves? Can you not let the billows of popular misbelief wash over you, break and crash—and break and crash in vain? If these things scare you, where is your faith? When the Son of Man comes, how many will He find on the earth whose faith stands not in men, but in the witness of God?

The widow staked her all upon the result of her pleading with the judge. She had not two strings to her bow—she had but one resort in her trouble—the judge *must* hear her. She would lose her little property and her children would die of starvation if he did not hear her. He *must* hear her! About that she had no two opinions. What we need at the present moment

is the man that believes God, believes the Gospel, believes Christ and does not care two pins about anything else! We need those who will stake reputation, hope and life, itself, upon the veracity of God and the certainty of the everlasting Gospel. To such, the Revelation of God is not one among many truths—it is the one and only saving Truth of God! Alas, we have, nowadays, to deal with foxes with holes to run to in case they are too closely hunted! Oh, to have done with all glory but glorying in the Cross! For my part, I am content to be a fool if the old Gospel is folly. What is more, I am content to be lost if faith in the atoning Sacrifice will not bring salvation! I am so sure about the whole matter, that if I were left alone in the world as the last Believer in the Doctrines of Grace, I would not think of abandoning them, nor even toning them down to win a convert. My all is staked on the veracity of God! “Let God be true, but every man a liar.”

“When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth,” such as He deserves at our hands? Do we believe in Jesus practically, in matter-of-fact style? Is our faith fact and not fiction? If we have the truth of faith, have we the degree of faith which we might have? Just think of this—“If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove.” What does this mean? Brethren, are we not off the rails? Do we even *know* what faith means? I begin, sometimes, to question whether we believe at all. What signs follow our believing? When we think what wonders faith could have done. When we consider what marvels our Lord might have worked among us if it had not been for our unbelief—are we not humiliated? Have we ever cut ourselves clear of the hamper of self-trustfulness? Have we ever launched out into the deep in clear reliance upon the eternal God? Have we ever quit the visible for the invisible? Have we clung to the naked promise of God and rested upon the bare arm of Omnipotence which, in and of itself, is more than sufficient for the fulfillment of every promise? O Lord, where are we? Where shall we find an oasis of faith amid this wilderness of doubt? Where shall we find an Abraham? Is not the question an instructive one when set in connection with the parable which teaches us the power of importunate prayer?

III. In the next place, our text seems to me to be SUGGESTIVE IN VIEW OF ITS VERY FORM. It is put as a question—“When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” I think it warns us *not to dogmatize about what the latter days will be*. Jesus puts it as a question. Shall He find faith on the earth? If you say, “No,” my dear Friend, I shall be very much inclined to take the other side and warmly plead the affirmative. I remember how Elijah said that he, only, was left, and yet the Lord had reserved unto Himself 7,000 men that had not bowed the knee to Baal. Nations that know not Christ shall run to Him and the kings of Sheba and Sheba shall offer gifts. I venture to hope that when the Son of Man comes He *will* find faith on the earth—but if you vehemently assert that it will be so, I shall be driven to advance the *negative* side with much apprehension that it may prove true! When our Lord was here before, He found little enough of faith. And He has distinctly told us that when He shall come the second time, men will be as they were in the days of Noah—“they did

eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark." I am inclined to take neither side. Let it remain a *question*, as our Lord has put it!

This question leads us to much holy fear as to the matter of faith. If our gracious Lord raises the question, the question ought to be raised. They say that some of us are old fogies because we are jealous for the Lord of Hosts. They say that we are nervous and fidgety and that our fears are the result of advancing age. Yes, at 53 I am supposed to be semi-imbecile with years! If I were of *their* way of thinking, I do not suppose that this would occur to *them*. We fall into a pessimism—I think that is the word they use—I do not know much about such terms. Surely the Savior was not nervous! None will dare to accuse *Him* of foolish anxiety! But yet He puts it, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" As far as my observation goes, it is a question which might suggest itself to the most hopeful persons at this time, for *many processes are in vigorous action which tend to destroy faith.* The Scriptures are being criticized with a familiarity which shocks all reverence and their very foundation is being assailed by persons who call themselves Christians! A chilling criticism has taken the place of a warm, childlike, loving confidence.

As one has truly said, "We have now a temple without a sanctuary." Mystery is discarded that reason may reign. Men have eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil till they think themselves gods! Revealed Truth of God is not now a doctrine to be believed, but a proposition to be discussed! The loving woman at Jesus' feet is cast out to make room for the traitor kissing Christ's cheek! Like Belshazzar, our men of modern thought are drinking out of the vessels of Jehovah's sanctuary in honor of their own deities! The idea of child-like faith is laughed at and he is regarded as the most honest man that can *doubt* the most and pour most contempt upon the authority of the Divine Word of God! If this continues, we may well ask, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" In some places the greatest fountain of infidelity is the Christian pulpit! If this is the case—and I am sure it is so—what must become of the churches and what must come to the outlying world? Will Jesus find faith in the earth when He comes?

In addition to many processes which are in action to exterminate faith, *are there not influences which dwarf and stunt it?* Where do you find great faith? Where is the preaching or the teaching that is done in full faith in what is preached and taught? It is no use dogging other people—let us come home to ourselves. My Brothers and Sisters, where is our own faith? It seemed almost a novelty in the Church when it was stated long ago that Mr. George Mueller walked by faith in regard to temporal things. To feed children by faith in God was looked upon as a pious freak! We have come to a pretty pass, have we not, when God is not to be trusted about common things? Abraham walked with God about daily life but, nowadays, if you meet with a man who walks with God as to his business, trusts God as to every item and detail of his domestic affairs, persons look at him with a degree of suspicious amazement! They think he has Grace in his heart, but they also suspect that he has a bee in his bonnet, or he would

not act in that sort of way! Oh yes, we have a fancied faith—but when it comes to the stern realities of life—where is our faith?

My Brothers and Sisters, why are you so full of worldly care? Why are you so anxious, if you have faith in God? Why do you display, in worldly things, almost as much distrust as worldly men? Why this fear? This murmuring? This worry? O my Savior, if You were to come, we could not defend ourselves for our wretched mistrust, our foolish apprehension, our lack of loving reliance upon You! We do not trust You as You ought to be trusted! And if this is the case among those who are such great debtors to Your loving faithfulness, where will You find faith on earth? Where is that unstaggering faith which betakes itself to prevailing prayer and so rises above the petty miseries of the hour and the fears of a threatening future?

Do you not think that this, put in a question as it is, invites us to intense watchfulness over ourselves? Do you not think it should set us scrutinizing ourselves as our Lord will scrutinize us when He comes? You have been looking for a great many things in yourself, my Brothers and Sisters—let me entreat you to look to your faith. What if love grows cold! I am sorry for it but, after all, the frost must have begun in your *faith*. You are not so active as you used to be. That is to be greatly regretted, but the streams run low because the wellhead is not as full as it was known to be—your faith is failing. Oh that your soul were fed upon Divine realities! Oh that you had a vivid consciousness of the certainty of God's Presence and power! When faith is strong, all the other Graces are vigorous. The branches flourish when the root sucks up abundant nutriment—and when faith is in a healthy state, all the rest of the spiritual man will also be vigorous. Brothers and Sisters, guard well your faith!

My fear is that when Christ comes, if He delays much longer, He will find many of us faint because of our long waiting and because of the disappointments which arise out of the slow spread of the Gospel. The nations continue in unbelief. O Lord, how long?! Because we have not accomplished all that we hoped to have done, we are apt to grow weary. Or perhaps when He comes, He will find us sleeping for sorrow, like the disciples in the garden when He came to them three times and found them very sleepy. We may get to feel so sad that the Gospel does not conquer all mankind that we may fall into a swoon of sadness, a torpor of despair and so be asleep when the Bridegroom comes! I fear, most of all, that when Jesus comes, He may find that the love of many has waxed cold because iniquity abounds. Warm-hearted saints keep each other warm, but cold is also contagious. When sin abounds, saints may be able to stand against it and yet it has a sad tendency to chill their faith. If the Master comes and finds us lukewarm, it will be a calamity, indeed! The question stirs a bitter anguish in my soul. I trust it also moves you.

It is a question. I cannot answer it, but I open wide the doors of my heart to let it enter and try me. It acts like a fan in the Lord's hand to purge the floor. It sweeps away my self-confidence and leads me to watch and pray, that I enter not into the temptation of giving up my faith. I pray that we may stand fast when others slide, so that when the Lord comes, we may be found accepted of Him.

IV. I will close with this remark—my text is very IMPRESSIVE IN RESPECT TO PERSONAL DUTY. “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” Let faith have a home in *our* hearts even if it is denied a lodging everywhere else. If *we* do not trust our Lord and trust Him much more than we have ever done, we shall deserve His gravest displeasure. It will be a superfluity of naughtiness for us to doubt, for, to some of us, conversion was a clear, sharp and distinct fact. The change made in our characters was so manifest that the devil, himself, could not make us doubt it. We know that the misery we suffered under a sense of sin was no fiction and that the peace we received through faith in Jesus was no dream. Why do we doubt?

Since conversion, some of us have been led in a strange way and every step of it has shown us that the Lord is good and true and ought to be trusted without stint. We have been sorely sick, full of pain, anguish and depression of spirit—yet we have been upheld, sustained and brought through! In great labors we have been strengthened. In great undertakings we have been supported. Some of you have been very poor, or your business has been declining and emergencies have been frequent—and yet all these have proven the Truth of God. Do not these things make it the more incumbent upon you to trust Him? Others of you have suffered sad bereavements. You have lost, one after another, the props of your comfort. But when you have gone to God, He has heard your prayers and been better to you than father, husband, or friend! It is down in your diary in black and white that His mercy endures forever and you have said to yourself many times, “I shall never doubt again after this.”

Brothers and Sisters, it ought to be impossible for us to mistrust—and natural to confide! And yet I fear it is not so. If after all this watering, we grow so little faith, we may not wonder that our Lord asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

Some of us have been so familiar with dying beds—we have seen so many pass away in holy calm and even with transporting triumph—that for us to doubt is disrespect to the memories of the saints! For us to doubt would be treachery to the Lord who has favored ourselves, also, with visits of His love. We may doubt the dearest ones we have and that would be cruel—but we had better do that than cast any suspicion upon Him who has manifested Himself to us as He does not to the world! I speak not to you all, but I speak to those whom the Lord has specially favored, to whom He has revealed His secrets and made known His Covenant. For these to question His faithfulness is wickedness! What shall I say of His own elect, if they do not believe Him? If it were possible for you to quit your faith, you would crucify your Lord afresh! He must not be thus wounded in the house of His friends. Go, go where you will, O Unbelief, you shall not find willing lodgment in *my* heart! From my spirit you shall be banished as a detested traitor, for my Beloved is true and I will lean upon Him!

I think I hear you say, “We are resolved upon it. We are called to have faith in our Lord, even if none else believe Him.” Then look to it that you do not fail in these evil times. If you would keep your faith, settle it in your

minds that the Holy Scriptures are inspired of the Holy Spirit and so are our Infallible rule of faith! If you give up that foundation, you cannot exhibit faith worthy of the name. It is as clear as the sun in the heavens that a childlike faith in God as He is revealed is not possible to the man who doubts the Revelation. You must accept the Revelation as Infallible or you cannot unquestioningly believe in the God therein revealed! If you once give up Inspiration, the foundations are removed and all building is laborious trifling. How are the promises the support of faith if they are questionable? God can only be known by His own light and if we cannot trust the Light of God, where are we?

Next, settle it in your soul as to the Holy Spirit's dealings with yourself. He has renewed you in the spirit of your mind. At least I ask the question—Has He or has He not? You were converted by a Divine agency from your lost estate of sin and brought, by the same Divine agency, into newness of life—were you or were you not? Unless you are quite certain about this, it is not possible for you to rise to any height of faith. You *must* know that God has come into contact with your soul, or else what have you to believe?

Next to that belief you must know your full pardon and sure justification through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ your Lord. Believe in the precious blood! Whatever else you doubt, believe in the merit of the great Sacrifice of Calvary. Rejoice in your own acceptance through the Sacrifice, seeing your whole faith rests therein! O Brothers and Sisters, our eternal hopes cannot be built on speculation—we need the Revelation of God! We cannot fight the battles of life with probabilities—we need certainties for such a conflict! If God has not revealed fixed Truths, you may go and think and dream—but if He has given us a clear Revelation, let us believe it and cease to imagine and invent! O Sirs, if you must speculate, risk your silver and your gold, but I beseech you to lay aside all idea of speculating in reference to your souls! I need absolute certainties and unquestionable verities to bear me up when death's cold flood is rising up to my loins! Divine Truths of God, as they are written in the Book and brought home to the heart by the Holy Spirit, are sure standing ground for that faith which Jesus looks for. He looks for it in vain when men no longer accept His work as undoubted fact.

Again, if you would have strong faith, never relax your confidence in the efficacy of *prayer*. This is essential to my text, for the widow used no other weapon than prayer in her importunity with the judge. She would not have persevered as she did in her pleadings if she had not felt morally certain that in the long run she would prevail. Brothers and Sisters, believe that God hears your prayers and that He will answer them! As for me, I do not need any argument to prove the influence of prayer with God. I have tried it and do try it till it is no longer an experiment! The man that habitually eats bread knows that he is nourished by it—the man that habitually lives by prayer to God knows that God hears him! It would be absurd to offer him evidence for or against the statement. If a person were to argue with me that there was no sun in the heavens, I am afraid I should laugh outright.

If anyone said that he did not believe me to be alive, I do not know in what way I could prove it to him. Would it be lawful to kick him, by way of argument? When a man says, "I do not believe in prayer," I answer, "What if you do not? You are the only loser." That God answers prayer is a living certainty to me and I can say no more and no less. If you do not believe in prayer, assuredly the Lord will not find in you the faith of which our text speaks. If you regard it as a pious exercise which refreshes the devout but has no power whatever with God—well then, if *all* are of your mind, the Son of Man will find no faith on the earth! Do not talk about *believing*—you know nothing of the matter!

If you do believe, believe up to the hilt! Plunge into this sea of holy confidence in God and you shall find waters to swim in. He that believes what he believes shall see what he shall see. No man yet was ever found guilty of believing in God too much! Among the high intelligences of Heaven, no creature was ever censured for being too credulous when dealing with the Word of the Most High. Let us believe implicitly and explicitly. Let us believe without measure and without reserve. Let us hang our all upon the Truth of God. Let us also aspire to walk with God in the heavenlies and become the King's Remembrancers. Let us seek Grace to become importunate pleaders of a sort that cannot be denied, since their faith overcomes Heaven by prayer.

Oh, that I might have in my Church many a prevailing Israel! Some here know what it is to be up early in the morning to besiege the Throne of Grace with all the power of believing prayer. How much I owe to these dear ones, eternity, alone, will declare! Oh, that we had many more intercessors who would bear sinners on their hearts day and night before the Lord and, like their Savior, would never rest till the Lord built up His Church! Alas, for the rarity of such conquering faith! I question whether there are not Christian people here who have never heard a certain text which I am about to quote—and I am sure there are others who will shudder when they hear it—"Thus says the Lord, concerning the work of My hands, command you Me."

"Surely that cannot be Scripture!" cries one! But it is so. Turn to Isaiah 45:11 and read it both in the Authorized and the Revised Versions. Can a *man* command the Lord? YES! To believing men He puts Himself at their call! He bids them command His help and use it as they will. Oh that we could rise to this! Is there such faith among us? If there is not, may our Lord Jesus, by His Spirit, work it in us for His own Glory! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
 Luke 17:20-37; 18:1-8.
 HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—149, 12, 691.**

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THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP NO. 2395

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 13, 1895.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 3, 1887.

*“Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the
one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.”
Luke 18:10.*

THIS is called a parable, yet it is rather an incident, an anecdote, a statement of facts. You will observe that our Lord never used a fable. Fables may be employed to set forth that which is earth-born, but a *parable*, which is, in itself, true, is alone adapted to set forth spiritual Truths of God. I say this just now because I read, the other day, an assertion that the story of the rich man and Lazarus was only a fable, like that of Jotham. But the most of our Lord's parables are not only parables, but literal facts—and all of them might be facts. I would almost go the length of saying that all of them *have been* actual facts and in this case there is nothing parabolic at all. It is the statement of an incident which did literally occur, for truth is best illustrated by truth and, as Christ had nothing to teach but what was pure Truth, He illustrated it by Truth and never went into the realm of fiction, or invented a tale, or told a story which was not a fact, much less did He ever teach by a mere fable!

There were two men who went into the Temple to pray. They prayed in just the way that our Lord describes and they went away, the one justified, and the other without a blessing. I am not going into the full teaching of the parable on this occasion, but I want to make a few observations concerning public worship in the Lord's House. Commencing to preach, again, on Thursday nights, after my season of rest, I thought that this sermon should be a sort of preface or introduction to our gatherings for prayer, praise, preaching and hearing the Word. God grant us a blessing in beginning, again, this holy employment. And may we be in health and strength and spiritual vigor, and be of some use to the people of God!

I. Commencing, then, I would say, first, that IT IS WELL TO WORSHIP GOD IN PUBLIC—“Two men went up into the Temple to pray.”

It is good to pray anywhere. He that does not pray in his closet is but a hypocrite when he pretends to pray in the Temple. But, though we pray in the closet—though we get into such a habit of prayer and are so full of the spirit of prayer that we can pray anywhere—it is well to go and mingle with others and openly worship God who delights to be thus wor-

shipped. It was written very early in the history of our race, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." It has been the custom of the godly to meet for worship in all times. The sheep of Christ are gregarious—this is their nature, they love to gather themselves into congregations, to feed in the same pasture—and to enjoy, together, the Presence of their great Shepherd. It will always be so. The more pious and godly men are, alone, the more will they love associated worship. If it should ever happily come to pass that each feeble one among us should be as David, and every David should be as the angel of the Lord, yet even *then* we would find strength and help in our service for God by meeting together for united worship. The Apostolic command is, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching." Public worship is not everything—if there were no private worship, it would be nothing by itself. To go up to the Temple is not everything. The man who does not meet God *outside* the Temple will not meet God *inside* the Temple, he may rest assured of that.

Yet, it is well, it is desirable that it should be said of us as it was said of the men mentioned in our text, "Two men went up into the Temple to pray." For public worship is, first of all, *an open avowal of our faith in God and of our belief in prayer*. If we pray in private, nobody knows it. At least nobody *should* know it, for our Lord's direction is very plain, "You, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly." Our acts of personal devotion must be sacred to God and our own souls, but when we go up to the public assembly—whether it is but of two or three, or of many thousands, it matters not—there is, to that extent, an *open declaration* that we believe in God, that, let others do as they may, as for us, we worship Him, we believe in the reality and power and usefulness of prayer and, therefore, in the light of day, before all men, we gather ourselves together to pray! I thank God that there are, in this unbelieving London, so many thousands of assemblies of worshipping people—a public testimony constantly borne to the fact that we do believe in God and that we do believe in prayer!

Public worship is also, in the next place, *a good way of securing unity in prayer*. A number of persons may agree to pray about one thing, yet they may never see each other's faces—their prayers may blend at the Mercy Seat, but they must lack an emphatic consciousness of unity such as we have who come together to pray. Our Lord Jesus promised His special Presence to the united gatherings of His people when He said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Oh, dear Friends, what should we do if we were not able to come together to mingle our sighs and cries and tears and, better still, to blend our joys, our Psalms, our shouts of victory? As we are members of one mystical body, it is but right that we should, as members of that

one body, worship together, lifting up the joyous song in tuneful harmony and blending our supplications!—

“Around our common Mercy Seat.”

I think, also, that public worship is *a great means of quickening*. At any rate, it is so to me. I never feel that I can pray as well as when I am in the midst of my own dear friends and, oftentimes, when things are flagging within the soul, to get together with brighter spirits, in whom the life of God is more vigorous, is a great help to me. It does not seem so very long ago—although these spectacles and my many gray hairs tell me that it must have been long since— that I used to say to my mother that hymn which begins—

**“Lord, how delightful ‘tis to see
A whole assembly worship Thee!
At once they sing, at once they pray;
They hear of Heaven, and learn the Way.”**

Dr. Watts put it very well and I can utter the same sentiment—

**“Lord how delightful ‘tis to see
This vast assembly worship Thee!”**

when the house is full from floor to ceiling—

**“At once they sing, at once they pray;
They hear of Heaven, and learn the Way.”**

Those two men, of whom our Savior spoke, did well to go up to the Temple to pray! And *we* shall do well not to cease from the habit of assembling ourselves together for public worship in the Lord’s House.

Then, dear Friends, public worship is *a part of the great system by which God blesses the world*. It has much to do with the gathering, the sustenance, the strengthening, the invigorating and the extension of the Church of Christ. And it is through the Church of Christ that God accomplishes His purposes in the world. Oh, the blessings that come to us in our public assemblies! Are there not, sometimes, days of Heaven upon earth? Have we not felt our hearts burning within us when we have been listening to the Word of God, or joining in praise or prayer? Those Houses of God where the Gospel is truly preached, whatever their architecture may be, are the beauty and the bulwarks of the land! God bless them! Wherever the Lord’s people are gathered together, in a cathedral or in a barn—it does not matter where—it is none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven when God is there! And who among us would dare to stay away? As long as we have legs to carry us and health with which to use those legs, let us be found among the waiting assemblies in God’s sanctuary!

For, once more, it seems to me that public worship on earth is *a rehearsal for the service of Heaven*. We shall sing together, there, Brothers and Sisters, not *solos*, but grand chorales and choruses! We shall take parts in the Divine oratorio of redemption—it will not be some *one* melodious voice, alone, that shall lift up the eternal hallelujah! I spoke playfully of our brother Mayers singing the Hallelujah Chorus all by himself, but neither he nor any other man can do that! We shall all have to take our parts to make the harmony complete. I may never be able to rise to

certain notes unless my voice shall be wondrously changed, but some other sinner, saved by Grace, will run up the scale—nobody knows how high—and what a range of melody the music will have in Heaven!

I believe that our poor scales and modes of singing, here, are nothing at all compared with what there will be in the upper regions! There, the bass shall be deeper and yet the notes shall be higher than those of earth. Even the crash of the loudest thunder shall be only like a whisper in comparison with the celestial music of the new song before the Throne of God! John spoke of it as “the voice of many waters.” The waves of one ocean can make a deafening, booming noise, but in Heaven there shall be, as it were, the sound of sea on sea, Atlantic upon Pacific, one piled upon another and all dashing and crashing with the everlasting hallelujahs from the gladsome hearts of the multitude that no man can number! I expect to be there and I remember that verse in one of our hymns that says—

***“I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise;
Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!”***

But you cannot sing that heavenly anthem alone, because however well you can sing by yourself, that is not the way you will have to sing in Heaven—there you will have to sing in harmony with all the blood-washed hosts. Therefore let us often come up to the Lord’s House, and when we are gathered together, let us again take up the words of Dr. Watts, and say—

***“I have been there and still would go,
’Tis like a little Heaven below.”***

That little Heaven below shall help to prepare us for the great Heaven above!

That is our first observation, then. It is well to worship God in public.

II. Secondly, IT IS WELL TO HAVE A REASON WHEN WE GO UP TO PUBLIC WORSHIP. “Two men went up into the Temple *to pray.*” They went there for that express purpose.

Now, whenever we go to the assembly of God’s people, we should have some good reason—and the right reason is that which these two men had—they went up to the Temple *to pray.* I would rather that you came with a bad reason than that you did not come at all. I have known people come to pick pockets and yet they have gone away with a blessing. I am sorry if any of you came, tonight, for that reason, yet I am glad that you are here. Perhaps friends will prevent you from committing the sin of theft by taking a little extra care of their pockets! I have known persons go into the House of God out of sheer mockery and yet God has blessed them, for His ways are strangely sovereign. But that is to be ascribed to matchless mercy and it is not the way we ought to appear before the Lord!

When we go to the sanctuary, we should go for a reason, we should go up to pray—*we should not go merely from custom.* Do we not often do that? Not so much on Thursday nights, I think, for people come, then,

because they like to come. But on Sundays it is such a proper thing with certain persons to go to a place of worship that they almost wish it was *not* so proper and they would like to have a good excuse for staying home! Well, if you come only out of custom and you do not get a blessing, I pray you, do not wonder at it! If you do not come for anything and you do not *get* anything, do not be disappointed! If you go to a shop across the road and do not mean to buy anything, do not be surprised if you come out with nothing—and if you come here and do not need anything, very well, you will go away with nothing! Is it not just what you might have expected? He who goes to the river and takes no rod or net with him, will have no fish in his basket, even though there may be shoals of them in the water! So, if we want to be blessed in our worship, we must come with a reason, even as these two men went up into the Temple “to pray.”

Neither do I think that we should come up to the assembly of God’s people *merely to hear sermons*. The proper thing is to come “*to pray*.” “But we do hear sermons,” says one. Yes, but I hope that does not hinder your praying! Somebody said, the other day, that people who go to Church go to pray, but that we who go to Chapel go to hear sermons. My dear Friend, that remark shows what sort of sermons you get at Church, because those who come to hear us preach pray while we are preaching and they find that there is nothing that helps them to pray as much as a good sermon does! In fact, there is no worship of God that is *better* than the hearing of a sermon! I venture to say that if a sermon is well heard, it puts faith in exercise as you believe it, it puts love in exercise as you enjoy it, it puts gratitude in exercise as you think of all the blessings that God has given to you!

If the sermon is what it should be, it stirs all the coals of fire in your spirit and makes them burn with a brighter flame and a more vehement heat. To imply that hearing a sermon is not worship is really to slander your minister! It must be a very bad sermon in which there is, as it were, a jerk out of the prayers to get into it, for the supplication should lead up to the sermon, and then the discourse should be a continuation of the prayer that has preceded it and bring it back upon the mind, again, so that all present may pray the better and worship God the more acceptably because of the sermon to which they have been listening.

Still, if anybody comes to hear a sermon, especially as, perhaps, some of you came while I was away, to criticize the preacher, that is not the way to get a blessing! I do not mind if you criticize *me*—you may do that when you like—only you will not get blessed by doing it. But when there are other preachers here and someone says that he does not like this one, and another says that he does not like the other, then, if you do not get a blessing out of the service, who is to blame? “Two men went up into the Temple *to pray*.” And if we go to the House of God and seek to turn the whole of the worship into a prayer, we shall not come away without a blessing! The main objective in all worship is that we get near to God and really pray to Him.

Neither do I think that we should go to the House of God *merely to get comforted and cheered*. That is a very sweet result from hearing the Word of God, but it should not be our main objective in going to hear it—we should meet together that we may draw near to God. If it is the Lord's will not to comfort but to rebuke us, and if it is His purpose not to cheer but to cast us down, we shall still feel, "What I received came from God. I prayed to Him and He spoke to me and I had special fellowship with the living God, while I was also in communion with my Brothers and Sisters in Christ. That is what I went for, and that is what I have had."

The publican teaches us what we should go to the House of God to do and to say. There should be, in God's Presence, *confession of sin*. We should, each one of us, when we draw near to the Lord, bow down in His Presence with reverent awe. If the very angels veil their faces when they come near Him, we must humbly bow before Him when we come to worship in His House! He is in Heaven and we are upon earth. He is our Father, but He is also our Father who is in Heaven—and we poor sinful creatures can never come into the light of His Presence without perceiving that we are full of sin. I have heard some people talk about "walking in the light as God is in the light," as if that meant that they had no sin. Listen to what the Apostle John says, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." And then, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son," is still needed, for even then it, "cleanses us from all sin." Without its continual application, there would be no walking in the light—and the more walking in the Light of God there is, the clearer will be the perception of every speck and stain in the character! So, the more true our worship is, the more certain shall we be to *make confession of sin*.

Communion with God and confession of sin should always be remembered by us when we come up to the House of God.

Then there should be *asking for mercy*. We should come as paupers seeking relief. We should come as rebels craving pardon. We should come as pardoned ones still asking renewed tokens of forgiveness—as men, once washed, who still come, that their feet may be cleansed—that they may be clean every whit as they pursue their course on the journey of life.

In the publican's prayer there is, in the Greek, *a reference to sacrifice*. He cried, "Lord, be propitious to me, the sinner." "Have mercy upon me for the sake of the Great Propitiation, the Great Expiation." They who come up to God's House for the right reason, come to find Jesus, to prove the power of His precious blood, to be perfumed with the incense of His all-sufficient merit and to be covered with His matchless righteousness! That is the right way of coming up to the assembly of God's people, to speak with Him humbly, for we are sinful. Prayerfully, for we are full of need. Believingly, for Jesus has offered a Sacrifice and we are accepted in and through Him. That, dear Friends, is the second division of my discourse—it is well to have a reason when we go up to public worship.

I will pause, here, and pass a few questions round for everyone to ask, "Did I come, tonight, for such a reason? Is that my general habit, to go up to my place of worship for such a reason? Or do I go jauntily, as if it were an ordinary transaction to go up for the worship of God?" I will not propose any answers to you—your own consciences will be able to give the reply. Only let them speak and God bless the inquiry to you all!

III. Thirdly, IT IS POSSIBLE TO GO UP TO PUBLIC WORSHIP WITH A GOOD REASON AND YET TO FORGET IT. "Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican."

It was very remarkable that a Pharisee should forget his reason—that is the one point concerning him to which I am going to call your attention—he went up to the Temple to pray, but he did *not pray*. He never prayed a word, but he did something else. If it had been written, "Two men went up into the Temple to boast," I would give the Pharisee the palm, for he certainly did that magnificently! But as it is said, "Two men went up into the Temple *to pray*," then it is certain that this Pharisee quite forgot why he had come, for he never prayed at all!

Well, now, who was the gentleman that forgot his reason? It *was the person who ought especially to have remembered it*, for he was a Pharisee! By profession he was a separatist from others because of his supposed peculiar holiness. He was a man amazingly acquainted with the Word of God, at least, with the letter of it. He wore some little black boxes between his eyes with texts of Scripture inscribed upon them and he wore others round his wrist. And he had very broad blue borders on his garments, for he was particularly observant of what he read in the Law of Moses. And, generally, a Pharisee was a teacher. He was first cousin to a Scribe and often was a Scribe, himself. He had written out a copy of the Law and he had its precepts at his fingertips!

Now, surely, if there is anybody who goes up to the Temple to pray, this is the man who will pray. If anybody forgets why he came, it will not be this person! But, listen. That was the very man who *did* forget all about it and this may be true of a minister, a deacon, an elder, one of the Brothers and Sisters who prays at Prayer Meetings, the leader of a Bible class, a teacher in the Sunday school, the best sort of people. "Oh," you exclaim, "we cannot say anything but what is honorable of them!" And yet it was one of this class who forgot why he went up into the Temple! Let me remind you Church members who make a loud profession, that it was a great professor who went up to the Temple to pray and did not do it! What would you say to your boy, who went to a shop, and then came home and said that he had forgotten his reason? And what will you say to yourself, dear Friend, especially if you happen to be somebody notable, if it should be *you* who went up to the Temple to pray, and did not pray? Oh, do not let it be so in your case! Do not, tonight, leave this house till you have had real fellowship with God, through JESUS CHRIST His Son, if you have never had it before!

How do we know that this man forgot his reason? We know it by what he said. *He did not pray at all*. He said, "God, I thank You that I am not

as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” By his words he must be judged, as you and I will be—and his words go to prove that he forgot why he went up to the Temple. He acted as though he was in his own house, praising himself, instead of being in God’s House, where the Lord, alone, is to be praised!

Why did this man fall into this great blunder and forget why he went up to the Temple? He did it because *he was so full of himself that there was no room for God in his heart*. He was so satisfied with himself that he felt no need of prayer. He already had all that he required and he had so much that he could only stand still and overflow with a kind of gratitude to the one to whom he owed everything, namely, *himself*. Though he said, “*God, I thank You,*” He did not mean it—he meant all the praise for himself! He was so fine a bird and had such rich feathers that he felt that everybody ought to admire him as much as he admired himself!

Well now, Brothers and Sisters, you will say to me, “Has this any bearing upon us?” Listen. Do you ever feel perfectly satisfied with yourselves? Are there not times when there is no sin that burns the conscience, when you think that you are *somebody*, a pattern saint, a highly experienced good old man, a rare Christian matron, and so on? The devil tells you all that, does he not? And you believe him! Or else you say that you are such a smart young man—you have only lately joined the Church, yet you have already got into the Lord’s work in a wonderful way—there must be a great deal in you. You do not put this boasting into English, because we do not talk English to our hearts when we get proud—it is a sort of Greek which we talk, by which we try to conceal our own meaning from ourselves! Then we feel, perhaps, that we are getting *perfect*—and that is the time when we forget to pray! And we go into the House of God and, when we come out, we make some remark about the preacher’s manner, or about Sister So-and-So, whose bonnet is really too smart for a Christian woman to wear, or about our friend, So-and-So, who spoke rather roughly to us. We—WE— WE—we are so good that we can find fault with all others and say, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican!” And then we do not pray.

Whenever you get one inch above the ground in your own esteem, you are that inch too high! The way to Heaven is down, down, down! As to self, it must sink. Our sense of sin must grow deeper and deeper, and a sense of obligation to Grace must be more and more fully impressed upon our heart until we are able to say with great emphasis, though it is in the deep silence of the soul, “God be merciful to me, the sinner!” Otherwise, we shall come to the Temple on the reason of prayer and we shall forget it. We shall go to the closet to pray and yet shall not pray. Or we shall read the Bible and not find anything upon which to feed our *souls* because we are not hungry, but full. We shall not seek true wealth, because we shall fancy we are not poor, but rich. We shall not go to the Source of all might because we shall imagine we are not weak, but

strong. If we go up to the Temple as the Pharisee did, there will be nothing for us, even in the place where prayer is known to be made.

IV. So I close this discourse with a fourth observation. IT IS POSSIBLE TO CARRY OUT OUR REASON FOR GOING TO PUBLIC WORSHIP. We *can* go up to the Temple to pray and *really* pray!

Who is the man who is most likely to pray? According to this parable, it was the publican. *It was a man under a sense of sin.* It was a man who felt that he was *the* sinner, even if nobody else was a sinner. It was this man to whom sin was a reality, not a fiction, and to whom the mercy of God was a real need, and not a mere doctrine, who craved that mercy at the Throne of God and felt that only Sovereign Grace could give it! It was this man who pleaded the precious blood of the Propitiation and felt that only by that way could he receive pardon. That was the man who truly prayed! Oh, have I not, sometimes, gone to pray with a breaking heart, groaning, crying and longing to see my Lord's face, and to have a sense of acceptance in the Beloved? And I have come away and felt that I had not prayed because I could not use language and words such as I would wish to use—and yet, on looking back, I have seen that it was *then* that I prayed most!

Next to the sense of *sin*, the publican had *a sense of need*. When the need is felt the heaviest, prayer is truest. When the soul is lowest, then the flood of supplication is the highest. I am sure you pray best when you have least satisfaction with yourself, and you get nearest to God when you get farthest from self. When you feel that you are not worthy to lift up your eyes to Heaven, it is *then* that Heaven's eyes look down on you! The sorrowful thought of a broken heart is immeasurably better than the indifference of a callous spirit. Bless God for a humble mind that trembles at His Word—it is much better than that presumption which puts aside all feeling. There are some who will go to Heaven questioning their own state all the way, yet they will arrive there safely. And there are some who never doubted their state who may have to doubt it when it is too late! Anyway, it is a deep sense of *sin*, a deep sense of *need*, a deep sense of *dependence* upon Sovereign Grace, that helps a man to come to the House of God and to go away with his mission accomplished.

Let us all try to bring our needs before God. Let us sink ourselves in His Presence into the very depths, and then let us come and joyfully take what He freely offers to all who trust His dear Son! Let us receive Grace at His hands, not as courtiers who have a right, but as those who feel like dogs under the table and yet cry, "Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table."

The publican excites our pity as we hear his groans and sighs, and see him smite upon his breast. But when we know that this is the man whom God blessed, and that he went to his house justified, rather than the other, we no longer pity him, but we seek to emulate *his repentance and his Grace*, and we pray the Lord to help us, thus, to come to His feast with a hearty appetite, thus to come to His wardrobe conscious of

our own rags, thus to come to His fullness admitting our own emptiness, thus to come to the Fountain of Eternal Life feeling that apart from it we are dead! Then shall we truly pray, even as this despised publican did!

Poor Soul, almost in despair, you think, "I have no right to be here. I am so guilty, I am so vile." You are the very sort of sinner Christ died to save! Not sham sinners who have to pretend to be sinners, but *you miserable sinners*, you *real sinners*! Not you who make marks on your skin, like some beggars do, that you may seem to be wounded, but you who are as bad as you can be—you who have sinned so deeply that you feel as if you were already lost, you who lie at Hell's dark door, you who are dragged about by the hair of your head by the foul fiend of the Pit—you who are in your own esteem the worst of all men! Come to Christ tonight!

Make way for them! Stand back, for these are the people He came to save! He has come "to seek and to save that which was lost." Believe that Christ died to save you, and you are saved! Throw yourself on His atoning Sacrifice, and it avails for you at once! Glorify Him by trusting Him for your salvation! Let Him be your High Priest and, from first to last, your Savior, and He is yours as surely as you are a living man or woman! Go your way justified rather than the other who does not need the Propitiation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord bless you! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 122; LUKE 18:1-14.**

We will read two portions of Scripture relating to public worship. The first will be Psalm 122, one of David's "Songs of degrees."

Psalm 122:1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the House of the LORD.* "I was glad for my own sake, for I hungered and thirsted to go into the House of the Lord. I was glad for the sake of those who offered to go with me, for I delight to see in others a longing desire to profit by the means of Grace. I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'"

2, 3. *Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together.* So is every true Church of God when it is in a healthy state. There are no divisions, no schisms—"Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together." It is not a long straggling street, a dislocated village, but all the houses are rightly and regularly placed and surrounded with strong munitions of defense against the adversary. May this Church always be blessed with such unity that it shall be as a city that is compact together!

4. *Where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.* We should go up to the House of God, then, for two purposes. First, "unto the testimony of Israel," that is, to hear what God testifies to us and, also, to publicly testify our confidence in Him. And, next, we should go up "to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." Especially should we do this when we have been restored from beds of languishing sickness and pain, or when we come

up from the house of mourning. But what is there in God's House that should tempt us to go there?

5. *For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.* The preaching of the Gospel is like the setting up of a Throne of Judgment, "for the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing, even, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And long before the last Great Judgment Day arrives, and the final assize begins, the ministry of the Gospel is God's Judgment Seat at which ungodly men may learn what they are in the sight of the Judge of All—what their present state of condemnation is and what it will finally be unless they repent!

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.* Ask that she may be free from persecution without, and from anything like disturbance within—"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

6. *They shall prosper that love You.* Neglect of the means of Grace is the death of all soul-prosperity. But an earnest love of the House of God and all who belong to God will bring us true spiritual prosperity.

7-9. *Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within you. Because of the House of the LORD our God I will seek your good.* Now let us read a short passage out of the Gospel according to Luke.

Luke 18:1-7. *And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? He hears their prayer a long time because it does not weary Him. It pleases Him! He loves to hear their sighs and cries, but will He not yield to their entreaties? What do you think? Shall not the good, gracious, loving God yield, at length?*

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? Faith enough to make such prayers as this? Faith enough to pray with importunity? Oh, if we had faith enough to resolve to have a blessing and determined never to cease crying to God until we had it, we should have far more favors than we have so far gained from our God!*

9-12. *And He spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. A fine pea-*

cock, truly! See how he spreads out his feathers and struts before God, glorifying himself?

13. *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* “The sinner,” it should be—it is emphatically so in the Greek. There is a Pharisee, *the* righteous man according to his own estimate, and all the rest were sinners. Here is the publican, he is *the* sinner, and he thinks everybody else is righteous. These were two very conspicuous individuals, the self-righteous man and the sinner! And they are both here tonight! I will not ask them to stand up, but no doubt they are both of them present. Now what became of them?

14. *I tell you, this man*—The sinner

14. *Went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* It is God’s usual method to reverse what man does and to turn things the other way around—“Everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.” You remember how the Virgin Mary, in her song, praised the Lord for this very habit of His—“He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.” That is His regular way of working and He will continue to do so!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 122 (SONG 1), 999, 607.

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

A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH NO. 1949

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 20, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much
as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast,
saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”
Luke 18:13.*

IT was the fault of the Pharisee that though he went up into the Temple to pray, he did not pray. There is no prayer in all that he said. It is one excellence of the publican that he went up to the Temple to pray and he *did* pray—there is nothing but prayer in all that he said. “God be merciful to me a sinner” is a pure, unadulterated prayer throughout! It was the fault of the Pharisee that when he went up to the Temple to pray, he forgot an essential part of prayer which is *confession of sin*—he spoke as if he had no sins to confess, but many virtues to parade. It was a chief excellence in the devotion of the publican that he did confess his sin, yes, that his utterance was full of confession of sin! From beginning to end it was an acknowledgment of his guilt and an appeal for Grace to the merciful God. The prayer of the publican is admirable for its fullness of meaning. An expositor calls it *a holy telegram*—and certainly it is so compact and so condensed, so free from superfluous words—that it is worthy to be called by that name. I do not see how he could have expressed his meaning more fully or more briefly. In the original Greek the words are even fewer than in the English. Oh, that men would learn to pray with less of language and more of meaning! What great things are packed away in this short petition! God, mercy, sin, the propitiation and forgiveness!

He speaks of great matters—trifles are not thought of! He has nothing to do with fasting twice in the week, or the paying of tithes and such second-rate things. The matters he treats of are of a higher order. His trembling heart moves among sublimities which overcome him and he speaks in tones consistent therewith. He deals with the greatest things that ever can be—he pleads for his life, his soul! Where could he find themes more weighty, more vital to his eternal interests? He is not *playing* at prayer, but pleading in awful earnest. His supplication speeded well with God and he speedily won his suit with Heaven. Mercy granted to him full justification! The prayer so pleased the Lord Jesus Christ, who heard it, that He condescended to become a portrait painter and took a sketch of the petitioner. I say the prayer in itself was so pleasing to the gracious Savior that He tells us how it was offered—“Standing afar off, he would not lift up so

much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast.” Luke, who, according to tradition, was somewhat of an artist as well as a physician, takes great care to place this picture in the national portrait gallery of men saved by Sovereign Grace. Here we have the portrait of a man who called himself a sinner who may still be held up as a pattern to saints! I am glad to have the Divine sketch of this man, that I may see the bodily form of his devotion. I am more glad, still, to have his prayer, that we may look into the very soul of his pleading.

My heart’s desire this morning is that many here may seek mercy of the Lord as this publican did—and go down to their houses justified! I ask no man to use the same words. Let no man attach a superstitious value to them. Alas, this prayer has been used flippantly, foolishly and almost looked upon as a sort of charm! Some have said—“We may live as we like, for we have only to say, ‘God be merciful to me,’ when we are dying, and all will be well.” This is a wicked misuse of Gospel Truth! Yes, it turns it into a lie! If you choose thus to pervert the Grace of the Gospel to your own destruction, your blood must be on your own heads! You may not have space given you in which to breathe out even this brief sentence, or, if you have, the words may not come from your heart and so you may die in your sins. I pray you, do not thus presume upon the forbearance of God! But, if with the publican’s *heart*, we can take the publican’s *attitude*. If with the publican’s spirit we can use the publican’s words, *then* there will follow a gracious acceptance and we shall go home justified. If such is the case, there will be grand times today, for angels will rejoice over sinners reconciled to God and made to know in their own souls the boundless mercy of the Lord!

In preaching upon the text, I shall endeavor to bring out its innermost spirit. May we be taught of the Spirit so that we may learn four lessons from it!

I. The first is this—THE FACT OF SINNERSHIP IS NO REASON FOR DESPAIR. You need, none of you, say, “I am guilty and, therefore, I may not approach God. I am so greatly guilty that it would be too daring a thing for me to ask for mercy.” Dismiss such thoughts at once! My text and a thousand other arguments forbid despair.

For, first, *this man who was a sinner yet dared to approach the Lord*. According to our version, he said, “God be merciful to me *a sinner*,” but a more accurate rendering is that which the Revised Version puts in the margin—“*the sinner*.” He meant to say that he was emphatically *the sinner*. The Pharisee yonder was *the saint* of his age, but this publican who stood afar off from the holy place was *the sinner*. If there was not another sinner in the world, he was one—and in a world of sinners he was a prominent offender—the sinner of sinners! Emphatically he applies to himself the guilty name. He takes the chief place in condemnation and yet he cries, “God be merciful to me *the sinner*.”

Now if you know yourself to be a sinner, you may plead with God, but if you mourn that you are not only a sinner, but *the sinner* with the definite article—the sinner above all others—you may still hope in the mercy of the Lord. The worst, the most profane, the most horrible of sinners may

venture, as this man did, to approach the God of mercy! I know that it looks like a daring action and, therefore, you must do it by faith. On any other footing but that of faith in the mercy of God, you who are a sinner may not dare to approach the Lord lest you be found guilty of presumption. But with your eyes on mercy, you may be bravely trustful. Believe in the great mercy of God and though your sins are abundant, you will find that the Lord will abundantly pardon! Though they blot your character, the Lord will blot them out! Though they are red like crimson, yet the precious blood of Jesus will make you whiter than snow!

This story of the Pharisee and the publican is intended as an encouraging example to you. If this man who was *the* sinner found forgiveness, so shall you, also, if you seek it in the same way. One sinner has speeded so well—why should not you? Come and try for yourself and see if the Lord does not prove in your case that His mercy endures forever.

Next, remember that you may not only find encouragement in looking at the sinner who sought his God, but in the God whom he sought. Sinner, *there is great mercy in the heart of God*. How often did that verse ring out as a chorus in the temple song—

***“For His mercy shall endure
Ever faithful, ever sure!”***

Mercy is a specially glorious attribute of Jehovah, the living God. He is “the Lord God, merciful and gracious.” He is “slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.” Do you not see how this should cheer you? Sinners are necessary if mercy is to be indulged! How can the Lord display His mercy except to the guilty? Goodness is for creatures, but mercy is for sinners! Towards unfallen creatures there may be love, but there cannot be mercy. Angels are not fit recipients of mercy. They do not require it, for they have not transgressed. Mercy comes into exercise after Law has been broken, not till then. Among the attributes, it is the last which found scope for itself. So to speak, it is the Benjamin and the darling attribute of God—“He delights in mercy.” Only to a sinner can God be merciful. Do you hear this, you sinner? Be sure that you catch at it! If there is boundless mercy in the heart of God and it can only exercise itself towards the guilty, then you are the man to have it, for you are a guilty one! Come, then, and let His mercy wrap you about like a garment this day and cover all your shame. Does not God’s delight in mercy prove that sinnership is no reason for despair?

Moreover, *the conception of salvation implies hope for sinners*. That salvation which we preach to you every day is glad tidings for the guilty. Salvation by Grace implies that men are guilty. Salvation means not the reward of the righteous, but the cleansing of the *unrighteous*. Salvation is meant for the lost, the ruined, the undone! And the blessings which it brings of pardoning mercy and cleansing Grace must be intended for the guilty and polluted. “The whole need not a physician.” The physician has his eyes upon the sick. Alms are for the poor, bread is for the hungry, pardon is for the guilty. O you that are guilty, you are the men that Mercy seeks after! You were in God’s eyes when He sent His Son into the world to save sinners! From the very first inception of redemption to the comple-

tion of it, the eyes of the great God were set on the guilty—not on the deserving! The very name of Jesus tells us that He shall save His people from their sins.

Let me further say that inasmuch as that salvation of God is a great one, it must have been intended to meet great sins. O Sirs, would Christ have shed the blood of His heart for some trifling, venial sins which your tears could wash away? Do you think God would have given His dear Son to die as a mere superfluity? If sin had been a small matter, a little sacrifice would have sufficed. Do you think that the Divine Atonement was made only for small offenses? Did Jesus die for little sins and leave the great ones unatoned for? No, the Lord God measured the greatness of our sin and found it high as Heaven, deep as Hell and broad as the infinite and, therefore, He gave so great a Savior. He gave His only-begotten Son, an infinite Sacrifice, an immeasurable Atonement. With such throes and pangs of death as never can be fully described, the Lord Jesus poured out His soul in unknown sufferings that He might provide a great salvation for the greatest of sinners. See Jesus on the Cross and learn that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men! The fact of salvation and of a *great* salvation, ought to drive away the very notion of despair from every heart that hears of it! Salvation, that is for me, for I am lost! A great salvation, that is for me, for I am the greatest of sinners! Oh, hear my word this day! It is God's Word of love and it rings out like a silver bell! O my beloved Hearers, I weep over you and yet I feel like singing all the time, for I am sent to proclaim salvation from the Lord for the very worst of you!

The Gospel is especially, definitely and distinctly addressed to sinners. Listen to it—"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The Gospel is like a letter directed in a clear and legible hand—and if you will read its direction, you will find that it runs thus—"TO THE SINNER." O Sinners, the word of this salvation is sent to you! If you are a sinner, you are the very man for whom the Gospel is intended and I do not mean, by this, a merely complimentary nominal sinner, but an out-and-out rebel, a transgressor against God and man! O Sinner, seize upon the Gospel with joyful eagerness and cry unto God for mercy at once!—

***"'Twas for sinners that He suffered
Agonies unspeakable!
Can you doubt you are a sinner?
If you can—then hope, farewell.
But, believing what is written—
'All are guilty'—'dead in sin'
Looking to the Crucified One,
Hope shall rise your soul within."***

If you will think of it again, there must be hope for sinners, for *the great commands of the Gospel are most suitable to sinners.* Hear, for instance, this Word of God—"Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Who can repent but the guilty? Who can

be converted but those who are on the wrong track and, therefore, need to be turned? The following text is evidently addressed to those who are good for nothing—"Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." The very word, "repent," indicates that it is addressed to those who have sinned—let it beckon you to mercy!

Then you are bid to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, salvation by faith must be for guilty men, for the way of life for the innocent is by perseverance in good works. The Law says, "This do, and live." The Gospel talks of salvation by *believing* because it is the only way possible for those who have broken the Law and are condemned by it. Salvation is of faith that it might be by Grace. Believe and live! Believe and live! Believe and live! This is the jubilee note of the trumpet of Free Grace. Oh, that you would know the joyful sound and thus be blessed! Oh, that you that are sinful would hear the call as addressed to you in particular! You are up to your necks in the mire of sin, but a mighty hand is stretched out to deliver you. "Repent and believe the Gospel!"

If you need any other argument—and I hope you do not—I would put it thus—*great sinners have been saved*. All sorts of sinners are being saved today. What wonders some of us have seen! What wonders have been worked in this Tabernacle! A man was heard at a Prayer Meeting pleading in louder tones than usual. He was a sailor and his voice was pitched to the tune of the roaring billows. A lady whispered to her friend, "Is that Captain F?" "Yes" said the other, "why do you ask?" "Because," said she, "the last time I heard that voice, its swearing made my blood run cold! The man's oaths were terrible beyond measure. Can it be the same man?" Someone observed, "Go and ask him." The lady timidly said, "Are you the same Captain F _____ that I heard swearing in the street, outside my house?" "Well," he said, "I am the same person, and yet, thank God, I am not the same!" O Brothers and Sisters, such were some of us, but we are washed, we are sanctified! Wonders of Divine Grace belong to God!

I was reading the other day a story of an old shepherd who had never attended a place of worship, but when he had grown gray and was near to die, he was drawn by curiosity into the Methodist chapel, and all was new to him. Hard-hearted old fellow as he was, he was noticed to shed tears during the sermon. He had obtained a glimpse of hope. He saw that there was mercy even for him! He laid hold on eternal life at once! The surprise was great when he was seen at the chapel and greater still when, on the Monday night, he was seen at the Prayer Meeting—yes, and *heard* at the Prayer Meeting, for he fell down on his knees and praised God that he had found mercy! Do you wonder that the Methodists shouted, "Bless the Lord"? Wherever Christ is preached, the most wicked of men and women are made to sit at the Savior's feet, "clothed, and in their right minds." My Hearer, why should it not be so with *you*? At any rate, we have full proof of the fact that sinnership is no reason for despair.

II. I must now advance to my second observation—A SENSE OF SINNERSHIP CONFERS NO RIGHT TO MERCY. You will wonder why I men-

tion this self-evident truth, but I must mention it because of a common error which does great mischief. This man was very sensible of his sin inasmuch that he called himself, THE SINNER, but he did not urge his sense of sin as any reason why he should find mercy. There is an ingenuity in the heart of man, nothing less than devilish, by which he will, if he can, turn the Gospel, itself, into a yoke of bondage. If we preach to sinners that they may come to Christ in all their anguish and misery, one cries—"I do not feel myself to be a sinner as I ought to feel it! I have not felt those convictions of which you speak and, therefore, I cannot come to Jesus!" This is a horrible twist of our meaning! We never meant to insinuate that convictions and doubts and despondencies conferred upon men a *claim* to mercy, or were *necessary* preparations for Grace. I want you, therefore, to learn that a *sense of sin* gives no man a right to Divine Grace.

If a deep sense of sin entitled men to mercy, *it would be a turning of this parable upside down*. Do you dream that this publican was, after all, a Pharisee differently dressed? Do you imagine that he really meant to plead, "God be merciful to me because I am humble and lowly"? Did he say in his heart, "Lord, have mercy upon me because I am not a Pharisee and am deeply despondent on account of my evil ways"? This would prove that he was, in his heart of hearts, a Pharisee! If you make a righteousness out of your *feelings*, you are just as much out of the true way as if you made a righteousness out of your *works*. Whether it is work or feeling, anything which is relied upon as a claim for Grace is an antichrist! You are no more to be saved because of your conscious miseries than because of your conscious merits! There is no virtue either in the one or in the other. If you make a Savior of *convictions*, you will be lost as surely as if you made a Savior out of *ceremonies*! The publican trusted in Divine Mercy and not in his own convictions. And you must do the same.

To imagine that an awful sense of sin constituted a claim upon mercy would be *like giving a premium to great sin*. Certain seekers think, "I have never been a drunk, or a swearer, or unchaste, but I almost wish I had been, that I might feel myself to be the chief of sinners and so might come to Jesus." Do not wish anything so atrocious! There is no good in sin in any shape or fashion! Thank God if you have been kept from the grosser forms of vice. Do not imagine that repentance is easier when sin is grosser—the reverse is true. Do believe that there is no advantage in having been a horrible offender. You have sins enough—to be worse would not be better. If good works do not help you, certainly *bad* works do not! You that have been moral and excellent should cry for mercy and not be so silly as to *dream* that greater sins would help you to readier repentance! Come as you are and if your heart is hard, confess it as one of your greatest sins. A deeper sense of sin would not entitle you to the mercy of God—you can have no title to mercy but that which mercy gives you. Could your tears flow forever—could your grief know no respite—you would have no claim upon the Sovereign Grace of God, who will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

Then, dear Friends, remember, if we begin to preach to sinners that they must have a certain sense of sin and a certain measure of conviction,

such teaching would turn the sinner away from God in Christ to himself. The man begins at once to say, "Have I a broken heart? Do I feel the burden of sin?" This is only another form of looking to *self*. Man must not look to himself to find reasons for God's Grace. The remedy does not lie in the seat of the disease—it lies in the Physician's hands. A sense of sin is not a *claim*, but a *gift* of that blessed Savior who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Beware of any teaching which makes you look to *yourself* for help! You must, rather, cling to that doctrine which makes you look only to Christ! Whether you know it or not, you are a lost, ruined sinner, only fit to be cast into the flames of Hell forever. Confess this, but do not ask to be driven mad by a sense of it. Come to Jesus just as you are and do not wait for a preparation made out of your own miseries. Look to Jesus and to Him alone.

If we fall into the notion that a certain sense of sin has a claim upon God, *we shall be putting salvation upon other grounds than that of faith*—and that would be false ground. Now, the ground of salvation is—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." A simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the way of salvation! But to say, "I shall be saved because I am horribly convicted of sin and driven to desperation," is not to speak like the Gospel, but to rave out of the *pride of an unbelieving heart*. The Gospel is that you believe in Christ Jesus; that you get right *out of yourself* and depend alone on Him! Do you say, "I feel so guilty"? You are certainly guilty, whether you *feel* it or not! And you are far more guilty than you have any idea of. Come to Christ because you are guilty, not because you have been prepared to come by looking at your guilt! Trust nothing of your own, not even your sense of need. A man may have a sense of disease a long time before he will get healing out of it. The looking-glass of conviction reveals the spots on our face, but it cannot wash them away. You cannot fill your hands by putting them into your empty pocket and feeling how empty it is! It would be far wiser to hold them out and receive the gold which your friend so freely gives you. "God be merciful to me a sinner" is the right way to put it, but not, "God be merciful to me *because* I sufficiently feel my sinnership, and most fittingly bewail it."

III. My third observation is this—THE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR SINNERSHIP GUIDES MEN TO RIGHT ACTION. When a man has learned of the Holy Spirit that he is a sinner, then by a kind of instinct of the new life, he does the right thing in the right way. This publican had not often been to the Temple and had not learned the orthodox way of behaving. It is easy to learn how we all do it nowadays in *our* temples—take off your hat, hold it in front of your face and read the maker's name and address! Then sit down and, at the proper moment, bend forward and cover your eyes and, furthermore, stand up when the rest of the congregation does. People get to do this just as if they were wound up by machinery—yet *they do not pray* when they are supposed to be praying, nor bow before the Lord when worship is being offered.

This publican is out of rank! He does not follow the rubric. He has gestures of his own. First, instead of coming forward, he stands afar off. He

does not dare to come where that most respectable person, the Pharisee, is displaying himself, for he does not feel worthy. He leaves space between himself and God, an opening for a Mediator, room for an Advocate, place for an Intercessor to interpose between himself and the Throne of the Most High! Wise man, thus, to stand afar off! For by this means he could safely draw near in the Person of Jesus. Furthermore, he would not lift so much as his eyes to Heaven. It seems natural to lift up your hands in prayer, but he would not even lift his eyes. The uplifting of the eyes is very proper, is it not? But it was still more proper for “the sinner” not to lift his eyes. His downcast eyes meant much.

Our Lord does not say that he *could not* lift up his eyes, but he *would* not. He could look up, for he did in spirit look up as he cried, “God be merciful to me.” But he would not because it seemed indecorous for eyes like his to peer into the Heaven where dwells the holy God. Meanwhile, the penitent publican kept smiting upon his breast. The original does not say that he smote upon his breast *once*, but he smote and smote again! It was a continuous act. He seemed to say—“Oh, this wicked heart!” He would smite it. Again and again he expressed his intense grief by this Oriental gesture, for he did not know how else to set forth his sorrow. His heart had sinned and he smote it! His eyes had led him astray and he made them look down to the earth. And as he, himself, had sinned by living far off from God, he banished himself far from the manifest Presence.

Every gesture and posture is significant and yet all came spontaneously. He had no book of directions how to behave himself in the House of God, but his sincerity guided him. If you want to know how to behave yourselves as penitents, be penitents. The best rubrics of worship are those which are written on broken hearts. I have heard of a minister who was said to cry in the wrong place in his sermons—and it was found afterwards that he had written in the margin of his manuscript, “Weep here.” His audience could not see the reason for his artificial moisture. It must have had a ludicrous effect. In religion everything artificial is ridiculous, or worse! But Grace in the heart is the best “master of the ceremonies.” He who prays aright with his heart will not much err with foot, hand, or head. If you would know how to approach God, confess yourself a sinner and so take your true place before the God of Truth—throw yourself on Divine Mercy and thus place God in His true position as your Judge and Lord.

Observe that this man, even under the weight of conscious sin, was led aright, for *he went straight away to God*. A sense of sin without faith drives us from God, but a sense of sin with faith draws us immediately to God. He came to God alone. He felt that it would be of no avail to confess his fault to a mortal, or to look for absolution from a man. He did not resort to the priest of the Temple, but to the God of the Temple! He did not ask to speak to the good and learned man, the Pharisee, who stood on the same floor with him. His Enquiry Room was the secret of his own soul and he enquired of the *Lord*. He ran straight away to God, who alone was able to help. And when he opened his mouth, it was, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” That is what you have to do, my dear Hearer, if you would be

saved—you must go distinctly and immediately to God in Christ Jesus. Forget all things else and say, with the returning prodigal, “I will arise and go to my Father.” None but God can help us out of our low estate! No mercy but the mercy of God can serve our turn and none can give us that mercy but the God of Mercy! Let every broken-down sinner come to his God, against whom he has offended.

The publican did not look round on his fellow worshippers—he was too much absorbed in his own grief of heart. Especially is it noteworthy that he had no remarks to make upon the Pharisee. He did not denounce the pride, or the hypocrisy, or the hard-heartedness of the professor who so offensively looked down upon him. He did not return contempt for contempt, as we are all too apt to do. No, he dealt with the Lord alone in the deep sincerity of his own heart—and it was well. My Hearer, when will you do the same? When will you cease to censure others and reserve your severity for yourself, your critical observations for your own conduct?

When he came to God, it was *with a full confession of sin*—“God be merciful to me a sinner.” His very eyes and hands joined with his lips in acknowledging his iniquities. His prayer was wet with the dews of repentance. He poured out his heart before God in the most free and artless manner—his prayer came from the same fountain as that of the prodigal when he said, “Father, I have sinned,” and that of David when he cried, “Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.” That is the best praying which comes from the lowliest heart.

Then he appealed to mercy only. This was wise. See how rightly he was guided. What had he to do with *justice*, since it could only condemn and destroy him? Like a naked sword, it threatens to sheathe itself in my heart—how can I appeal to *justice*? Neither power nor wisdom, nor any other quality of the great God could be resorted to—only Mercy stretched out her wing. The prayer, “God be merciful,” is the only prayer that you who have been greatly guilty can pray. If all your lives you have spurned your Savior, all you can now do is to cast yourselves upon the mercy of God.

The original Greek permits us to see that this man had an eye to the Propitiation. I do not say that he fully understood the doctrine of Atonement, but still, his prayer was, “God be propitiated to me, the sinner.” He had seen the morning and the evening lamb and he had heard of the sin-offering. And though he might not have known all about atonement, expiation and substitution, yet as far as he did know, his eyes were turned that way. “O God, be propitiated, accept a sacrifice and pardon me!” If you know your sin, you will be wise to plead the Propitiation which God has set forth for human sin. May the Spirit of God constrain you to trust in Jesus now! The new year is already gliding away—its second month is slipping from under us—how many months are to go before you, a guilty sinner, will come and ask mercy of God, the infinitely-gracious One? Great God, let this day be the day of Your power!

IV. I now close with my last head, which is this—THE BELIEVING CONFESSION OF SINNERSHIP IS THE WAY OF PEACE. “God be merciful

to me a sinner,” was the prayer, but what was the answer? Listen to this—“This man went down to his house justified rather than the other”!

In a few sentences let me sketch this man’s progress. He came to God *only* as a sinner, nakedly as a sinner. Observe, he did not say, “God be merciful to me a *penitent* sinner.” He *was* a penitent sinner but he did not plead his penitence. And if you are ever so penitent and convicted of sin, do not mention it as an argument lest you be accused of self-righteousness. Come as you are, as a sinner and as nothing else! Exhibit your wounds. Bring your spiritual poverty before God and not your supposed wealth. If you have a single penny of your own, get rid of it. Perfect poverty, alone, will discharge you from your bankruptcy. If you have a moldy crust in the cupboard of self-righteousness, no bread from Heaven will be yours. You must be *nothing* and *nobody* if God is to be your All in All! This man does not cry, “God be merciful to me the penitent,” but, “be merciful to me the *sinner*.” He does not even say, “God be merciful to me the reformed sinner.” I have no doubt he did reform and give up his evil ways, but he does not plead that reformation.

Reformation will *not take away your sinnership*, therefore do not speak as if it could do so. What you are to be will make no atonement for what you have been! Come, therefore, simply as a sinner, not as a changed and improved sinner. Do not come because you *are* washed, but *to be washed*! The publican does not say, “God be merciful to me a *praying* sinner.” He was praying, but he does not mention it as a plea, for he thought very little of his own prayers. Do not plead your prayers—you might as well plead your sins! God knows that your prayers have sin in them. Why, Man, your very tears of repentance need washing! When your supplications are most sincere, what are they but the wailings of a condemned creature who cannot give a single reason why he should not be executed? Feel and acknowledge that you deserve condemnation—and come to God as a sinner. Off with your paltry finery, I mean your “filthy rags!” Do not trick yourself out in the weeds of your own repentance, much less in the fig leaves of your own resolutions—but come to God in Christ Jesus in all the nakedness of your sin—and everlasting mercy will cover both you and your sins.

Next, notice that this man did nothing but appeal to mercy. He said, “God be merciful to me.” He did not attempt to excuse himself and say, “Lord, I could not help it. Lord, I was not worse than other publicans. Lord, I was a public servant and only did what every other tax collector did.” No, no! He is too honest to forge excuses. He is a sinner and he admits it. If the Lord should condemn him out of his own mouth and send him to Hell, he cannot help it—his sin is too evident to be denied. He lays his head on the block and humbly pleads, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Neither does this publican offer any *promises* of future amendment as a setoff. He does not say, “Lord, be merciful for the past, and I will be better in the future.” Nothing of the sort! “Be merciful to me the sinner” is his one and only request.

So would I have you cry, “O God, be merciful to me! Although I am even now condemned and deserved to be hopelessly damned by Your justice, yet have mercy upon me, have mercy on me now.” That is the way to pray

and if you pray in that way God will hear you. He does not offer to *pay* anything. He does not propose any form of self-paid ransom. He does not present to God his tears, his abstinence, his self-denial, his generosity to the Church, his liberality to the poor, or anything else—he simply begs the Lord to be propitiated and to be merciful to him because of the great Sacrifice. Oh, that all of you would at once pray in this fashion!

Now, I want to cheer your hearts by noticing that this man, through this prayer and through this confession of sin, experienced a remarkable degree of acceptance. He had come up to the Temple condemned—“he went down to his house justified.” A complete change, a sudden change, a happy change was worked upon him! Heavy heart and downcast eyes were exchanged for glad heart and hopeful outlook. He came trembling into that Temple—he left it rejoicing! I am sure his wife noticed the difference. What had come over him? The children began to observe it, also. Poor father used to sit alone and heave many a sigh, but all of a sudden he is so happy! He even sings Psalms of David out of the latter end of the book! The change was very marked. Before dinner he says, “Children, we must give God thanks before we eat this meal.” They gather round and wonder at dear father’s happy face as he blesses the God of Israel!

He says to his friends, “Brethren, I am comforted. God has had mercy upon me. I went to the Temple guilty, but I have returned justified. My sins are all forgiven me. God has accepted a Propitiation on my behalf!” What good would come of such a happy testimony! This was a very sudden change, was it not? It was worked in a *moment*. The process of *spiritual* quickening is not a matter of hours, but of a single second of time. The processes which lead up to it and spring out of it are long, but the actual reception of life must be instantaneous. Not in every case would you be able to put your finger upon that second of time, but the passage from death unto life must be instantaneous. There must be a moment in which the man is dead and another moment in which he is alive. I grant you, life would be very feeble at first—still, there must be a time in which it was not there at all! And again, there must have been an instant in which it begins. There can be no middle condition between dead and alive. Yet a man may not know *when* the change took place.

If you were going to the Cape you might cross the equator at dead of night and know nothing about it, but still you would cross it. Some poor landmen have thought that they would see a blue line right across the waves. But it is not perceptible, although it is truly there—the equator is quite as real as if we could see a golden belt around the globe. Dear Friends, I want you to cross the line this morning! Oh, that you might go out of this house saying, “Glory, glory, hallelujah! God has had mercy upon me!” Though you feel this morning that you would not give two-pence for your life, yet if you come to God through Jesus Christ, you shall go away blessing God not only that you are alive, but that you shall live forever, happy in His love!

Once more, this man went away with a witness such as I pray we all may have. “He was justified.” “But,” you add, “how do I know he was justified?” Listen to these words. Our blessed Lord says, “I *tell* you that this

man went down to his house justified rather than the other.” “I tell you.” Jesus, our Lord, can tell! Into our ear He tells it. He tells it to God and the holy angels and He tells it to the man, himself! The man who has cried *from his heart*, “God be merciful to me a sinner” is a justified man! When he stood and confessed his sin and cast himself wholly upon the Divine Mercy, that man was unburdened so that he went down to his house justified! We are all going down to our houses. Oh, that we might go down *justified!* You are going home. I want you to go home to God, who is the true home of the soul. “*He went down to his house justified,*” and why should not you do the same?

Perhaps, my Hearer, you have never been to the Tabernacle before. Possibly, my Friend, you are one of those gentlemen who spend Sunday mornings in their shirtsleeves at home reading the weekly paper. You have come here this morning quite by accident. Blessed be God! I hope you will go home “justified!” The Lord grant it! Perhaps you always come here and have occupied a seat ever since the Tabernacle was built—and yet you have never found mercy. Oh, that you might find mercy this morning! Let us seek this blessing. Come with me to Jesus. I will lead the way! I pray you say with me this morning—“God be merciful to me *the sinner.*” Rest on the great Propitiation—trust in Jesus Christ’s atoning blood! Cast yourself upon the Savior’s love and you shall go down to your house justified!

Is it a poor cottage? Is it less than that—a back room up three flights of stairs? Are you very, very poor and have you been out of work for a long time? Never mind. God knows all. Seek His face. It will be a happy Sunday for you, if you, this day, begin a new life by faith in Jesus! You shall have joy, peace and happiness if you seek and find mercy from the great Father. I think I see you trudging home, having left your load behind you, but compassed about with songs of praise unto our God. So be it! Amen and Amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 51 and 32.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—912, 202, 591.**

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CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

NO. 216

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 3, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And the Publican, standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”
Luke 18:13.***

THE heroes of our Savior's stories are most of them selected to illustrate traits of character entirely dissimilar to their general reputation. What would you think of a moral writer of our own day, should he endeavor in a work of fiction, to set before us the gentle virtue of benevolence by the example of a Sepoy? And yet Jesus Christ has given us one of the finest examples of charity in the case of a Samaritan. To the Jews, a Samaritan was as proverbial for his bitter animosity against their nation as the Sepoy is among us for his treacherous cruelty and as much an object of contempt and hatred. But Jesus Christ, nevertheless, chose His hero from the Samaritans, that there should be nothing added to adorn him, but that all the adorning might be given to the grace of charity.

Thus, too, in the present instance, our Savior, being desirous of setting before us the necessity of humiliation in prayer has not selected some distinguished saint who was famed for his humility, but He has chosen a tax-gatherer, probably one of the most extortionate of his class, for the Pharisee seems to hint as much. And I doubt not he cast his eye sideways at this Publican, when he observed, with self-gratulation, “God, I thank You, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican.” Still, our Lord, in order that we might see that there was nothing to predispose in the person—but that the acceptance of the prayer might stand out—set even in a brighter light by the black foil of the Publican's character, has selected this man to be the pattern and model of one who should offer an acceptable prayer unto God. Note that and you will not be surprised to find the same characteristic exhibited very frequently in the parables of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As for this Publican, we know but little of his previous career, but we may, without periling any serious error, conjecture somewhat near the truth. He may have been, and doubtless he was, a Jew, piously brought up and religiously trained. But, perhaps, like Levi, he ran away from his parents and finding no other trade exactly suited to his vicious taste, he became one of that corrupt class who collected the Roman taxes. And ashamed to be known as Levi any longer, he changed his name to Matthew, lest anyone should recognize in the degraded cast of the Publican,

the man whose parents feared God and bowed their knees before Jehovah. It may be that *this* Publican had in his youth forsaken the ways of his fathers and given himself up to lasciviousness and then found this unworthy occupation to be most accordant with his vicious spirit.

We cannot tell how often he had ground the faces of the poor, or how many curses had been spilled upon his head when he had broken into the heritage of the widow and had robbed the friendless, unprotected orphan. The Roman government gave a Publican far greater power than he ought to possess and he was never slow to use the advantage for his own enrichment. Probably half of all he had was a robbery, if not more, for Zaccheus seems to hint as much in his own instance, when he says—“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have gotten anything of any man by false accusation, I restore it unto him four-fold.”

It was not often that this Publican troubled the temple. The priests very seldom saw him coming with a sacrifice. It would have been an abomination and he did not bring it. But so it happened that the Spirit of the Lord met with the Publican—and made him think upon his ways and their peculiar blackness. He was full of trouble, but he kept it to himself, pent up in his own bosom. He could scarcely rest at night nor go about his business by day, for day and night the hand of God was heavy upon him. At last, unable to endure his misery any longer, he thought of that House of God at Zion and of the sacrifice that was daily offered there.

“To whom, or where should I go,” said he, “but to God?—and where can I hope to find mercy but where the sacrifice is offered.” No sooner said than done. He went. His unaccustomed feet beat their steps to the sanctuary, but he is ashamed to enter. Yonder Pharisee, holy man as he appeared to be, goes up unblushingly to the court of the Israelites. He goes as near as he dare to the very precincts, within which the priesthood alone might stand. And he prays with boastful language. But as for the Publican, he chooses out for himself some secluded corner where he shall neither be seen nor heard and now he is about to pray, not with uplifted hands as yonder Pharisee, not with eyes turned up to Heaven with a sanctimonious gaze of hypocrisy—but fixing his eyes upon the ground, the hot tears streaming from them, not daring to lift them up to Heaven. At last his stifled feelings find utterance. Yet that utterance was a groan, a short prayer that must all be comprehended in the compass of a sigh—“God be merciful to me a sinner.”

It is done. He is heard. The angel of mercy registers his pardon, his conscience is at peace. He goes down to his house a happy man, justified rather than the Pharisee and rejoicing in the justification that the Lord had given to him. Well then, my business this morning is to invite, to urge, to beseech *you* to do what the Publican did, that you may receive what *he* obtained. There are two particulars upon which I shall endeavor

to speak solemnly and earnestly—the first is *confession*, the second is *absolution*.

I. Brethren, let us imitate the Publican, first of all in His CONFESSIOIN. There has been a great deal of public excitement during the last few weeks and months about the confessional. As for that matter, it is perhaps a mercy that the outward and visible sign of Popery in the Church of England has discovered to its sincere friends the inward and spiritual evil which had long been lurking there. We need not imagine that the confessional, or priestcraft, of which it is merely an offshoot, in the Church of England is any novelty. It has long been there—those of us who are outside her borders have long observed and mourned over it.

But now we congratulate ourselves on the prospect that the Church of England herself will be compelled to discover her own evils. And we hope that God may give her grace and strength to cut the cancer out of her own breast before she shall cease to be a Protestant Church and God shall cast her away as an abhorred thing. This morning, however, I have nothing to do with the confessional. Silly women may go on confessing as long as they like and foolish husbands may trust their wives, if they please, to such men as those. Let those that are fools show it. Let those that have no sense do as they please about it. But as for myself, I should take the greatest care that neither I nor mine have anything to do with such things. Leaving that, however, we come to personal matters, endeavoring to learn, even from the errors of others, how to act rightly ourselves.

Note the Publican's confession—to *whom was it presented?* "God be merciful to me a sinner." Did the Publican ever think about going to the priest to ask for mercy and confessing his sins? The thought may have crossed his mind, but his sin was too great a weight upon his conscience to be relieved in any such way, so he very soon dismissed the idea. "No," says he, "I feel that my sin is of such a character that none but God can take it away. And even if it were right for me to go and make the confession to my fellow creature, yet I should think it must be utterly unavailing in my case, for my disease is of such a nature that none but an Almighty Physician could ever remove it." So he directs his confession and his prayer to one place, and to one, alone—"God be merciful to me a sinner." And you will note in this confession to God, that it was *secret*. All that you can hear of his confession is just that one word—"a sinner."

Do you suppose that was all he confessed? No, Beloved, I believe that long before this, the Publican had made a confession of all his sins privately, upon his knees in his own house before God. But now, in God's House, all he has to say for man to hear, is—"I am a sinner." And I counsel you, if ever you make a confession before man, let it be a general one but never a *particular* one. You ought to confess often to your fellow creatures that you have been a sinner, but to tell to any man in what respect you have been a sinner is but to sin over again and to help your fellow

creature to transgress. How filthy must be the soul of that priest who makes his ear a common sewer for the filth of other men's hearts! I cannot imagine even the devil to be more depraved than the man who spends his time in sitting with his ear against the lips of men and women, who, if they do truly confess, must make him adept in every vice and school him in iniquities that he otherwise never could have known. Oh, I charge you—never pollute your fellow creature—keep your sin to yourself and to your God. *He* cannot be polluted by your iniquity. Make a plain and full confession of it before Him. But to your fellow creature, add *nothing* to the general confession—"I am a sinner!"

This confession which he made before God was *spontaneous*. There was no question put to this man as to whether he were a sinner or not. As to whether he had broken the Seventh Commandment, or the eighth, or the ninth, or the tenth. No, his heart was full of penitence and it melted out in this breathing—"God be merciful to me a sinner." They tell us that some people never can make a full confession, except a priest helps them by questions. My dear Friends, the very excellence of penitence is lost and its spell broken if there is a question asked. The confession is not true and real unless it is spontaneous. The man cannot have felt the weight of sin who wants somebody to tell him what his sins are! Can you imagine any man with a burden on his back, who, before he groaned under it, wanted to be told that he had got one there? Surely not. The man groans under it and he does not want to be told—"There it is on your back"—he knows it is there. And if, by the questioning of a priest, a full and thorough confession could be drawn from any man or woman, it would be totally useless—totally vain before God—because it is not spontaneous.

We must confess our sins because we cannot help confessing them. It must come out because we cannot keep it in—like fire in the bones—it seems as if it would melt our very spirit unless we gave vent to the groaning of our confession before the Throne of God. See this Publican—you cannot hear the abject full confession that he makes. All that you can hear is his simple acknowledgment that he is a sinner. But that comes spontaneously from his lips. God Himself has not to ask him the question but he comes before the Throne and freely surrenders himself up to the hands of Almighty Justice, confessing that he is a rebel and a sinner. That is the first thing we have to note in his confession—that he made it to God secretly and spontaneously. And all he said *openly* was that he was "a sinner."

Again—*what did he confess?* He confessed, as our text tells us, that he was a sinner. Now, how suitable is this prayer for us! For is there a lip here present that this confession will not suit—"God be merciful to me a sinner"? Do you say—"the prayer will suit the harlot, when, after a life of sin, rottenness is in her bones and she is dying in despair—that prayer suits *her* lips." Yes, but my Friend, it will suit *your* lips and *mine*, too. If

you know your heart and I know mine, the prayer that will suit her will suit us also. You have never committed the sins which the Pharisee disowned. You have neither been extortionate, nor unjust, nor an adulterer. You have never been even as the Publican, but nevertheless the word “sinner” will still apply to you. And you will feel it to be so if you are in a right condition.

Remember how much *you* have sinned against light. It is true the harlot has sinned more openly than you but had she such light as you have had? Do you think she had such an early education and such training as you have received? Did she ever receive such checking of conscience and such guarding of Providence as those which have watched over your career? This much I must confess for myself—I do and must feel a peculiar heinousness in my own sin for I sin against light, against conscience and more, against the love of God received and against the mercy of God promised. Come forward, you greatest among saints and answer this question—does not this prayer suit you? I hear you answer, without one moment’s pause—“Yes, it suits me now. And until I die my quivering lips must often repeat the petition, ‘Lord have mercy upon me a sinner.’ ” Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you, use this prayer today, for it must suit you all.

Merchant, have you no sins of business to confess? Woman, have you no household sins to acknowledge? Child of many prayers, have you no offense against father and mother to confess? Have we loved the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, with all our strength? And have we each loved our neighbor as ourselves? Oh let us close our lips as to any boasting and when we open them, let these be the first words that escape from them, “I have sinned, O Lord. I have broken Your Commandments. Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner.” But mark, is it not a strange thing that the Holy Spirit should teach a man to plead his sinnership before the Throne of God? One would think that when we come before God we should try to talk a little of our virtues.

Who would suppose that when a man was asking for mercy he would say of himself, “I am a sinner”? Why, surely, reason would prompt him to say, “Lord have mercy upon me. There is some good point about me. Lord have mercy upon me. I am not worse than my neighbors. Lord have mercy upon me. I will try to be better.” Is it not against reason, is it not marvelously *above* reason, that the Holy Spirit should teach a man to urge at the Throne of Grace that which seems to be against his plea, the fact that he is a sinner? And yet, dear Brethren, if you and I want to be heard, we must come to Christ as sinners.

Do not let us attempt to make ourselves better than we are. When we come to God’s Throne, let us not for one moment seek to gather any of the false jewels of our pretended virtues—rags are the garments of sinners. Confession is the only music that must come from our lips—“God be mer-

ciful to ME—a sinner.” That must be the only character in which I can pray to God. Now, are there not many here who feel that they are sinners and are groaning, sighing and lamenting because the weight of sin lies on their conscience? Brothers and Sisters, I am glad you feel yourself to be a sinner, for you have the key of the kingdom in your hands!

Your sense of sinnership is your *only* title to mercy. Come, I beseech you, just as you are—your nakedness is your only claim on Heaven’s wardrobe. Your hunger is your only claim on Heaven’s granaries, your poverty is your only claim on Heaven’s eternal riches. Come just as you are, with nothing of your own except your sinfulness and plead *that* before the Throne—“God be merciful to me a sinner.” This is what this man confessed—that he was a sinner and he pleaded it—making the burden of his confession to be the matter of his plea before God.

Now again, *how does he come?* What is the posture that he assumes? The first thing I would have you notice is that he “stood afar off.” What did he do that for? Was it not because he felt himself a separated man? We have often made general confessions in the temple, but there never was a confession accepted, except it was particular, personal and heartfelt. There were the people gathered together for the accustomed service of worship. They join in a Psalm of praise, but the poor Publican stood far away from them. They unite in the order of prayer. Still he could not go near them. No, he was come there for himself and he must stand by himself. Like the wounded deer that seeks the deepest glades of the forest where it may bleed and die alone in profound solitude, so did this poor Publican seem to feel he must be alone.

You notice he does not say anything about other people in his prayer. “God be merciful to *me*,” he says. He does not say “one of a company of sinners,” but “a sinner,” as if there were not another sinner in all the world. Mark this, my Hearer, that you must feel yourself solitary and alone before you can ever pray this prayer acceptably. Has the Lord ever picked you out in a congregation? Has it seemed to you in this Hall as if there were a great black wall round about you and you were closed in with the preacher and with your God and as if every shaft from the preacher’s bow was leveled at *you* and every threat meant for *you* and every solemn upbraiding was an upbraiding for *you*? If you have felt this, I will congratulate you. No man ever prayed this prayer aright unless he prayed alone, unless he said “God be merciful to *me*,” as a solitary, lonely sinner. “The Publican stood afar off.”

Note the next thing. “He would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven.” That was because he *dare* not, not because he *would* not. He would have done it if he dared. How remarkable it is that repentance takes all the daring out of men. We have seen fellows very daredevils before they were touched by Sovereign Grace who have become afterwards the most trembling and conscientious men with the most tender con-

science that one could imagine. Men who were careless, bragging and defying God, have become as humble as little children and even afraid to lift their eyes to Heaven though once they sent their oaths and curses there.

But why did he not dare to lift his eyes? It was because he was dejected in his “spirit”—so oppressed and burdened that he could not look up. Is that your case, my Friend, this morning? Are you afraid to pray? Do you feel as if you could not hope that God would have mercy on you, as if the least gleam of hope was more light than you could possibly bear—as if your eyes were so used to the darkness of doubt and despondency, that even one stolen ray seemed to be too much for your poor weak vision? Ah, well, fear not, for happy shall it be for you. You are only following the Publican in his sad experience now and the Lord who helps you to follow him in the confession, shall help you to rejoice with him in the absolution.

Note what else he did. He smote upon his breast. He was a good theologian. He was a real doctor of divinity. What did he smite his breast for? Because he knew where the mischief lay—in his breast. He did not smite upon his brow as some men do when they are perplexed, as if the mistake were in their understanding. Many a man will blame his understanding while he will not blame his heart and say, “Well, I have made a mistake. I have certainly been doing wrong, but I am a good-hearted fellow at the bottom.” This man knew where the mischief lay and he smote the right place—

“Here on my heart the burden lies.”

He smote upon his breast as if he were angry with himself. He seemed to say, “Oh, that I could smite you, my ungrateful Heart, the harder, that you have loved sin rather than God.” He did not do penance and yet it was a kind of penance upon himself when he smote his breast again and again and cried “Alas! Alas! Woe is me that I should ever have sinned against my God”—“God be merciful to me a sinner.” Now, can you come to God like this, my dear Friend? Oh, let us all draw near to God in this fashion. You have enough, my Brother, to make you stand alone for there have been sins in which you and I have stood each of us in solitary guilt. There are iniquities known only to ourselves which we never told to the partner of our own bosom, nor to our own parents or brothers, nor yet to the friend with whom we took sweet counsel.

If we have sinned thus alone, let us go to our chambers and confess alone—the husband apart and the wife apart, the father apart and the child apart. Let us each one wail for himself. Brothers and Sisters, leave off to accuse one another. Cease from the bickering of your censoriousness and from the slanders of your envy. Rebuke *yourselves* and not your fellows. Rend your own hearts and not the reputation of your neighbors. Come, let each man now look to his own case and not to the case of another. Let each cry, “Lord, have mercy upon me, as here I stand alone, a sinner.” And have you not good reason to cast down your eyes? Does it

not seem sometimes too much for us ever to look to Heaven again? We have blasphemed God, some of us, and even imprecated curses on our own limbs and eyes. And when those things come back to our memory we may well be ashamed to look up. Or if we have been preserved from the crime of open blasphemy—how often have you and I *forgotten* God! How often have we neglected prayer! How have we broken His Sabbaths and left His Bible unread!

Surely these things, as they flash across our memory, might constrain us to feel that we cannot lift up so much as our eyes towards Heaven. And as for smiting our breast, what man or woman is there among us that need not do it? Let us be angry with ourselves because we have provoked God to be angry with us. Let us be in wrath with the sins that have brought ruin upon our souls. Let us drag the traitors out and put them at once to a summary death. They deserve it well. They have been our ruin. Let us be their destruction. He smote upon his breast and said, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.”

There is one other feature in this man’s prayer which you must not overlook. *What reason had he to expect that God would have any mercy upon him?* The Greek explains more to us than the English does and the original word here might be translated—“God be propitiated to me a sinner.” There is in the Greek word a distinct reference to the doctrine of atonement. It is not the Unitarian’s prayer—“God be merciful to me,” it is more than that—it is the Christian’s prayer, “God be propitiated towards me, a sinner.” There is, I repeat it, a distinct appeal to the *atonement* and the mercy seat in this short prayer. Friend, if we would come before God with our confessions, we must take care that we plead the blood of Christ.

There is no hope for a poor sinner apart from the Cross of Jesus. We may cry, “God be merciful to me,” but the prayer can never be answered apart from the *Victim* offered, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. When you have your eye upon the mercy seat, take care to have your eye upon the Cross, too. Remember that the Cross is, after all, the mercy seat, that Mercy never was enthroned, until she did hang upon the Cross crowned with thorns. If you would find pardon, go to dark Gethsemane and see your Redeemer sweating, in deep anguish, gout of gore. If you would have peace of conscience, go to Gabbatha the pavement and see your Savior’s back flooded with a stream of blood.

If you would have the last best rest to your conscience, go to Golgotha—see the murdered victim as He hangs upon the Cross, with hands and feet and side all pierced, as every wound is gaping wide with extreme misery. There can be no hope for mercy apart from the *Victim* offered—even Jesus Christ the Son of God. Oh, come. Let us one and all approach the mercy seat and plead the blood. Let us each go and say, “Father, I have sinned. Have mercy upon me, through Your Son.” Come, drunkard, give me your hand. We will go together. Harlot, give me your hand, too.

And let us likewise approach the Throne. And you, professing Christians, come you also, be not ashamed of your company. Let us come before His presence with many tears, none of us accusing our fellows, but each one accusing himself. And let us plead the blood of Jesus Christ, which speaks peace and pardon to every troubled conscience.

Careless Man, I have a word with you before I have done on this point. You say, "Well, that is a good prayer, certainly, for a man who is dying. When a poor fellow has the cholera and sees black death staring him in the face, or when he is terrified and thunderstruck in the time of storm, or when he finds himself amidst the terrible confusion and alarm of a perilous catastrophe or a sudden accident, while drawing near to the gates of death. Then it is only right that he should say, Lord have mercy upon me."

Ah, Friend, the prayer must be suitable to you, then, since you are a dying man. It must be suitable to you, for you know not how near you are to the borders of the grave. Oh, if you did but understand the frailty of life and the elusiveness of that poor prop on which you are resting, you would say, "Alas for *my* soul! If the prayer will suit me dying, it must suit me now. For I *am* dying even this day and know not when I may come to the last gasp."

"Oh," says one, "I think it will suit a man that has been a very great sinner." Correct, my Friend and therefore, if you knew yourself, it would suit you. You are quite correct in saying that it won't suit any but great sinners. And if you don't feel yourself to be a great sinner, I know you will never pray it. But there are some here that feel themselves to be what you ought to feel and know that you are. Such will, by grace, use the prayer with an emphasis this morning, putting a tear upon each letter and a sigh upon each syllable as they cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." But mark, my Friend, you may smile contemptuously on the man that makes this confession, but he shall go from this house justified, while you shall go away still in your sins, without a hope, without a ray of joy to cheer your unchastened spirit.

II. Having thus briefly described this confession, I come more briefly still to notice the ABSOLUTION which God gave. Absolution from the lips of man I do believe is little short of blasphemy. There is in the Prayer Book of the Church of England an absolution which is essentially Popish, which I should think must be almost a verbatim extract from the Roman missal. I do not hesitate to say that there was never anything more blasphemous printed in Holywell Street than the absolution that is to be pronounced by a clergyman over a dying man. And it is positively frightful to think that any persons calling themselves Christians should rest easy in a Church until they have done their utmost to get that most excellent book thoroughly reformed and revised and to get the Popery purged out of it.

But there *is* such a thing as absolution, my Friends and the Publican received it. “He went to his house justified rather than the other.” The other had nothing of peace revealed to his heart. This poor man had all and he went to his house justified. It does not say that he went to his house having eased his mind—that is true, but more—he went to his house “justified.” What does *that* mean? It so happens that the Greek word here used is the one which the Apostle Paul always employs to set out the great doctrine of the righteousness of Jesus Christ—even the righteousness which is of God by faith. The fact is that the moment the man prayed the prayer every sin he had ever done was blotted out of God’s book so that it did not stand on the record against him. And more, the moment that prayer was heard in Heaven, the man was reckoned to be a righteous man.

All that Christ did for him was cast about his shoulders to be the robe of his beauty. That moment all the guilt that he had ever committed himself was washed entirely away and lost forever. When a sinner believes in Christ, his sins positively cease to be and what is *more* wonderful, they all *cease* to be, as Kent says in those well known lines—

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

They are all swept away in one solitary instant. The crimes of many years—extortions, adulteries, or even murder—wiped away in an instant. For you will notice the absolution was instantaneously given. God did not say to the man—“Now you must go and perform some good works and then I will give you absolution.” He did not say as the Pope does, “Now you must swelter awhile in the fires of Purgatory and then I will let you out.” No, He justified him then and there. The pardon was given as soon as the sin was confessed.

“Go, My son, in peace. I have not a charge against you. You are a sinner in your own estimation, but you are none in Mine. I have taken all your sins away and cast them into the depth of the sea and they shall be mentioned against you no more forever.” Can you tell what a happy man the Publican was, when all in a moment he was changed? If you may reverse the figure used by Milton, he seemed himself to have been a loathsome toad, but the touch of the Father’s mercy made him rise to angelic brightness and delight. And he went out of that house with his eye upward, no longer afraid. Instead of the groan that was on his heart, he had a song upon his lips. He no longer walked alone, he sought out the godly and he said, “Come and hear, you that fear God and I will tell you what He has done for my soul.”

He did not smite upon his breast, but he went home to get down his harp and play upon the strings and praise his God. You would not have known that he was the same man, if you had seen him going out—and all

that was done in a minute. “But,” says one, “do you think he knew for *certain* that all his sins were forgiven? Can a man know *that*?” Certainly he can. And there are some here that can bear witness that this is true. They have known it themselves. The pardon which is sealed in Heaven is re-sealed in our own conscience. The mercy which is recorded above is made to shed its light into the darkness of our hearts. Yes, a man may know on earth that his sins are forgiven and may be as sure that he is a pardoned man as he is of his own existence.

And now I hear a cry from someone saying, “And may I be pardoned this morning? And may I *know* that I am pardoned? May I be so pardoned that all shall be forgotten—I who have been a drunkard, a swearer, or what not? May I have all my transgressions washed away? May I be made *sure* of Heaven and all that in a *moment*?” Yes, my Friend. You believe in the Lord Jesus Christ if you will stand where you are and just breathe this prayer out, “Lord, have mercy! God be merciful to me a sinner, through the blood of Christ”—I tell you, Man, God never did deny that prayer yet. If it came out of honest lips He never shuts the gates of mercy on it. It is a solemn litany that shall be used as long as time shall last and it shall pierce the ears of God as long as there is a sinner to use it. Come, be not afraid, I beseech you, use the prayer before you leave this Hall. Stand where you are—endeavor to realize that you are all alone and if you feel that you are guilty—now let the prayer ascend.

Oh, what a marvelous thing, if from the thousands of hearts here present, so many thousand prayers might go up to God! Surely the angels themselves never had such a day in Paradise as they would have today, if every one of us could, by God’s grace, truly and sincerely make that confession! Some are doing it. I know they are—God is helping them. And Sinner, do you stay away? You, who have most need to come—do you refuse to join with us? Come, Brother, come. You say you are too vile. No, Brother, you cannot be too vile to say, “God be merciful to *me*.” Perhaps you are no viler than we are. At any rate, this we can say—we feel ourselves to be viler than you and we want you to pray the same prayer that we have prayed. “Ah,” says one, “I cannot. My heart won’t yield to that. I cannot.” But Friend, if God is ready to have mercy upon you, yours must be a hard heart if it is not ready to receive His mercy. Spirit of God, breathe on the hard heart and melt it now! Help the man who feels that carelessness is overcoming him—help him to get rid of it from this hour.

You are struggling against it. You are saying, “Would to God I could pray that. I could go back to be a boy or a child again and then I could. But I have got hardened and grown gray in sin and prayer would be hypocrisy in me.” No, Brother, no, it would not. If you can but cry it from your *heart*, I beseech you say it! Many a man thinks he is a hypocrite when he is not and is afraid that he is not sincere when his very fear is a proof of his sincerity. “But,” says one, “I have no redeeming trait in my

character at all.” I am glad you think so! Still you may use the prayer, “God be merciful to me.” “But it will be a useless prayer,” says one. My Brother, I assure you not in my own name, but in the name of God, my Father and your Father, it shall not be a useless prayer.

As sure as God is God, he that comes unto Christ He will in no wise cast out. Come with me now, I beseech you. Tarry no longer. The heart of God is yearning over you. You are His child and He will not give you up. You have run from Him these many years but He has never forgotten you. You have resisted all His warnings until now and He is almost weary, but still He has said concerning you, “How shall I make you as Admah; how shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together”—

**“Come humbled sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve.
Come with your guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve:
I’ll go to Jesus; though my sin
Has like a mountain rose,
I know His courts; I’ll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.
Prostrate I’ll lie before His face,
And there my sins confess;
I’ll tell Him I’m a wretch undone,
Without His Sovereign Grace.”**

Go home to your houses—let everyone—preacher, deacon, people—you of the Church and you of the world—everyone of you, go home and before you feast your bodies, pour out your hearts before God and let this one cry go up from all our lips, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

I pause. Bear with me.

I must detain you a few moments. Let us use this prayer as our own *now*. Oh that it might come up before the Lord at this time as the earnest supplication of every heart in this assembly! I will repeat it—not as a text, but as a prayer—as my own prayer, as your prayer. Will each one of you take it personally for himself? Let everyone, I entreat you, who desires to offer the prayer and can join in it, utter at its close an audible “Amen.”

Let us pray—“GOD - BE - MERCIFUL - TO - ME - A - SINNER.” [And the people did, with deep solemnity, say, “AMEN.”]

P.S.—The preacher hopes that he who reads will feel compelled most solemnly to do likewise.

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TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!

NO. 2687

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 12, 1900.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 17, 1881.**

***"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."
Luke 18:14.***

THE publican was justified rather than the Pharisee. The outwardly worse man of the two was accepted rather than the one who was apparently better. "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other." Observe, dear Friends, our Savior's gentle way of describing the contrast between these two men. He says that the publican was "justified rather than the other," but we all know that behind this mild and lenient expression, there is the sad and solemn Truth of God that the Pharisee was not justified at all. It is concerning that fact that I am about to speak to you. The publican was justified and the Pharisee was not, yet our Lord only said, "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other." It will be true wisdom on our part, also, to sometimes state a Truth in the very mildest way possible. A Scriptural Doctrine loses nothing of its effect by being tenderly expressed—indeed, a forcible Truth of God may even have its force increased by being rather understated than overstated. Our Lord Jesus Christ knew when to use this holy art and He did so on this occasion and, therefore, you and I will be wise if we do the same when a fitting opportunity occurs.

Notice, further, dear Friends, that the pith, the marrow, the very center of the blessing that we expect to get in worship is justification. To be accepted of God, to be regarded as just, to be esteemed by Him as doing the right thing—this is what we ought to seek whenever we come together for worship! And in that sense the publican, with his earnest cry for mercy, was justified—that is, he was accepted by God, he was regarded as one who had been made just—while the Pharisee, who stood there ostentatiously publishing his own excellences, was not justified, was not accepted, was not considered a just man and did not receive from God any of the favors which He is accustomed to give to those who rightly worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The reason why the Pharisee did not receive that which is the end of all worship—namely, acceptance with God, and justification in His sight—was that he reckoned himself too good to be justified. According to his own opinion, he was altogether too righteous a man to need God's favor and mercy. And I want now to speak to any of you who think you are

too good to be saved. I am always preaching to sinners and I have had the great delight of seeing many and many a sinner taken in the Gospel net and saved. Now I want to talk to those who are scarcely sinners except that, by way of compliment, they acknowledge that they are. "Yes," they say, "we are all sinners." And if they go to church, they say, "Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners." Yet, all the while, they neither look miserable, nor are they really conscious that they are sinners in the sight of God and *already under condemnation*. I want to speak especially to this class of persons. It is a great pity that it should be so, yet there are many people who, in their own estimation, are much too good to be saved, too good ever to be justified, too good ever to go to Heaven! There may be some such persons here. If so, may God the Holy Spirit bless to them what I have to say in Christ's name!

I. My first remark is that THERE ARE STILL SUCH PERSONS AS THIS PHARISEE.

There are still in the world many persons who, in their own opinion, are too good to be justified, too good to be saved. They come to this condition *because they compare themselves with others*. This Pharisee said, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." He felt himself to be quite a saint compared with the publican. He went up many degrees in his own estimation when he thought of what a wicked extortioner that publican had been! And he remembered someone who had been an adulterer and another person who had been unjust—and contrasting himself with these people, he felt that he was the most respectable individual whom he knew—a man to be held in very high esteem! He felt that God ought to be *thanked* for making such a man and if nobody else would do it, he would do it himself, for that was a duty which ought to be discharged at once. So remarkable a specimen of human excellence ought not to be left on the face of the earth, ungratefully forgotten by men—and as many of them did seem to forget him and not to see his excellences, he would, himself, bless God that there was, at any rate, one person in the world who was all he ought to be, if not a little more! He reckoned himself to be so good because he compared himself with other men.

My dear Hearer, are you very good by the same sort of measurement? Are you superlatively excellent because you judge yourself by a similar standard? If so, let me ask you kindly to make use of that standard in another way by comparing yourself, not with those whom you regard as your inferiors, but with those whom you must acknowledge to be your superiors. You have surely read some biographies of really devout, earnest, holy, consecrated men whose lives much exceed yours in all that is of true worth. So, if you will look *up* instead of looking down, I think you will soon begin to say, "Ah, I am far short of their standard! I am nothing like those men were. I am not living such a careful, prayerful, watchful, self-denying, consecrated life as they lived." Let this thought take a little of the conceit out of you. Begin to think that you are not quite so good as you thought you were and it may do you some service if you meditate for a while upon that fact.

“But,” you say, “we cannot all be expected to come up to *their* standard.” Ah, but you *are* expected to do that, and a great deal more, for, if you are going to be justified by your works, you will have to go far above their standard! The true standard by which you are to measure yourself is not even the most saintly of the saints, nor the most devoted of the martyrs and confessors. The standard for any man who would be saved by his own righteousness is God’s holy Law! Listen to it—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Have you come anywhere near that standard? I am sure you have not. You have fallen far short of what God demands of you, so what does it matter though you say, “I am better than some people are”? You are evidently worse than others are and you are much worse—infinately worse—than you ought to be! And the perfect Law of God, if you are to be justified by it, requires a *perfect obedience to all its commands*—and that you can never render. O dear Sirs, you are laboring under a terrible mistake! You are, in your own judgment, superlatively good, but you come to that conclusion only by comparing yourselves among yourselves—a process which, as the Apostle Paul tells us, is “not wise.” Measure yourselves by the Law of God and you will shrink into nothing at once if you are a man of honor, wisdom and sense.

There are some who think themselves much too good to be justified by God and they are under that delusion *because they have set one duty above another*. Listen to this Pharisee’s boast—“I fast twice in the week.” Among the Pharisees of our Lord’s day, I believe that Monday and Thursday were the regular fast days. I have heard that among certain modern Pharisees, Friday is the appointed time for fasting, but that is a matter about which I do not know much. The Pharisee evidently felt that it was a most important thing to fast twice in the week—and then he added, “I give tithes of all that I possess.” There were certain tithes that were demanded by God’s Law, but he seems to imply that he did *more* than was required of him, for he gave tithes of *all* that he had coming in. I daresay that, like the rest of the Pharisees, he had tithed the “mint, and anise, and cumin”—probably, all together it did not amount to much, and in comparison with, “the weightier matters of the Law—judgment, mercy and faith”—which he had omitted, it was as nothing at all. But he was very careful to pay the tithe of his mint, anise and cumin.

That might have been to his credit if he had not set it up as being the chief and main thing to be put in the front, the choice article to be exhibited in the window to let everybody see what a remarkably excellent person he was! “I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” He did not say anything about the widows’ houses that he had devoured, nor about the pretense and hypocrisy that lurked behind his long prayers. He did not say anything about his pride and his contempt for his fellow men, which he even dared to express in what he called his prayers. No, but he brought certain other things to the front—out of all true proportion—and then he felt himself to be wonderfully good.

Well, now, we know some persons who are most regular in their attendance at a place of worship. Perhaps someone asks, "Is not that a good thing for me to do?" Yes, it is an excellent thing, but I do not say much about it if you give short weight in your shop, or if you tell lies in your home, or anywhere else, or if you are living an unchaste life. There are other things to be thought of besides going to a meeting on Sunday. "Oh, but we have been baptized and we take the communion." Yes, I know you do and it is a very important thing that you should do so if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and if you are really living as true Believers should live. But if you put any religious *ceremony* to the front and omit the more vital matters, it will not do!

Then you know there are some persons who say, "Well, Sir, I was baptized as an infant, I was confirmed by the bishop, I have always attended the parish church, I give my guinea to every contribution, I have family prayer, I have—I hardly like to say how many good things I have." Just so. That is the way with some people—they put a certain set of duties into the front, while other duties are neglected. And they bring to God one duty blood-red with the murder of another. There are some who have given to God what they have gained by lying and trickery in their business, or they have given to God what they have ground out of the bones and marrow of the poor. Is it not often so? But it is not to be expected that God will accept either ourselves or our offerings because we choose to put one set of external duties into the front and then say, "We are superlatively good." It is a dreadful delusion! May God save you from it, my Friend, if you are under it! Remember the solemn words of the Lord Jesus upon this very point—"These ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

There are also some persons who reckon themselves to be very good *because they conceive themselves to have done almost more than they ought*. There is one family of the "Good-Enoughs" and there is another family of the "Too-Goods." They are cousins, I believe. Certainly, they are very closely related. This Pharisee belonged to the family of the "Too-Goods." I have already reminded you that he said, "I fast twice in the week." Now, according to the law of the Jews, they were to fast *once in the year*—so this man gave a hundred days for one, for he fasted twice in the week. They were to give a tithe of the produce of their land, but he did more than that. He said, "I give tithes of all that I possess. Surely, there is a balance to my credit. If I do fall short anywhere, I have gone over the mark in some other things and have done more than was required of me."

Alas, it is often the characteristic of hypocrites that they overdo one part and underdo another! Remember that striking simile in Hosea 7:8—"Ephraim is a cake not turned." What happens to a cake that is not turned? Why, it is done too much on one side and it is not done at all on the other! It is burnt black upon the coals on one side and the other side is dough just as it was when it was put down to bake! How many there are who always keep looking at their burnt side! "Oh," they cry, "we are baked and more than baked." Yes, but look at the other side of you,

which God also sees—there, you are underdone. Oh, that we might have sense enough to look at ourselves in a true light and to see the whole of ourselves—for then our foolish self-righteousness would soon vanish!

Let me speak to these very good people a little longer. This Pharisee, though he was so very good in his own esteem—could not be justified *because he did not pray*. Someone asks, perhaps, “Did he not pray?” No. He went up to the Temple to pray, but he did not pray. There was not a word of prayer in all that he said. And you, my Friend, may have knelt down every morning and every evening since you were a child, and yet never have prayed, for prayer is the speaking of a poverty-stricken heart to a rich God—the actual asking of something from God—but you have not felt that you needed anything from Him, so you have not asked for it! You have never cried out of your heart unto the Lord. You have uttered a certain form of words and that has been the end of it. You may say your prayers everyday till you die and yet never have prayed at all. How could this Pharisee expect that he should be saved when he had never prayed?

And, next, *he did not love his fellow men*. And it is a rule with God that if we love not our fellows, we shall not have their love. If we forgive not our erring brother, neither will the Lord forgive us. This Pharisee did not love his brother—he put all the rest of mankind into one bundle and he said, “God, I thank you that I am not as other men”—the whole lot of them. He himself stood there alone—he was the one man for whom God was to be thanked! He did not love his fellows, or else he would have thought better of them and he would not have put them all down as unworthy to be associated with himself, nor would he have set himself up above them all. Specially, he did not love that publican. He was horrified to find him standing so near him and he uttered, even in the House of God, a contemptuous expression concerning his fellow sinner. How could God send a man home justified when he was unloving and without sympathy for his fellow man?

Notice, also, that *this Pharisee did not ask for mercy*. Look again at his pretended prayer. There is not anything in it concerning mercy. He said, “God, I thank you,” but he did not cry, “Give me mercy. Grant me forgiveness. Pardon all my transgressions against you.” There was not a word of petition or supplication—then how should God give the man that which *he never asked for*? How should He bestow justification on one who never sought it?

Perhaps the most fatal flaw of all was that *there was no reference to an atonement in his devotion*. He said, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are,” but there was no plea that the atonement offered on the altar might avail for him. Yet, deep down in the poor publican’s prayer, there lies an allusion to the Propitiation or Mercy Seat. The penitent cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” has in it the veiled thought of the great propitiatory Sacrifice! But how shall God hear the prayer of the man who does not plead the blood of Jesus, nor make any mention of His great Sacrifice for sin? The Pharisee was altogether too good in his own esteem, so he was not justified. I wonder whether there are any such people here?

II. Secondly and but briefly, let me say concerning such persons as this Pharisee, that **THEY CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED.**

I can support my statement by the following reasons. First, *for God to justify them would be to dishonor Himself by putting Himself in the place of a debtor to them*—and that can never be the case. This man as good as pleaded, if he pleaded at all, that God should accept and justify him because he had not done certain things, but he had done other things—therefore God was, as it were, indebted to him for his extraordinary excellence! But Man, Woman, do you think that God will ever be debtor to *you*? Will you dare to stand before your Maker and talk to Him as if you had some merits of your own which deserved commendation from Him? Probably you would not say that in so many words, but there are many who are practically saying as much as that. They kick against the Doctrine of Election, for instance. They say that for God to save one person, and not another, is wrong, for they have as much claim upon Him as others have—which is true, for they have no claim at all, just as others have none at all! Yet their very opposition to God's exercise of His Sovereign rights proves that, deep down in their hearts, they believe they have some claim upon Him and that God is, in some sense, their debtor. But, dear Friends, you can never be justified while you talk or act in such a way as that! God will freely give Heaven, itself, away! He will give His own Son as the free gift of His Grace, but He will have no dealings with you if you think you have any claims upon Him. Claims upon Him? Wretches who deserved, long ago, to have been cast into Hell—how can you talk about your own merits when you appear before the infinitely holy God?

Further, God cannot justify these self-righteous people *because, if He did, it would be as good as saying that Christ's Atonement was not necessary.* If you can go to Heaven by your own works, why did Christ die? If you can get there by fasting, prayer, religious observances and moralities, then yonder Cross with Christ upon it was a superfluity and a mistake! There was no need for any plan of salvation and no need of an atonement by blood, if, after all, men might be good enough to save themselves! But we know that there is no salvation apart from Christ's atoning Sacrifice, so God cannot justify the self-righteous when, in order to do so, He would have to cast a slur upon His own wisdom and upon His own well-beloved Son. You good people, you who are too good to be saved—I mean, too good in your own esteem—you cannot be justified!

Further, if God were to justify those who are like this Pharisee was, He would be *either making two ways to Heaven or else shutting sinners out.* You see, dear Friends, God must shut the sinners out if the door into Heaven is only for the good, or else He must make a special entrance for the gentlefolk—a little private door where qualified people can go in by presenting tickets describing their own merits. But, if that were to be the case, we would have to get the Bible altered, for this blessed Book tells us that there is only one way of salvation and the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, says that He is the Way. The Bible says that there is only one foundation and that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The Apostle Peter, speaking to the rulers and eld-

ers of Israel, said, "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Suppose that sinners are to be saved partly by works and partly by Grace? Then what is to become of those who have no good works to plead? Shall they be lost? No, yet, if they are to be saved, they must be saved by Grace alone. Then there must be two ways to save men—some by Grace—that is the way for sinners. Some by Grace and works—that is the way for respectable people like some of you. Then we should have two gates to Heaven and if two, why not twenty? And then, at last, it would come to this, that we might have twenty thousand different ways to Heaven! I have seen a book entitled, "Every Man's Own Lawyer," and we might in time have another book upon the subject, "Every Man His Own Savior." That is what it would practically come to, at last, if there was more than one way of salvation! But it is not so and never shall be so. There is one way of salvation for all who come to God and that is by faith in Jesus Christ! And if you will not walk in this narrow way—if you are too good to travel along this pilgrim path—you shall perish in your accursed self-righteousness! Accursed, indeed, it is, for it has shut multitudes out of all hope of mercy because they have thought themselves too good to be saved!

If the self-righteous are to be saved, we must alter the Bible in other places besides those I have quoted. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." You must strike that passage out and so you must the reference to "Him that justifies the ungodly." It must no longer be said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," but we shall have to make David say, "Blessed is he who has never sinned at all, but whose merits deserve eternal life." Poor David would have come off badly under such a rule!

You will also have to alter the Church as well as the Bible. I must go out and most of my Brothers and Sisters will have to go out, for we shall not be able to get along with such good people as you are! We have all been sinners and God has had mercy upon us—and we love Him much because He has forgiven us much—and when you self-righteous folk come in, you will not like to associate with us. And when we pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," you will feel ashamed of us. Yet, mark you, the Church will not be altered in order to please you!

If it were, we would also have to alter many of our best hymns. We could not sing the hymns we have sung this evening. "Rock of Ages" also would have to go, for we should feel that Toplady made a mistake when he wrote it. And "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," would have to follow it. If this is the right system—if the good people are to come to Christ with their own goodness and to be saved because they are so good—then what is to become of the whole of our Hymn-Book? Why, everything will be turned upside down! But mark this—the turning upside down will come in another way. It is you self-righteous ones who will be turned upside down!

And if you will continue to be deluded and to believe a lie, you will have to suffer for it. I pray that God, in His mercy, may abase you now with true humility and lay you low at the feet of Jesus, for, if not, you will have to be abased at the coming of the Lord, in the Day when He shall judge all things according to Infallible Truth of God—and your fancied righteousness will then melt away like hoar-frost at the rising of the sun—and you will cry out in despair, “Woe is me! Woe is me! I thought myself good and excellent, but now I am cast out, while sinners, whom I despised, are brought in to feast on His wondrous mercy forevermore!”

III. Now I shall conclude by observing, concerning these people who are, in their own esteem, too good to be justified by Grace and who do not, therefore, seek God’s Grace, that **IT IS MOST FITTING THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED.**

I will tell you why it is most fitting and, first, *because it is taking them on their own standing.* A man ought never to object to be taken at his own valuation. I once had an experience which may illustrate the way in which God will deal with men who are like this Pharisee. There came to me a gentleman—a very great gentleman—who wished to become a student of the College. He told me that in all probability, I had never had such a remarkable genius as he was offering himself as a student. Of course I was amazed and deeply gratified. I asked him in what way he could display his genius and he replied that he had been studying for the ministry for many years, that he was most fluent and eloquent and that, if I liked, he would preach me a sermon on the spot upon any subject that I chose to give him. I said, “No, I do not think that I could listen to a sermon from you just now, for I have a good many other people waiting to see me.” He went on to tell me about his wonderful attainments, but I stopped him and said, “I must decline your application.” “But why?” he asked. “Well,” I answered, “we have no such men as you are in the College. We have none of your sort.” “Well, then,” he said, “it is time you had.” So I told him that the tutors were very ordinary sort of persons and, according to his own account, he knew very much more than they did, to begin with, and I also said that the President of the College was a still more ordinary person and that, considering the way in which I was confounded by his dazzling genius in that short conversation, I really must decline him. It was not possible that we should be able to get on together, for there was nothing that he could learn, as he already knew everything, so there was no need for him to become a student with us.

You may imagine his surprise because I took him on his own footing. He showed himself off to be such a remarkably wonderful man that all I could feel was, “I can read you through and through and understand what a fool you are.” I did not tell him so, but I met him on his own ground and told him that he was much too good for me to receive into the College. I believe it was right that he should be so answered, for Solomon said, “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.” And, oh, how grimly and solemnly will God, at the last, answer every self-righteous fool according to his folly—“You say that you did not sin as that publican did. No and, therefore, you did not repent as

that publican did. Christ came into the world to save sinners, but, according to your own declaration, you are not one of them, so He did not come to save you. He has shed His blood to wash the filthy, but you say that you are not filthy, so you shall never be washed, you shall forever remain as you are." This will be one way of letting the self-righteous see how God laughs at the calamity of those who have despised His mercy when their fear comes. All their self-righteousness was a mocking and a laughing at Christ and His precious blood—and at Free Grace and the Gospel—so the time will come when they will hear another kind of laugh and it will be but fitting that they should.

It is fitting that the self-righteous should not be justified and they, themselves, cannot wonder at it, because *they know that they are unwilling to accept the Gospel*. They cannot wonder that they do not have its blessings, for they do not like its terms! There are some of you, I fear, who are not willing to make a confession of your sin. You say that you do not wish to be saved by charity, to be delivered from going down to the Pit by the Sovereign, unmerited Grace of God—you must have a hand in the matter, somehow, for you think you have some claim upon God! Well, then, do you wonder that what you will not receive is denied you? They who shut their eyes must not marvel if the sun seems no more to shine for them. When men will not hear, they must not be surprised if the voice ceases to speak. Take heed unto yourselves, you who are trusting in your own righteousness, lest God, taking you at your word and seeing you unwilling to accept the blood and righteousness of Christ, may justly give you over to perish in your sin!

What an awful sight that will be—a *man everlastingly a martyr to his own pride!* Even the demons in Hell might ask, "Why did that man come to Hell? Was he unjust?" No. "Was he an extortioner?" No. "Was he an adulterer?" No. "Then, why did he come here?" Because he would not go to Heaven by Grace! He thanked God that he was not as other men are, but he has not much to thank God for, now, for he finds himself cast out while many of the other men, whom he despised, are saved. "But why did he go to Hell?" Only to keep up his own pride, to have his own way and not to bow his neck to Christ's righteous rule. When a man sacrifices his life for his country, when a man loses his life on behalf of science—above all, when a man is burned to death for God and for the Truth, I can honor him—but when a man loses his soul for the sake of his pride, angels and men may well cover him with everlasting contempt!

O Sirs, I pray you, if pride is keeping you out of Heaven, give it up and cast yourselves down at Jesus' feet! The old fable tells us of a fox that entered into a vineyard by a very small hole. He was very thin, then, but he ate so many of the grapes that he grew to be twice his former size and could not get out again! He could have been caught and killed because He had grown too big to make his escape, so there was nothing for him to do but to starve himself down to his former size and so get out to a place of safety. And if you have made yourselves so big with your own righteousness that you cannot get through that strait and narrow way of yielding to Christ, trusting Him and obeying Him—then you must shrink

and starve yourself down to this size. I pray God speedily to bring you down to it till you, too, shall be a bankrupt sinner, an emptied sinner, a condemned sinner—and then shall just look to Christ upon the Cross and live, for—

***“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for you”—***

if you will but look there for it! But if you will look only to yourself for it, you will perish in your iniquity and your blood will be upon your own head. God bless this word to all whom it concerns, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:1-14.**

Verse 1. *And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.* “Not to faint” in their expectation of answers to their supplications and, therefore, give up prayer, but to persevere in presenting their petitions at the Throne of Grace because prayer is never lost labor. There may be a time during which God does not appear to answer prayer, but He will ultimately answer it. Therefore “men ought always to pray, and not to faint” in prayer. If they do not pray, they will faint in many ways. Their courage will faint. All their hope as to the future will faint and fall into a dead swoon, as it were. So, dear Friends, you have your choice between praying and fainting! The doctrine our Savior laid down was “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” And this is the parable which He related in illustration of that Truth of God.

2. *Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man.* He was a most unfit person to be a judge, as many in Eastern cities still are. They are ready enough to take bribes, but they are not so prompt in giving just judgments. They generally attend to the business of the rich and the powerful, but neglect the poor and needy. So was it with this judge who, “feared not God, neither regarded man.”

3. *And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.* Probably someone had come and taken away from her the little bit of land that her husband had left her, upon the produce of which she and the children might have lived, and she could not get it back. So she comes to the judge, and cries, “Avenge me of my adversary.”

4. *And he would not for a while.* He had plenty of applicants who could pay him better than this poor woman could, so he disregarded her petition. But he little knew that, in her, he had to deal with a woman who meant to be heard and who intended to press her suit until she won it. She was evidently a very determined character. Though a broken-hearted widow, yet she was not broken-spirited even though the judge refused, for a while, to attend to her plea.

4, 5. *But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by*

her continual coming she weary me. She came again and again, and again and again—she would not leave off coming, for she meant to have the justice she sought and she got it. Now that is the way to pray, as if we would even weary God with our supplications, though we can never do so! It is impossible to weary Him with earnest believing entreaties, yet we must show the same determination in prayer which this importunate widow manifested while pleading with the unjust judge.

6. *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says.* He is unjust, but he is now obliged to be just! He is hard-hearted, but he is compelled to yield! The widow has conquered him, not by her money, but by her importunity! She is there so often that she troubles him and he says he must give in and grant her request.

7. *And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?* He may seem to be slow about it, but when His people cry to Him, He will ultimately hear them if He does not at once. Do not imagine that the children of God will always be laughed at and downtrodden. God will yet arise and take their side. They may be pushed into a comer for a while, but they shall come out into a large room in due season, for God will certainly avenge His own elect.

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* If anybody could find it, He could, for He creates it all and He knows where to look for it, yet there is so little of it that even He, whose eyes can detect the faith that is as small as a grain of mustard seed, can scarcely find it. There is all too little real faith in the world and those who think they have most of it, when they get into troubled waters, soon find they have not any to spare—and much that they thought was faith does not turn out to be so. O Brothers and Sisters, how little do we trust our God compared with what He deserves!

9, 10. *And He spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Two men went up into the Temple to pray.* They were both alike in going up to the Temple, but they were very different in coming back from the Temple. It is a very important thing to come to the House of God in a right state of heart—and it is a still better thing to go away from the Lord's House really benefited and improved. These two men went up to the Temple with the same objective—each of them went there “to pray.” Both intended to pray, though they did not both do so—but that was their objective.

10. *The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.* A tax-gatherer, one of the most hated people in Christ's day, because none but the lowest class of Jews would collect taxes for the Romans and, as a general rule, they farmed the taxes and greatly increased them by demanding of the people much more than was due. They were, therefore, held in the worst possible repute. I am not sure that tax-gatherers are the objects of much love anywhere, but, among the Jews, they were detested because they were collecting tribute for the Romans whom the conquered nation abhorred.

11. *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as*

this publican. So it is evident that he noticed one person who was there, though I do not find that the publican took any notice of him. We can tell by this remark that the mind of the Pharisee was wandering from his supposed devotions. It is a bad sign in a so-called worshipper when he knows a great deal about other people who are in the Lord's House. I have known many people whose recollection, after a sermon, has been quite as much about who was there and who was not there, as it has been about what was in the sermon, and what was not in it! So this Pharisee's eyes went gadding about and he spied out the poor publican, but, after a contemptuous reference to him, he returned to the catalog of his own virtues and excellences.

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* There his prayer ended and he stood in a most enviable state of contentment, delighted with himself, lost in the contemplation of his own ineffable purity. I think I see him in all his glory, yet I quickly turn to the other part of the Temple, further away from the most sacred place, for there I behold the true worshipper.

13. *And the publican, standing afar off.* Not afar off from the Pharisee, only, but afar off from the sacred shrine, the innermost Temple, as if unworthy to be there at all—"the publican, standing afar off."

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven.* That throne of the Highest—as if even a glance from his unholy eyes might defile that sacred place! He bowed his eyes downward, as if to read in the earth the record of his sin. He did not dare to look up.

13. *But smote upon his breast.* His heart smote him and he smote upon his heart.

13, 14. *Saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* The great Lord and Master acts as He would have His true servants do. It was said of some of them that they turned the world upside down and that is exactly what He does! He abases those who exalt themselves and He exalts those who abase themselves. He lifts up the lowly and casts down them of high degree in their own estimation—and so shall it be to the end of the world.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—397, 544.

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

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

RECEIVING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A LITTLE CHILD NO. 1439

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Verily I say unto you, Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God
as a little child shall by no means enter it.”
Luke 18:17.*

WHEN our Lord blessed the little children He was making His last journey to Jerusalem. It was thus a farewell blessing which He gave to the little ones and it reminds us of the fact that among His parting words to His disciples, before He was taken up, we find the tender charge, “Feed My lambs.” The ruling passion was strong upon the great Shepherd of Israel, “who gathers the lambs with His arms and carries them in His bosom.” And it was fitting that while He was making His farewell journey He should bestow His gracious benediction upon the children. Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ is not here among us in Person, but we know where He is and we know that He is clothed with all power in Heaven and in earth with which to bless His people.

Let us, then, draw near to Him this day. Let us seek His touch in the form of fellowship and ask the aid of His intercession. Let us include others in our prayers and among these let us give our children and, indeed, *all* children, a leading place. We know more of Jesus than the women of Palestine did! Let us, therefore, be even more eager than they were to bring our children to Him that He may bless them and that they may be accepted in Him, even as we are. Jesus waits to bless! He is not changed in Character, or impoverished in Grace—as He still receives sinners, so does He still bless children—and let none of us be content, whether we are parents or teachers, until He has received our children and has so blessed them that we are sure that they have entered the kingdom of God!

Our Savior, when He saw that His disciples were not only backward to admit the children to Him, but even rebuked those who brought them, was much displeased and called them to Him that He might teach them better. He then informed them that instead of the children being regarded as intruders, they were most welcome to Himself and, instead of being interlopers, they had full right of access, for of children and of childlike persons His kingdom was composed. Moreover, He declared that none could enter that kingdom except in the same manner as children enter. He spoke with Divine certainty, using His own expressive, “verily,” and He spoke with the weight of His own personal authority, “I say unto you.”

These prefatory expressions are intended to secure our reverent attention to the fact that so far from the admission of children into the kingdom being unusual or strange, no one can find entrance there unless they receive the Gospel as a little child receives it. It is this statement of the

Master which affords us a subject for this morning, which, may the Divine Spirit open up to us and impress upon our hearts. I shall speak upon three matters. First, upon the secret thought of the disciples which the Master refuted by the language of the text. Secondly, upon the open declaration of our Lord in the text. And, thirdly, upon the encouragement which He thus gives to us.

I. To begin with, let us deal with THE SECRET THOUGHT OF THE DISCIPLES—expressed by their *actions* though not spoken in words. And, first, it is pretty clear that the disciples thought the children were too insignificant for the Lord's time to be taken up by them. If it had been a prince who wished to come to Jesus, no doubt Peter and the rest of them would have diligently secured him an introduction. But, you see, these were only poor women with babies and small children. If it had been an ordinary person like themselves, they would not have repelled him with rebukes. But mere children! Sucklings and little children! It was too bad for these to be intruded upon the great Teacher!

A word is used about the youthful applicants which may signify children of any age, from sucklings up to 12 years—surely Jesus had worry enough without the intrusion of these juveniles. He had higher subjects for thought and graver objects of care. The children were so very little they were quite beneath His notice—so the disciples thought in their hearts. But, Brothers and Sisters, if it comes to a matter of insignificance, who among us can hope to win the Divine attention? If we think that children must be little in His sight, what are *we*? He takes up the isles as a very little thing. To Him the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers! Yes, we are all as things of nothing! If we were humble, we should exclaim, "Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?"

If we dream that the Lord will not notice the little and insignificant, what think we of such a text as this—"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." Does God care for sparrows and shall He not care for little children? The idea of insignificance must be set aside at once. "Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly." But are little children so insignificant? Do they not people Heaven? Is it not your conviction? It is mine—that they make up a very considerable part of the population of the skies! Multitudes of infant feet are treading the streets of the New Jerusalem! Snatched from the breast before they had committed actual sin—delivered from the toilsome pilgrimage of life—they always behold the face of our Father which is in Heaven. Of such is the kingdom of God."

Do you call these insignificant? Do you *dare* despise children who are the most numerous company in the army of the elect? I might turn the tables and call the *adults* insignificant, among whom there can be found no more than a small remnant who serve the Lord. Besides, many children are spared to grow up to man's estate and, therefore, we must not think a child insignificant. He is the father of the man. In him are great possibilities and capacities. His manhood is as yet undeveloped, but it is there and he that trifles with it mars the man. He who tempts the mind of a boy may destroy the soul of a man! A little error injected into the ear of a

youth may become deadly in the man when the slow poison shall at last have touched a vital part. Weeds sown in the furrows of childhood will grow with the young man's growth, ripen in his prime and only decay into a sad corruption when he himself declines.

On the other hand, a Truth of God dropped into a child's heart will there fructify and his manhood shall see the fruit of it. Your child listening in the class to his teacher's gentle voice may develop into a Luther and shake the world with his vehement proclamation of the Truth of God! Who among us can tell? At any rate, with the Truth in his heart, the child shall grow up to honor and fear the Lord and thus shall he help to keep alive a godly seed in these evil days. Therefore let no man despise the young or think them insignificant! I claim a front place for them. I ask that if others are kept back, at any rate their feebleness may make room for the little ones! They are the world's future! The past has been and we cannot alter it—even the present is gone while we gaze on it. Our hope lies in the future—therefore by your leave, Sirs, room for the children, room for the boys and girls!

Again, I suppose that these grown-up Apostles thought that the children's minds were too trifling. They are at their play and their childish mirth—they will regard it only as a pastime to be folded in Jesus' arms—it will be mirth to them and they will have no idea of the solemnity of their position. Well, well! Trifling is it? *Children* are said to be guilty of trifling! Oh, Sirs, and are you not also triflers! If it comes to an examination upon the matter of trifling, who are the greatest triflers—children or full-grown men and women? What is greater trifling than for a man to live for the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, or for a woman to live to dress herself and waste her time in company? No, more—what is the accumulation of wealth for the sake of it but miserable trifling? Child's play without the amusement!

Most men are triflers on a larger scale than children and that is the main difference. Children, when they trifle, play with little things—their toys so breakable—are they not made on purpose to be trifled with and broken? The child with his trifles is but doing as he should. Alas, I know men and women who trifle with their souls and with Heaven and Hell and eternity! They trifle with God's Word, trifle with God's Son, trifle with God Himself! Charge not children with being frivolous, for their little games often have as much of earnestness about them and are as useful as the pursuits of men! Half the councils of our senators and the debates of our Parliaments are worse than child's play! The game of war is a far greater folly than the most frolicsome of boyish tricks!

Big children are worse triflers than the little ones can ever be. Despise not children for trifling when the whole world is given to folly! "Yes," they say, "but if we should let the children come to Christ and if He should bless them, they will soon forget it. No matter how loving his look and how spiritual his words, they will go back to their play and their weak memories will preserve no trace of it at all." This objection we meet in the same manner as the others. Do not men forget? What a forgetful generation do most preachers address! Verily, this is a generation like that of which

Isaiah said, "Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

Alas, many of our hearers must have the Gospel preached to them again and again and again till the preacher is well-near weary with his hopeless task! They are like men who see their natural faces in a glass and go their way to forget what manner of men they are. They still live in sin. The Word has no abiding place in their hearts. Forgetfulness? Charge not *children* with it lest the accusation is proven against yourselves! But do the little ones forget? I suppose the events which we best remember in advanced age are the things which happened to us in our earliest days. At any rate, I have shaken hands with gray-headed men who have forgotten nearly all the events which have intervened between their old age and the time of their childhood—but little matters which transpired at home, hymns learned at their mother's knee and words spoken by their father or sister have lingered with them!

The voices of childhood echo throughout life. The first learned is generally the last forgotten. The young children who heard our Lord's blessing would not forget it. They would have His countenance photographed upon their hearts and never forget His kind and tender smile. Peter, James and John and the rest of you are all mistaken and, therefore, you must suffer the children to come to Jesus! Perhaps, too, they thought that children had not sufficient capacity. Jesus Christ said such wonderful things that the children could not be supposed to have the capacity to receive them. Yet, indeed, this is a great error, for children readily enter into our Lord's teaching. They never learn to read so quickly from any book as from the New Testament.

The words of Jesus are so childlike and so fitted for children that they drink them in better than the words of any other man, however simple he may try to be. Children readily understand the Child Jesus. What is this matter of capacity? What capacity is needed? Capacity to believe? I tell you children have more of that than grown-up persons. I am not now speaking of the *spiritual* part of faith, but as far as the mental faculty is concerned, there is any quantity of the capacity for faith in the heart of a child. His believing faculty has not yet been overloaded by superstition, or perverted by falsehood, or maimed by wicked unbelief. Only let the Holy Spirit consecrate the faculty and there is enough of it for the production of abundant faith in God!

In what respect are children deficient of capacity? Do they lack capacity for repentance? Assuredly not! Have I not seen a girl weep herself ill because she has done wrong? A tender conscience in many a little boy has made him unutterably miserable when he has been conscious of a fault. Do not some of us remember the keen arrows of conviction which rankled in our hearts when we were yet children? I distinctly remember the time when I could not rest because of sin and sought the Lord, while yet a child, with bitter anguish! Children are capable enough of repentance, God the Holy Spirit working it in them. This is not conjecture, for we, ourselves, are living witnesses.

What, then, do children need in the matter of capacity? "Why, they have not sufficient understanding," says one. Understanding of what? If

the religion of Jesus were that of modern thought; if it were such sublime nonsense that none but the so-called “cultured” class could make heads or tails of it, then children might be incapable of its comprehension. But if it is, indeed, the Gospel of the poor man’s Bible, then there are shallows in it where the tiniest lamb in Jesus’ fold may wade without fear of being carried off its feet! It is true that in the Scriptures there are great mysteries where your leviathans may dive and find no bottom—but the knowledge of these deep things is not essential to salvation, or else few of us would be saved!

The things that are essential to salvation are so exceedingly simple that no child need sit down in despair of understanding the things which make for his peace. Christ crucified is not a riddle for sages, but a plain Truth of God for plain people. True, it is meat for men, but it is also milk for babes! Did you say that children could not love? That, after all, is one of the grandest parts of the education of a Christian—did you *dream* that children could not attain to it? No, you did not say that, nor dared you *think* it, for the capacity for love is great in a child! Would God it were always as great in ourselves!

To put the thought of the Apostle into one or two words—they thought that the children must not come to Christ because they were not like themselves—they were not men and women. A child not big enough, tall enough, grown enough, great enough to be blessed by Jesus? So they half thought! The child must not come to the Master because he is not like the man. How the blessed Savior turns the tables and says, “Say not, the child may not come till he is like a man, but know that *you* cannot come till you are like he! It is no difficulty in the child’s way that he is not like you—the difficulty is with you—that you are not like the child.” Instead of the child needing to wait until he grows up and becomes a man, it is the *man* who must grow *down* and become like a child! “Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall by no means enter it.”

Our Lord’s words are a complete and all-sufficient answer to the thought of His disciples and we may, each one, as we read them, learn wisdom. Let us not say, “Would to God my child were grown up like myself that he might come to Christ.” No, but rather may we almost wish that we were little children again, could forget much that we now know, could be washed clean from habit and prejudice and could begin again with a child’s freshness, simplicity and eagerness! As we pray for spiritual childhood, Scripture sets its seal upon the prayer, for it is written, “Except a man be born again He cannot see the kingdom of God.” And again, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” Thus much upon the secret thought of the disciples.

Now, I wonder whether any of you have such a thought as theirs lingering in your brain or heart this morning? I wonder whether you ever think in this fashion? I should not be surprised if you do. I hope it is not quite so common as it used to be, but I used to see, in certain quarters among old folks, a deep suspicion of youthful piety. The seniors shook their heads at the idea of receiving children into the Church of the living God. Some even ventured to speak of converts as “only a lot of girls and boys”—

as if they were the worse for that! Many, if they hear of a child-convert, are very dubious, unless he dies very soon and then they believe all about him! If the child lives, they sharpen their axes to have a swing at him by way of examination. He must know all the doctrines, certainly—and he must be supernaturally grave!

It is not every grown-up person who knows the higher doctrines of the Word of God, but if the young person should not know them he is set aside. Some people expect almost Infinite Wisdom in a child before they can believe him to be the subject of Divine Grace. This is monstrous! Then, again, if a believing child should act like a child, some of the fathers of the last generation judged that he could not be converted, as if conversion to Christ added 20 years to our age! Of course, the young convert must not play any more, nor talk in his own childish fashion or the seniors would be shocked, for it was a sort of understood thing that as soon as ever a child was converted, he was to turn into an old man! I never could see anything in Scripture to support this theory, but then, Scripture was not so much cared for as the judgment of the deep-experienced people and the general opinion that it was well to summer and winter all converts before admitting them into the sacred enclosures of the Church.

Now, if any of you still have an idea in your head hostile to the conversion of children, try and get rid of it, for it is as wrong as wrong can be. If there were two enquirers before me now—a child and a man—and I received from each the same testimony, I should have no more right to distrust the child than to suspect the man! In fact, if suspicions must come in *anywhere*, it ought rather to be exercised towards the adult than in reference to the child who is far less likely to be guilty of hypocrisy than the man and far less likely to have borrowed his words and phrases! At any rate, learn from the Master's words that you are not to try and make the child like *yourself*, but you are to be transformed till you yourself are like the *child*.

II. Now we pass on to our second head, namely, THE OPEN DECLARATION OF OUR LORD wherein He sets forth His mind upon this matter. Looking at it carefully, we observe, first, that He tells the disciples that the Gospel sets up a kingdom. Was there ever a kingdom which had no children in it? How, then, could it grow? Jesus tells us that children are admitted into the kingdom. No, not only that some few are here and there admitted into it, but, “of such is the kingdom of God.” I am not inclined to get away from the plain sense of that expression, nor to suggest that He merely means that the kingdom consists of those who are like children. It is clear that He intended such children as those who were before Him—babies and young children—“of such is the kingdom of God.”

There are children in all kingdoms and there are children in Christ's kingdom. I am not certain that John Newton was not right when he said that the majority of persons who are now in the kingdom of God are children. When I think of all the multitudes of babies that have died, who are now swarming in the streets of Heaven, it does seem to me to be a blessed thought that albeit generation after generation of adults have passed away in unbelief and rebellion, yet enormous multitudes of children have gone streaming up to Heaven, saved by the Grace of God, through the death of

Christ, to sing the high praises of the Lord forever before the Eternal Throne! “Of such is the kingdom of Heaven.” They give tone and character to the kingdom! It is rather a kingdom of children than of men.

Next, our Lord tells us that the way of entering the kingdom is by *receiving*. “Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall by no means enter it.” We do not enter into the kingdom of God by working out some deep problem and arriving at its solution or by fetching something out of ourselves, but by *receiving* a secret something into us. We come into the kingdom by the kingdom’s *coming into us*. It receives us by our receiving it. Now, if this entrance into the kingdom depended upon something to be fetched out of the human mind by study and deep thought, then very few children could ever enter it! But it depends upon something to be *received* and, therefore, children may enter. Those children who are of sufficient years to sin and to be saved by *faith*, have to *listen* to the Gospel and to *receive* it by faith—and they can do this, God the Holy Spirit helping them.

There is no doubt about it, because great numbers have done it. I will not say at what age children are first capable of receiving the knowledge of Christ, but it is much earlier than some fancy. We have seen and known children who have given abundant evidence that they have received Christ and have believed in Him at a very early age. Some of them have died triumphantly and others of them have lived graciously—and some are here now, grown up to be men and women who are honorable members of the Church. Oh, Sirs, you who would wish to be considered “cultured” and thoughtful and, therefore, able to fetch a Gospel out of the deep well of your own consciousness—you will never be saved by that process! It is not that which comes *out of you* which will save you, but that which *goes into you!* Inventions and discoveries will not enable you to enter the kingdom—you must be *receivers*. You must sit at Jesus’ feet and *believe* what He reveals. You must let your artful questions and your curious suppositions lie still and you must become a scholar—for the proud spirit which scorns discipleship will shut you out of the kingdom of God unless you crucify it! We enter the kingdom by receiving and, therefore, children can enter!

The next thing in the text is that if we receive this kingdom and so enter into it, we must receive it as children receive it. How do children receive the kingdom of God? The answer must be twofold, seeing there are two sorts of children—those who are mere babies and incapable of actual sin—and those who are quite capable both of sinning and believing. I shut out neither from the text because I honestly think they are both there. In one Gospel our version reads, “infants,” and in the one before us, “little children.” We know that infants enter the kingdom, for we are convinced that *all* of our race who die in infancy are included in the election of Grace and partake in the redemption worked out by our Lord Jesus. Whatever some may think, we believe that the whole spirit and tone of the Word of God, as well as the Nature of God, Himself, lead us to believe that all who leave this world as babies are saved.

Now, how do they receive the kingdom, for in the same way must we receive it! Certainly children do not receive it by birth or blood, for we are expressly told in John’s Gospel that the children of God are born not of

blood nor of the will of the flesh! All privilege of descent is now abolished and no baby enters into Heaven because it was born of a pious father or mother—neither shall any be shut out because his progenitors were atheists or idolaters! My solemn persuasion is that the child of a Muslim, or a Papist, or a Buddhist, or a cannibal dying in infancy is as surely saved as the child of the Christian! Salvation by blood or birth there can be none, for the Gospel dispensation does not admit of it. If saved, as we assuredly believe they are, infants must be saved simply according to the will and good pleasure of God because He has made them to be His own!

Neither are infants saved as the result of any ceremony. There is no mention in the passage of infant baptism and yet if there had been, such an ordinance as this appears to be a natural time for announcing it. Not so much as a word or a hint upon that practice can be found here and, therefore, I will not waste words upon a question quite foreign to my text. It is clear that our Lord is speaking of children, as such, and not as the subjects of a ceremony. Children dying in infancy in China and Japan are as truly saved as those dying in England or Scotland. Their need of (so-called) baptism cannot affect them one jot. Babes of swarthy mothers; infants born in the kraal of the Hottentot or the wigwam of the Red Indian are alike saved and, therefore, not saved by any outward rite, or by the mystic power of a priesthood. They are raised to the kingdom of Heaven by the Free and Sovereign Grace of God!

How are they saved then? By works? No, for they have never worked! By their natural innocence? No, for if that innocence could have admitted them to Heaven, it must also have sufficed to save them from pain and death. If *sin* is not upon them in some form, how is it that they suffer? The imputed sin which makes them *die* prevents our believing that they claim Heaven by right of innocence! They die because of Adam's fall. Sad consequence of their being born of fallen parents. Mark their appealing looks as the dear little ones look up in their sufferings, as if they would ask why they must endure so much pain! We look at them with all the deeper grief because we cannot help them and are made to reflect upon the mysterious union of the race in its fall and sorrow.

The anguish of the dying little one is a proof of Adam's fall and of its participation in the result. The dear babies live again, however, because Jesus died and rose again and they are in Him! They perish, as far as *this* life is concerned, for a sin which they did not commit—but they also live eternally through a righteousness in which they had no hand—even the righteousness of Jesus Christ who has redeemed them! We know little of the matter, but we suppose them to undergo regeneration before they enter Heaven, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and to enter the spiritual world they must be born of the Spirit. But whatever is worked in them, it is clear that they do not enter the kingdom by the force of intellect, or will, or merit—but as a matter of Free Grace—having no reference to anything that they have done or have felt!

In that same manner you, O man or woman, must pass into the kingdom, entirely through Free Grace and not at all by any power or merit of your own! You will enter Heaven as fully by Grace as if you had *never* lived a godly life, nor had practiced a single virtue. I said, the other eve-

ning, to an esteemed member of this Church who lies dying, “Dear Brother, you have been a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” He replied, “You say so, but I think nothing of what *I* have done. I am looking to Christ, alone.” Just so. That is the ground of salvation! There cannot be *any* reason for the salvation of that dear baby which has just passed the portals of the skies—it was born of a fallen race—except the Grace of God! And that Grace of God which saves the baby must save you and me. I have nothing else to rest upon but the baby’s Savior and no hope except the belief that the Headship of Christ comprehends me within itself, even as it comprehends the little one.

Now we have to think of another sort of children—those who outlive the time of infancy and become children capable of actual sin and of knowing Christ and being converted. Many of these, by faith, enter the kingdom. Now, as these children receive the kingdom of Heaven, so must we receive it. How do the children receive it? I answer, a child receives the Gospel with humility, with simple faith and with unworldliness. Children are not held up to us as an example in all things, for they have faults which we ought to avoid. But they are here praised in this point—the way in which they receive the kingdom. How does a child receive it? We have said first, with humility. He is humble enough to be without prejudice. Take a little child and tell him about Christ Jesus the Savior and if God blesses the telling of the story of the Cross and he believes it, he receives it without having any wrong views and notions to battle with.

Many a man goes to hear the Gospel with the idea that Christ is merely human. He cannot get rid of that prejudice from his mind and, therefore, he does not receive Christ Jesus the Lord. Another comes to hear the Word with the recollection of all that he has heard and read of infidelity, heresy and profanity—how can he profit till this is removed? Another comes with his mind stuffed with proud self-righteousness, with a belief in priestcraft, or with a reliance upon some form or ceremony. If we could get this lumber out of the soul there would be some hope—but all this is a hindrance. Now the dear child, as he listens to the story of the love of God in Christ Jesus, has none of these prejudices to spoil his hearing! Very likely He does not even know that such evils have been invented by man and he is blessed in his ignorance. He will find out the evil soon enough, but for the present he humbly drinks in the Word, and prays—

**“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look on me, a little child;
Pity my simplicity;
Suffer me to come to Thee.”**

Now, this deliverance from preconceived notions is what we greatly need! My highly cultured and learned hearer over yonder, you must come to Jesus as if you knew nothing! You must begin *de novo*, with a clean page, on which Jesus must write what you are to believe. Just as your little boy or your little girl must believe, even so must you. There is only ONE way for the shepherd and the sage, the philosopher and the peasant. The little child receives Christ humbly, for he never dreams of merit or purchase. I do not recollect ever having met with a child who had to battle with self-righteousness in coming to Christ. A child cannot say, “Lord, I

have been a constant attendant at Church or at the Meeting House for years. I have taken the sacrament regularly for half-a-century!" Neither can he say with the Pharisee, "I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess."

Now, when a little one believes in the Lord Jesus, it is always with a heart clear of boasting and with a soul which sings—

***"In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling."***

That is how you will have to come to Jesus, my fine grown-up! You must doff those feathers of pride and strip off that finery of self-righteousness or you will find Heaven's gate too low and too narrow for you! A little child is free from the pride of knowledge—it has no "culture" and research to heap up before the Cross. Certain men will not come to Jesus because they know too much. Their self-conceit will be their ruin. They have read and they have thought and they have studied and, therefore, they know better than Inspiration, better than Apostles and Prophets! But my big brother, you must be diminished and brought down from the chair of the critic to the stool of the scholar if ever you are to be saved. Saving truth enters the heart—it is not developed from within—and it will have to come into you as it comes into the child, simply by believing what Jesus says, or else you will be a castaway. There is no other way of your entering into the kingdom of God but by the door which admits a child!

A second point about a little child is that it is generally teachable. You do not find your children in the Sunday school, when the Lord blesses them, raising difficulties. They do not enquire how is the good news from Heaven consistent with reason? And how is this statement of Scripture to be reconciled with the spirit of the age? No, there is the bread of Heaven before the child and he eats it, though he does not yet know how the wheat was made into bread. That is how we must receive the kingdom—we must lay aside all hope of solving difficulties and simply believe upon the authority of God. Nothing short of this is faith! Children receive the Gospel without proposing amendments in it. "I should like your Gospel," says one, "if you would alter it here and amend it there." There is a clique abroad nowadays who are always for unsettling our faith in the old Truth of God, but a child receiving the Gospel knows nothing of such designs—he takes it from the Word of God just as he sees it there. In the same manner must we receive the kingdom of Heaven.

A child receives it, too, with a wondering realization of it. When you tell a believing child the promises of the Word of God, how he opens his little eyes! How fully he believes the Word of God! How ready he is to ask for the blessing and to receive it and act upon it! It is, to him, a matter of undoubted fact! I have seen people who profess to be Christians smiling at the matter-of-fact way in which a child has believed the Word of God—and yet we ought to believe it in the same way—and we shall never enter into the enjoyment of it till we do! In the child's simple, honest, hearty way, we must believe the Word to mean what it says and to be a reality and a truth—and only then shall we know the marrow and fatness of the Gospel!

Once again, the child receives the Gospel in an unworldly manner. He has not to think of how he shall meet those heavy bills tomorrow, nor even of how he shall provide for his daily bread. He has not much to think of at all except that which he is taught. It is a grand thing to give all one's mind to the teaching of Jesus, for then we are sure to learn! It is beautiful to see how contented children are. A child of a poor man is just as happy as a young prince—with a few bits of platter to play with, he is just as much at ease as if he could handle diamonds and rubies. The child has no ambition for great things. Why should boys and girls care for stars? They are satisfied with their lot—they crave not for thrones and kingdoms! Give them enough dirt to make a pie and they will be as merry as the birds in spring and much more satisfied than a millionaire if he could obtain sole possession of the Bank of England! In this respect children have an advantage over us because when they receive the kingdom of God they are not already full with the thoughts of the world and the cares of riches.

If you notice, our Savior has placed this incident just before that of the rich young man who went away sorrowful, as much as if He would set before us the man with his possessions who loses the kingdom in contrast with the child with none—and thinking about none—who receives the kingdom! Oh that you who are unsaved would let your business alone awhile and give your whole minds to seeking Christ! He is your main need! Oh that you would forget your worldly concerns a little and go into your chamber and cry, "Great God, I will seek after nothing else but You until I find You. I must have Christ or die! Lord, I cast all else aside and resolve to wait upon You till I am washed from sin and admitted into Your kingdom."

Now, I think I hear someone murmur, "If this is true, what is the use of the exercise of private judgment?" The highest result of the exercise of judgment is that you resolve to sit at Jesus' feet! You do not resign yourself to any pope, preacher, or human leader—but since Jesus is God, you feel quite safe in accepting His Infallible Word as your guide and, like a child, you sit at His feet! "Well," asks another, "but what is the use of our obtaining learning and knowledge?" Here is one of the uses of it—it is not your learned man who rejects Christ—it is your man who has a smattering of learning and boasts of it! He that has an honest heart and is deeply learned always feels it sweet to be a child in the Presence of his God. The most gigantic minds in the world are the most childlike. Learn as much as ever you can and investigate as far as ever you please! But if God sanctifies your learning, it will help to make you more childlike so that you will all the more readily learn of Jesus!

"But then, what is the use of experience?" This is the best use of experience! What little I have ever had of experience has taught me that I cannot trust myself at all. It has taught me that I can neither think a good thought nor do a right act apart from my Master! My experience teaches me to be sure of nothing unless I have it from my Lord's mouth and I think the more experience any man obtains the more will he be of that mind. "Still," says one, "surely we must advance in capacity and in attainments and become men?" I admit that very freely, but when in knowledge you are men, then in teachableness you will be quite sure to be chil-

dren, for the greater a man becomes in the kingdom of God, the more a child he becomes! Yes, the greatest among us, who sat as high above us as the heavens are above the earth, is One who was called, "The Holy Child Jesus." When we see Him sitting in the midst of children who cluster all round Him while He clasps one and another to His bosom, we perceive that He is wonderfully much at home! We see He is just a holy, tender, lovely Man-Child, Himself, loving and being loved! Let us try to be such!

Do you not all love a man who is childlike in the frankness and loveableness of his nature? Do you not all wish that you could grow into children in simplicity and live a child's life in freedom from care? That is the use of increased capacity, that you may be more capable of being children—that you may have more capacity to receive the Truth from God because you are more conscious of your ignorance and emptiness. He is the best receiver who feels himself to be thoroughly empty and is, at the same time, as willing to be taught as a little child.

III. My time has gone before I noticed it and I must only say two or three words upon the last head, namely, THE GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT given by our Lord in the text. I cannot expatiate, but I pray you consider it, each one for himself. First, to all parents and teachers. Let us rejoice in the conviction that our children may be brought to Christ and let us labor earnestly to bring them, however little they may be! I hope we prayed about them while they yet knew nothing of our prayers and I hope we shall continue to pray for them till we see them safe in the arms of Jesus.

Next, what an encouragement this is to children! I am always glad to see the little ones so desirous to come to the Tabernacle service. I hope they can understand a good deal of what is said. Yes, I am sure they do, for I see their beaming faces! Dear little children, come to Jesus! Do not wait till you grow up, but seek the Lord early, for His promise is, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." And then what encouragement this is to all who are childlike! You feel that you do not know much; you mourn your lack of capacity for grasping the lofty Truths of the Word. You feel willing to be anything or nothing so that you may but be saved—surely the reception of the children will encourage you in the belief that Jesus will accept you!

And last of all, to my mind it is a sweet comfort concerning our race over which we have such cause to mourn. After all, when we think of infants being saved and of the Lord saying, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven," we shall hope that out of all kindreds, nations and tongues there will be a number that no man can number in whom Christ shall see of the travail of His soul! Millions of infant souls compose the family above! If you have lost infants, you will rejoice when you remember that you will go to them though they will not return to you!

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

THE SOUL'S CRISIS

NO. 906

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

***“Jesus of Nazareth passes by.”
Luke 18:37.***

Such was the news of that day. As an exclamation, doubtless it was often repeated when our Lord made His journeys through the land of Palestine and its outskirts—“Jesus of Nazareth passes by!” How quickly would the inhabitants of their cities and their villages be astir when the news reached them! What a curiosity there would be to see Him, knowing that His fame was spoken of everywhere! What an eagerness among the multitudes to get close enough to hear Him! What an intense anxiety on the part of some to go, themselves, and of others to take their sick and diseased friends that they might obtain health and cure! Oh, I think there was enough in those words to make men forego, awhile, their farms and their merchandise, their labors and their pleasures that they might feast their eyes and ears with the sight of His face and the sound of His voice—or much more, that they might obtain some grateful relief and get some substantial benefit from Him who went about doing good!

But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I want you to catch the *spiritual* significance of these thrilling words. Did you understand them aright, you would rise up and shake off your lethargy! You would be eager to greet His Presence and anxious to learn His doctrine! That, however, which I am sure would stir you to the heart's core and excite all your passions is the vehement desire to have salvation, present salvation, from Him! Surely you would be ready to receive Him into your house, to welcome Him to your heart and to sit at His feet dissolved in wonder, love and praise! And yet full many of you who join the throng and mingle with the families that come up to seek the Lord are as unconcerned for yourselves as though your sins were of no concern and your souls in no immediate peril!

Oh, it is high time that some here present were saved! In a short time you must be in another world. Hard by that column, on my right, in yonder gallery, in that next pew, there have usually sat two attentive hearers, husband and wife, who early this morning were suffocated by the smoke of their own burning house! I little thought that they would be preachers to us tonight—but they are so. The calamity, sudden and mysterious, which has removed them from our midst, sets “the uncertainty of life,” and the “preparation for departure” so vividly before us that we cannot refrain our emotions or restrain our sympathies.

Their absence should speak loudly to those who occupy the seat they have vacated, asking them whether they are ready to depart. Not less loudly should it speak to all sitting here, raising the question in the hearts of some of you who are careless about your souls, how you could bear to pass out of this world if the arrow of death should overtake you unawares. A trifling accident may prove fatal! A slight illness may be the precursor of speedy dissolution! Can you imagine your own remorse as you glance backwards at the Gospel you have listened to but never embraced—the blood of sprinkling you have heard of, but have never been applied to your conscience—the Savior whom you passed by with indifference when He passed by you, ready to be gracious and you would not be His disciple? Ah, you may turn from such questions with a faint smile now—before long you will turn to them with a pale shudder!

Are there any here present anxious to be saved? Let me have their solemn, earnest and devout attention! I pray God that what I speak simply may just strike their consciences and touch their hearts. If they want their judgments informed, may the Word come with light to their spirits and in that light may they behold Christ and find salvation! Our text is taken from a little narrative of a blind man who sat by the side of the highway begging—not an inappropriate picture of you, my Friends, who are solicitous of mercy and anxiously desirous of salvation. Are you not as blind and poor *spiritually* as he was *literally*?

I am sure that you will at once confess that you are blind. The eyes of your understanding are dim. Your heart is wrapped in darkness. You cannot see what you want to see. You do not even see your sin so as to repent of it with contrition. You have not yet seen the power of the precious blood of Jesus so as to believe in it as worshippers once purged and abundantly conscious that it has procured their remission. While you are so blind, I am quite sure that you will not be grieved or vexed with me if I say, too, that you are as poor as Bartimaeus. His was poverty of pence, but yours is poverty of soul. You have no merit! You have no strength. You have no possibility of ever getting the means of spiritual livelihood for yourselves. You are as poor as the poorest beggar that ever asked a charity for God's sake from the wayfarers!

But you are sitting tonight in somewhat the same position as that blind man was, for he sat in the place of Jesus' passing by and you have come to the place where God's mercy has often been revealed—where saints and sinners have passed by in crowds and where, blessed be His name!—Jesus Himself sometimes has passed by! What if tonight you should be apprised and aware of His Presence here and should cry out to Him and He should stop and open those blind eyes of yours and give you the light of life and the joy of eternal salvation? What if you should have to go home and say to your friends and kinsfolk, "I have had an experience tonight

the like of which I never felt before! I have found a Savior! I have received the forgiveness of my sins! I am a new creature in Christ Jesus!”?

Why you would make angels sing fresh hallelujahs in Heaven, while on earth God would be glorified and yourselves and your friends would be blessed by so lively an exercise of faith and so wonderful a participation of Divine Grace!

I. Now, looking steadfastly that this may be the case, I wish to speak very pointedly to you about two or three things. First, when Jesus passed by the blind man it was to that man A DAY OF HOPE. He had given up all thought of ever being able to see, so long had his eyes been closed to the light. When Jesus passed by the case was different. He could perform any miracle—there was no limit to His healing power—why shouldn't He open a blind man's eyes? And you, my anxious Friend, you have felt that you could not be saved. Of course, if it depended upon yourself you could not by any duties you discharged, or any services you performed acquire merit enough to enter Heaven—or even to procure the forgiveness of your sins on earth.

But, if Jesus Christ has come into the world to save that which was lost, it is a totally different matter! He can certainly pardon the greatest offenders and He can deliver from going down into the Pit the most undeserving of rebels. It was an hour of hope to that blind man and if Jesus passes by now, this is an hour of hope to you! But, does He pass by? I answer—Yes! There are different respects in which this may be interpreted of our Lord's conduct. In a certain sense He has been passing by some of you *ever since you* began to discern right from wrong. You have, some of you, been nurtured and bred up under the hearing of the Gospel and you cannot remember the time when you did not know something, at any rate, of the facts and Truths of God that pertain to Christianity.

Well, all this while Jesus Christ has been slowly passing by you—halting, pausing, giving you space—if perhaps you would call to Him for mercy. O take heed, that passing by may soon be over! The candle of life may be blown out. Yet while the Gospel rings in your ears, it is a day of hope to you—let not Satan or your own despairing heart persuade you to the contrary. More especially is it a time of Christ's passing by *when the Gospel is preached with power*. If this evening the Gospel should so come to you as to win your attention and melt your heart—if you should feel a Divine influence exerted over you by it—the evidence will not be lacking that Jesus is passing by.

Or, if the Gospel, though it affects not *you*, should convey such an influence and bring forth such fruits in *others* who are sitting in the same pew with you, that they should be saved—depend upon it—the kingdom of God will have come near unto you! It will then have passed by and you will have received no blessing because you sought it not in faith. Yet re-

sponsibilities will have come upon you from which you will not be able to escape! Jesus will have passed by other blind men and they will have asked for sight and had it, while you will remain blind—not because Jesus cannot heal you—but because you have not asked His healing, but have continued still in your unbelief of Him. I feel conscious within myself that this very night Jesus is, in a special manner, present in this assembly.

Sometimes the preacher has yearnings within himself for the people as if he travailed in birth until Christ is formed in them. He wrestles with such an earnest longing after souls as if their peril and the conflict for their rescue were all his own—that is no slight omen of the coming blessing. He perceives, also, the same desire in many of his converted hearers. As he knows that they are praying God with much vehemence of spirit to bring in the sinner, the atmosphere of prayer becomes to him an indication of the time and the place where Jesus manifests Himself, for where His people pray, Christ is surely present! I encourage you then, dear Hearers, with hopeful signs of heavenly Grace!

This is a hopeful hour! If you have lived up till now unsaved, I indulge the fervent hope that the hour has now come when you shall find salvation! Though you may, up to now, have sought and sought and sought in vain, yet now, surely, the set time to favor you has come! Lord, grant it may be so, that it may be so to many and we will bless Your name!

II. Secondly, as it was a time of hope to that poor blind man, so was it especially a TIME OF ACTIVITY. You that anxiously desire salvation regard attentively these words. A man cannot be saved by what he *does*—salvation is in Christ—yet no man is saved except as he seeks earnestly after Christ! This blind man did not open his eyes himself. What he did, did not help or contribute in any degree to his attaining sight. Nevertheless, he had to seek Jesus to have his eyes opened. There was enough in this to kindle all his passions, summon all his faculties and engage all his energies. But most certainly there was nothing in it to exercise his skill in discovering or applying a remedy—nothing to win him any honor—nothing to entitle him to any reward.

Yet this man is a picture of what we should be if we desire to be saved. *He listened attentively.* He could not see, but he had ears. He could catch the sound of footsteps. The silence that was broken by crowds coming along the road to Jericho was peculiar. The tramp was of an unusual sort and the tone of voices far different from those of wrangling or of revelry, or the songs of common travelers. He listened, yes, he listened with all his ears. So, dear Hearers, whenever the Gospel is preached, do not give it merely such a hearing as you might give to an ordinary story that is told you. But oh, hear it as God's Word! Hear it with bated breath and profound reverence! Drink it in as the parched earth drinks in the shower!

Hear it fearing to miss a single word, lest that should be the word that might have blessed you!

I believe attentive hearers are the most likely people to get the blessing. Let none of *us*, therefore, when we go to the courts of the Lord's House and hear a Gospel sermon, suffer our thoughts to be wandering here and there, but let us give scrupulous heed so we may detect the footsteps of the Lord by the conversation of His disciples. But, this man, after he had heard with discrimination, *enquired with eagerness what it meant*. Oh, how I wish our hearers would begin to ask, "What does it mean?" I can say that I put my words as plainly as I can. Oftentimes when there is a bunch of gaudy flowers of rhetoric that I gladly would use and *could* use, I have thrown them all on the dunghill because they might have stood in some poor sinner's way and he might not have understood the plain Truth of God so well.

Ah, but still, for all that, talk as we may, the carnal mind understands not the things that are of God! It is a blessed sign when men begin to say, "What is it all about? What is the drift of this Gospel? What does the man mean by sin and its heinousness? What does he mean by Christ and His precious blood? What is it all about?" O dear Hearers, some of you only skim your Bibles when you read them! I wish you would stop and ponder and ask of Christian people who have experienced these things, "What do these texts mean?" So, too, if there is anything in a sermon that baffles you, I wish you would seek out some godly and instructed Christian and say, "Explain to me what this thing means?" I should have great hopes of you if you were thus enquiring after the plan of salvation.

Is it not worth your while to ask the question, Sirs? When a man has lost his way, he will ask 20 people sooner than he will continue to pursue a wrong course. And will you lose your way to Heaven through not asking old travelers to direct you? Do, I pray you, be in earnest to learn and it shall not be long before *God* shall teach you, for whenever He makes a man conscious of his ignorance and anxious to be taught, God the Holy Spirit is quite sure to instruct him before long. When this man had asked the question and had been told in reply that Jesus of Nazareth passed by, notice what he did next—*he began to pray*.

We are told that he cried. His cry was a *prayer* and his prayer was a *cry*. It took the form of a piteous and emphatic outburst of desire—"You Son of David, have mercy on me." It was a short prayer. He did not need a book. Being a blind man he could not have used one if he had had it. Blessed be God, we need no Book of Prayers. We need such prayers as blind men can use quite as readily as those who can see. And what a comprehensive prayer it was—"Have mercy on me! Have mercy on me!" It was not the *words* of the prayer—it was the true *desire* and the *believing*

confidence of the prayer that did the work. "You Son of David, have mercy upon me!"

Now, my dear Hearer, you tell me that you wish to be saved, that you are anxious, no, enquiring—but do you pray? How can you expect mercy if it is not thought by you to be worth the asking for? What? Will you have God give you it without your seeking it? He has done so sometimes, but the usual rule of Divine Grace, and the most proper rule is that you should humbly ask for mercy at His feet. Will you do it? What? Is Hell so paltry a doom that you will not pray to escape from it? What? Is Heaven so trifling a destination that you will not pray that you may gain it? O Sirs, when heavenly mercy is to be had for the *asking*, will you not invoke the Almighty and be obedient to the Redeemer to obtain it? Then how richly you deserve to die! Being placed on pleading terms, you will not plead! And being bid to seek the Lord while He may be found, you willfully refuse to seek Him!

Yes, richly do you deserve to perish in your sin! But it must not be so with you. I cannot look you in the face and think you will do such despite to God's claims and your own interests. No, you will pray, I trust you will. You will cry with your whole heart to God! Be assured that never did a man really cry for mercy and continue to do so with his whole heart, but sooner or later mercy came! There are no praying souls in Hell! God never damns those who are suppliants for mercy. If you do but lay hold on the Cross of Christ and say, "I will not let this go except I get the blessing! I will not cease until I win my soul's desire," you shall soon have the mercy that you seek! O that God would stir you up to pray!

As this man prayed, there were some standing by who said, "Hush! Hold your tongue! You disturb the preaching. We cannot hear the silvery tones of the orator. Be still. It is not right for a beggar like you, crawling in the street, to disturb respectable people by your harsh, croaking voice—be quiet!" But his heart, being thus moved, there was no silence for his tongue! So much the more, with increasing vehemence and force, he iterated and reiterated the prayer, "You Son of David, you Son of David, have mercy on me! Have mercy on me!"

Now, if you desire salvation and have begun to pray, Satan will say, "Ah, it is of no use! Be quiet!" The flesh will say, "Why do you do this? There is time enough." Procrastination will come in and say, "When you grow old it will be time enough, then, to begin to seek the Lord." A thousand difficulties will be suggested, but, O Soul, if you are, indeed, set upon salvation and God has made you in earnest, you will say to all these, "Stand back! I cannot and will not be silenced by you! I must have mercy! It is mercy I need and it is mercy I must have, or I perish forever and that I cannot afford! Therefore I will cry the more!"

I wish—but ah, it is not in my power—still, I do wish that I could persuade you to importunate prayer. May the Holy Spirit lead you to pray. Well do I recollect my own prayers when I was seeking Christ. I prayed for months and sometimes in the chamber where I sought the Lord, I felt as if I could not come away from the Mercy Seat till I had an answer of peace—but I waited long before I got it. Still, it came at last and oh, it is worth waiting for! If one had to plead for mercy by the 20 years at a time, yet if at last the silver scepter were stretched out it would well repay all the groans and the tears of the most anxious spirits! Get to your chambers, then, or if you cannot get to your chambers, get to a saw pit, a hayloft—it matters not where—and pour out your heart before Him and do not rise from your knees until the Lord has said, “Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you”!

After this man had thus pleaded, it is noteworthy that Jesus stood still and called him. I must call your attention to this matter. As soon as Jesus had called the blind man, the effect produced on him is startling. I think I see him sitting there by the wayside helpless. Jesus bids him come. He gets up and in a moment he throws off that outer garment which had been so precious to him—in which he had so often wrapped himself up in cold nights—when he had to sleep beneath the open sky. That much prized, though all patched and filthy garment—he threw it right away! It might have made him a minute or two slower, so off he threw it and away he ran to Jesus!

Ah, and it is a great mercy when a poor soul feels that it can throw away anything and everything to get to Christ! “Oh,” says the sinner who really seeks a Savior, “if there is any sin that I indulged that prevents my finding mercy, only let me know it and I will do away with it. Is there any habit I have which I do not even know to be sin, or a thing I do that gives me pleasure, but is objectionable in the sight of God, I will do away with it! O Lord, if I must be poor, or if I must be sick, I will do away with my health and away with my wealth if I may but find mercy—

***“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol is,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only You.”***

I charge you, seekers of Jesus, let nothing stand between you and Christ! You *must* have salvation! You cannot afford to do without it. O fling away, then, everything that might impede you. Cast off the garment that might trip you up in the heavenly race. Lay aside every weight and the sin that does most easily beset you and press to Jesus at once. Tonight, I pray you, press to Jesus with vehement speed and be not content till you get the blessing!

Once more. When this man had come to Jesus and Jesus said to him, “What will you that I should do unto you?” *the man returned a straight-*

forward and intelligent answer, “Lord, that I might receive my sight.” Now, when you are at prayer tonight, any of you, do not merely pray a general prayer, but put it before the Lord in plain language. I could suppose, for example, the tenor of your confession and petition might be something like this—“Lord, here I am. I have lived all this time without regard of You. I have been a hearer at the Tabernacle. Sometimes I have been so deeply impressed that I have shed many tears, but Lord, it has all come to nothing. Sermons upon sermons have I heard, yet sermon after sermon has been lost upon me. I am afraid I am a Gospel-hardened sinner.

“I think, Lord, that sitting as I do right opposite the preacher, he speaking so pointedly as he does to me, witnessing, as I do, how others have been saved while I have been left unsaved, my heart must be like the nether millstone. Yet, Lord, You can save me. O have mercy on me! O melt this heart of stone! Break this adamant! Thaw this rock of ice! Lord, I know what it is that hinders me—there is that cherished sin. There is that vile companion. There is that lust of the flesh. O God, enable me to give it up! Now help me to pluck off the right arm and tear out the right eye, for, oh, I cannot perish! I cannot perish! I cannot bear Your wrath in the world to come! I am afraid because of it! Therefore would I flee from it and find refuge in Jesus!”

Or perhaps *your* case may be quite a different one and in pleading with God you may have to say, “Lord, I never was a keeper of Your Sabbath. I have been on all those holy days spending the time in sinful pleasure and I do not know that I have any regard for You, but I fell into the crowd at the Tabernacle gates just now and got into the aisle and, Lord, Your Word has found me out and I feel as I never felt before! I do desire to be reconciled to You.” Oh, you do not know how glad your heavenly Father will be to hear that, for, just as in the parable, the father ran and fell upon the prodigal's neck and kissed him, so will our Father who is in Heaven run and fall upon your guilty neck and give you the kiss of pardon and of acceptance! And you, even *you*, shall be saved!

Glory be to God, there is none that will press and seek and knock and strive thus, but the mercy shall come unto them! Still, I cannot withhold one other remark. That which really brought salvation to this blind man *was his faith*, for Christ says, “Your faith has saved you.” Now here is the greatest point of all—faith! Faith—for work without faith is of little worth. Faith is the great saving Grace—it is the real life-germ. “What is faith?” you ask. Anxious Enquirer, if you would know what faith is, understand that the other words for it are *trust* and *belief*. The faith that saves is a belief that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, offered an atonement for sin, and then, after a firm conviction, a simple *trusting* in that Atonement for your salvation.

Can you, this night—oh, I pray the Holy Spirit enables you!—can you, this night, trust Jesus Christ? When I ask that question of an awakened sinner, it seems to me as if the answer should always be, “Can I trust Him? Yes, indeed! Such a Savior, so Divine, offering such a sacrifice as the death of Himself, surely I can trust Him!” Here is a nail upon which you may well hang all the weight of the vessel! Here is a bridge over which tens of thousands of the heaviest sinners may safely cross! Come then, Sinner, what do you say? Are you resolved to trust Jesus? If so, your faith has saved you already! Go and wrestle in prayer till you get you an assurance of it.

III. Time flies and I must not tarry. Let me have a solemn word upon another point. When Jesus passed by, it was, as we have said, to the blind man an hour of hope and it was an hour for bestirring himself. Now we notice, thirdly, it was AN HOUR OF CRISIS. Did I not observe just now that while life lasts Jesus is passing by? That is true in one sense, but I do also believe that in many cases the hour in which they will ever be able to find mercy is past long before men die. There was a man who had listened to an earnest Gospel exhortation and as he listened he felt that the preacher was speaking out his inmost heart to him. He thought within himself, “That is an important matter.”

As he listened the importance of the matter seemed to strike him more and more. His tears began to flow and he resolved that when he reached his home that night he would seek the Lord. As he went on his way, a companion met him and said, “Come with me,” and he invited him to a certain ale-house. He was revolted at the thought for the moment. He stood still and the deliberation seemed to go on in his soul—“Which shall it be? Shall it be my jovial companion, or shall it be that earnest prayer on which I have resolved?” He hesitated a moment and his better self, or rather the Holy Spirit within him, conquered, and that night as he knelt, Divine light shone into his soul and he became a Christian!

On that same occasion there was another man who passed through precisely the same experience and to whom the same temptation came. But he yielded to it and he was never after that troubled with such another difficulty. He listened again to sermons, but he never felt, under them, as he did under that. They lost all interest for him. After a time he left off attending the means of Grace and he is at this time a blasphemer, though before he seemed to stand upon the very borders of salvation! Probably to this last man there will never come a day of Grace again. He has now put himself beyond the reach of it, as to the *means*—for he attends no place of worship and gives no heed to anything of the kind. Religion has become a thing for him to laugh at and its preachers the objects of his scorn.

Here were the turning points of these two lives—Divine Grace decided the one and the flesh decided the other—the one, in all human probability, is bound for Heaven and the other, alas, is bound for Hell. Such a night as this may have come now. I do not know that young man, nor where he sits tonight, but he is here. He has, after this service is over, an engagement of a sort that if his sainted mother in the country could but know of it, it would make her very hair stand on end with horror to think that her son should have come to *that*. I charge him by the living God to give up that sin, or else this night he may seal his own damnation!

There sits here in this house a woman who will, this evening, if the Lord shall make her fulfill the purpose of her heart, seek Christ and find Him. But if the temptation that is now striving with her should overcome her and the evening should be spent, after all, in idle chat, her conscience shall be seared as with a hot iron and from this hour it shall not be possible for the shafts of the Gospel to come at her. O that God may decide your case rightly for you, helping your will, your stubborn and wicked will, to yield and bow to the blessed instigation of His Holy Spirit in your hearts, for I am persuaded that this is an hour of crisis to many here!

IV. Lastly, remember that this hour of Jesus passing by is AN HOUR THAT WILL SOON BE GONE. Did you notice that word, “Jesus of Nazareth *passes by*”? He is not stopping, He is *passing* by, for He is going on towards the walls of Jericho to pass through its gates. Blind man, it is now or never, for He is passing by! He has come up to where you are! Cry to Him now! He has passed you, but cry to Him. Now, Man, He is long past, but He can yet hear you. Cry to Him now!

Ah, but He is passed and is gone and the man has not cried and now there is no other who can open his eyes, neither will this Son of David, for He has passed by and been unasked, unsought to bless. You had Christ passing by when you were young. I would to God you had said to Him then, “Have mercy on me!” But you waited till He came up to you in middle life and yet you did not seek Him. Alas, alas, for that! And now the gray hairs are stealing over you and half-a-century of unbelief has hardened your heart. You are getting close to 60 years of ungodliness, but He is not out of ear-shot yet. He will hear you now. O cry to Him, I pray you cry and may God’s Holy Spirit, who is the Author of all true supplication, breathe in you, now, a cry that never shall be stopped until you get the answer, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

Now, it may be that some here to whom I am speaking think that this preaching is all child’s play and that our talking about these solemn things is very easy. I protest before God this night that I feel it to be stern hard work! Not but what it is easy and delightful to *preach* the Gospel, but I yearn over the souls of some of you! I cannot understand why you crowd here and when I know that there are perhaps half as many outside as in-

side, clamoring for entrance, I know not why it is. I do nothing to attract you here, but speak right out my Master's Gospel. The truth is, if the Lord inclines your hearts and brings you within the sound of the Gospel which I am eager to proclaim, I feel a responsibility about you which it were not possible for you to estimate.

What if you should, in the Day of Judgment, be able to say, "We crowded to that house and we listened to that man, but he did not tell us the Truth of God, or he told it to us so coldly that we thought it did not matter and we put it off"? Oh, if you are lost, yet bear me witness that I would gladly have you saved! And if persuasions could bring you to Christ, you should not perish for lack of them. "*Believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." This is the message, but if you reject it, a weight falls on my spirit—it seems to crush me like a millstone—the thought that you should be lost! For what is it to be lost? To be cast away from the Presence of God! To be cast into Hell! To have to suffer, and that forever, all that the Justice of God can demand—all that the Omnipotence of God can inflict!

Why, Sirs, if I have but a headache, or a toothache for one brief hour, my patience can scarcely endure the torture! What must it be to suffer such pains for a century? Man, I cannot guess what it must be! What must it be to have ten thousand times worse pains than these, forever and ever? Why, to be dejected in mind, to be despairing, to be disconsolate—how bewildered it makes men! They take the knife or the poison in a fit of insanity—it may be they cannot bear their lives because of their anguish and desperation. But all the pangs and racks and abandonment from which men suffer *here* are nothing to be compared with the woes and mental anguish of the world to come! Oh, the agony of a spirit doomed, forlorn, accursed, upon which God shall put His foot in awful wrath and lift it up no more forever!

And there, as you lie, tormented to the quick, you will have this to be your miserable portion—"I heard the Gospel, but I would not heed it. Christ was put before me, but I would not acknowledge Him. I was entreated to believe in His name and fly to Him for salvation, but I hesitated—hung in suspense, objected—and at length denied Him. And all for what? For a little drink, a little dance, a little sin that yielded me but slight pleasure—or for worldly gain, or for low and groveling vices—or for sheer carelessness and gaiety! *Lost, lost, lost!* And for nothing! A sinner damned!"

He lost his soul, but he did not gain the world. He gained only a little frivolous pleasure, even that poor pittance he spent in an hour and then he was forever cast away! May it not be so with you—not with *one* of you, old or young! But may the Lord have mercy upon the whole assembly, for His dear name's sake. Amen.—

***“There is a time, we know not when,
 A point we know not where,
 That marks the destiny of men,
 To glory or despair.
 There is a line, by us unseen,
 That crosses every path—
 The hidden boundary between
 God’s patience and His wrath.
 To pass that limit is to die,
 To die, as if by stealth.
 It does not quench the beaming eye,
 Or pale the glow of health.
 The conscience may be still at ease,
 The spirits light and gay.
 That which is pleasing still may please,
 And care be thrust away.
 But on that forehead
 God has set
 Indelibly a mark,
 Unseen by man—for man as yet
 Is blind and in the dark.
 And yet the doomed man’s path below,
 Like Eden, may have bloomed.
 He did not, does not, will not know,
 Or feel that he is doomed.
 He knows, he feels, that all is well,
 And every fear is calmed.
 He lives, he dies, he wakes in Hell,
 Not only doomed but damned!
 O where is your mysterious brook,
 By which our path is crossed,
 Beyond which God Himself has sworn,
 That he who goes is lost?
 How far may we go on in sin?
 How long will God forbear?
 Where does hope end? And where begin
 The confines of despair?
 An answer from the skies is sent—
 ‘You that from God depart,
 While it is called today,
 Repent! And harden not your heart.’”***

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 18.

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MUST HE? NO. 2755

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 1, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 27, 1879.**

***“And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him,
and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down;
for today I must stay at your house.”
Luke 19:5.***

I THINK this is the only instance in which our Lord invited Himself to anybody's house. He often went when He was invited, but this time, if I may use the expression, He did the inviting Himself! Usually we must seek the Lord if we want to find Him. To the eye, at any rate, the apparent work of Grace goes on in this way—a man begins to cry for mercy, as the blind man who heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, cried to Him, “You Son of David, have mercy on me.” But God is so rich in Grace that He does not restrict Himself to this usual method! Generally, He is found of them that seek Him, but, sometimes, He is found of them that seek Him not. Yes, if I tell the whole Truth of God—if you go down to the bedrock of actual fact—it is *always* God who seeks sinners. He always calls them a people who are not a people and the first movement between God and the sinner is never on the sinner's part, but on God's part. Still, apparently, men begin to pray to God and begin to seek the Lord—and this is the usual order in which salvation comes to them. The prodigal said, “I will arise and go to my father,” and he arose and came to his father.” The blind man cried, “Jesus, you Son of David, have mercy on me.”

Our text, however, describes a case which shows the freeness of Divine Mercy, for, although Zacchaeus did not invite Christ to his house, Christ invited Himself. Though there was no asking Him to be a guest, much less any pressing entreaty on the part of Zacchaeus, Christ pressed Himself upon him and said to him, “Make haste, and come down; for to-day I must stay at your house.” I reckon that there are some here who are on an errand something like that of Zacchaeus. They want, perhaps, to see the preacher—which is not nearly as good a thing as wanting to see the preacher's Master. Still, that curiosity has brought them into the place where Jesus of Nazareth is known to come and I do pray that He may find many to whom He will say, “Make haste, and come

and receive Me; for I must stay, this very night, with you and dwell in your house and heart at this time and forever.”

I. The first thing I am going to talk about is THE DIVINE NECESSITY WHICH PRESSED UPON THE SAVIOR. He says, “I must.” “Today I must stay at your house.”

I do not think of this so much as a necessity upon Zacchaeus as upon Christ. You know that He felt this “must” at other times. In John 4:4, we read, “He must needs go through Samaria.” There was a sacred necessity that He should go that way. The most notable instance of all was when “Jesus began to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” In this case, the “must” was of another kind—He must stay in the house of Zacchaeus. What necessity was this which pressed so urgently upon our blessed Master? There were many other houses in Jericho beside that of the tax gatherer. I daresay there were other persons who would, apparently, have been more suitable hosts for the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet it was not really so. There was a mighty pressure upon Him, who is the Omnipotent Lord of all! Necessity was laid upon Him who is “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” He was His own Master, yet He must do something to which He was constrained by an urgent necessity—He must go and lodge that night nowhere else but at the house of Zacchaeus. What did this “must” mean?

I answer, first, it was *a necessity of love*. Our Lord Jesus needed to bless somebody. He had seen Zacchaeus and He knew what his occupation was and what his sin was—and He felt that He must bless him. As He looked at him, He felt as a mother does concerning her child when it is ill and she must nurse it. Or as you might feel concerning a starving man, whom you saw to be ready to expire with hunger, and you felt that you must feed him. Or as some men have felt when they have seen a fellow creature drowning, and they have plunged in to save him. They did not stop to think. They dared to do the brave deed without a thought, for they felt that they “must” do it. The compulsions of charity, the necessities of benevolence—these urgent things laid violent hands upon them, so they must do it. Thus Jesus felt—only in a much higher sense—that He must bless Zacchaeus. He must go to his house, that He might enter his heart, to stay there and to make Zacchaeus holy and happy henceforth and forever! And He is the same Christ, now, that He was then—He is not less loving, He is the same gracious Savior and He feels the same necessity, the same hunger after souls, the same thirst of love to bless the sons of men and I, therefore, hopefully expect that there will be, even in this place and, I hope, in many other parts of the world, some of whom it will be true that the Lord Jesus Christ must come to their house and

heart! So, this was a necessity arising out of our Savior's Divine benevolence and love.

Next, I think it *was a necessity of His Sovereignty*. "I must stay at your house." Here were scribes, Pharisees and all sorts of people around Him who were saying, "He is a Prophet! He has opened a blind man's eyes and He must, therefore, as a Prophet, be entertained by some notable Pharisee! Some very respectable person must find Him a lodging tonight." But our Lord Jesus Christ seems to say, "I cannot be bound. I will not be fettered. I must exert My own will. I must display My Sovereignty and though these people will all murmur, I cannot help that. Zacchaeus, I will come and stay with you, just to show them that I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion!"

You see, this man smelled bad! We are not very fond of tax gatherers here, but in the East, they like them still less than we do! And among the Jews, a tax gatherer, if he was a Jew who came to collect an obnoxious impost by a foreign power upon a people who thought that they were the people of God and ought to be free, was a man who was intensely hated for having stooped to become one of the farmers of taxes! And if he was the chief contractor of customs, as Zacchaeus was, he had a very bad name, indeed! People did not cultivate his acquaintance. They seldom dropped in to tea at his house and, as a general rule, they spoke very evilly of him. When they mentioned sinners, they always reckoned that Zacchaeus, who had made a fine thing out of the business they specially loathed, and was reputed to be very rich, was one of the very worst—nobody thought much of him. I think, too, that he had been excommunicated by a law of the Sanhedrim, for the publicans were generally regarded as excommunicated persons—shut out, certainly, from the society of more respectable people.

Besides, to my mind, Zacchaeus was an eccentric sort of person. That running of his was a very strange action for such a man! Wealthy men, even though they happen to be short of stature, do not generally take to running through the streets and climbing trees! I should think Zacchaeus was the sort of man who kept to himself and who, when he meant to do a thing, would do it—and if it was to climb a tree, as a boy might—he did not mind that, for he had got beyond caring for public opinion! He was an oddity—he may have been a very good sort of fellow in some respects, but it is quite clear that he was an odd sort of person. So our Lord Jesus Christ seemed to say, "I will show these people that when I save men, it is not because they stand well in society, or because they enjoy an excellent reputation, or because there are some beautiful points in their character. I will save this odd man, this Zacchaeus, this despised tax gatherer. I must have him—he is just the sort of man in whom I can best display the Sovereignty of My Grace." To this day, men

cannot bear that Doctrine! Free will suits them very well, but Free Grace does not! They would not let Christ choose His own wife—I say it with the utmost reverence. I mean they would not let Him have the choice of His own bride, His Church, but say that must be left to the will of men! But Christ will have His way, whatever they may say. He has a sacred determination in His blessed heart, that He will do as He pleases and so, for that reason, He says to Zacchaeus, “*I must stay at your house.*”

Our Lord Jesus was also under another necessity, *He needed someone in whom He could display the great power of His Grace.* He needed a sinner, to begin with. That was to be the raw material out of which He was going to make a saint and a saint of a very special character. Is there a Christian in this place who comes up to the standard of Zacchaeus after he was converted? I do not wish to be censorious, but I doubt if there is one. Is there anybody here who gives away half his income to the poor? I think that was going a long way in Grace in the matter of almsgiving. And then remember that he was but a babe in Grace when he did that—so what he did when he grew older, I do not know. But the first day he was born to Christ, he was a saint of that kind! What kind of a saint he grew to be, by-and-by, I can scarcely imagine! Lord, out of what material did You make such a generous soul as this? What? Out of a grasping, grinding tax gatherer, who sought to grab all he could lay his hands on, the mighty Grace of God, better than a magic wand, opened his closed heart and made it gush forth like a fountain flowing in a thousand generous streams! Jesus seems to say, “*I must have Zacchaeus so that the men of the world may see what I can make out of the most unlikely material—how I can take coarse pebbles from the brook and transmute them into diamonds! How I can bedeck my crown with jewels of the first water, which were originally but as the common stones of the street.*”

I wonder whether there is anybody here who feels that he has not anything at all in him that is any good whatever? If so, the Lord could say, “*I will make something of that man that will cause all who know him to marvel. I will make his wife wonder what has changed him. I will make all his children say, ‘What has come over Father?’ I will make the whole parish say, ‘What a miracle! What a miracle!’*” This was the kind of “*must*” that was laid upon our Savior and I hope such a “*must*” is laid upon Him now!

There was one more “*must*” upon Him, namely, He must stay in the house of Zacchaeus *because Zacchaeus was to be His host at Jericho.* Even the Savior must be lodged somewhere and, in most places, His Father had appointed some gracious spirit to entertain Him—and Zacchaeus was to be His host that day. And if He ever came that way again, I feel certain that He would go to His old quarters. Blessed be my Master’s dear name, He still has some hosts left where the guest chamber is always ready for Him! In every town, village and hamlet, there is some

house where there is a Prophet's chamber, and if you were to ask, "Is there anybody here who will entertain the Lord Jesus Christ?" You would soon find people who would be glad to have His company! Perhaps there is a large upper room, furnished and prepared, where they might break bread together. Or a little room where two or three might meet with Jesus—a place that never seems so bright as when there are a few praying people met together in it! The Lord must be entertained in this world and Zacchaeus was to be the man to entertain Him in Jericho!

Who is the one here now who will take Jesus in? A stranger from the country, perhaps? There is no preaching place in your village, the Gospel is not often proclaimed within miles of the place where you live and few people go to hear it when it is preached. That is all the more reason why Jesus must come to your house, for He means to have your best room, or that old shed of yours, or that big barn—that the Gospel may be preached there! There is a Divine necessity laid upon Him to have your heart for Himself so that He may come and dwell with you, and make your house His headquarters, where His disciples may go forth to attack the enemy where you live and that all in your region may know that the true Salvation Army has come there—and that the Captain of our salvation has Himself come to make His abode in your house and your heart!

There is plenty of room for enlargement upon this point, but we must go on to the next one.

II. So, secondly, LET US ENQUIRE WHETHER THERE IS SUCH A NECESSITY IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES. Has the Lord Jesus Christ any necessity to come and stay at your house, to come and abide in your heart? I can answer that question best by putting a few enquiries to you.

First, *are you willing to receive Christ at once?* Then, there is a necessity laid upon Him to come to you, for He never sent the will into a man without also sending His Grace with the will! Indeed, the willingness to receive Him is the proof of the working of His Grace! Do you long and sigh that Christ might be yours? Then you shall surely have Him! Are you earnestly anxious to be reconciled to God by Jesus Christ? Then you may have that great blessing at once! Are you thirsting after righteousness? Then you shall be filled, for what say the Scriptures? "Let him who is thirsty, come." And lest anybody should say, "Oh, but there is some preparation implied in that word, thirst, and I am afraid that I do not thirst enough." What does the Scripture further say? "And whoever will—whosoever will—let him take the water of life freely."

Next, *will you heartily receive Jesus?* Zacchaeus "received Him joyfully" and if you will do the same, then He must stay at your house! I think I hear somebody say, "Receive Him joyfully? Ah, that I would if He would but come to me. I would give all I have to have Christ as my Savior, to have the new life implanted within me and to have Jesus dwelling in my heart. I would be willing to live, or willing be die if I might but have Him

as mine.” So you will receive Him joyfully, will you? Ah, then He is bound to come to you! When the door of your heart is opened, Jesus will not be long before He enters. He will stand and knock even at a closed door—therefore I am sure that He will enter an open one! It is written of Lydia, “whose heart the Lord opened,” and her heart was not long open before the Lord entered it. And if yours is open to Christ, that is a proof that you are one of those in whom He must stay at this time!

Let me ask you another question. *Will you receive Christ, whatever the murmurers may say?* Suppose He comes to you and they begin to murmur, as they did when He went to be the guest of Zacchaeus? I do not know where you live, but those around you will be sure to find fault both with you and with your Lord, too. “They all murmured, saying that He was going to be guest with a man that is a sinner.” So, you see, they were murmuring at Zacchaeus as well as at Christ, and you will have the same sort of treatment when you receive Christ. Those who used to say, “You are a fine fellow,” when they find that you have become a Christian, will call you a mean spirited wretch! As long as you give them something to drink, they will say what a jolly dog you are! But as soon as you have done with their ways, you will be *literally* like a dog to them and they will have nothing for you but kicks and curses!

In more respectable society you know how they give a Christian the cold shoulder. Nothing is actually said, but there is a very clear intimation that your absence is preferred to your company when you once become a Christian. Can you bear that? Can you dare that? Because if Christ comes to your house and heart, you must expect that He will bring His Cross with Him. Are you willing to have Christ, Cross and all, and to say, “Let the murmurers say what they will and do what they will, my mind is made up, Christ for me, Christ for me! I cannot give Him up”?

Further, will you receive *Jesus Christ as your Lord?* Zacchaeus did so, for he said, “Behold, Lord.” Now, are you willing to give up all to Christ and to let Him be Lord over you? Are you willing to *do* what He bids you, *as* He bids you, *when* He bids you and simply *because* He bids you? For, verily, I say unto you, you cannot have Christ for your Savior unless you also have Him as your Lord! He must rule over us as well as forgive us! As one of our poets says—

**“Yet know, nor of the terms complain,
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign!
To reign and with no partial sway—
Thoughts must be slain that disobey.”**

Sins must be given up, evil practices must be forsaken. You must follow after holiness and endeavor in all things to imitate your Savior who has left you an example that you should follow His steps. Are you ready for that? Because if you are, then Christ is ready to stay at your house and to dwell in your heart!

Once more, *will you be prepared to defend Him?* If Jesus comes to a house, it becomes the duty of the host to defend Him. So Zacchaeus, not in boasting, but as a kind of answer to the sneers of the murmurers, when they said that Christ had gone to dwell with a sinner, seemed to say, "But I am no longer a sinner, as I used to be. If I have wronged anybody, I will restore it fourfold and, henceforth, the half of my income shall be given in alms to the poor." That was the best defense he could give and Christ must be defended by the changed lives of His disciples. You must live so that when men attempt to attack the Savior, they may be compelled to say, "Well, after all, that man is the better for being a Christian." Your children may rail at religion, but they will be compelled to say, "We could speak against Christ and Christians generally, but when we think of how our mother lived and how she died, our tongues are silenced. Then, there is our old nurse who feared the Lord—many a joke did we crack about her religion! But, ah, there was something about her that was so heavenly that we were obliged to believe in the reality of it whether we would or not."

Yes, dear Friends, if the Lord Jesus Christ should come to your house, you must say, "It shall be my heart's ambition, as long as I live, to defend His cause by the holiness of the character which I trust His Holy Spirit will work in me." If this is the case with any of you, then He must stay at your house tonight. God grant that He may do so!

III. Now I must close by reminding you of WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF CHRIST COMES TO STAY IN YOUR HOUSE.

First, *you must be ready to meet objections at home.* You who say that you are willing to receive my Master, are you quite sure that you know what that reception involves? Christ says that He wishes to stay at your house and that He must do so, and you say, "Yes, my Lord, I gladly welcome You to my heart and my home." But wait a moment, my Friend! Have you asked your wife about that matter? You know that you must not bring strangers home—she will be down upon you if you do. Have you counted the cost of your decision? And, my good woman, you say, "I want to bring Christ home with me." Have you asked your husband about it? Sometimes a dear child says, "Jesus Christ shall abide with me." But what will Father say? For, alas, often, the father is at enmity against God. If that is the case in your home, are you prepared to endure persecution for Christ's sake? Our Lord Himself said, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." And it is often so. David said to Jonathan, "What if your father answers you roughly?" Suppose that is your experience—can you keep true to Christ under such circumstances? Can you say, "I love my wife. I love my child, I love my father, but I love Jesus more than all of them and I must have Christ in my heart, and in my house, even if it brings war there"? Ah, then, He will come to your house if that is your resolve. But if not, He will not come to take the second

place. He will not come there if you turn coward at the first jest that is made against you, or the first hard thing that is spoken against your Lord. But He will come to your house if, despite all rebuffs and rebukes, you are determined that He shall make His abode with you.

But, next, is *your house fit for Him to enter, and abide there?* I know some houses where my Lord could not lodge for a single night! The table, the talk, the whole surroundings would be so uncongenial to Him. Are you prepared, then, to put away everything that would displease Him and to have your house cleansed of all that is evil? You cannot expect the Lord Jesus to come into your house if you invite the devil to come, too! Christ would not remain in the same Heaven with the devil—as soon as Satan sinned, He hurled him out of the holy place. He could not endure to have a sinful spirit, the spirit of evil, there, and He will not come and live in your house if you make provision for the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and all those evil things that He abhors. Are you prepared, by His Grace, to make a clean sweep of these things? He will not come to you on any other terms.

Further, *we must admit none who would grieve our Guest.* It is hard to lodge with some people because their children are so badly behaved. My Lord loves not to dwell in families where Eli is at the head of the household and where the children and young people live as they like. If He comes to your house, He will want you to be like Abraham, of whom He said, “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.” If He comes to your house, you must ask Him to come in the same way that He came to the house of the jailor at Philippi. How was that? I have often heard half of that passage quoted without the context—“Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, *and your house.*” Many leave out those last three words, “and your house.” But what a mercy it is when all in the house, as well as the head of the family, have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Do you not wish that it may be so in your house? Do you not ardently desire it? I trust that you do.

Once more, *when the Lord Jesus Christ comes into your house, you must entertain Him.* He needs no riches at your hands, yet He wants the best that you have. What is the best that you have? Why, your heart, your soul! Give Him your heart, give Him your life, give Him your very self! If you had to entertain the Queen—if she had promised to come and spend an evening with you—I will guarantee that you would be fidgeting and worrying for weeks about what you should get for such an occasion! And if you have but little means, you would try to get the very best that you could. I frequently used to go and preach in a country place where I stayed at a farm—and the dear old man who lived there used to have about a hundred pounds of beef, at the very least, on his table! And

when, year after year, I noticed such enormous joints, I said to him, one day, "You must have a very curious idea of my appetite—it is not possible that I should ever get through these masses of meat that you put on your table." "Oh," he replied, "we get through it all very easily after you are gone, for there are plenty of poor people and plenty of farm laborers round about, and they soon clear it up." "But," I enquired, "why do you have so much when I come?" "Bless you, Sir," he answered, "I would give you a piece as big as a house if I could get it—I would, indeed—just to show you how welcome you are at my home." I understood what he meant and appreciated his kindness and, in a far higher sense, let us all do as much as we possibly can to show the Lord Jesus how welcome He is to our heart and our home!

How welcome He ought always to be when He comes, as our blessed Savior, to put away our sin and change our nature, and honor us with His royal company, and keep and preserve us even to the end that He may take us up and our children, too, to dwell at His right hand forever! Oh, there ought to be grand entertainment for such a Guest as He is! Where is the man who is going to ask Him home tonight? Here stands my Master and in His name I ask—who will take Him home tonight? With whom shall Jesus lodge tonight? "Oh," says one, "if He would but come to me, I would be glad enough to welcome Him." He is glad enough to come, for He delights to be entertained in human hearts. O you soldiers over there, with the red coats on—I am always glad to see you here—shall Jesus Christ abide with you tonight? And you others, in black coats, or in colored dresses, shall Jesus Christ abide with you tonight? You good friends who are up from the country, if you have not taken Christ into your hearts, will you not take Him in now? I cannot hear what you say, but He can, and if this is the reply, "God be merciful to me a sinner, and come and lodge with me tonight," it shall be done, and His shall be the praise!

Now the time has gone, but I must say just these few words more. I remember that when I was crying to God for mercy and I could get no answer to my supplication, so that I feared I must really give up prayer as hopeless, the thought which kept me praying was this, "Well, if I do not get salvation, I shall perish." I seemed to fancy that the Lord had kept me waiting—that was only my foolish way of thinking and it was not true—but I said to myself, "If the Lord keeps me waiting, I also kept Him waiting a long while. Was I not for many years resisting Him and refusing Him? So if He makes me wait for salvation, I must not complain." Then I thought, "Well, now, if I were to keep on praying and I did not find Christ for 20 years, yet, if I found Him at last, the blessing would be well worth having and worth waiting for, so I will never leave off praying for it." And then I thought, "Why should I expect that I must be heard the moment I choose to come to the Mercy Seat, when I would not hear God's call when

He so often spoke to me?" So I still persevered in prayer, yet with this thought—what else can I do?—like a whip always upon my back. I felt that this must be my resolve—

***"I can but perish if I go.
I am resolved to try!
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die."***

I like that plan which I have known to be followed by some who have gone to their room and shut the door, determined not to go out till they had found the Savior. They have read the Word, especially such passages as these, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." And they have gone down on their knees and have said, "Lord, this is Your promise. Help me now to believe in Jesus and give me salvation for His sake, for I will not leave this place without Your blessing!" Such vehemence, such importunity is sure to prevail! How dare anyone of you continue to live unsaved? How dare you, Sir, again close your eyes in sleep while you are unreconciled to God? What if, instead of waking up in that bedroom of yours, you should lift up your eyes and say, "Where am I? What is this dreadful place? Where are the things I once loved? Where are the things I lived for? Where am I? Where is Christ! Where is the Gospel? Where are Sabbath days? Where are the warning words I used to despise? Where is the power to pray? Is all this gone forever? And where am I? In dark, dark, dire despair—an enemy to You, O God, and an enemy to You forever! Horror and dismay have taken hold upon me."

The very attempt to depict that awful scene makes me feel as though dread would stop my tongue. Oh, I pray you, go not there! There are some who deny the eternity of future punishment, but, for my part, I would not risk such suffering for an hour even if it should end then. What woe it would be to be only an hour in Hell! Oh, how you would then wish that you had sought the Savior and had found Him! But, alas, there is no such thing as an hour in Hell! Once lost, you are lost forever! Therefore seek the Lord now! Cry with Jeremiah, "O Lord our God, we will wait upon You!" You cannot fight it out! You cannot escape from everlasting wrath unless you trust in Jesus, so let this be your cry—

***"You, O Christ, are all I need
More than all in You I find!
Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on You!"***

So, Christ of God, we cast ourselves into Your arms! Save us, save us, save us for Your sweet mercy's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:36-43; 19:1-10.**

Luke 18:35-38. *And it came to pass, that as He was come near unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passes by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, You son of David, have mercy on me!* He did not need to be told twice who was passing by, nor did he need any exhortation to seek Christ's help. It was enough for him that Jesus of Nazareth was near him, so he would cry to Him for the help He alone could give. Oh, that we were half as sensible! Oh, that the blindness did not get into men's hearts! If it were not so, every blind soul would at once begin to cry to God for mercy! There is not one poor sinner here who knows that Jesus often passes this way, who would not begin at once to cry, "You Son of David, have mercy on me."

39. *And they which went before rebuked him. "Be quiet!" they cried.*

39. *That he should hold his peace. "Do not interrupt the flow of those marvelous words, or break the thread of that matchless discourse."*

39. *But he cried so much the more, You son of David, have mercy on me!* They could not quench the fire that burned within his breast! They did but increase its intensity by all their efforts to put it out. The blind man was so earnest to get his eyes opened that his voice could not be silenced. This was a proof of his commonsense and true wisdom. It is remarkable how clearly the blind people mentioned in the Scriptures could see! Oh, that those who think they can see could really see as plainly as this blind man could, and would act as wisely as he did! "He cried so much the more, You Son of David, have mercy on me!" This was his only hope—perhaps his last opportunity—so he availed himself of it to the fullest.

40, 41. *And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be brought to Him: and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What will you that I shall do unto you? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.* There was no waste of words. He said what he meant and he meant what he said, and he knew what he needed. It is a great thing, in prayer, to know what we really need—a very important thing to be sensible enough not to multiply words, but to cry to the Lord with a definite objective, as this blind man said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

42, 43. *And Jesus said unto him, Receive your sight; your faith has saved you. And immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.* That was a blessed Praise Meeting, brought about by the healing of that one man! Now that his eyes were opened, he showed that his mouth was not closed. He proved that he could pray well. Now he proves that he can also praise well! He prayed when they tried to stop him, but now nobody shall stop him from praise! And he so praised the great Physician that, with the flaming firebrand of his gratitude—and he set all other hearts ablaze—"All the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

Luke 19:1. *And Jesus entered.* That is, He entered at one end of the town—

1. *And passed through Jericho.* And so came out at the other end of it.

2. *And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.* It was an important station for the collection of customs—there was a good deal of produce at Jericho upon which there was a tax, so Zacchaeus had a good post. He was rich.

3-7. *And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must stay at your house. And he made haste and came down and received Him joyfully, And when they saw it, they all murmured.* Some of the very people, I suppose, who had just before given praise to God. So fickle are the judgments of men that we need not be elated when all of them speak well of us. It only needs that the wind should veer just half a point and they will all speak ill of us! The cry of men, even when it is most clear and strong, is not to be depended on. They shout “Hosanna,” today, but, before the week is out, they cry, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him.” So here, “They murmured.”

8. *Saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.* I do not know where else He could have gone, for they were all sinners! But they meant that this tax gatherer was “a sinner.” By public reputation, he was an excommunicated person who was regarded by everybody as “a sinner” in a very special sense.

8. *And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.* “Henceforth, one half of my income shall go in almsgiving.”

8. *And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.* “I will not give to the poor or to God that which is not lawfully mine. I will not steal a sheep and give the feet to the poor, but I will give back, four times over, anything that I may have taken wrongfully and still the half of my future income shall go to the poor.”

9, 10. *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—408, 538, 576.

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

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

EFFECTUAL CALLING (IRRESISTIBLE GRACE) NO. 73

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,
APRIL 6, 1856,
BY THE REV C H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for today must I abide at your house.”
Luke 19:5.***

Notwithstanding our firm belief that you are, for the most part, well instructed in the Doctrines of the everlasting Gospel, we are continually reminded in our conversation with young converts how absolutely necessary it is to repeat our former lessons and repeatedly assert and prove over and over again those Doctrines which lie at the basis of our holy religion. Our friends, therefore, who have many years ago been taught the great Doctrine of Effectual Calling, will believe that while I preach very simply this morning, the sermon is intended for those who are young in the fear of the Lord—that they may better understand this great starting point of God in the heart—the Effectual Calling of men by the Holy Spirit. I shall use the case of Zaccheus as a great illustration of the Doctrine of Effectual Calling. You remember the story. Zaccheus had a curiosity to see the wonderful Man, Jesus Christ, who was turning the world upside down and causing an immense excitement in the minds of men. We sometimes find fault with curiosity and say it is sinful to come to the House of God from that motive. I am not quite sure that we should hazard such an assertion. The motive is not sinful, though certainly it is not virtuous—yet it has often been proved that curiosity is one of the best allies of Grace. Zaccheus, moved by this motive, desired to see Christ—but there were two obstacles in the way—first, there was such a crowd of people that he could not get near the Savior. Second, he was so exceedingly short in stature that there was no hope of his reaching over people’s heads to catch a glimpse of Him. What did he do? He did as the boys were doing—for the boys of old times were, no doubt, just like the boys of the present age—they were perched up in the branches of a tree to look at Jesus as He passed along! Elderly man though he is, Zaccheus

jumps up and there he sits among the children! The boys are too much afraid of that stern old Publican, whom their fathers dreaded, to push him down or cause him any inconvenience. Look at him there—with what anxiety he is peeping down to see which is Christ—for the Savior had no pompous distinction. No one is walking before Him with a silver mace. He did not hold a golden crozier in His hand—He had no pontifical dress. In fact, He was dressed just like those around Him! He had a coat like that of a common peasant, made of one piece from top to bottom. Zaccheus could scarcely distinguish Him. However, before he has caught a sight of Christ, Christ has fixed His eyes upon him and, standing under the tree, He looks up and says, “Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at your house.” Down comes Zaccheus! Christ goes to his house. Zaccheus becomes Christ’s follower and enters into the Kingdom of Heaven!

I. Now, first, Effectual Calling is a very gracious Truth of God. You may guess this from the fact that Zaccheus was a character whom we would suppose the last to be saved. He belonged to a bad city—Jericho—a city which had been cursed and no one would suspect that anyone would come out of Jericho to be saved! It was near Jericho that the man fell among thieves—we trust Zaccheus had no hand in it—but there are some who, while they are Publicans, can be thieves, also. We might as well expect converts from St. Giles’s, or the lowest parts of London, from the worst and vilest dens of infamy, as from Jericho in those days! Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, it matters not where you come from—you may come from one of the dirtiest streets, one of the worst back slums in London—if Effectual Grace calls you, it is an Effectual Call which knows no distinction of place! Zaccheus also was of an exceedingly bad trade and probably cheated the people in order to enrich himself. Indeed, when Christ went into his house, there was an universal murmur that He had gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner! But, my Brothers and Sisters, Divine Grace knows no distinction—it is no respecter of persons! God calls whom He wills and He called this worst of Publicans, in the worst of cities, from the worst of trades! Besides, Zaccheus was one who was the least likely to be saved because he was rich. It is true, rich and poor are welcome—no one has the least excuse for despair because of his condition—yet it is a fact that, “not many great men” after the flesh, “not many mighty” are called, but, “God has chosen the poor of this world—rich in faith.” But even here, Grace knows no distinction. The *rich* Zaccheus is called from the tree. Down he comes and he is saved. I have thought it one of the greatest instances of God’s condescension that He can look *down* on man. But I will tell you there was a greater

condescension than that when Christ looked *up* to see Zaccheus! For God to look down on His creatures—that is mercy—but for Christ so to humble Himself that He has to look up to one of His own creatures—that becomes mercy, indeed! Ah, many of you have climbed up the tree of your own good works and perched yourselves in the branches of your holy actions and are trusting in the free will of the poor creature, or resting in some worldly maxim. Nevertheless, Christ looks up even to proud sinners and calls them down. “Come down,” He says, “today I must abide at your house.” Had Zaccheus been a humble-minded man, sitting by the wayside, or at the feet of Christ, we would then have admired Christ’s mercy. But here he is lifted up and Christ looks up to him and bids him come down!

II. Next it was a *personal* call. There were boys in the tree as well as Zaccheus but there was no mistake about the person who was called. It was, “*Zaccheus*, make haste and come down.” There are other calls mentioned in Scripture. It is said, especially, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Now that is not the Effectual Call which is intended by the Apostle when he said, “Whom He called, them He also justified.” That is a *general* call which many men, yes, all men reject, unless there comes after it the personal, particular call, which makes us Christians. You will bear me witness that it was a personal call that brought you to the Savior. It was some sermon which led you to feel that you were, no doubt, the person intended. The text, perhaps, was, “You, God, see me.” And perhaps the minister laid particular stress on the word, “me,” so that you thought God’s eyes were fixed upon you. And before the sermon was concluded, you thought you saw God open the books to condemn you and your heart whispered, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord.” You might have been perched in the window, or stood packed in the aisle—but you had a solemn conviction that the sermon was preached to you and not to other people! God does not call His people in shoals but in units. “Jesus said unto her, *Mary*, and she turned and said unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master.” Jesus sees Peter and John fishing by the lake and He says to them, “Follow Me.” He sees Matthew sitting at the table at the receipt of custom and He says unto him, “Arise and follow Me,” and Matthew did so. When the Holy Spirit comes home to a man, God’s arrow goes into his heart—it does not graze his helmet, or make some little mark upon his armor—it penetrates between the joints of the harness, entering the marrow of the soul. Have you felt, dear Friends, that personal call? Do you remember when a voice said, “Arise, He calls you.” Can you look back to when you said, “My Lord, *my* God”—when you knew the Spirit

was striving with you and you said, “Lord, I come to You, for I know that You call *me*”? I might call the whole of you throughout eternity but if *God* calls one, there will be more effect through His personal call of one, than my general call of multitudes!

III. Thirdly, it is a *hastening* call. “Zaccheus, *make haste.*” The sinner, when he is called by the ordinary ministry, replies, “Tomorrow.” He hears a telling sermon and he says, “I will turn to God. by-and-by.” The tears roll down his cheeks, but they are wiped away. Some goodness appears, but like the cloud of the morning it is dissipated by the sun of temptation. He says, “I solemnly vow from this time to be a reformed man. After I have once more indulged in my darling sin I will renounce my lusts and decide for God.” Ah, that is only a *minister’s* call and is good for nothing! Hell, they say, is paved with good intentions. These good intentions are begotten by general calls! The road to Hell is laid all over with branches of the trees whereon men are sitting, for they often pull down branches from the trees, but they do not come down, themselves. The straw laid down before a sick man’s door causes the wheels to roll more noiselessly. So there are some who strew their path with promises of repentance and so go more easily and noiselessly down to the pit of Hell! But God’s call is not a call for tomorrow. “*Today* if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts: as in the provocation, when your fathers tempted Me.” God’s Grace always comes with dispatch—and if you are drawn *by God*, you will run after God and not be talking about delays! Tomorrow—it is not written in the almanac of time. Tomorrow—it is in Satan’s calendar and nowhere else! Tomorrow—it is a rock whitened by the bones of mariners who have been wrecked upon it. Tomorrow is the wrecker’s light gleaming on the shore, luring poor ships to destruction. Tomorrow—it is the idiot’s cup which he lies at the foot of the rainbow, but which none has ever found. Tomorrow—it is the floating island of Loch Lomond, which none has ever seen. Tomorrow—it is a dream. Tomorrow—it is a delusion. Tomorrow, yes, tomorrow you may lift up your eyes in Hell, being in torment. Yonder clock says, “today.” Your pulse whispers, “today.” I hear my heart speak as it beats and it says, “today.” Everything cries, “today.” And the Holy Spirit is in union with these things and says, “*Today* if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Sinners, are you inclined now to seek the Savior? Are you breathing a prayer right now? Are you saying, “Now or never! I must be saved now”? If you are, then I hope it is an *Effectual Call*, for Christ, when He gives an Effectual Call, says, “Zaccheus, make haste.”

IV. Next, it is a *humbling* call. “Zaccheus, make haste and *come down.*” Many a time has a minister called men to repentance with a call which

has made them proud, exalted them in their own esteem and led them to say, "I can turn to God when I like! I can do so without the influence of the Holy Spirit." They have been called to *go up* and not to *come down*. God always humbles a sinner. Can I not remember when God told me to come down? One of the first steps I had to take was to go right down from my good works. And oh, what a fall was that! Then I stood upon my own self-sufficiency and Christ said, "Come down! I have pulled you down from your good works and now I will pull you down from your self-sufficiency." Well, I had another fall and I felt sure I had gained the bottom, but Christ said, "Come down!" And He made me come down till I fell on some point at which I felt I was not savable. "Down, Sir! Come down, yet." And down I came until I had to let go of every branch of the tree of my hopes in despair. Then I said, "I can do nothing. I am ruined." The waters were wrapped round my head and I was shut out from the light of day and thought myself a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel. "Come down lower, still, Sir! You have too much pride to be saved." Then I was brought down to see my corruption, my wickedness, my filthiness. "Come down," says God, when He means to save! Now, proud Sinners, it is of no use for you to be proud, to stick yourselves up in the trees—Christ will have you down. Oh, you that dwell with the eagle on the craggy rock, you shall come down from your elevation—you shall fall by Grace, or you shall fall with a vengeance one day. He "has cast down the mighty from their seat and has exalted the humble and meek."

V. Next, it is an *affectionate* call. "Today I must abide at *your house*." You can easily conceive how the faces of the multitude change! They thought Christ to be the holiest and best of men and were ready to make Him a king! But He says, "Today I must abide at your house." There was one poor Jew who had been inside Zaccheus' house—he had "been on the carpet," as they say in country villages when they are taken before the justice—and he recollected what sort of a house it was. He remembered how he was taken in there and his conceptions of it were something like what a fly would have of a spider's den after he had once escaped! There was another who had been "relieved" of nearly all his property—the idea he had of walking in there was like walking into a den of lions! "What?" they said, "Is this holy Man going into such a den as that, where we poor wretches have been robbed and ill-treated? It was bad enough for Christ to speak to him up in the tree, but the idea of going into his house!" They all murmured at His going to be "a guest with a man who was a sinner." Well, I know what some of His disciples thought—they thought it very imprudent—it might injure His Character and He might offend the people. They thought He might have gone to see

this man at night, like Nicodemus, and give him an audience when nobody saw Him! To acknowledge such a man publicly was the most imprudent act He could commit! Why did Christ do as He did? Because He would give Zaccheus an *affectionate* call. “I will not come and stand at your threshold, or look in at your window, but I will come into your house—the same house where the cries of widows have come into your ears and you have disregarded them. I will come into your parlor, where the weeping of the orphan has never moved your compassion. I will come therewhere you, like a ravenous lion have devoured your prey. I will come there, where you have blackened your house and made it infamous. I will come into the place where cries have risen to high Heaven, wrung from the lips of those whom you have oppressed! I will come into your house and give you a blessing.”

Oh, what affection there was in that! Poor Sinner, my Master is a very affectionate Master! He will come into your house. What kind of a house have you got? A house that you have made miserable with your drunkenness—a house you have defiled with your impurity—a house you have defiled with your cursing and swearing—a house where you are carrying on an illegal trade that you would be glad to get rid of? Christ says, “I will come into your house.” And I know some houses, now, that once were dens of sin where Christ comes every morning! Husband and wife, who once only could quarrel and fight, bend their knees together in prayer! Christ comes there at dinnertime, when the workman comes home for his meals. Some of my hearers can scarcely come for an hour to their meals but they must have word of prayer and reading of the Scriptures! Christ comes to them! Where the walls were plastered up with the lascivious songs and idle pictures, there is a Christian almanac in one place. There is a Bible on the chest of drawers—and though it is only one room they live in—if an angel should come in and God should say, “What have you seen in that house?” he would say, “I have seen good furniture, for there is a Bible there—here and there a religious book—the filthy pictures are pulled down and burned. There are no cards in the man’s cupboard, now. Christ has come into his house.” Oh, what a blessing that we have our Household God as well as the Romans! Our God is a Household God. He comes to live with His people! He loves the tents of Jacob. Now, poor rag-muffin Sinner, you who live in the filthiest den in London—if such an one is here, Jesus says to you, “Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for today I must *abide at your house*.”

VI. Again, it was not only an affectionate call, but it was an *abiding call*. “Today I must *abide at your house*.” A *common call* is like this, “Today I shall walk into your house at one door and out at the other.”

The common call which is given by the Gospel to all men is a call which operates upon them for a time and then it is *all over*—but the saving call is an *abiding call*. When Christ speaks, He does not say, “Make haste, Zaccheus and come down, for I am just coming to look in.” No. He says, “I must abide at your house. I am coming to sit down to eat and drink with you. I am coming to have a meal with you. Today I must *abide at your house*.” “Ah,” says one, “you cannot tell how many times I have been impressed, Sir. I have often had a series of solemn convictions and I thought I was really saved—but it all died away—like a dream. When one awakes, all has vanished that he dreamed. So was it with me.” Ah, but poor Soul, do not despair! Do you feel the strivings of Almighty Grace within your heart bidding you repent today? If you do, it will be an *abiding call*. If it is Jesus at work in your soul, He will come and tarry in your heart and consecrate you for His own forever! He says, “I will come and dwell with you and that, forever. I will come and say—

***Here I will make My settled rest,
No more will go and come.
No more a stranger or a guest,
But Master of this home.***

“Oh,” you say, “that is what I want! I want an *abiding call*, something that will last. I do not want a religion that will wash out, but a fast-color religion.” Well, that is the kind of call Christ gives! His ministers cannot give it—but when Christ speaks, He speaks with power and says, “Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for today I must *abide at your house*.”

VII. There is one thing, however, I cannot forget, and that is that it was a *necessary call*. Just read it over again. “Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for today I *must* abide at your house.” It was not a thing that He might do, or might not do—it was a necessary call! The salvation of a sinner is as much a matter of necessity with God as the fulfillment of His Covenant that the rain shall no more drown the world. The salvation of every blood-bought child of God is a necessary thing for three reasons—It is necessary because it is God’s *purpose*. It is necessary because it is Christ’s *purchase* and it is necessary because it is God’s *promise*. It is necessary that the child of God should be saved. Some divines think it is very wrong to lay a stress on the word, “must,” especially in that passage where it is said, “He must go through Samaria.” “Why,” they say, “He must go through Samaria because there was no other way He could go and, therefore, He was forced to go that way.” Yes, Gentlemen, we reply, no doubt. But then there might have been another way. Providence made it so that He must go through Samaria and that Samaria should lie in

the route He had chosen. “He *must* go through Samaria.” Providence directed man to build Samaria directly in the road and Grace compelled the Savior to move in that direction. It was not, “Come down, Zaccheus, because I *may* abide at your house,” but, “I *must*.” The Savior felt a strong necessity. Just as much a necessity as there is that man should die. As strong a necessity as there is that the sun should give us light by day and the moon by night—just so much a necessity is there that every blood-bought child of God shall be saved! “Today I *must* abide at your house.” And oh, when the Lord comes to this—that He *must*—then He *will*! What a thing it is with the poor sinner, then! At other times we ask, “Shall I let Him in at all? There is a Stranger at the door. He is knocking now—He has knocked before—shall I let Him in?” But this time it is, “I *must* abide at your house.” There was no knocking at the door, but smash went the door into atoms! And in He walked—I must, I shall, I will—I care not for your protecting your vileness, your unbelief. I must, I will—I must abide at your house.” “Ah,” says one, “I do not believe God would ever make me to believe as you believe, or become a Christian at all.” Ah, but if He shall but say, “Today I must abide at *your* house,” there will be no resistance in you. There are some of you who would scorn the very idea of being a canting Methodist—“What, Sir? Do you suppose I would ever turn into one of your religious people?” No, my Friend, I don’t *suppose* it—I *know* it for a certainty—if God says, “I must,” there is no standing against it! Let Him say, “must,” and it will be!

I will just tell you an anecdote proving this. “A father was about sending his son to college, but as he knew the influence to which he would be exposed, he was not without a deep and anxious solicitude for the spiritual and eternal welfare of his favorite child. Fearing lest the principles of Christian faith, which he had endeavored to instill into his mind, would be rudely assailed, but trusting in the efficacy of that Word which is quick and powerful, he purchased, unknown to his son, an elegant copy of the Bible and deposited it at the bottom of his trunk. The young man entered upon his college career. The restraints of a pious education were soon broken off and he proceeded from speculation to doubts and from doubts to a denial of the reality of religion! After having become, in his own estimation, wiser than his father, he discovered one day, while rummaging his trunk, with great surprise and indignation, the sacred deposit. He took it out and while deliberating on the manner in which he would treat it, he determined that he would use it as waste paper on which to wipe his razor while shaving. Accordingly, every time he went to shave, he tore out a leaf or two of the holy Book and thus

used it till nearly half the volume was destroyed. But while he was committing this outrage upon the sacred Book, a text, now and then, met his eyes and was carried, like a barbed arrow, to his heart! At length, he heard a sermon which discovered to him his own character and his exposure to the wrath of God. It riveted upon his mind—the impression which he had received from the last torn leaf of the blessed, yet insulted Volume. Had worlds been at his disposal, he would freely have given them all, could they have availed in enabling him to undo what he had done! At length he found forgiveness at the foot of the Cross. The torn leaves of that sacred Volume brought healing to his soul—for they led him to repose on the mercy of God—which is sufficient for the chief of sinners! I tell you there is not a reprobate walking the streets and defiling the air with his blasphemies. There is not a creature abandoned so as to be well-nigh as bad as Satan, himself—if he is a child of life—who is not within the reach of mercy! And if God says, “Today I must abide at your house,” He assuredly will!

Do you feel, my dear Hearer, just now, something in your mind which seems to say you have held out against the Gospel a long while, but today you can hold out no longer? Do you feel that a strong hand has got hold of you and do you hear a voice saying, “Sinner, I must abide at your house. You have often scorned Me, you have often laughed at Me, you have often spit in the face of mercy, often blasphemed Me, but Sinner, I must abide at your house! You banged the door yesterday in the missionary’s face. You burned the tract, you laughed at the minister, you have cursed God’s House, you have violated the Sabbath—but, Sinner, I must abide at your house and I will”? “What? Lord,” you say, “abide at *my* house? Why it is covered all over with iniquity. Abide in *my* house? Why there is not a chair or a table but would cry out against me. Abide in *my* house? Why the joists and beams and flooring would all rise up and tell You that I am not worthy to kiss the hem of Your garment! What? Lord, abide at *my* house?” “Yes,” He says, “I *must*. There is a strong necessity, My powerful Love compels Me and whether you will let Me or not, I am determined to make you willing and you shall let Me in.” Does not this surprise you, poor Trembler—you who thought that mercy’s day was gone and that the bell of your destruction had tolled your death-knell? Oh, does not this surprise you, that Christ not only asks you to come to Him, but invites Himself to your table and, what is more, when you would send Him away, kindly says, “I must—I will come in”? Only think of Christ going after a sinner, crying after a sinner, begging a sinner to let Him save him—and that is just what Jesus does to His chosen ones! The sinner runs away from Him, but Free Grace pursues him and says,

“Sinner, come to Christ.” And if our hearts are shut up, Christ puts His hand in at the door and if we do not rise, but repulse Him coldly, He says, “I must, I will come in.” He weeps over us till His tears win us! He cries after us till His cries prevail—and at last, in His own well-determined hour, He enters into our heart and there He dwells. “I must abide at your house,” says Jesus.

VIII. And now, lastly, this call was an *effectual* one, for we see the fruits it brought forth. Open was Zaccheus’ door, spread was his table, generous was his heart, washed were his hands, unburdened was his conscience, joyful was his soul! “Here, Lord,” he said, “the half of my goods I give to the poor. I dare say I have robbed them of half my property—and now I restore it. And if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I will restore it to him fourfold.” Away goes another portion of his property! Ah, Zaccheus, you will go to bed tonight a great deal poorer than when you got up this morning—but infinitely richer, too! Poor, very poor, in this world’s goods, compared with what you were when you first climbed that sycamore tree. But richer—infinity richer—in heavenly treasure! Sinner, we shall know whether God calls you by this—if *He* calls, it will be an *Effectual Call*—not a call which you hear and then forget—but one which produces good works! If God has called you this morning, down will go that drunken cup, up will go your prayers! If God has called you this morning, there will not be *one* shutter down today in your shop, but *all and* you will have a notice stuck up, “This house is closed on the Sabbath-Day and will not again on that day, be opened.” Tomorrow there will be such-and-such worldly amusement—but if God has called you, you will not go! And if you have robbed anybody, (and who knows but I may have a thief, here), if God calls you, there will be a restoration of what you have stolen—you will give up all that you have—so that you will follow God with all your heart! We do not believe a man to be converted unless he does renounce the error of his ways—unless, practically, he is brought to know that Christ, Himself, is Master of his conscience and His Law is his delight! “Zaccheus, make haste and come down; I must abide at your house.” And he made haste and came down and Jesus received him joyfully. “And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Now, one or two lessons. *A lesson to the proud.* Come down, proud heart, come down! Mercy runs in valleys, but it goes not to the

mountaintop. Come down, come down, lofty spirit! The lofty city—He lays it low even to the ground and then He builds it up. Again, a *lesson to the poor despairing soul*—I am glad to see you in God’s House this morning—it is a good sign. I care not what you came for. You heard there was a strange kind of man that preached here, perhaps. Never mind about that. You are all quite as strange as he is! It is necessary that there should be strange men to gather in other strange men. Now, I have a mass of people here. And if I might use a figure, I would compare you to a great heap of ashes, mingled with which are a few steel filings. Now, my sermon, if it is attended with Divine Grace, will be a sort of magnet—it will not attract any of the ashes—they will stay just where they are—but it will draw out the steel filings! I have got a Zaccheus there! There is a Mary up there! A John down there, a Sarah, or a William, or a Thomas there—God’s chosen ones—they are steel filings in the congregation of ashes and my Gospel, the Gospel of the blessed God, like a great magnet, draws them out of the heap! There they come, there they come! Why? Because there was a magnetic power between the Gospel and their hearts. Ah, poor Sinner, come to Jesus, believe His love, trust His mercy. If you have a *desire* to come—if you are forcing your way through the ashes to get to Christ—then it is because Christ is calling you!

Oh, all of you who know yourselves to be sinners—every man, woman and child of you—yes, you little children (for God has given me some of you to be my wages), do you feel yourselves sinners? Then believe on Jesus and be saved! You have come here from curiosity, many of you. Oh, that you might be met with and saved! I am distressed for you, lest you should sink into Hell. Oh, listen to Christ while He speaks to you! Christ says, “Come down.” This morning go home and humble yourselves in the sight of God. Go and confess your iniquities that you have sinned against Him. Go home and tell Him that you are a wretch, undone without His Sovereign Grace. Then look to Him, for rest assured He has first looked to you. You say, “Sir, oh, I am willing enough to be saved, but I am afraid He is not willing.” Stop! Stop! No more of that! Do you know that is part blasphemy? Not quite all. If you were not ignorant, I would tell you that it was full blasphemy! You cannot look to Christ before He has looked to you. If you are willing to be saved, He gave you that will! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized and you shall be saved. I trust the Holy Spirit is calling you. Young man up there, young man in the window, make haste! Come down! Old man, sitting in these pews, come down! Merchant in yonder aisle, make haste! Matron and youth, not knowing Christ, oh, may He look at you! Old grandmother, hear the gracious call! And you, young lad, Christ may be looking at you—I trust

He is—and saying to you, “Make haste and come down, for today I must abide at your house.”

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

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

JESUS JOYFULLY RECEIVED

NO. 2701

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 16, 1881.

“He...received Him joyfully.”
Luke 19:6.

THIS morning [Sermon #1624, Volume 27—*WELCOME! WELCOME!*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] I showed you, dear Friends, how joyfully Jesus receives sinners—how He welcomes them—how glad He is to find those whom He came to seek and to save. From this text it appears that when sinners receive Jesus, they receive Him joyfully, so that there is joy on both sides. It is a joyful business altogether—the Savior is glad to save and the sinner is glad to be saved! I know which of the two has the greater joy, for it is always more blessed to give than to receive, and the great heart of Jesus, in its Infinite Benevolence, is conscious of a rarer joy than even the saved sinner can experience. It is a delight to Him to save. So great is His joy that He cannot contain it all within His own heart and He represents Himself as calling together His friends and neighbors, and saying to them, “Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost.”

And when the two seas meet—the sea of the saved one's gladness and the sea of the Savior's joy—what blessed floods they make! How the dancing waves clap their hands with delight! Surely, joy on earth then becomes more than on any other occasion parallel with the joy in Heaven. Such joy before the Lord is “according to the joy in harvest.” And such days are “as the days of Heaven upon the earth.” How earnestly, then, you and I ought to seek to bring men to Christ! This is the best method of making joy in this sin-cursed world. This is the surest way of plucking up the thorns and the thistles that sin has sown and of making the myrtle and the rose to grow instead, according to that ancient promise—“You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands”—even before you who are the means of reconciling men to their Maker, and of bringing sinners to their Savior!

This joyous time of receiving Christ is the turning point in character, and it is also one of the tests of destiny. By this sign shall you discern between the men predestinated unto eternal life and those who have no share in the Divine decree. He that *receives* Christ thereby proves that he *is* Christ's, but he that receives Him not shall surely perish as the result

of his willful rejection of the Savior. The Gospel is, after all, the great fan that winnows the chaff from the wheat. It separates the precious from the vile, even as Christ said to the Jews, "You believe not, because you are not of My sheep." Whether or not you will receive Christ when He comes your way is the all-important matter for each one of you to decide. If your door is shut when He is passing by, He may never come your way again. But if, when He bids you come to Him, as He bade Zacchaeus make haste and come down, you receive Him with alacrity, opening the door of your heart that He may enter in, then shall you prove that you are His, that you are among those who are the blessed of the Lord, and who shall be blessed, world without end! So this matter of the reception of Christ is, as I called it just now, all-important—and I want to press it upon each unsaved person here with the urgent desire and the confident hope that some, like Zacchaeus, will joyfully receive Christ.

This passage also teaches us that often the most unlikely persons are the first to receive the Savior. I would have said, and you would all have agreed with me, that the least likely person in the city of Jericho to receive Christ into his house was this rich little tax-gatherer, Zacchaeus—this man whom all the people disliked so much, that when Christ went to his house, "they all murmured, saying, that He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." Yet he was the one person in that place who did entertain the Lord Jesus Christ! And many a time since has Christ been shut out of good men's doors, or the doors of those who have reckoned themselves as good men—but He has found shelter within the gates of sinners, and such sinners as have been reputed among men to be utterly given over and hopeless. I would not pick my congregation even if I might do so—I would much rather that they should come, as they do come, by God's choice and constraint. For the man whom I might think most likely to be blessed would probably pass the blessing by, and he whom we, in our poor, feeble judgment, might expect to be the last to receive the Savior, might turn out to be the first, the most willing and the most joyful receiver of Him! I cannot tell, therefore, who among you will take the Savior in. I wish I could hope that all who have not yet done so, would do it before the sermon ends. He is such a wondrous Guest that you may all entertain Him at the same moment! And He can come to each one's heart—He may be the Guest of everyone who is a sinner, and yet each sinner who receives Him shall find that a whole Christ has come into his heart!

Let me also add that sometimes very strange motives may bring people where they will be led to receive the Savior. I need not allude to Zacchaeus climbing the sycamore tree, or only just allude to it in passing, but many a person has come into the House of God out of the idlest curiosity, or to oblige a friend, or to while away an hour. Rowland Hill used to say that there were some people who made a cloak of religion—and when they ran into Surrey Chapel, on a wet day, to shelter from the rain, he used to add, "and there are some who make an umbrella of it." It is still so—people are influenced by all sorts of motives—harmless motives, vain motives, foolish motives, even condemnable motives have brought

persons where Jesus Christ has been passing by! And they have been the occasion of Christ's entering into hearts which otherwise had been closed to Him. It may be so with some of you who are here. Perhaps you hardly expected to be here and you scarcely know why you came. Yet it was written in the Book of Destiny that this night you should either accept Christ as your Savior, or you should be willfully guilty of shutting the door of your heart in His face! God grant that it may not be that latter action, but may you say to Him, "Come in, blessed Savior. Let salvation come, in Your Person, to my house and heart this very hour—then will I rejoice while You shall rejoice also."

Thus have I introduced to you the text—"He received Him joyfully." Now I want to say to you, with regard to the reception of the Savior, that He is not here corporeally or physically, for He has gone back into Glory, to sit at the right hand of the Father. But He is here *spiritually* according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He enters freely into men's hearts, but He cannot now be received corporeally into your houses, nor can He sit at your tables and partake of your feasts. But He can, by His Spirit, enter into your hearts and He can spiritually dwell there, and make a temple of your bodies, and reign there, finding a happy abode within your renewed nature.

I. Now, if you would receive Him, I wish to call your attention, first, to the fact that, in order to salvation, THERE MUST BE A PERSONAL RECEPTION OF A PERSONAL CHRIST. "He received Him joyfully." There you have two persons both present. "He"—that is, Zacchaeus—"received Him"—that is, Christ—"joyfully." That looks very simple, yet there is a great depth of the Truth of God in it, as I will try to show you.

For, first, *there are some persons who suppose that in order to be saved, they are to receive a creed.* That is quite true. You are to have a creed and I urge you to take heed what you believe. Go to the Law and to the Testimony and believe nothing but what is in the Word of God. But I pray you to also remember that a man may receive the most sound creed in Christendom—and yet be damned! He may believe, as a matter of head knowledge, all that should be believed. And yet, for all that, he may not believe anything with his heart, and so may perish. I believe that the devil is orthodox. In all that he says, he usually seems to propound either the Truth of God or something which shows that he knows what the Truth is, yet, though in that sense, he believes, and even goes as far as trembling, the devil is not changed in heart, nor will he be saved by what he believes! It is not receiving a creed which saves you—it is receiving a Person into your heart's love. It is not written in our text, "He received it," but, "He received *Him*." Mark that—"He received Him joyfully."

Again, *salvation comes not through receiving an ordinance, or ordinances, however correct or Scriptural they may be.* It is not said, "Zacchaeus received baptism, or, "Zacchaeus received the communion." I do not doubt that Zacchaeus did receive both ordinances, but it was not said to him, "This day is salvation come to your house because you have received the sacraments." No! Salvation came to him when he received Christ, when that blessed and Divine Person crossed the threshold of his

heart and was welcomed as He installed Himself in the affections of the rich tax-gatherer. It was then that he was saved and, Beloved, if you are to be saved, Christ must come in a similar fashion into your understandings and your hearts. Salvation comes not through ordinances, however Scripturally and correctly they may be observed—it is Christ, and Christ alone, who can save your soul! It must be with you as it was with Zacchaeus when “he received Him joyfully.”

Furthermore, *it was not even the Doctrine of Christ* that Zacchaeus, on this occasion, received, though he did receive the Doctrine of Christ, and learned of Christ, and became His disciple. But, first, he received Christ, and then he received Christianity. Beware, I pray you, of being like many nominal Christians who know not Christ! Beware of that Christianity from which Christ has been eliminated! You must first receive the Master, or else it is idle to be associated with His servants. You may say that you belong to His Church, but if you are not joined to the Head, what will it avail you to claim to be in the body? If you are not vitally united to the Lord so as to become one spirit with Him, of what service will it be to you that you are reckoned among His followers and that your names are written on an earthly church roll? Zacchaeus received Christ Himself—and this is the all-important saving matter—“he received Him.”

How did he receive Him? *He received Christ as his Guest and entertained Him.* Will you so receive Christ—giving Him your heart, your love, *yourself*—letting Him come and find meat and drink for His love within your souls? I beg you to admit Him thus. Behold, He stands at the door of your heart and knocks—again, and again, and again, with gentle hand knocking at the door, does He seek an entrance. Oh, open your heart to Him and let Him be your Guest this very hour!

But, further, *Zacchaeus received Christ as his Lord.* Notice what he said. “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” That is the way in which you also must receive Christ as your Master and Lord.

In so doing, *Zacchaeus also admitted Christ as His Savior*, for Jesus said, “This day is salvation come to this house.” You will think it strange, but I have known some who have called Jesus, “Lord,” who have not acknowledged Him as their Savior. Thank God it is changed with them, now, but I did know some who came to this house who honored and worshipped Christ according to the light they had—yet they did not understand their need of Him, nor did they accept Him as their Savior. As I said, just now, this has all been changed with them, and so must it be with any of you who would truly receive Christ. If you do not accept Him in His Character as Savior, you virtually reject Him altogether, since He can never be separated from the merit of His blood, and the love of His heart towards guilty sinners. What? Would you have an unwounded Christ—an unbleeding Christ—a Christ that never died for men? There is no such Christ as that except in fiction! The Christ of reality “is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” And in that Character He must be received by us if He is received at all.

II. Now I press on to notice that THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST, TO BE REAL, MUST IN EVERY CASE BE VOLUNTARY. Willingly, Zacchaeus “made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.” That joyful reception of Christ shows the willingness of Zacchaeus. It proves how cheerfully, how gladly, how willingly—the words all carry the same sense—how joyfully, with the full freedom of his will, he received the Savior.

Observe that *the call of Grace does not hinder this willing reception.* There was a previous call of Grace—“Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house.” But, although that call was graciously powerful and, in a Gospel sense, irresistible, yet it did not interfere with the free agency of Zacchaeus so as to make him unwillingly receive the Savior. No, he cheerfully, joyfully, received Christ as the result of that call. Here is where many people make a great mistake. They fancy that we who preach effectual calling, make out that men are like logs of wood or carved images—and things that are dragged or drawn about without any reference to their own will. We teach nothing of the kind! We preach that men are intelligent, responsible agents and that the Omnipotent Grace of God, in which we firmly believe, and our belief in which we are never ashamed to declare—nevertheless exerts itself in a way and manner suitable to the free agency of these human beings, so that Grace gets the victory. But, at the same time, a man acts as a man!

Zacchaeus is not dragged down from the tree by an angel who lays hold of the nape of his neck and throws him down against his will. And the door of his house does not open by magic, but the man comes down from the tree, in the ordinary way, by the exercise of his own will and power and he opens the door of his home for Christ to enter. Yet, secretly, in his heart there was a power other than his own which was moving him to act as he did. This may not be easy to understand, or to explain in words, but it is easy enough in actual life! It is plainly seen in the lives of those who are converted to Christ. Nobody will say that Zacchaeus did not as freely let Christ into his house just as he had performed any action in his life. In fact, he never had put so much heart into anything he had ever done as he did into that act of receiving Christ. “He made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.” He was glad to do it! He cheerfully yielded obedience to the Divine command!

And, dear Friends, you and I must receive Christ cheerfully, willingly, voluntarily, *or else we have not really received Him at all.* Christ will not force Himself into any man’s house and sit there against the man’s will. That would not be the action of a guest, but of an unwelcome intruder! Christ will not come in, as it were, mailed and armed, to forcibly take possession of any man’s soul! What He does is gently change the bias of our will so that we willingly invite Him to enter our heart. We constrain Him to come in and to dwell with us! We say to Him, “Abide with us,” and not only are we willing to have Christ, but we are anxious and desirous to have Him. To get Him, we would, if necessary, sell all that we have! To keep Him, we would lay down our very lives, for that which once seemed undesirable to us is now the height of our ambition, the very core and

center of our highest desire! “He made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.” His whole heart went with his reception of Christ.

What do you say, dear Friend? Will you now receive Christ joyfully? Will you willingly receive Him? I know you will if you truly feel your need of Him and if you realize how exactly He meets that need. I know you will gladly receive Him if you understand what blessings come in His train—what wealth of happiness and joy He gives to the heart in which He condescends to dwell! You will say to Him, “My Lord, I repent most sorrowfully that I ever resisted You and, made willing in the day of Your power, I fling open the doors of my heart and cry, ‘Come in! Come in, come in! Dwell with me from now on and go no more out forever.’”

After Christ has been received into the heart, *everything else will have to be done cheerfully and voluntarily*. He did not command Zacchaeus to give the half of his goods to the poor, but, spontaneously, as soon as Christ came in, Zacchaeus said, of his own accord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.” No ordinance to this effect had proceeded from the Savior’s lips—“Zacchaeus, you must restore fourfold to all whom you have wronged.” No, but gladly, out of the fullness of his renewed heart, he freely said, “If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” This is the very essence of true religion—it is cheerful voluntariness. When a man who professes to be a Christian, begins to ask, “Must I do this?” or “Must I do that?”—He makes us stand in doubt concerning him. Believers in Christ are not under the Law, but under Grace. The principle that rules us is not, “Must I?” but, “May I?” It becomes to the Believer a joy and a delight to serve Christ! He is not flogged to his duty. The slave-driver’s whip and the stocks are not for the freeborn citizens of the New Jerusalem!

These things are for men of the world who will do nothing unless they are paid for it, one way or the other. The dread of Hell, or the hope of Heaven—these are the only motives that they recognize. But those who receive Christ dread no Hell, for they know that they can never go there! “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Such a man works not to obtain Heaven—why should He? Heaven is already his! In Christ Jesus it is given to Him by a Covenant which cannot be broken. So now he sings—

**“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn!
Chosen of You ere time began,
I choose You in return!”**

And this blessed voluntariness, this joyous freedom of the will conferred by Sovereign Grace becomes the very life and soul of vital godliness! Do you possess it, dear Friend? If not, may God the Holy Spirit speedily give it to you! If you have it, may He nurture it and make it to increase within you, and so, like Zacchaeus, whatever you do, you may do it joyfully, cheerfully, as unto the Lord!

III. This brings me now to close with my third remark, which is, that THE RECEPTION WHICH WE GIVE TO CHRIST MAY WELL BE A JOYFUL ONE.

To receive Christ into the heart, dear Brothers and Sisters—ought not that to be as glad a thing as for a man to welcome his long-desired bride, or his firstborn child, or to receive his estate when he comes to the ripeness of manhood? Yes, more than that! Ought it not to be as much joy to receive Christ as to receive Heaven, itself, for would there be any Heaven possible if we had not first received Christ? Ring the bells of Heaven and ring them yet again, for a soul has received Christ Jesus the Lord! It is the most joyous event on earth and it gives even new joy in Heaven. See how the angels fly upward from their various watching places to tell their brethren on yonder battlements that they may publish it in every golden street, “Another sinner has received Christ. Joy, joy forever!” These are the things that make jubilees in Heaven! When sinners receive their Savior, they make glad rejoicing before the face of the Highest, Himself.

If I hear that a certain person’s reception of Christ had not much gladness in it, I am not necessarily led to suspect the reality of it, though I wish he had received Christ joyfully. When men receive the Word with gladness, if it is nothing but the bare Word, I can understand that they may be like the rocky ground which received the good seed. But, after a while, for lack of depth and moisture, the ground yielded not life enough or nourishment enough for the seed, so it withered away. But it is different when, instead of, “it,” you read, “*Him*.” “He received *Him* joyfully.” That is another matter altogether, for, if Christ is received into the soul, He will not die. If Jesus is taken into the heart, He will not disappear and go His way. But where He once comes, He abides forever! So, let us have as much joy as we can connected with our conversion and let us not, because of that gladness, question its genuineness, but let us rather be all the more sure that it is a true work of Christ’s Grace because, like Zacchaeus, we have received Christ joyfully!

Think what joy there ought to be in the heart that receives Christ into it. First of all, *what an honor it is!* O poor lowly woman, or humble man, will the Lord of Glory really come and dwell in you? You are no queen, or prince, or philosopher—will the great Lord of All dwell in your frail body which is undecorated by costly dress, perhaps unadorned by natural beauty? Has He indeed come down to dwell with *you*? Then, you are indeed honored even above the angels, for we never read that Christ dwells in them! You ought to be indeed glad that the Lord has permitted you to receive such an honor as this.

Then, next, where Jesus comes into the heart, *He comes to put away all sin*. Wherever Jesus is received, all the guilt of the past is blotted out and gone, never to be remembered anymore. When you receive Christ, you receive full remission of all your sin—every transgression goes into complete oblivion! Just think of that, and tell me if it is not a joyous thing to receive Christ! Will you not, then, like Zacchaeus, receive Christ joyfully?

When you receive Christ, you also receive the fountain of inward purity, *the well-spring of cleansing which shall overflow unto ultimate perfection*. Receiving Christ, sin gets its death warrant. Every buyer and seller in the temple of your nature will have to go! Everything received by false

accusation will have to be given up. Where Jesus comes, the devil flies away and angels come in with all their blessed train of beauty and holiness. To receive Christ is to drive out Hell and to let in Heaven—it is to end the darkness and to begin the everlasting day. Then, shall we not receive Him joyfully?

Let me come close to you and whisper a little secret in your ear. Zacchaeus did not know it and the parallel does not hold good with his case, but it does with ours. There is great cause for joy in receiving Christ, *because He will never go away again*. When He once comes into our heart, He claims the freehold of it and, by a Divine entail, holds possession of it against all comers even to the end. I am not one of those who believe that a man can be a child of God, today, and a child of the devil tomorrow. Ah, no! When Christ, the strong Man armed, does really take possession of the heart, a stronger than He must come if He is to be driven out—and there is no one stronger than He is! Hell itself can find no power to match the might of Him who died to save His people from their sins! And you may depend upon it that He will fight for His own and preserve His own even until He comes to take them to be with Him forever! Therefore, be glad when Jesus comes into your heart, for it means salvation for you even unto the end.

And, further, *it also means eternal glory*, for He who thus comes into your heart is the same Savior who prayed, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” Oh, yes! He will bring you safely home to Glory. Admit Him and He will keep you here as His own until such a day as it shall please Him—and then He will gently waft your soul away to the better land where, transformed, and rendered white as snow, He will still dwell in you and walk in you, and you shall be His people, and He will be your God! Oh, the bliss of admitting Christ into the heart and life! There is nothing like it under Heaven and even Heaven, itself, can show nothing better than the joy of receiving Christ into one’s inmost heart, for that is, indeed, Heaven begun below!

So I will finish my discourse by begging all of you who are gathered together here, if you have never yet received Christ, to receive Him now. Perhaps someone enquires, “How can we receive Him?” Well, first, open the door which has hitherto been closed. Be willing that He should come into your heart, to rule your whole life. Next, stand at the door and invite Him to come in. By earnest prayer, entreat Him to enter. Then, believe in Him—that is really to receive Him, as John says, “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” So that *believing on Him* is receiving Him. It is *trusting* Him. You know what it is to trust yourself wholly to the care of another. Just as you might, on some dark night, when you had lost your way on the moor, trust yourself entirely with a guide who knew the way, even so trust yourself with Christ to lead you to His Father, and He will do it. You have received Him when you have trusted Him! O dear Hearts,

do receive my Master! Blessed Spirit, lead them to do so, and to do so at once!

I admire Zacchaeus very much for one thing in which he differed from a good many of you. You ask such a lot of questions and when you get them answered, or if they are not answered, you ask so many more. If Zacchaeus had been like you, I can imagine how he would have sat up in that sycamore tree, and when Christ called out to him, "Make haste, and come down," He would have said, "But ____." And Jesus would have listened, and heard what he had to say, and answered him. Then he would have said again, "But, Lord ____." And there he might have stayed up in that sycamore tree and no blessing would have come to him! There are so many of you who have been, as it were, up a sycamore tree for years! You always want to know more than you will ever know. You seem to be very clever at picking holes in the Gospel—you have wonderful skill in the art of trying how you can damn yourselves—and you will do it, one of these days, unless God should prevent you by His almighty Grace!

If you can, you even spoil the precious promises of Scripture. You lay hold of one of God's golden coins and try to deface it. I mean that you take His promise and then seek to get the very life and soul out of it—not that you may claim it for yourself, but in order to show that it does not belong to you! I never yet heard of a man going to the law to prove that a fortune was *not* his. Men are eager enough to get temporal things, but when you come to spiritual things, there are thousands of people who seem only anxious to prove that they can never be saved! If I were in your place, I would let the devil do that kind of work if he liked, it is very much to his taste, but, as for you, do not have even a little finger in it!

Look at Zacchaeus. I can see him. As soon as ever Christ says to him, "Come down," why, dear me, the man is down before we can utter another word! And soon he is at the door of his house and saying to the Master, "Come in, Lord, come in! Heartily do I welcome You!" Now, then—go and do likewise—ask no more questions, but make haste, and come down, and receive Christ joyfully. "But I want to know this." You shall know it when you have received Christ. "But am I one of His elect?" I will answer your question as soon as you receive Him. A good Wesleyan brother said to a Calvinistic friend down in Cornwall, "Now, Malachi, I owe you these two pounds, but, before I pay you, you must tell me whether you are predestinated to have them." Malachi said, "Just put the two pounds here, in the middle of my hand, and I will tell you directly."

That was very sensible on the part of Malachi and I say to you—Do not be asking about predestination or anything else, but just receive Christ! And when you have accepted Him, you may rest assured that He has given you power to become a son of God! You have believed on His name and, therefore, you are saved! That is the all-important point. So, like Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, and receive Christ joyfully! The Lord grant that you may do it and unto His name shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

LUKE 19:1-27.

Verses 1, 2. *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.* Many of those tax-gatherers were rich. They usually farmed the taxes, and took care to extort all that they possibly could out of the poverty of the people.

3. *And he sought to see Jesus who He was.* He did not seek to hear Him—his curiosity lay in another direction—he desired to see Him. Who could this Man be who created such a stir? What kind of Man was He?

3-5. *And could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him.* Zacchaeus went up into the sycamore tree that he might see Jesus, but he was, himself, seen there by Jesus. And that, dear Friends, is the first act in the process of salvation! Jesus looks at us and then we look at Him. So, here, the Lord spied out Zacchaeus up among the branches of the tree—“He looked up, and saw him.”

5. *And said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house.* His surprise at receiving such a message must have been overwhelming, yet he did not allow that surprise to delay his obedience to Christ’s command.

6, 7. *And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying that He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.* “This professedly superior Teacher, this Purist, this Teacher of the highest morality has gone to be guest with this tax gatherer—a man who is a sort of outlaw, a disreputable person altogether.” Ah, how does the legal spirit in self-righteous men cry out against the sweet benevolence of our blessed Master who comes into the world for this very purpose—to be the Guest of sinners, that He may be the Physician of sinners!

8. *And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.* There was not one among those self-righteous people who would have done a tenth as much as Zacchaeus declared that he would do!

8. *And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.* There was not one among the murmurers who would have dared to say as much as that! There are a great many people who are quick to condemn those who are a hundred times better than themselves. I wonder whether there are any people of that sort here? I should not wonder if there are.

9. *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, for as much as he is also a son of Abraham.* When our Lord was here, His personal mission as a Soul-Winner was to the Jews, to those who were of the house of Abraham. So He shows that however much despised this man might be, he came within the compass of the Christ’s immediate mission—“for as much as he is also a son of Abraham.”

10, 11. *For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And as they heard these things, He added and spoke a parable, because He was near to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.* Some of them dreamt of a temporal sovereignty with Christ at its head, so He taught them that His Kingdom was something very different from that.

12, 13. *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. "Use these pounds on my account. Be stewards of them for me until I return."*

14-16. *But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds. He was a modest man. He did not say, "I have gained ten pounds," but, "Your pound has gained ten pounds." And if God has blessed anyone so as to enable him to bring in a large result from the talent entrusted to him, he must ascribe it all to God, and not to himself—"Lord, Your pound has gained ten pounds."*

17-19. *And he said unto him, Well, you good servant: because you have been faithful in a very little, have you authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, your pound has gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be you also over five cities.* Observe that, whatever the triumph of Christ is to be, His faithful servants are to share in it. He is to be the King of the many cities in the rich provinces of His Father's domain, but He will give to one of His servants ten cities, and to another five cities. But what a vast dominion that must be out of which He can afford to give such rewards as this! Ten cities—can any earthly king give in this fashion? There are royal rewards at the last for those who are faithful now. No pitiful pence shall fall to the lot of those who diligently serve the Lord Christ—they shall have a rich reward, not of debt, but of Grace and, therefore, all the larger!

20. *And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is your pound, which I have kept laid up, in a napkin.* He had not lost it, he had not spent it, he had not even dug a hole in the earth and hidden it—he had used a nice piece of linen to wrap it in and had taken great care of it. And there it was, just as when he received it. It had not diminished, neither had it grown at all.

21. *For I feared you, because you are an austere man: you take up that you laid not down, and reap that you did not sow.* So there is a slavish kind of fear, a dread, a horror of God which will keep men out of His service. It ought not legitimately to do so, but, undoubtedly, there are some persons who, out of an evil timidity, are afraid to attempt anything for God or man, and hence their life is useless. Their talent cankers and rusts in the napkin in which they have wrapped it.

22. *And he said unto him, Out of your own mouth will I judge you, you wicked servant! You knew that I was an austere man. “That was your opinion. According to your own confession, that was your idea concerning me—‘You knew that I was an austere man.’”*

22, 23. *Taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: why then gave not you my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required my own with usury? “With proper interest.”* God does not trouble about clearing His Character with ungodly men. You and I are very particular and punctilious in defending ourselves against false accusations, but God’s Character needs no clearing. It is so transparent that if ungodly men choose to smear it, He argues with them on their own ground, and does not stay to answer their slanders. When I have heard people say of God that He is unjust or too severe, all I have felt inclined to say in reply was just this, “Whatever He may be, He is the God who will judge you at the last. And if you think thus of Him, so much the more ought you to yield yourself to Him and submit to His infinite majesty, for He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. It is an ill day when we attempt to be the judge of our Judge, and pretend to be the god of God. He is infinitely glorious, so let us bow before Him!”

24-26. *And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that has ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he has ten pounds). For I say unto you, that unto everyone which has shall be given; and from him that has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him.* They who have some already shall have more, especially in the matter of Grace. If you serve God well, He will give you more to do. If you love Him ardently, He will reward you by enabling you to have more love to Him. And if you exercise great faith, He will give you yet more faith. The way to be truly enriched, spiritually, is to be faithful to God in what we have.

27. *But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.* Whatever these words mean, it is certain that there is a terrible doom in store for all who are God’s enemies! May none of us be found among them!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—408, 537.

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

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

THE HONORED GUEST

NO. 3487

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1915.

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

“And he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.”
Luke 19:6.

ARE YOU prepared, like Zaccheus, to give the Lord Jesus Christ a glad and grateful welcome? If we would obtain the full benefit of His devoted life, His atoning death and His triumphant Resurrection, we must receive Him into our hearts by simple faith and entertain Him with tender love. Outside the door of our heart, Jesus is a stranger—He is no Savior to us—but inside the heart which has been opened, by Divine Grace, to admit Him, His power is displayed, His worth is known and His goodness is felt! My dear Hearers, you have heard of His fame, you have witnessed the miracles He has worked upon others and now it remains that you receive Him, yourself, to ensure your own well-being. He stands at the door and knocks! You must open to Him. The promise is, “If any man will open unto Me, I will come in and sup with him.” “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” Not upon all who heard was the privilege conferred, for many, when they heard, did not believe. Alas, they provoked Him, and so they perished in their sins! But those who hail Jesus as a Friend, salute Him as an honored Guest, sit at His feet, hang on His lips and find how He lights every chamber of their soul with joy, satisfies every craving of their better nature and enriches them with all the endowments of adopted children!

In many respects Zaccheus supplies us with a noble example. He shows us how to receive the Savior. You will observe that he received Him speedily. “He made haste and came down.” It is not always easy to come down from a tree with great speed. He came down, however, as fast as he could. There was no hesitancy in his manner. I daresay his heart was down before his feet! In like manner they who would receive Christ must receive Him now. This is not a call or a counsel to be trifled with. The procrastination of Felix, which led him to say, “When I have a more convenient season I will send for You,” is a very dangerous spirit. Let those who talked as Felix talked beware lest they perish as Felix perished! “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Zaccheus made haste. They who receive Christ heartily must receive Christ immediately!

We notice, too, that *Zaccheus received the Lord obediently*. When the Master said, “Make haste,” he made haste. Hardly had He said, “Come

down,” when down he came. If you, my Hearers, be likewise willing and obedient, you shall eat of the good of the land. Christ likes us to be obedient to Him, though He speaks to us less as a Lawgiver than as a Savior and a Friend. If we refuse to take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, how can we reasonably expect to find rest unto our souls? The words of Jesus must be deeply respected and diligently observed by those who would have Him for their Rock, their Refuge and their Hiding Place. Let Him be your Counselor if you want to partake of His redemption! Render allegiance to Him as your King if you would enjoy all the Grace of His priestly mediation and intercession!

There was also a *thorough heartiness on the part of Zaccheus in receiving Christ*. He made a great feast for Him. He did not admit Him as one who intruded. It was not with cold civility, but with cordial hospitality that he greeted Him. I think I see the satisfaction that sparkled in his face! I think I hear the salutation that leaped from his tongue, “Come in—come in, my gracious Lord! Never did my house entertain so welcome a guest as You are!” Would you receive Christ, you must throw the doors of your heart wide open! Then your eyes, your lips—every muscle of your body will express your earnestness. Your whole spirit, soul and strength will be stirred to enthusiasm if you know His worth and feel the honor He confers on you. A man who finds a treasure hid in a field will congratulate himself on his good fortune. A woman, when she embraces her first-born child, will dote on him with exquisite fondness. Shall no strong emotions prove our sincerity when we receive the Lord of Life and Glory?

And mark you, too, this Chief of the Publicans *received Christ spiritually*. His convictions were in keeping with his conduct. When he distributed his goods to the poor, and made a bold confession of his faith before his fellow men, there was proof positive that Christ had not only crossed the threshold of Zaccheus’ house, but had also penetrated the chambers of his heart! Ah, Beloved, it is useless to receive Christ nominally, professionally, ceremonially, or with rites and ceremonies, to do Him empty homage! By a sincere reception of Him who was sent of God, your nature, your disposition and your habits will be transformed from what they were, and conformed to what He is—and the change will be conspicuous, for if you are in Christ, and Christ is in you, all will become new!

A prominent feature, however, so distinctly stated that it should not be carelessly overlooked was this, that he received Him joyfully. This was crowning evidence of the purity of his motives and the artlessness of his actions. In such mirth there could be no guile. Ask now, *Why do not all men thus receive Jesus Christ joyfully? How is it that some men receive Him with such exuberant joy? In what ways do those show their joy who have thus received the Master?*

I. WHY IS IT THAT ALL MEN DO NOT RECEIVE CHRIST JOYFULLY?

This is our first question. They need Him, all of them. There is no difference in this respect. Whether Jews or Gentiles, they are all sold under

sin. God has concluded the whole race of man in unbelief. He has shut them all up in condemnation! There is no escape from the universal doom except by the way of the Cross. Jesus Christ comes to save—comes with pardon in His hands, with messages of love, with tokens of favor—yet most men bar the doors of their hearts against Him! There is no cry heard in their souls, “Lift up your head, O you gates! And be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!” Instead thereof, there is a sullen cry, “Come prejudice! Come unbelief! Come hardness of heart! Come love of sin—bar the doors and barricade the gates lest, perhaps, the King of Glory should force an entrance!” Men treat the Savior as they would treat an invader who attacked their country! They seek to drive Him away! They would gladly be rid of Him. They cannot endure His Presence. No, they can scarcely endure, some of them, to hear about Him in the street! Why is this? The chief reason *lies in the depravity of man’s nature*. You never know how bad man is till he comes in contact with the Cross!

Although the crimes of savage, uncivilized men may appear to you far more heinous than any that are committed in our favored country where just laws are, for the most part, enacted, and opportunities of education generally enjoyed, yet the propensity to do that which is evil in the teeth of a knowledge of that which is good, the subtlety of perverting the Truth of God in the clear light of Divine Revelation, the faithlessness of that foul ingratitude which can betray the most tender friendship, are never so painfully illustrated as in view of the Crucified! To despise the name of Jesus, to reject the love of God, to conspire against the Ambassador of Peace, to take the inhuman, devilish counsel—“This is the heir; let us kill Him!”—this was the last offense of the wicked husbandmen in the parable. Nor does the parable exaggerate the treachery. For this is the greatest offense of human nature, when it says, in effect, “This is the Incarnate God, let us reject Him. This is the Word made flesh, let us disgrace Him. This is the Father’s beloved Son—let us betray Him!” Oh, Human Nature, how blind must be your heart, how seared your conscience not to see the beauties of Christ! How base must you be to despise the love and tenderness of such a Savior!

Were we to select secondary causes, however, which spring out of this deep-seated depravity and discriminate between the various classes of offenders, we would say that *many men reject Christ instead of receiving Him joyfully out of sheer ignorance*. For this ignorance there is not much valid excuse. There are thousands of persons, even in this highly-favored, greatly-enlightened country, who really do not know what the Gospel means! The knowledge of salvation is within their reach, but they have no desire to acquaint themselves with this best of all the sciences. We are all sinners, they say, but they do not know what they mean. In the jargon of general confession, they lose sight of their own personal transgressions. The plan of salvation by a Substitute, which is the gist of the

whole matter, never dawned on their understanding. They do not know the great Truth of God that Jesus took our sins and suffered for us in our place that justice might be satisfied, that mercy might be magnified and that we sinners might be liberated and, therefore, it comes to pass that whoever trusts in Christ is saved! Being ignorant of this, they are still depending upon their own works, merits and professions—or they are relying upon their baptism, their confirmation, or their identification with some ecclesiastical system by means of some outward ceremony—instead of understanding that *salvation is by faith*, a thing of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter. This ignorance of the blessed Savior prevents many from receiving Him joyfully. So was it with the woman of Samaria—hence the Savior said to her, “If you had known the gift of God and who it is that speaks to you, you would have asked, and He would have given you living water.” Lest you perish through lack of knowledge, Brothers and Sisters, do entreat the Lord to guide you in the reading of Scripture, and in listening to the exposition of Scripture, that you may get a clear understanding of the way of the Lord. “That the soul should be without knowledge is not good,” for ignorance is the parent of many infatuations!

To refuse attention, to resist evidence, to rebut exhortation in the instance of full many, exhibits *a spirit of gross unbelief*. They will not believe in Jesus. They will not acknowledge Him to be the Son of God—they will scarcely believe that the Man ever lived who had a right to the homage which His few disciples offered Him! The Atonement they look upon as an old wives’ tale and they account the Resurrection from the dead as an idle dream! I will say but little of their excuse. They are not open to conviction. They live in darkness because they have barred every window of their soul against the Light of God. The precious Doctrine of Christ bears on its face the genuine stamp. Its authenticity is engraved upon its very forefront. Their stolid disputations cannot diminish its value or its virtue. They wrong themselves when they denounce or disparage the Truth of God as it is in Christ.

Others are actuated by *a positive aversion to the Savior*. They have no sinister reflections to cast on the story of His life, the purity of His manners, the holiness of His Character, or the benevolence of His mission—but they do not desire to be saved from their sins—they rather enjoy reveling, unrebuked and undisturbed, in the gratification of their own sensual propensities! They do not want to be saved from drunkenness! They would rather go on with the drink. They do not want to be saved from the lusts of the flesh—they would sooner pamper its gross appetites! They do not want to be saved from pride or self-confidence—they would rather indulge their towering ambition! They do not want, in fact, to have a divorce proclaimed between them and their sins—they would sooner discard the high obligations of the Divine Law and act upon the expedience of the life that now is—than forego a pursuit or a pleasure in hope of eternal life! Hence they cannot bear the name of Jesus! They re-

coil from it, unable to conceal their enmity. Religion is not merely insipid—it is positively nauseous to them! The singing of a hymn in the house would put them out of temper. Did their wife or their child mention the Cross of Christ, or faith in His precious blood, they would either sneer and ridicule with unseemly jest, or else their temper would boil over with malice and wrath! The Lord pluck that black heart out of you, Man! The Lord give you a new heart and a right spirit! You will have to bend or else to break! If you will not turn, you will burn! If you do not repent of this hatred of Christ, now, you will feel remorse enough for it hereafter. In the day when He comes in the clouds of Heaven to judge the quick and the dead, you will seek in vain to elude His eyes, or escape from His wrath!

You will find that the reason for not receiving Christ in many others is the fact that *they are worldly, and eaten up with too many cares*. A pitiful apology and very perilous! Such paltry excuses will bring poignant regrets. The hour of death can do little to rectify the years of life misspent. Not then can you seek God, if you have never sought Him before! Oh, you are taken up with the farm and the merchandise, with your daily labors and diversions, your losses and your gains heaping up, not knowing who shall inherit. These canker worms eat up your souls. Would that men were not such fools as to be always providing for this poor tenement of the body, while they neglect the precious jewel it encloses—their immortal soul—occupied with trivial personalities, while reckless of their real estate. They are crying, “Buy, buy,” in Vanity Fair, while the Lord of Life and Glory passes by! Yet they heed not. Talk of the main chance, but they miss the wise choice. They sell gold for dross—they lose their souls and get Hell!

Still more inexcusable, I think, are those who reject Christ because *they are taken up with the world’s frivolities*. Some people live in a whirl of fashion where repentance would be accounted vulgar! Not in sportive gaieties, but in pensive solitudes do penitence and contrition find room for exercise. Ridiculous as it may sound, some people are far too genteel to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! He is fit company, in their esteem, for publicans and sinners, but into their drawing rooms, were He to enter, He would soon be expelled! They want Him not in the upper circle of the *haut ton*—neither would He be kindly received in the lower circles, among the frequenters of music halls and dancing saloons. Ah, no—as of old, so now—“There is no room for Him in the inn.” The world is ready enough to welcome actor, singer, dancer, punster, anyone who can amuse them! But as for Christ, who stands with bleeding hands and cries, “Come unto Me and I will give you rest,” they despise Him! They miss the soul of beauty for gaudy charms and bubbles! They turn from the source of real joy to indulge in silly laughter! They push away the real and leap after the shadow!

They forsake the overflowing fountain and fly to the broken cisterns that can hold no water!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is a miserable spectacle! It is a dreary sight to see a sinner despising mercy, a drowning man rejecting the life-belt, a sick man declining the physician, a man entering the gates of death refusing life and immortality! Oh, Sin, how you have fooled men! How you have made them hate themselves and act cruelly to their own souls! What suicides they commit! What a sacrifice of their noblest nature! They go down to Hell with a verdict of *felo de se*. O Israel, you have destroyed yourself! You have destroyed yourself! They reject Him shamefully whom they should have received joyfully! They carry out their own will and they perish in their willfulness! And now we ask in the next place—

II. WHY DO SOME MEN RECEIVE HIM JOYFULLY?

The answer is simply *because Divine Grace has made them to differ*. Grace has subdued their stubborn will, illuminated their darkened understanding, changed their depraved affections and made their whole mind to judge of things after a different fashion. Do not suppose that we who have received Christ were naturally any better disposed to Him than others. Oh, no! If, when the seed was sown, we were like the honest and good ground in which it took root, there had been a previous tillage upon our hearts to make them ready! We would not have been found willing had it not been the day of God's power! I think we all unite in saying—

***“Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in,
Else we had still refused to taste
And perished in our sin.”***

As for the reasons and inducements which prompted us to receive Christ joyfully, I may speak very plainly for myself. *I received Christ because I could not help it*. I was at my wits' ends. I think no man ever flees to Christ for refuge, or seeks shelter in the Port of Gospel Peace until he is quite certain that every other harbor is shut up. We make Christ our last resource! We try everything else. We make grand resolutions to do good works, or to attend gorgeous ceremonies. We try trivial formalities, or paltry superstitions—anything—the silliest conceit or the emptiest quackery! We go the round of folly before we discover the path of wisdom. At length I must go to Christ, or else woe is unto me if I win Him not! Helpless and hopeless, in sheer distress we cry out, “Give me Christ, or else I die.” Henceforth He is not merely our choice, but a positive necessity to us to have Him as our hourly, daily and eternal portion! Oh, the strait unto which I was brought when I received Christ! It was Christ or death! Salvation by Christ, or damnation without Him! I received Him because I could not help it. I had no alternative. How many of you are in the same dilemma? How many of you will fly to Him in similar destitution? Driven before the tempest, catching a glimpse of the lighthouse, you cry out—

**“Jesus, lover of my soul
Let me to Your bosom fly.”**

Well may we receive Christ joyfully since He works such wonderful changes in us, and so beneficent! He cheers the grievous past. It was all black and threatening with the memory of our provocations. He sprinkles His blood upon it and now it becomes bright and beaming with mementos of the loving kindnesses and tender mercies of the Lord. He illuminates the present. There was nothing but gloom and black despair till He shone as the Light of Life in our dwelling! Then life and salvation dawn upon us like the dayspring from on high. He disperses the clouds that hung over the future. The outlook was dark and threatening till Jesus came, bright and glorious, and we discovered a hereafter. Beyond the black river of death we now discern the gleaming of the spirit land, and the place of meeting where we shall see His face! Thus, when Jesus comes into the heart, the three realms of the past, the present and the future all glow with the Light of God! When the sun rises, the hills, valleys and rivers, above and beneath, are all sown with orient pearl!

Right joyfully do we receive Christ because *He comes into our hearts with such gracious offices*. He came as a Priest to put away sin! Who could but be glad? He came as a King! Who would not receive such a Monarch with sound of trumpets and flaunting of banners? He came to us as a Shepherd! Shall not the flock of His pasture be glad of the sight of Him? He came as a dear and tender Friend—does not His sweet sympathy excite any joy? Think, too, of the yet more endearing relationship in which He came. He came as a Husband and our souls are married unto Him. Blessed Bridegroom! Adorable Savior, You have engrossed our heart and won our love! Does not the bride rejoice when the husband comes home? Is there not gladness in her heart when the nuptial day approaches? Oh, well, well might we welcome Christ when He comes, dressed in such robes and wearing such offices as these! When He came, He came with such wondrous blessings—pardon and peace, justification and acceptance, sanctification and honor, wisdom and righteousness—all these! And now He proclaims Himself to be our Protector! His paths drop fatness. He makes rich and adds no sorrow. Such as find Him find in Him such wealth of goodness—deep, mysterious, unknown—as far exceeds earthly pleasure, all worldly fortune! Surely on the lowest ground we might afford Him the loftiest welcome! Even churlish Laban received Eliezer with courtesy when he saw the presents he brought—the bracelets, the earrings and the jewels—and should not we receive Jesus when we mark those costly gifts in His hands—the purchase of His own blood which He freely gives to those who receive Him?

And shall we not receive Him joyfully *because He comes in such blessed spirit*? He upbraids not. He was all gentleness, meekness, Grace, when here below—though of Divine pedigree—the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. Should we not, then, receive Him with sound of the trumpet, with the psalter and harp, yes, and with unspeak-

able joy of heart? Let me add that the better we know Him, the more joyfully we receive Him for His own sake. Oh, I could stand here and weep to think that I do not speak better of my Lord and Master! Truly I know more of His Grace and goodness than I should ever be able to tell! I trust you can say the same. It is one thing to know the sweetness of His savor, and quite another thing to have to tell that savor to others. There is no exaggeration in the language of the spouse when she says, "Yes, He is altogether lovely." Such as receive Him with their hearts, will find that the most rapturous expressions that saints have ever used do not exceed, but fall infinitely short of the delight, the heavenly joys, which He brings into the soul! If one might choose a Heaven upon earth, it would be to rest forever in quiet meditation upon the beauties of His Person, the perfection of His Character, the power of His blood, the prevalence of His plea, the Glory of His Resurrection, the majesty of His Second Advent! Everything about Christ is delightful. There is not a Truth of God He ever teaches but is fragrant with choice perfume. There is not a word He utters but smells of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces from which He came!

If you have not received Christ, my dear Hearers, you have missed the brightest feature of Divine Revelation. For a foreigner to visit England and never see the Metropolis of London. For a man to have lived in the world without ever seeing the sun. For one to have beheld tables spread with the most sumptuous provisions, but never to have tasted any of them—in any such case there would be little cause for congratulations! So you do not know what life is—you are dead to all its charms. You do not know what light is—you have only dwelt in the shade, or in the twilight at the best—if you have not beheld the Savior, entertained Him, and tasted that He is gracious! You have missed the cream. You have been staying outside in the farmyard feeding with the swine! You do not know what the fatted calf is, upon which the children feed at the Father's table. You have been a dog, satisfied with the bones, not knowing the fatness and the marrow of true life. But the Christian, dear Friends, finds Christ to be so inconceivably precious, such a fountain of delight, such a river of mercy, that when he receives Him, he receives Him joyfully—and the longer he knows Him, the more joyful he is to think that he ever received Him at all! And now, such being the reasons why some receive Christ joyfully, let us ask—

III. HOW DO THEY SHOW IT? IN WHAT WAYS AND BY WHAT MEANS DO THEY EXPRESS THEIR JOY?

I have known some who have taken very strange ways of showing their joy. They have been inclined to stand up and shout in the very place where they found the Savior, while others could only sit still and water the floor with their tears, feeling as if for the next week or two they did not want to look anybody in the face, but just in solemn silence of the mind to revel in the company of their adorable Lord! We do not wonder that some people show a little strange enthusiasm when they first come

to know Christ. It is no marvel. When a man has been in prison for months, he may well be a little demonstrative in his joy on obtaining his liberty—so when a soul has been under the burden of sin and bound with its galling chain, he may well leap, as Bunyan tells us his Pilgrim did when the burden was loosed off him and rolled away!

Yet there are other and better ways of expressing satisfaction and pleasure than these which have much of the flesh, much of the natural disposition about them. Though not to be condemned, still they are not to be commended. A better way of showing that you have received Christ joyfully is by *turning out His enemies*. When you receive Christ in at the front door, you must not keep the devil in the back parlor! Every traitor sin must be ejected when the Great King takes up His residence in your heart! The thorough cleansing of your house from every defilement is the smallest tribute we can expect you pay in deference to your royal Guest. The soul that receives Christ joyfully, sighs and groans because it cannot make, as it would, a clean sweep of its sin! I know you do not love Christ if you cling to your sins! If you love Christ heartily, you will put away your iniquities—

***“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be;
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee.”***

And when you do receive Christ joyfully, *you will be eager to obey His instructions*. Like Zaccheus, you will ask, “Lord, what would You have me do?” Christ was going to Zaccheus’ house, and you know what people say when they have a guest they are anxious to please. They entreat him thus, “Now just do as you like. Consider yourself at home. Whatever you want, ask for, only tell us what we can do to make you happy, and we shall be glad to do it.” This is how every cheerful holy soul deals with Christ. He says, “Lord, tell us what You would have me do. Only let me know Your will—tell me by Your Word, by Your minister, by Your Holy Spirit! Work in my own heart, personally—teach me Your way, and oh, my God, my heart shall be glad to conform to Your wishes.” Have you all done this? Have you been obedient to all the Savior’s commands, or have you sought to observe them? If you have, this should be an evidence of your joyfully receiving Him!

Another proof of our joy in receiving Christ is *receiving His people*. This, in more ways than one, He has made the test of attachment to Himself. “Love one another.” “Feed My lambs.” “If you have done it unto one of the least of My brethren, you have done it unto Me.” Just as Laban said when he took in Eliezer, “There is room for you, and room for the camels,” so let there be room in our hearts for Jesus. There will be room for some of these poor troubled ones, these burdened saints. They may not always be pleasant company, but we shall be willing to receive them, and to join with them because of their Master. Now, dear Friends, if you are a Christian, and have received Christ, unite yourselves with

His people—make a profession of your faith, come out and join the people of God—and do not be ashamed with them to suffer the reproach of Christ.

And if you have received Christ joyfully, *you will love His Cross*. I mean not only the Cross which He had to carry, but the cross which you now have to carry for Him. You will count it a great privilege to suffer reproach for His sake. You will love the Cross. “No cross, no crown,” is an ancient motto, but it is just as true today as it was a thousand years ago! The faith that Moses illustrated, you will follow, counting the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. If you receive the Master in good part, you will say, “Come in, my Master! Come in, and bring Your Cross, too, and I will bear it cheerfully, for Your sake.”

Moreover, you will prove the grateful welcome you give Him *by wishing that other people may receive Him joyfully, too*. I cannot believe you know my Master if you do not wish to make Him known. Were you cured of some sad disease and met with a sufferer as bad as you once were, your tongue would be quick to tell him of the medicine that can cure him. And surely, if you have been saved by Christ from the damning power of sin, you will want to be telling it to the sons of men that there is balm in Gilead and that there is a Physician there! Perhaps you cannot preach. Possibly not half a dozen people might be edified were you to try. But you can talk to a neighbor. You can speak with your children. I was pleased, today, in reading the life of John Wesley’s mother, to notice how she set apart Monday to speak to one of her daughters, Tuesday to speak to another, Wednesday to speak, as she says, “to Jack,” meaning John Wesley, and Thursday to speak to Charles—so that they each had a day—and there was an hour each day given to speak to each child about the affairs of the soul. That is the way to win the children for God! Depend upon it, Reader, the blessing of God, the Holy Spirit, if we experimentally know the joy of religion, ourselves, will be the means of much good to others if we make it a point to “tell to sinners round what a dear Savior we have found.”

May the Lord, in His mercy, call you as He called Zaccheus! May many of you receive Him joyfully as Zaccheus did! Seek Him and He shall be found of you. Trust Him—He will not deceive you. Cast your soul upon Him—He will be as good as His Word. Mark His promise, “Him who comes unto Me I will in nowise cast out.” Faithful is He that gives you this grateful encouragement! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, now, and through countless ages you will look back upon this fleeting hour with unspeakable, perennial joy—with gratitude that eternity cannot be exhausted! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 2:1-14.**

Verses 1, 2. *And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And immediately many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not even near the door: and He preached the Word unto them.* We expect to see the crowd round the door, but there was not room, even for the doorway hearers, when Jesus Christ was preaching! There is an attracting power about the Voice of Jesus. We may expect that if we will let Jesus speak in the ministry, and not speak too much our own thoughts and our own words, there will still be the same attraction about the Gospel. “He preached the Word unto them.”

3. *And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy.* A paralyzed person—that is the exact word—one who could not come himself, but had a very anxious desire to come. They came to Him, bringing a paralytic.

3. *Which was borne of four.* Your neighbors agreed to lift him

4. *And when they could not come near unto Him for the crowd—*They had tried the door many times, but could not possibly enter.

4. *They uncovered the roof above where He was.* They, perhaps, went up the stairway of the next house, and then from one flat roof to another, till they came to the top of the veranda which sheltered Christ while He preached to the people in the court. They uncovered this roof above where He was.

4. *And when they had broken it up—*For it does not seem to have been a very light structure, but to have required some labor. Yet they broke it up.

4. *They let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.* Where there is a will there is a way, and when there is no way, a resolute will can make one. Better to come to Christ through the ceiling than not to come at all. Better to be let down to Him by a rope than not to be in His Presence!

5. *When Jesus saw their faith—*For He has a very quick eye to faith—and though we do not read that they had said anything and, therefore, they had not *expressed* their faith—yet this bold and venturesome action in breaking up the roof and letting all the dust fall about the Savior’s head, not fearing that they would provoke Him, but trusting in His gentleness and patience, showed their confidence that they had only to get the man where Christ could see him, and good would come of it. “When he saw their faith.”

5, 6. *He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts—*They had come with a bad motive. They wanted to find fault and they took their seats that they might hear everything very carefully, take notes of it and put it down—and make as much mischief of it as they could! They had their ears open. They did not know, however, that He could read their hearts, or they might not have been so forward in com-

ing into His Presence. They were “sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts.”

7. *Why does this Man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God?* Which was quite true, but then He was God and, therefore, it was not blasphemy! Blasphemy it would have been had he not been Divine.

8, 9. *And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Arise, and take up your bed, and walk?* Do they not each require a Divine power? If I am Divine, I shall prove I am by healing this man. Then I have a right to say, “Your sins are forgiven you.”

10-12. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (he said to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house. And immediately he arose, took up his bed and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.* Admire and imitate the faith and the obedience of this paralytic! He did better than some, for there have been some who, out of very gratitude, have disobeyed Christ. I mean, when He said to one that he should not tell what Christ had done, he did tell it. But this man, though no doubt his gratitude would have prompted him to stay and throw himself at his Benefactor’s feet, or to stop at least and sing a hymn of thankfulness to God, yet he knows that to obey is the best form of gratitude—and as Christ had told him, “Go your way into your house,” he did just that! The best thing to do for Christ is to do what Christ bids you. There are many glittering forms of gratitude, but all is not gold that glitters. The most golden gratitude is that which scrupulously renders obedience to every command of Jesus Christ. Take this to heart, and do you likewise.

13. *And He went forth again by the seaside, and all the multitude came unto Him, and He taught them.* Better air than there was in the house, and more room, but He kept to the same Gospel. He taught them.

14. *And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.* Swept up his shekels—gathered up his account books—stayed no longer. He rose from taking tolls to follow the Master! Oh, for just such a word tonight to some here present. “Follow Me.” And would to God there would be such a heart in them as there was in this man named Levi, alias Matthew, that they, too, might come and follow Jesus!

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

THE SINNER'S SAVIOR

NO. 1319

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 1, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying,
He was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner.”
Luke 19:7.***

PUBLICANS, or tax-gatherers, among the Jews were objects of intense aversion. The nation was always restless under the Roman yoke, for the Israelite's pride of lineage made him boast that he was born free and was never in bondage unto any man. Moreover, they had hopes of a great future under a Messiah who would lead them on to conquest and, therefore, the Roman yoke galled their shoulders exceedingly and the payment of taxes to a foreign power was a heavy grievance. That the people of God should pay tribute to a heathen power was a bone of continual contention and the persons of the tax-gatherers were held in bitter hatred. While they abhorred the collectors of customs as a class, they reserved their most intense contempt for any of their own countrymen who lent themselves to this obnoxious business.

They regarded such as almost renouncing their relationship to Israel and sharing the guilt of the oppressor. As a usual rule it would only be the lowest class of people among the Jews who would become collectors of tribute from their own countrymen. The outcasts and scapegoats of society would sometimes take to this detested business, but very rarely would a man of wealth and position, such as Zacchaeus evidently was, encounter the scorn which such an office brought upon him. Zacchaeus was not, perhaps, the actual tax collector who called upon individuals, but he was the superintendent of the custom house officers of the district, for, “he was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich.”

He came, perhaps, under even greater contempt than others because he occupied a more prominent position and carried on the unsavory business on a larger scale. Jewish society drew a cordon around the *publicans* and set them aside as moral lepers, with whom respectable people must not associate if they studied their souls' health. And so Zacchaeus, with all his wealth, was regarded as a pariah by his fellow countrymen. He may have been a thoroughly honest and upright man, but that mattered little to those who had taken a prejudice against all publicans. He was regarded by the Pharisaic party as one of the offscouring of society—a man not to be acknowledged in the street and into whose house no one would enter. He was a man to be shunned if he had the impertinence to enter the synagogue or the temple, and only to be tolerated because it was not possible to rid the world of him.

From the very first, our Lord had broken through this hard and fast rule. He disregarded all the traditional and fashionable rules of caste. Constantly did He address publicans as if they had the same feelings as

other men. He talked with them and went into their houses, so that He came to be commonly called by those who wished to show their contempt of Him, "the friend of publicans and sinners." A man who could be a friend to publicans was reckoned to be as evil as publicans, themselves, and further than that, a man could not go! If the Jew mentioned publicans and sinners, he always gave publicans the first place, as being decidedly the worse of the two! "Friend of publicans and sinners"—who can tell what a mass of contempt was condensed into that title!

Our Lord did not at all deviate from His course because of this scoffing, but He went on befriending sinners, even open sinners, sinners of the most avowed and undoubted degree of sin! He almost commenced His ministry by talking to an unchaste woman at the well of Sychar. And He finished it by dispensing pardon to a thief while hanging on the Cross—and between that calling of the woman of Samaria who had had five husbands and was living unlawfully at the time—right along to the thief who died upon the gallows tree for his crime, the Savior had been receiving sinners and eating with them! He had been seeking and saving that which was lost!

The old contempt of the sinner's Savior still lingers in the world among the self-righteous. Taking different shapes and speaking with other voices, it is still among us and still, in one way or the other, the old charge is repeated that Christianity is too lenient on the sinner. They say it tends to discourage the naturally amiable and virtuous, and looks too favorably upon the vicious and disreputable. They say that it is always talking about pardon without merit and speaking slightingly of human goodness. And therefore some even say they regard Christianity as a foe to society and an enemy to good morals. How easily could we turn the tables upon these slanderers, for usually those who talk thus have but a scant supply of morals and virtues themselves.

First, Brothers and Sisters, it was said that Jesus had gone to be a guest of a man that was a sinner, and we shall *admit the truth of the charge*. Secondly, we shall *deny the insinuation which that charge is meant to cover*. And thirdly, *we shall rejoice in the fact which has been the subject of the objection*.

I. First, then, we shall ADMIT THE TRUTH OF THE CHARGE. We do so most cheerfully and without the slightest reserve! Jesus *did* go to be a guest of a man that was a sinner and He did so not only once, but as often as He saw a need. He went after the sheep which had gone astray and He had a wonderful attraction for the disreputable classes, for it is written, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." His ministry was aimed at those who were as sheep without a shepherd and it succeeded among such, for we read that the publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom! We are not, for a single moment, going to deny what is so evidently true—Jesus was and is the sinner's Friend.

We admit most fully and freely that the Gospel which now represents Christ upon earth bears the most kindly relationship towards the guilty. That, in fact, it contemplates their salvation and finds its greatest triumphs among them! To begin with, *the object of Christ and the design of*

the Gospel is the saving of sinners. If there is any man in this world who is not guilty, the Savior is nothing to him. If there is anyone who has never transgressed God's Law, but has kept His Commandments from his youth up and is excellent and meritorious in himself, Jesus Christ did not come into the world to call such a man to repentance. Why should He? "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick."

Christ comes not to proffer His needless services to those who are not sin-sick or needy! A Savior for those who are not lost? A Redeemer for those who are not enslaved? Alms for the rich? Medicine for the whole? Pardon for the innocent? These are all needless things! A physician does not at all hesitate to say that he comes into a town with his eyes upon the sick. It would be ridiculous for him to come there with a view to anybody else! And so to guilty sinners Jesus comes. Gospel promises are addressed to the guilty. Who else would need abundant pardon? Gospel invitations are addressed to the sinful. Who should be entreated to wash but those who are foul? Gospel blessings are intended for those who have transgressed and are under condemnation, for who else would value forgiveness and justification?

I know, myself, of no Gospel for men who have not sinned! I know of no New Testament promises intended for those who have never broken the Law of God! I perceive all through the wondrous pages of the Gospel that Mercy's eyes and heart are set upon those who are guilty and self-condemned! The Eternal Watcher is looking over the vast ocean of life, not that He may spy out the vessels which sail along proudly in safety, but that He may see those who are almost wrecks. "He looks upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profits me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the Pit, and his life shall see the light."

Our Lord was more moved at the sight of sickness than of health! He worked His greatest wonders among fevers, leprosies and palsies! This is the end and object of the Gospel, namely, to save the unrighteous! The God of the Gospel is He that "justifies the ungodly," "for when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." As the Gospel's eye is thus fixed on sinners, we have to notice that *our Lord does actually call sinners into its fellowship.* Zacchaeus did not come to Jesus, first, but Jesus went after Him while he was yet a sinner, and said to him, "Today I must abide in your house." So does the Gospel, by the Holy Spirit's power, continually call to itself the guilty!

The drunk, the thief, the harlot, the profane, the careless, the prayerless are called out—those who are consciously guilty are led to faith and pardon. Not merely those guilty of open sin, but those guilty of secret sin—sins of the heart, sins of the imagination, sins which stain the inmost soul are converted and saved! Jesus Christ causes His ministers, in the preaching of the Word of God, to gather out of the world and into the Church those who were enemies and alienated in their minds by wicked works. The Spirit of God does not effectually call those who are without sin, but He calls *sinners* to repentance. The Spirit of God does not quicken

those living—living in their own natural *goodness*—He quickens the *dead* in trespasses and sins!

The eternal love of God does not go forth towards those who dream of their own superiority and wrap themselves up in the mantle of their own righteousness, but it goes forth unto those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron because they have rebelled against the Lord and contemned the counsel of the Most High. These are they upon whom this mighty love fixes itself and upon whom Sovereign Grace exerts its power! The great Founder of Zion has found inhabitants for her, even as Romulus peopled Rome. It is said of that renowned builder that when he walled his city he peopled it by permitting the off-scouring of all other cities to use it as a refuge. Glorious things are spoken of you, O Zion, city of God, and yet all your citizens confess that they were guilty and defiled till Jesus washed and renewed them! Today Jesus, the Son of David, enlists under His banner men who are in debt and are discontented! And out of such as these are, He makes heroes of the Cross! Gladly would I invite to the cave Adullam of His Church those who are willing to enlist under the banner of the Son of David!

Moreover, while we are about it, we will make a further confession—*the Man Christ Jesus does very readily come to be a guest with a man who is a sinner, for He stands on no ceremony with sinners*, but makes Himself at home with them at once. If a Pharisee had gone to Zacchaeus' house and been allowed to do exactly what he liked, he would have said, "Well, I may, perhaps, condescend to enter your profane abode, Zacchaeus, but I must wash first and wash afterwards also. And, moreover, you, also, must wash and also have your house specially purified—it must be whitewashed, scrubbed, and perfumed with incense. And then, if you will take a seat up in the far corner of the room, I will not mind coming near the door, where the fresh air may, perhaps, remove any exhalations from your guilty person, for I, being so transcendently holy, am exceedingly sensitive and cannot come into contact with your unholiness."

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ did not ask Zacchaeus even to wash his little finger, but He said, "Make haste, and come down, for today I must abide in your house." Why, Zacchaeus had the green of the tree all over him! He was not in a very elegant condition to receive the Lord and, worse still, there was his sin about him! And yet Jesus Christ said to him before he had brushed off a grain of dust, "Make haste, and come down, for today I must abide in your house." To his house Jesus came and with him He sojourned, and all without ceremony and preparation! Yes, I have known the Lord Jesus meet with a man as black as Hell and wash him white in five minutes—and sit at his side and eat bread with him at once!

I have known Him meet with the very vilest of offenders and almost in the twinkling of an eye He has made the transgressor to be His companion and His friend! Did not the father in the parable at once receive his returning son? How many minutes did he wait before he kissed him? How many times did the prodigal wash his face before his father pressed him to his bosom? He did not even tell him to wash his hands, though he had been feeding *swine*, but fell upon his neck and kissed him then and there! Our Lord Jesus not only has pity upon sinners, but treats them with love,

comes under their roof and brings salvation to their homes! We confess the impeachment and rejoice that our Lord is indifferent to the censures of the proud and continues, still, to provoke the question, "Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?"

Our Lord goes further. He not only stands on no ceremony with sinners, but *within a very little time He is using those very sinners* who had been so unfit for any holy service—using them in His most hallowed world! Note how He makes Zacchaeus to be His host—"Today I must abide in your house." Was not this going too far? Might we not have prudently suggested, Good Master, forgive Zacchaeus, but do it privately? Good Master, accept Zacchaeus as a secret disciple, but do not publicly go into such society! To sit at his table and let him wait upon You, is too great an honor for the likes of him! And surely, Brothers and Sisters, it seemed to the first Christians to be almost impossible that Saul of Tarsus could be allowed to be a preacher!

They heard that he now preached the faith which he had persecuted, but they could hardly believe in his *Apostleship!* What? When his hands were just now blood-red with putting saints to death, is he to stand up and preach and to be an Apostle—how can it be? We all have a measure of this legal hardness and are scarcely prepared to allow the guilty to become heralds of Grace too soon after their conversion! The Gospel knows nothing of a purgatory at the Church doors, or a quarantine before its pulpit! Only is it, indeed, seen that a man has really accepted Christ and we may both receive him into fellowship and employ him in holy service! Jesus permits the man who was a sinner to become His host, even as He allowed the woman who was a sinner to anoint His head, and Peter, who had denied Him, to feed His sheep!

Yes, and the Lord favored Zacchaeus, the sinner, *by granting him, that day, the full assurance of salvation.* The very day that He called him, by His Grace, He gave him full assurance—at any rate I should not want any better assurance than Zacchaeus received when the Lord, Himself said to him, "This day is salvation come to your house."—

***"Oh, might I hear Your heavenly tongue
But whisper, 'You are Mine!'
Those gentle words should raise my song
To notes almost Divine."***

How often have we sung this wish, but Zacchaeus had it granted him, for the Lord said plainly, "Salvation has come to your house," and Zacchaeus could not doubt it! How happy he must have felt, how free from all trouble—"I am a saved man and salvation, having once entered the house, there is no telling where it will go—it will be upstairs, downstairs, among the servants, among the children! It will embrace all my descendants and I and my house shall be saved!"

He obtained that choice blessing within the first day of his believing on Christ! And is it not wonderful, poor Sinner, that though you, even now, have not believed in Jesus as yet, and are sitting down in sorrow, burdened with sin, yet if you now believe—before this service shall be over, you may not only be saved but know it—and shall go home and say to your wife and children, "Salvation has come to our house!" Blessed be the

name of Jesus! All this is true and we have no wish to conceal it! Jesus Christ has gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner!

II. Secondly, we are going to DENY THE INSINUATION WHICH IS COVERTLY INTENDED BY THE CHARGE brought against our Lord. Jesus is the Friend of sinners, but He is not the Friend of sin! Jesus forgives sin altogether apart from human merit, but Jesus does not, therefore, treat virtue and vice as if they were indifferent things, or in any way discourage purity and righteousness. Far from it, for, first, Christ was a guest with a man that was a sinner, but *He never flattered a sinner yet*. Direct me to a single passage in His Word in which He ever justifies a sinner in sinning, or ever treats sin as if it were a trifle, or looks at it as a mere misfortune and not as a crime!

No religion under Heaven is so strong in its denunciation of sin as the religion of Jesus Christ! His Words do not only condemn acts of sin, but even words and thoughts, in such words as these—"For every idle word that man shall speak, he shall give an account in the Day of Judgment." "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." The Savior's lips were too truthful and too pure to pander to the vices of men! He denounced sin in every form and shape and threatened it with everlasting fire! You do not find Jesus Christ anywhere asserting that the result of sin is a merely temporal evil, that the souls of sinners will be annihilated, or that they will, by-and-by, in another state, obtain forgiveness and be delivered, but, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment" rolls like thunder from His honest lips.

He sweeps away from men all their empty confidences wherein they entrenched themselves and makes them see that whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. He who lives in sin is declared to be the servant of sin, and he who brings forth evil fruit is judged to be an evil tree. Christ's fan is in His hand and He sweeps away the chaff. He sits as a refiner and consumes the dross. He lays the axe at the root of tree and demands that the heart and spirit be right before God. If He sets forth obedience to the Law, our Lord declares that it must be obedience in every point, or a man cannot be saved by it. If He accepts a follower, He bids him count the cost and forsake all that he has, or he cannot be His disciple. His moral standard is—"Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

If you want the standard of the Laws of God lowered, you must not go to Christ! And if you wish to see the penalties of sin mitigated, you must not go to Christ, for He is, of all Teachers, the most severe against sin of every sort, and the most clear in foretelling its penalty. The Friend of sinners is too much their Friend to befriend their sin—that He utterly abhors and He will never rest till He has driven it out of them. *Neither does the Lord Jesus Christ screen sinners from that proper and wholesome rebuke which virtue must always give to vice.*

The Pharisees, no doubt, meant to say, "This man Jesus does mischief. We keep ourselves aloof from all low company and in this way we do a good deal for these publicans, because we let them see the difference between holy and unholy men! When they look at our phylacteries between our eyes and observe the broad borders of our garments, and see how we

wash our hands, and know how we tithes on mint and cumin, it must greatly edify them! No doubt they will go home and feel greatly ashamed that they cannot associate with such blessed and holy people as we are. Now, that Man, Christ, goes in among them and eats and drinks with them! And thus, in some measure, our protest is broken down. They will think a great deal of themselves, now that the proper distance is no longer kept up, for they will say, if this Man, who is, no doubt, a good man, associates with us, then, after all, we are not so bad as we were thought to be."

That is how the Pharisees argued and there are some around us who still think that the best thing you can possibly do with the degraded is to isolate them. Turn your back on them! The sight of a good man's back will be a fine moral lesson to them! Make them to feel that you are disgusted with them and they will be brought to repent. But it does not turn out to be so. This process has generally been carried out by proud formalists and loathsome hypocrites and has ended in making bad worse! Jesus never sanctions this mode of reformation. Look at Him and admire! Did He say a word to Zacchaeus about his having taken taxes by false means, or about his being cruel to the poor? No, not a syllable!

Christ's Presence was enough rebuke for the man's sin. No sooner does a man perceive the love of Christ and the perfection of His blessed Person, than straightway sin receives its death blow and is ashamed to show itself anymore. Jesus is the best rebuke to sin. The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not say to you, who live in sin, "You are not fit company for Christians." Nor does it turn to godly people and say, "Make these your daily associates and join in their mirth." Quite the opposite! But it does, nevertheless, say to Christians, "Go and seek out the lost and bring them to a better mind." We go not among the sin-smitten to catch their disease, but to cure it! Going in such a spirit, a good man's presence is a far better rebuke to sin than a cold, self-righteous isolation. The Gospel does not aim so much at rebuking sinners as at reclaiming them. Its business is not to make men feel remorse for having sinned, but to rid them from the *power of sin*.

Again, *it is not true*, as I have heard some say, *that the Gospel makes pardon seem such a very easy thing and, therefore, sin is thought to be a small matter*. "Oh," says one, "if men have only to believe and be saved, you put a premium upon sin by making deliverance from it to be so speedy a business." These cavilers know better, some of them, and if they do *not* know better, let us teach them! When the Lord Jesus Christ forgave me, He taught me at the same moment to dread sin. I never had such a sense of the terrible evil of sin as I had in the moment of my forgiveness! Where, do you think, did I read my pardon? I read it on His Cross—written in crimson lines! I understood that, though the pardon was free to me, it cost Him cries and groans to bring me near to God. It cost His soul an agony never to be described before He could redeem one poor sinner from going down into the Pit. It is a gross injustice to charge the preaching of the Gospel to sinners with making sin to appear a trifle! The accusation is a baseless slander!

They who know no atoning blood. They who know nothing of the sufferings of Christ—these are they who can toy with sin. But those who gaze upon the wounds of Christ cannot but tremble at sin! The great doctrine of the Substitutionary Sacrifice, whenever it is fully received by the soul, makes sin to be exceeding sinful! Oh, Sin, I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but on the Cross my eyes see you slaying the Incarnate God! I abhor myself in dust and ashes!

Now, though Christ is the Friend of sinners, is it true that He makes men think lightly of personal character? “Oh,” say some, “these Christians teach that believing a creed saves the soul and that it does not matter at all how we live.” This is an old libel. I remember reading much the same charge in a book which leveled its artillery at Wilberforce and his evangelical friends. The author said, “in a cant, unmeaning jargon, they talk much of vital faith, but they say little of vital benevolence.” He goes on to remark that to teach men to be honest, clean, kind and truthful was far more important. Now, it is time that such a slander as that came to an end, but a lie has many lives and though you kill it 50 times over, it soon restores itself to vitality. Look at the matter of fact.

Jesus Christ did not teach Zacchaeus, by going to his house, that character was of no consequence. On the contrary, Zacchaeus perceived at once that character was of the greatest consequence and so he stood forth, and said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” Let who will, deny the logic of it! The fact is that when a man comes to believe in Jesus, he has a higher appreciation of the excellence of character than any other man in the world. And he does not merely appreciate it in theory, but begins to seek after it for himself.

Man's nature becomes renewed by the faith which, some say, will cause him to become indifferent to holiness. A man's whole life is changed by his believing in Jesus, and that which thus happily affects the character cannot honestly be said to lead to indifference concerning it! Even the remark I quoted now about Wilberforce was signally false, because it was through him and the party which gathered around him that benevolence gained one of her very noblest victories. How would the slave in the West Indies have obtained his liberty if it had not been for these very men? Wilberforce and the like, who while they held that faith in Christ, alone, could save the soul, felt that benevolence was the essential spirit of Christianity and liberty the natural right of every man! They spent their whole strength in fighting against the mercenary feeling of the times, till the fetters of England's slaves were broken forever!

It has been said that if we tell men that good works cannot save them, but that Jesus saves the guilty who believe in Him, we take away all *motives for morality and holiness*. We meet that, again, by a direct denial—it is not so—we supply the grandest motive possible and only remove a vicious and feeble motive! We take away from man the idea of performing good works in order to salvation, because it is a lie! Good works will not save a sinner, nor is he able to perform them if they *could* save him! Works done with a view to salvation are not good, because they are evi-

dently *selfish* and so are not acceptable to God. The selfishness of the motive poisons the life of the work and takes its goodness out of it.

But when we tell men, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," if they exercise faith they are saved! And being saved there grows up in their hearts *gratitude* to God—and from this springs a loving desire to *serve* God on account of what He has done—and this motive is not only very powerful but it is very pure, because the man does not, then, serve God with a view to self, but he serves Him out of love! And works done out of love to God are the only good works possible to men. It supplies a motive which is clean, clear, pure—a motive, moreover, which is proven by the lives of saved men to be potent enough to keep them in the way of righteousness all their days.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ gives men something more than motive, it supplies them with power and life, for wherever men believe on the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit is surely at work with all His wondrous power! He enters the heart and changes it, turns the whole current of the soul and creates within the man a new, living, conquering principle akin to the Nature of God, Himself, so that the man becomes and continues to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. This indwelling Spirit is not a theory, nor a doctrine, but a Person—and His work is not a dream, but a conscious fact—a phenomenon to which all Believers bear witness, for we have known Him and felt His power! We have bowed before the might and majesty of His influences.

As the anointing on Aaron's head went where Aaron went, so where Christ is received, the Holy Spirit comes, the new creation commences and men are delivered from living as they did before, under the bondage of corruption. Thus we repel with indignation the charge that Christ is the abettor of sin—and yet we preach with unabated eagerness this good news for sinners—Whatever sin you may have committed, and however stained you may be with habits of evil, there is immediate pardon to be had and complete salvation to be obtained, now, on this very spot, if you will but accept it and trust Jesus for it! We assure you of this from our own experience! We also assure you that all your good works, prayers, tears and almsgivings will go for nothing if you trust in *them*! But though you may be covered with ten thousand times ten thousand sins, if you believe in Jesus you shall be saved from them all!

He is a Savior and a great one! And He is able to deliver great sinners. This will not make you think lightly of sin, nor cause you to continue in sin that Grace may abound, but it will give you the power which you need! It will supply you with a strength you have never been able to find, notwithstanding all your efforts! It will enable you to rejoice that you are saved and, in the strength of such an assurance, you will find within your heart a love for holiness and an abhorrence of sin such as you have never known before! You will go to the door of your heart and say to the devil, "Get you gone!" And to the lusts of the flesh, "Get you behind me!" And as to all the temptations which arise from old companions you will shut the door in their faces and say, "Depart from me!"

III. In the third place, WE REJOICE IN THE VERY FACT WHICH HAS BEEN OBJECTED TO, that Jesus Christ comes to be a guest with men

who are sinners. And first, dear Brothers and Sisters, we rejoice in it because it *affords hope to ourselves*. It often happens that we should never have a hope of His coming to be a guest with us if He were not a guest to sinners. To me, such gracious facts are needed to save me from despair. Oh, it is mighty easy to build up a fine experience and a pretty sanctification. And to imagine that you are getting on wonderfully and becoming strong and pure, and very superior saints, indeed. Let the devil deal with you five minutes and he will show you something of quite another color!

Let your old corrupt nature only bubble up for a quarter of an hour and you will find such a condition of things in your soul that you will cry out in bitterness of anguish! Then will you find that fine words about experience do not fit your mouth and all your notions of being somebody will evaporate like dew in the summer's sun. Oh the thousands of times when I have looked for any mouse hole through which I might creep if I might but enter into a little hope! I love to preach a sinner's Gospel, for it suits myself! I delight to preach holiness and will aim at it as long as I live and can never be content until I am perfect, but still, my soul needs and must have the sinner's Savior! Nothing else will do for me!

Whenever I get nearest to my Lord and feel most of His preciousness, and enjoy most communion with Him, I lay lower before Him than ever and feel it to be an unspeakable privilege to creep to His feet and wash them with my tears. I have, at this moment, no sort of hope but in *mercy*, great mercy rendered to a great sinner through the sacrifice of Jesus! Brothers and Sisters, what is there to depend upon, except the sinner's Savior? If He does not save sinners, as sinners, by an act of free, rich, Sovereign Mercy, altogether apart from anything that is in them and of them, what will happen to you and me? We do not wish to make any excuses for our sin! We would loathe it and abhor ourselves before God on account of it, but still, a wash in the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness suits us today as well as it did 27 years ago, when, for the first time, we looked to Jesus and lived!

Do you not find it so, my beloved Brothers and Sisters? After half a century of knowing Christ, do you not find that you need a sinner's Savior as much as ever? You will need Him when you come to die even as you need Him now! And while you are languishing into everlasting life, He will be your strength and your song, and you will be glad to think that, "this Man receives sinners and eats with them." Again, we rejoice that it is true for another reason, because this *affords us hope for all our fellow men*. Suppose that our Lord did not visit any but the good, moral and excellent? Then, alas, for poor London's back streets and crowded courts! Alas for the casual ward! Alas for the penitentiary and alas for the jail! Alas for the fallen woman and alas for the thief!

But now there is hope for even these and every philanthropist ought to feel, deep down in his soul, the most profound gratitude to the Lord for this fact. This is earth's brightest star! This is her well of hope, her dawn of joy! Since Jesus Christ receives the guilty and saves the vile, despondency and despair have, from now on, no right to haunt the abodes of men! Hope smiles on all and invites the most fallen to look up and live! Yes, and let me tell you Pharisees, if there are any representatives of that

section here today—though you do not like the idea of Grace to the guilty, but cling to the idea of your being *rewarded* for your supposed *merit*—it is a great mercy for you that Jesus receives great offenders because *you* must be numbered among them!

What is your heart but a raging sea of pride and enmity against God and even against your fellow men? You despise God's ordained plan of Grace and you look with contempt upon the guilty whom He deigns to save! Is it not the spirit of the devil which makes you think yourself so much above your fellow men? Is it not an intolerable inhumanity which makes you wish that the Gospel were molded to suit you and to shut out poor sinners? Who are you to carry your head so high? If you have never sinned as open transgressors have done, yet it is very probable that you would have done *worse* if you had been placed in the positions which they have occupied! With all their faults there are greater faults in you—and if somebody were to set to work to read the secrets of your soul, aloud, you would be much ashamed!

Ah, there are many who are pluming themselves upon their virtues who, in the sight of God, are as rotten at the core as even the unchaste and the profane! There are more thieves, I doubt not, outside our jails than there are inside! And there are more double-dyed sinners than we ever dreamed of who appear respectable and yet are abominable! Yes, even among nominal Christians there are plenty of scarlet sinners—they are always at the place of worship, very regular in all acts of outward devotion—and yet they indulge in secret uncleanness and are as bad as any in the felons' prison!

If my Master were to repeat, today, a certain scene in which He figured so wonderfully, some of those now present would be placed in an awkward position. A woman taken in adultery was brought before Him. He did not, for a moment, justify her crime, but He said with great power and to the point, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." I say to you who pretend that you are righteous, that if your consciences speak, you must admit that you have no righteousness, but are so sinful that you have not a stone to fling, even against the grossest sinner! Convicted by your own conscience you may go out—but it were better, still, if you were to stay here and say, "Yes, in my heart I am guilty, too, and I bless Christ that He is a sinner's Savior, and that even I may look to Him this day and live."

We rejoice that this is the fact, because when we are working for the Lord *it cheers us up with the hope of fine recruits*. Many become very cold, stale and mechanical in their work for Jesus within a short time after they are converted. The enthusiasm dies out, the warmth chills. I remember a sailor who, before conversion, used to swear, and I guarantee you he would rattle it out, volley after volley! He became converted and when he prayed it was much in the same fashion. How he woke everybody up the first time he opened his mouth at the Prayer Meeting! The little Church had quite a revival, for their old jog-trot pace would not do for the new convert so full of love and zeal!

The prayers offered in the meetings had become quite stereotyped and so had everything else about them. There were the same sleepy people,

the same long prayers and the same dreary addresses. But Jack's conversion was like an earthquake and startled everybody—and their zeal revived. They even began to think that, perhaps, *sailors* might be saved, and started a service on the wharf and did many other good things. The conversion of a great sinner is the best medicine for a sick Church! In all the churches, you good people who are settled on your lees, need stirring up every now and then, and one of the best stirrings up you can have is to open the door of the Church and see a Saul of Tarsus standing there to be admitted!

The porter enquires, "Who is this that seeks admission here?" "A recruit," says he, and we look at him. Why, he is one of the devil's most famous soldiers, one of the men who carried the black flag in the battle, one who ridiculed us most! We are apt to look a little askance at him, for we feel dubious. So we refer him to the elders, that they may enquire and sift him, to see whether he is really a changed character. Perhaps these earnest men are not quite sure and hesitate till they see more of him. And they are quite right to do so. But if the Lord has really called the sinner, by His Grace, no sooner does the Church receive such a man than they find that he has brought with him fresh fire and throws a fresh impetus into the whole work! Our Lord Jesus, then, when He goes to be a guest with a man that is a sinner, brings additional strength to the Church and finds her recruits of the very sort she most needs. We will therefore rejoice and bless the sinner's Savior.

I wonder, this morning, where Zacchaeus is—whether he is up in the gallery there! Has there come in here a man who is a sinner and knows it? Has there come in here, this morning, one who, if I were to pass a label up to him inscribed with the word, "SINNER," would hang it round his neck and say, "I am the man"? Where are you, Zacchaeus? Jesus calls you! He means to save you at once! He says to you, "I must abide in your house today." Make haste down and open the door, and say, "Come in, my Lord, I am honored to receive You." Will any hesitate? Will any delay? May my Master's Holy Spirit cause, today, many a great sinner's heart to open and receive Jesus joyfully!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Luke 18:31-43; 19:1-10.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—257, 543, 544.

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A DAY TO BE REMEMBERED

NO. 2665

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 11, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 1, 1882.

“And Jesus said unto him, This day has salvation come to this house.”
Luke 19:9.

OBSERVE, dear Friends, that our Lord spoke this sentence to Zacchaeus. Some of us may have fancied that He said it to the objecting people, but He did not. They may have heard it and their objection may have been answered by it, but the main purpose of our blessed Lord, in uttering those words, was not to answer objectors, but to comfort one who might feel dispirited by their murmuring remark. Therefore, “Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house.”

It is always better to comfort Believers than to answer quibblers. The quibblers scarcely deserve a reply, for they are pretty sure to find fault again—it is according to their nature to do so. But as for the poor distressed people of God, who gladly receive the Truth of God, and yet have to endure unkind observations, let these be cheered, for has not the Lord, Himself, said, “Comfort you, comfort you My people”? Now, what could give Zacchaeus greater consolation than for the Lord Jesus Christ to bear witness to the fact of his salvation? “Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house.”

I fancy that I can hear some of you say, “We should count it the happiest day in our lives if the Lord Jesus would come and tell us that salvation had come to us.” But, Beloved, you cannot have Him come, in the flesh, to say that to you, for He has gone away, to carry on His service elsewhere. Among other things, He has gone to prepare a place for you who believe in Him. But His Spirit is equally Divine and He is always with us—and you may have the Spirit of God bearing witness with your spirit that you are the children of God. No, I trust that you not only believe that you may have this Witness, but that you actually have *had* it—you have had that secret, silent, inward evidence which no man understands but the one who receives it—and you know, in your own soul, that you have passed from death unto life because the Holy Spirit has sealed that Truth of God upon your heart! Therefore, dear Friend, be joyful. Yes, be exceedingly glad! If anything can make a man leap for joy, it ought to be the assurance of his eternal safety. If salvation has come to your heart, you ought to be as happy as an angel! I think that there are

some reasons why you should be even happier, for an angel cannot know, by personal experience, the bliss of having his sins forgiven. You who have realized this wondrous blessing ought to cause the wilderness and the solitary places to resound with the melody of your thanksgiving! And with the music of your grateful delight you should make even the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Oh, what bliss it is to be assured by the Holy Spirit, Himself, that you have passed from death unto life, and that salvation has indeed come to you! May many of you enjoy that bliss from this very hour!

Now let us come directly to the text. "This day," says Christ, "is salvation come to this house." You will not forget the outline of the sermon, for it is very simple, and one that can be easily remembered. First, *This day—what?* Secondly, *This day—why?* Thirdly, *This day—why not?*

I. First, THIS DAY—WHAT? What about this day?

Christ says, "This day is salvation come to this house." He seemed to cut that day out of all the rest of time and to say concerning it, "This day—this particular day—on this very day—is salvation come to you." Then, let this day be a holy day and let it be a holiday! Let it be remembered for many a year, yes, let it be remembered throughout all time and throughout eternity, too. "This day."

You know that there are some people who observe certain days which God has not ordained to be kept in any special manner. The Galatians did so and, therefore, Paul wrote to them, "I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." We do not judge those who act in a similar way, today, but still, like Paul, we are afraid for them—that is to say, we fear they are mistaken in what they do. But there *are* some days which God commanded to be observed.

The first was the day when the work of creation was finished, concerning which we read, "On the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." The completion of the creation, when, "God saw everything that He had made and, behold, it was very good," deserves to be remembered! And does not the new creation also deserve to be remembered? When the Lord creates in a man a new heart and a right spirit, shall we not say, one to another, "This day—this joyful day—this Divine day—this new creation day—is a day to be observed very specially"?

It is clear, from the practice of the Apostles, that the Lord intends us to observe the first day of the week, because that was the day of Christ's Resurrection from the dead, the day of the completion of our redemption—and well may we commemorate the complete redemption even more than the complete creation! Shall not each saved man especially celebrate the day when he was redeemed from sin? Shall he not count it worthy to be observed, with holy rites of preaching, praise and prayer, and to be had in grateful remembrance as long as he lives? Each Believer can say of the Lord's Day, "This day the Lord redeemed my soul out of the

land of the enemy and set me free forever.” God has appointed but one day to be kept sacred above all others—that is the Lord’s Day. Your Christmas days, and your Good Fridays and all such seasons are only observed by man’s ordinance—but the Sabbath is ordained of *God*—and that is to be observed as the emblem of rest. Now, surely, when a man comes into rest and “we which have believed do enter into rest,” then that day should be especially observed by him. It should become a Sabbath unto the Lord throughout the man’s whole life—that happy day in which salvation came to him. Let, then, “this day” stand as a special day in your calendar! Mark it with a red line, if you like. Or mark it with a golden seal and let it be had in remembrance forevermore.

Our Lord said to Zacchaeus, “This day is salvation come to this house.” From these Words I learn, first, that *salvation is a speedy blessing*. It can come to a house in a day. No, more, it can take possession of a *man’s heart* in a day. No, to go further, this great work can be accomplished in a single moment! I suppose that the new birth is actually a thing which requires no appreciable period of time—a flash and it is done! If a man is dead and he is restored to life, there may be, in certain respects, a gradual operation upon that man and some time may elapse before he is able to walk. But there must be a certain instant in which there is life in the man, whereas, a moment before, there was no life in him. The actual quickening must be a thing that is instantaneous, so that the working of salvation in a man may not only be performed this day, or this hour, or this quarter of an hour, but this minute, or even this second! Between light and darkness there is usually a period of twilight and so there is in the soul, but, even in twilight there is a measure of light, and there must be a moment when the first real beam of light begins to smite the ebonite darkness.

So there must be a moment when Grace first enters the soul and the man who before was graceless, becomes gracious! I think this is a good point to be remembered. You poor deluded souls who hope to save yourselves by your own works will have to keep on throughout your whole lives at that useless occupation! And even when you lie dying, you may be sure that you are not saved if you have been trusting to your own works. But he that believes in Christ Jesus is saved then and there and he can joyfully sing—

**“Tis done! The great transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.”**

This is a blessed fact, that salvation can come to a soul this very hour. No, as I have already reminded you, long before the hand of that clock shall have reached the end of this hour, salvation may have entered into many hearts that are in this place, as truly as it entered into the house of Zacchaeus!

Next, I learn from our text that *salvation is a discernible blessing*. “This day is salvation come to this house.” Christ could see it, so that it was something which could be seen. Yes, and salvation was also seen by Zacchaeus, himself, and the fruits of it were soon seen by those who were in

the house with him. Do not suppose that a man can be saved and yet know nothing about the great change that has been worked in him. It is not every man who can say for certain that he is saved, for faith is a thing of growth and assurance may not come at once. But when a man is really and completely saved, he has but to use the proper means and he may become absolutely certain of it. God the Holy Spirit is willing and waiting to give the full assurance of faith and of understanding to those who seek it at His hands.

Next, *salvation is a perfect blessing*. “This day is salvation come to this house.” Well, but only as late as yesterday that man had not even seen Jesus! Half an hour ago, he was climbing a tree, like a boy might have done, with no wish but just to get a sight of Jesus! And, now, is that man *saved*? “Yes,” says Christ, “this day is salvation come to this house.” “But, surely, you don’t talk as positively as that concerning a man who came here tonight unsaved and who has just trusted in Jesus? You must mean that he has reached a hopeful stage in his experience and that, after several years, he may, perhaps, come to be really assured that he is a saved man.” I mean nothing of the sort! I mean just what the text implies, which is that the moment the Lord Jesus Christ crossed the threshold of the house of Zacchaeus, his sins were forgiven him, his heart was renewed, his spirit was changed and he was a saved man. “But,” someone asks, “is anybody ever saved before he dies?” Yes, certainly! Were those persons dead of whom Paul wrote, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us who are saved, it is the power of God.” They were living men and women, yet the Apostle said that they were saved—and so they were! And, at the present moment, there are hundreds of thousands of believers in Jesus upon the face of this earth who are as truly saved, now, as they will be when they stand before the burning Throne of God “without spot, or wrinkle or any such thing.” In God’s judgment, by virtue of the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, on whom they are resting by faith, they have been delivered from condemnation, they have escaped from the dominion of sin and, in a word, they are saved! So, you see dear Friends, that salvation is a perfect blessing.

Notice, next, that it is *a much-containing blessing*. A man who believes in Christ is saved directly, but he does not fully know how much that word, “saved,” means yet. It is like a big box that comes into the house and you begin to open it and to take out, first, one thing and then another. “There,” you say, “that is all.” “Oh, no!” somebody says, who looks more carefully, “here is another packet.” “Well, then, that is surely all. There is nothing but straw at the bottom of the box.” You put your hand in and you cry, “Why, there is something more, and something more—what a boxful it is!” And what a boxful salvation is! You have no idea what there is in it—not only the pardon of sin, but justifying righteousness. Not only that, but regeneration, a new heart and a right spirit! Not only that, but sanctification, adoption, acceptance, power in prayer,

preservation, perseverance, victory—yes, we are to be more than conquerors through Him that has loved us—and all that is in the box!

Yes, and more, too, for we are to have a safe and happy departure out of this world and an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of God our Father! All that is in the box and all that had come into the house of Zacchaeus when the Lord Jesus Christ came there. And you, also, have all that if you have Christ, for it is all in Christ. You know how He said, “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father,” and Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” You will never get to the bottom of that box which bears the name, “salvation.” However great your needs may be, you may keep on taking out of it all that you require and still there shall be more left! Or, to change the figure, salvation is a springing well from which the more you draw, the more there is remaining, for drawn wells are always the sweetest and usually the fullest. So, bring your buckets to this great well of Gospel Grace that is springing up at your very feet! Thus you see that salvation is an all-containing blessing.

And, next, *it is a spreading blessing*, for salvation had come to the house of Zacchaeus—not to him only, but I hope it means to his wife, his children, and his servants. I never like to have the servants left out, though I am afraid that they often are. You servants who live in Christian families, mind that you do not get left out, for remember that Noah, although he was a good man, did not get a servant into the ark with him and his family. Also remember Lot. He was a good man of a very poor sort and he only got his two children out of Sodom, and no servant went with them. It is a sad thing when you live and labor in the midst of Christian people and yet you remain unsaved. I hope and believe that in the case of Zacchaeus, all in his house were saved when salvation came there.

But, once more, the salvation which had come to the house of Zacchaeus, was *an abiding blessing*, for I never read that it went away. If salvation comes to a man’s house, it comes to stay there, as Christ said to Zacchaeus, “I must abide at your house.” I can never believe in a man being saved for a time and then falling from Grace—and having to begin all over again. If he does not hold on his way to the end, it is clear that he was never really saved at all. As I have often told you, I can understand a man being regenerated, that is, being born again—but then some people tell us that it is possible for him, afterwards, to fall away from Grace. But what is to become of him the next time? Why, I suppose that he must be re-regenerated, born again and again! But I never read in Scripture anything of the kind. A man may be born again once, but he cannot be born again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again! That cannot be! When the work of regeneration is once done, it is done forever! The work of man comes to an end, but the work of God fails not. That which is born of God is as immortal as God Himself! The new

life that comes into the converted man from God cannot die. How often do we ring in the ears of our friends those glorious words of our Lord, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” Happy is the man to whose house salvation comes, for it comes to stay, world without end!

That must suffice for the first head, This day—what?

II. Now, secondly, we are to think of another aspect of the subject, that is, THIS DAY—WHY? Why had salvation come to the house of Zacchaeus that day?

I answer, because that day *Zacchaeus was called by effectual* Grace and whenever effectual Grace comes to anyone, it brings salvation. “Therefore, brethren,” as Peter says, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure,” for these are the “things that accompany salvation.” If you are sure that you are called of God, you may be quite certain that you are saved, for “this day”—the day in which a man is effectually called by Grace—this day does salvation come to his house. Look, dear Friends, God chose His people in His everlasting purpose, but salvation did not come to their houses that day. They knew nothing of it at that time, for they were not then born! Christ redeemed His people when He died on the Cross, but salvation did not come to their houses that day, for the most of them were not then in existence. But, in the fullness of time, the Gospel was preached to them and they heard it. Yet, in all cases, salvation did not come to their houses that day, for though they heard it, they refused it. But the moment that effectual Grace says to anyone, “Today I must abide at your house,” that Grace at once gains admission and salvation comes, then and there, to that man’s house. You remember how the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, “Whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified”? These great blessings are joined together, like the links of a chain, and you cannot pull them apart! There is the calling that fits into the justification and the chain is so made that the two links never can be separated. And then justification fits into glorification in such a way that you cannot possibly part them. It is no use for anyone to try to separate them. The devil may pull and hammer as much as ever he likes, but all his efforts will be in vain. I have sometimes likened that passage in Romans to a vast suspension bridge between earth and Heaven—“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” If you get your foot firmly resting on that great plank of effectual calling, you may be quite sure that you will be able to cross all the rest of the bridge and will most certainly reach the other side—and be “forever with the Lord.”

But how do we know that Zacchaeus was really called? I answer in such a way that you may know whether you, also, are called or not. The call of Zacchaeus was an effectual call, first, because it *was a personal call*. He was up in the sycamore tree and He heard Christ call, “Zacchaeus!” “Why,” he said to himself, “That is my name. He is calling me.” “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down.” “Then He can see that I am up here! His description exactly fits my case.” Now, when you come and hear me preach the Gospel, I try to put the Truth of God before you in a clear and very pointed manner. Some people say that it is wrong to be personal in preaching, but I always try to be as personal as I can. Yet I know that many of my hearers pass on to their neighbors and friends what I say to them. “Oh, that just fits Mrs. So-and-So,” says somebody. No, my dear Sir—it is meant for *you*, but you will not take it home to yourself. But when the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, calls, then the man says, “Dear me! I do not believe that the preacher can see me right here, yet he is speaking straight at me. I am sure that he is. How amazing! He just mentioned something that cannot have occurred to anybody but me. He has exactly described my case.”

Those are the times when God is about to bless the soul—when the man feels himself picked out from the rest of the congregation and the Gospel sharpshooter is just covering him with His rifle of Grace! I pray that the blessed bullet of the Gospel may find its mark in the very center of your heart and bring you down at the feet of Jesus as a weeping penitent! “Zacchaeus!” The Lord knew that was the name of the man up the sycamore and He also knows your name and your character. And when He means to call you by His effectual Grace, He will hold your photograph up and make you say, “Yes, that is my portrait! There is nobody else exactly like that.”

Next, *it was a royal call*. Jesus said to Zacchaeus, “Today I must abide at your house.” One of our proverbs says, “Must is for the king.” And when *the King* speaks, He *must* be obeyed! We who are His ministers try to be very pressing and urgent, but when the Master Himself utters the call, where the word of that King is, there is power! I hope He is saying to someone here, “Today I must abide in your heart.” Now you have come to the point when you, also, will have to say, “I must.” There must be no turning back, now, dear Friend! You must not say to Christ, “Go your way for this time.” No, but you must say, “This time is the time when I, also, will say, ‘must,’ as Christ says it to me.” That is an effectual call when it comes as a royal mandate, a warrant from the King! “I must.”

Then, next, *it was a call which produced immediate obedience*. The Lord said to Zacchaeus, “Make haste and come down.” And we read, “He made haste and came down.” I think I see him coming down that tree a great deal faster than he had gone up! He had not moved at such a rate as that for a long while, but he scurried down, for he was told to make haste by One whose command compelled him to obey. When the Lord Jesus Christ calls any of you effectually, you will not put off your decision till the next morning. You will not say, “I will wait till I can get home

and pray.” You will not even say, “I will wait till the end of the service and then talk with a Christian,” but your prayer will be, “Lord, help me to look to Jesus, now. I yield myself up to You this very instant. I am in a hurry about it. Lord, I am making haste to get to You! Make haste to come and save me. I would not delay a single second longer. I want to be Yours alone, and Yours at once.” That is a mark of effectual calling, when immediate obedience is given to the call.

Another mark in the case of Zacchaeus was, that it *was joyful obedience*. “He made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.” Oh, the joy of the heart that receives Christ when Christ Himself does really come to the soul! The moment I believed in Christ, I wanted to shout, “Hallelujah,” and if I had done so, I think that I might have been forgiven. The moment one believes in Christ and knows that his sin is all gone, what extravagance would be extravagant under such circumstances? Is not the man justified in being joyful when at length his iniquity is blotted out and his transgression is covered? It is a mark of effectual calling when we receive Christ joyfully. In the case of Zacchaeus, observe that *his obedience was complete*, for Christ said, “Today I must abide at your house” and, “he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully” at his house, for the people murmured because Christ had gone to be his guest. Now, dear Friends, will you also receive Christ? That is the point. Are you willing to let Him come to you and be your salvation? Are you eager that He should come? Do you beg Him to Come? Depend upon it, He will come to you when you are ready to receive Him—but mind you—do not trust for salvation to anything else or anyone else but Christ! Be satisfied with nothing but the ever-living Savior to be your Savior from first to last.

There was yet one more mark of the effectual calling of Zacchaeus, and that was that *He received Christ in a spiritual sense*, for he did not only take Him into his house, but he took Him into his heart. I know that he did so because he began at once to purge his heart by driving out covetousness. That was a splendid way of getting rid of it when he said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.” Then he began to drive put his former grasping habit, for he said, “And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore to him fourfold.” That was clear evidence that he meant to receive Christ in all His holy, gracious teaching, not merely as a man and a stranger, but, spiritually, as his Master, his Ruler, his Teacher, his Guide—in a word, as his Savior!

III. Now, lastly, THIS DAY—WHY NOT?

And now, change the day altogether, for I mean this very day when I am speaking to you, this first of October in the present year of Grace, 1882. “This day.” This day—why not? Why should we not, “this day,” give ourselves to Christ? I have tried to think of a reason why a man should not give himself up to the Lord Jesus Christ this day and I cannot find one. Then, why should he give himself to Christ this day, on this particular day? I think I know several reasons why he should do so.

First, *it is late enough*. Surely you do not need to wait any longer! How old did you say you are, Friend? Seventy-six? Eighty-six? What? As old as that and not yet saved? You do not need one like me, so much younger, to urge you to a speedy decision. Or did you say that you are not more than my own age—not yet fifty? Well, I find it is quite late enough for me. There are certain influences and sensations creeping over me which make me realize that I am somewhat different from what I used to be—and I expect it is the same with you. I think it is getting rather late in life for you to be still undecided. Perhaps some younger person says, “But I am only twenty-one.” Well, that is late enough to be without Christ! It is a thousand pities that the devil should have had 21 years of your life. I was converted to the Lord Jesus Christ when I was fifteen, but I wish it could have been 15 years before. Oh, that I had known and loved Him as soon as I knew anything and had lisped His name with the first words I ever uttered! I think every Christian will say the same. Whatever our age is, the time past may well suffice to have worked the will of the flesh. Do not you think so, my Friend? Have not you had quite enough of sin? What profit have you ever received from it? It is surely quite late enough for you to receive Christ as your Savior!

And, further, *it is late enough in the year*. It seems to me, when the leaves are falling all around you, as if they all said to you, “We all do fade as a leaf,” is it not fully time to seek the Lord? I know of no season that seems more suited for pensive thought than just now when the year seems to be weeping itself into its tomb—and burying itself amid falling leaves. Now is the time to yield yourself to the Lord! There cannot be a better period than just now—before yet the year is fully gone.

The mercy is, dear Friend, that though it is quite late enough, *it is not too late for anybody here*. There is yet time for you to seek the Lord! It is a pity to have put the Lord off until you have got into the sere and yellow leaf, but yet there is time to turn to Him! What? Have you reached the eleventh hour of life? It is late, it is very late, but still, it is not yet too late! It is not yet too late even if you are to die this week—and there are some out of this great company who will, I suppose, pass into the unseen world this week. Dear Friend, I know not who you are, but you who stand nearest to your eternal destiny, it is not yet too late even for you! I pray you, clutch at once at the great mercy now offered to you! God help you so to do!

Every week I have to hear of some out of our number who have passed away. There have been some this last week, and some whom I certainly thought we might have had with us for a long time. They were, apparently, in good health, yet now they are to be buried at the beginning of the week, for they have gone from us quite suddenly. And why may not some of you be the next to be taken? Do not postpone your decision any longer—I would that we could say tonight, “This day, October 1st, some soul did receive salvation! Let the recording angel mark it down.” The harvest is not quite over, though I thought it was. We down south have almost forgotten it, but there is a farming friend up with us today, who

said to me, "We have not finished our harvest, for we have not got the beans in yet." So, you see, the harvest is not quite over, but I do not want you to have to say, The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." I would like to get some of you to come in with the beans, just with the last crop. Oh, that you might be brought to Christ just at this end of the harvest! The Master is willing that you should come to Him even now, so do not delay. "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation!"

Remember, also, that *today is Gospel time*. Still is Christ preached to you! The door of mercy is still set open before you! "Come," is still the cry uttered by the Spirit, and the bride, the Lamb's wife echoes it, "Come!" Still the Water of Life is freely flowing for all who are willing to receive it!

Recollect, too, that *this is praying time*. You are still on praying ground. A prayer will yet find God. A traveler tells us that when he was in the East, he saw the procession of a Sultan passing through a certain city. The monarch was there—all bedizened with gems and every kind of barbaric ornament and surrounded by his guards. There was a poor wretch who wanted to get a petition to the Sultan, but he did not know how to manage it. He had no money with which to bribe the officials and he could not force his way through the armed men. So, in his desperation, he got near enough to throw the petition down at the monarch's feet, but one of the soldiers stuck a spear through it and he held it aloft—and that was the end of it, for the Sultan took no notice of the incident—he was much too great a man to attend to the petition of his poor subject. It is never so with God! Cast your petition—now you may—at His dear feet! He will answer it and send you on your way rejoicing!

You are not only on praying ground, for tonight seems to me to be a very auspicious season, for it is *Communion time*. God's people are presently coming together around His Table to remember Christ. Will you not also remember Him? We are about to receive Christ spiritually through the emblems of bread and wine which will set Him forth to us. Why should not you also receive Christ, in a spiritual fashion, by faith, as your Savior? Oh, that you would press through the throng and bow at the feet of Jesus Christ, our Lord! If you do so, He will accept you, and again it shall be said, "This day is salvation come to this house." God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:35-43; 19:1-10.**

Luke 18:35-39. *And it came to pass, that as He was come near unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! And they who went before rebuked him, that he should hold*

his peace. "Hush," they cried, "how can you disturb the blessed Master's discourse? Be quiet."

39, 40. *But he cried so much the more, Son of David, have mercy on me! And Jesus stood still.* Prayer held Him fast. Here is a stationary Savior, held in His place by the cries of a blind man. Oh, the power of prayer! It stays the onward march of the Son of God. "Jesus stood still."

40, 41. *And commanded him to be brought to Him: and when he was come near, He asked him saying, What do you want Me to do for you? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.* It is a great thing to know what you really need. There are some persons who are so blind that they do not know that they are blind—and because they say, "We see," therefore is their blindness the more intense! I fear that there is many a person who professes to pray, yet who, if Christ should come into the room and say, "What do you want Me to do for you?" would not know how to answer the question. This man did. He said, very briefly, and very clearly, but in a very full way, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

42. *And Jesus said unto him, Receive your sight.* Often, the blessing from Christ's lips is the echo of the prayer which fell from ours. The blind man said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Echo answered, "Receive your sight."

42, 43. *Your faith has saved you. And immediately he received his sight.* See how the prayer, the Word of Christ and the immediate effect of it, all tally? "That I might receive my sight." "Receive your sight." "He received his sight."

43. *And followed Him.* Christ likes not blind followers—"and followed Him."

43. *Glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.* They seemed to be greatly impressed, but we shall see that some of them soon spoke in another fashion.

Luke 19:1 *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.* There was to be a miracle at each end of Jericho. Long before, it had been cursed—now it was to have a double blessing!

2. *And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was the chief among the publicans.* That is, tax-gatherers.

2. *And he was rich.* As they often were, for they farmed the taxes and then squeezed every farthing they could out of the people.

3. *And he sought to see Jesus, who He was, and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature.* That was a fortunate thing for him. We need not all wish to be so tall as some people are. Perhaps Zacchaeus would not have gone up the sycamore tree if he had been a tall man. But the whole story turns upon something which many regard as a disadvantage—"he was little of stature."

4-7. *And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at your house. And he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all*

murmured. There is a great contrast between this verse and the last one in the previous Chapter—“All the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.” Here it is, “When they saw it, they murmured.” Yet, very likely many of them were the same people! Certainly they were the same sort of people that we hear of every now and then! “When they saw it, they all murmured.” There are far too many of that kind still about. We do not quite know who they are, nor where they are—they have a sort of non-descript, mysterious existence that finds expression in the words, “They say so-and-so and so-and- so.” They have been saying something about the minister, something about the Sunday school, something about the Bible class, something about your work and mine. You see, there always were such people about, and they always would talk, and their talk often took the form of complaining. “When they saw it, they all murmured,”

7. *Saying, He has gone to be guest with a man who is a sinner.* If He had not done so, He could not have gone anywhere, for all men are sinners! “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” But this man was a sinner above others, for he had sold himself to the hated Roman power and was authorized to collect the conqueror’s taxes from his own people. So, of course, in the estimation of the Jews, he was the worst kind of sinner that could be found anywhere.

8. *And Zacchaeus stood.* And he did not talk at all like a sinner!

8. *And said unto the Lord; Beheld, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.* Some of those saints, as they reckoned themselves, had not done anything like as much as that! “The half of my goods I give to the poor.”

8. *And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.* Which restitution was an act of justice—and when charity and justice go hand in hand, what more can we expect of men?

9, 10. *And Jesus said unto him, Today is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* And that day He had both sought and saved one of the lost ones, for He had found Zacchaeus up in a sycamore tree, and He had brought salvation to the tax-gatherer’s house. May He do the same for many who are here!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—660, 408, 658.

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

GOOD NEWS FOR THE LOST

NO. 1100

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 9, 1873,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10.***

THE promises of God are like stars, there is not one of them but has in its turn guided tempest-tossed souls to their desired haven. But as among the stars which stud the midnight sky there are constellations which above all others attract the mariner's gaze and are helpful to the steersman, so there are certain passages in Scripture which have not only directed a few wise men to Jesus, but have been guiding stars to myriads of simple minds who have, through their help, found the port of peace. I could mention a number of texts this morning which I might compare to the pointers of the Great Bear or to the Southern Cross because they have directly pointed the penitent eye to Jesus, the Pole Star, and by looking to Him, sinners have found “the way, the truth, and the life.”

This text is one of the notable stars, or rather, its words form a wonderful constellation of Divine love, a very Pleiades of mercy. The words and syllables seem to glisten to my eyes with a supernal splendor. I bless God for every letter of this thrice blessed text—“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” But as stars are of small service when the sky is all beclouded, or the air dense with fog, so it may be even such a bright Gospel light as our text will not yield comfort to souls surrounded with the clinging mists of doubts and fears. In such times mariners cry for fair weather and ask that they may be able to see the stars again.

So let us pray the Holy Spirit to sweep away, with His Divine wind, the clouds of our unbelief and enable each earnest eye in the light of God to see the light of peace. O that many awakened minds may find pardon and eternal life in the Savior this morning! God grant that in answer to the prayers now silently breathed by many, the blessing of salvation may come to this House.

I. There are four things I shall try to set forth this morning for the comfort of seeking sinners. The first is this—I would have all anxious hearts consider **HOW THE OBJECTS OF MERCY ARE HERE DESCRIBED**—“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” I feel inexpressibly grateful for this description—“that which was lost!” There cannot be a case so bad as not to be comprehended in this word, “lost.” I am quite unable to imagine the condition of any man or woman born so miserable as not to be contained within the circumference of these four letters—“lost.”

The man may have gone to a perfect extravagance of vice. He may have ruined himself body and soul. He may be upon the very verge of Hell and feel as if he were slipping into the pit—but this word descends to the lowest depth of his misery, for he is “lost.” Here and there upon our iron-

bound coasts there are harbors of refuge, but, unfortunately, some of them are only available for large vessels at certain times of the tide. At high-water, a vessel of large tonnage may enter them and find security, but if the tide runs out strongly, even though the harbor is there, there is not enough water to enable vessels of great weight to enter.

Behold, my text is a harbor of refuge available at *all* tides and even at the lowest ebb the biggest ships of heaviest tonnage may enter here! No matter, though the sinner should need a fathomless ocean of mercy to boat in, there is depth enough for him here! If the wind is blowing horribly this morning and the storms are out, and all the fiends out with the storms, yet, if the tempest-tossed soul can but make sail for this Divine Harbor—there is no sandbar at the mouth, no shallow water in the channel—there is no fear of its being able to enter! This harbor's mouth is exceedingly deep in mercy, for the text speaks of, "that which was lost." Souls lost through sin and folly are sought and saved by the Son of Man.

Let us consider how men are lost. We know, first, that they are lost by nature. However much men may rebel against the doctrine, it is a truth of Inspiration that we are lost even when we are born, and that the word, "lost," has to do, not only with those who have gone into sin grossly and wickedly, but even with all mankind. Did you ever notice the other place where this text occurs? It is in the 18th chapter of Matthew and the 11th verse, and it occurs there in a very significant relationship. Let me read you the words. Christ is speaking about little children, and He says, "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost."

The Lord had placed a little child in the midst of the disciples and had declared that they must be converted and become as little children. And yet He uttered these words in that connection. From that passage it is clear that, by nature, little children are lost and they owe their salvation to the Lord Jesus, when God is pleased to carry them to Heaven in infancy. Jesus is come to seek and to save those who are lost by nature—and it is most certain that no man now perishes through Adam's sin, only, and no man is cast into Hell because of natural depravity alone—his own personal sin and unbelief cast him there.

A far more terrible matter for us, practically, is this, that we are, apart from Divine Grace, lost by our own actions. Our nature has revealed itself in our character. Our inward inclinations have developed themselves in our conduct and we have lost ourselves by our own acts and deeds. We have erred and strayed from God's ways willfully and wickedly like lost sheep—and now the word, "lost," belongs to us by our own overt acts, as well as through Adam's Fall. And in addition to that, we are lost because our actual sin and our natural depravity have co-worked to produce in us an inability to restore ourselves from our fallen condition. We are not only wanderers, but we have no will to come home—we are prodigal sons, but we never say, "I will arise, and go to my Father," until the Grace of God puts it into our hearts to do so. We are like sheep which wander and wander and wander, but will never, by any chance, return unless the Good Shepherd of souls shall seek us.

If this world of ours could suddenly be left to itself, could forget the centripetal force which holds it in alliance with the sun and could set out upon a fearful journey into the darkness of far-off space—if it should travel so far away that no longer could a single beam of light reach it from the sun and it were altogether in darkness—it is quite certain that it could never find the sun again, for who could light a candle upon the earth wherewith we might search for the sun? The sun can only be seen by its own light. Where upon earth would be found the bands and cords with which to draw us back to the sun? The world could only be drawn by an influence from the sun itself—the central orb must give the motive power.

So, when a soul wanders from God, it has no light in it with which to see God and no force in it to draw God to itself. God must enlighten and draw the soul to Him. So that, in this three-fold sense, we are lost by nature, by practice, and by an utter inability to find out our God and to return to Him. Yet, terrible as this lost estate is, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” In addition to this, we are all lost by the condemnation which our sin has brought upon us. We are sometimes told by inaccurate talkers that we are in a state of probation. My Brothers and Sisters, nothing can be more unscriptural than such a statement! We have long ago been proved and found wanting. Our probation is over. We are now, if unrenewed, in a state of condemnation!

The trial is not now pending—it is over and we are condemned, already, for our sins. The fearful sentence of condemnation hangs over every man here who has not believed in the Lord Jesus. The sinner is lost in that sense. It is but a matter of time and that time in God’s hands—and the condemned man will be taken out to execution—and the punishment of Divine wrath will fall upon his guilty head. We are lost because we are under legal sentence and are unable to escape from it. We cannot make atonement to God for the wrong we have done, nor avoid His righteous jurisdiction. No mortifications of the body, no lamentations of the spirit, can wipe out a single sin—

***“Could my tears forever flow;
Could my zeal no respite know:
All for sin could not atone,
Christ must save, and Christ, alone.”***

So that, being before the bar of God regarded as condemned criminals, unregenerate men are lost, indeed.

More than this, there are certain persons in the world who are lost in a more apparent sense than others are—I mean that they are lost to society, to respect and perhaps to decency. That was the case with Zacchaeus, in connection with whom our text was spoken. I do not know what may have been his parentage. Possibly he was born of most reputable folk, but he showed a vicious mind and he turned aside from the good old paths. He loved low company and despised his father’s seriousness. There was great grief in that household on his account. Zacchaeus was lost to his parents—they had hoped he would have been a credit to their name—but instead he was a dishonor. They trusted that he would be the staff of their old age, but now he was a scourge to them.

They scarcely dared to whisper his name in any company, for he had joined with the men of Belial and mingled with the lewdest sort in the city. And by-and-by, as men go from bad to worse, Zacchaeus had taken up with the low and infamous trade of a tax-gatherer. He so pushed his way in it by his sharpness and hardness of heart that he became chief of the odious band of the extortionate oppressors of the people. The Pharisees, of course, never looked at him—they passed him by as though he were a dog—while the ordinary people of Jericho, when he was out of hearing, cursed him. Had he not exacted upon one—had he not oppressed another? His very name had a ban set upon it. He was lost to society.

But the Son of Man *sought* him and saved him, lost as he was! Society, to this day, has its rules, by the breach of which persons become outcasts. These rules are, some of them, commendable, but others are arbitrary, one-sided, cruel and hypocritical. We have sometimes heard men of the world ridicule what they are pleased to call the *cant* of the Church, but we take leave to say that there is no cant so desperately canting as the cant of the world. There occurred, not long ago, an instance of the world's relentless cruelty to those whom it is fashionable to brand with dishonor. A person who had, perhaps, fallen into sin in her earlier days, was restored to a respectable position—she was received in society among the noblest, but all of a sudden, dastardly lips revealed a secret—and a sin committed far back was raked up against her. From that day the world put away the woman, never asking her if she had repented, or taking her after-conduct into consideration.

The world is so pure and chaste and immaculate, that it shut out the erring one as if she had been a leper. Though itself reeking with foulest abominations, society feigns a virtuousness pure as the lily and chaste as the snow. The world is cold, hard, cruel towards a certain class of offenders. It receives into its embraces men who are, every inch of them, unclean—but a betrayed, deceived, broken-hearted woman the world shakes off as if she were a viper. This is the society which boasts its gallantry! This is the just, fair-dealing world! It caresses its noble rakes, but casts off the most penitent among the betrayed. Ah, hypocritical, canting world! Ah, hollow, lying world, to pretend to a virtue which you do not know! Rail not at the inconsistencies of religious men while your own are so glaring! Cruel tyrant, learn mercy and do justice before you become a judge of the servants of the Lord!

Now, the Son of man is come to seek and to save those whom the world puts outside its camp. The world says, "No." "Shame on her." "We will not speak to her." But Christ Jesus says, "I have come to pardon her, and to restore her, and she shall love Me much because much has been forgiven her!" There are other cases in which men, by their crimes, most justly place themselves outside the pale of society and for the preservation of order they are separated from the company of honest men. Now even these should have a door of hope left to them and a way of return. The cry, too often is, "Down with him! Down with him! He has sinned against his fellow men. Put him aside! What do we care what becomes of him?"

But the Son of Man who is infinitely pure and holy, who has a genuine horror of sin so that He really hates it and loathes it, yet does not loathe

sinner, but has come to seek and to save them! The sweep of Divine compassion is not limited by the customs of mankind! The boundaries of Jesus' love are not to be fixed by Pharisaical self-righteousness! "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Putting all that we have said into a few words, we would thus speak—I may be addressing persons here who feel that they have broken God's Laws, perhaps by no means publicly or in any of the grosser vices, but they have broken the Laws of God.

They may feel that they have and are sorrowing in their hearts because of it. They fear, also, that they have sinned in such a way that it cannot be possible for them to be forgiven. At the same time the hardness of their hearts astounds them—they feel themselves to be altogether bad and that no good thing dwells within them. They, therefore, despair of being saved. Beloved Friends, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Does not the description suit you? Are you not among the lost? Well then, you are among such as Jesus Christ came to save! And if perchance there should be one here who has fallen into the grosser vices, someone who has sullied his name and degraded himself to the very lowest degree, I am bound not to restrict the text and I do not desire to do so—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

O you lost ones! O you ruined and destroyed ones! The Son of Man is come to seek and to save you! The Greek word here used for *lost* is a form of that word which has, by certain modern discoverers, been translated, "annihilated," with a view to buttressing their unscriptural theory of the annihilation of the wicked. It is one of those instances in which the absurdity of such an interpretation ought to be evident even to themselves! The Son of Man has not come to seek and to save that which is annihilated—that would be rank nonsense! But the word *is* very forcible and signifies a destruction very terrible, a ruin of the most solemn kind. To be lost is to be fallen altogether, to be destroyed as to all good, to be utterly undone, yet the Lord Jesus Christ is come to seek and to save such as are in this wretched plight!

Why, this text sounds to me like the ringing of joyful Sunday bells which sometimes mariners have heard at sea! Ships are sometimes surrounded with a dense fog and the mariners know not whether they are near the land or on the wide ocean—they lie becalmed with no stir in the air, no stir in the sea—the ship is like a lost thing without power of motion or knowledge of her whereabouts. And then suddenly the mariners have heard bells ringing on the blessed Sunday and as the silver sounds have pierced the gloomy mist the mariners have known that they were somewhere near Old England's happy shores!

My text rings out most sweetly through the fogs of your soul's despair and doubt and I trust the glad message—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"—will reach you!

II. Now, let us turn to another point. There is very much of consolation in our text for the guilty, in the second place, if they notice HOW THE SAVIOR IS HERE DESCRIBED, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." As the Son of Man He is come. And here note, first of all, His Deity. You say, "Deity, how is that? The text says 'the Son

of *Man*.” Yes, and that is the point upon which I ground my remark. No Prophet or Apostle needed to call himself by way of distinction the son of man. It would be ridiculous for any one of us to speak of himself emphatically as the son of man—it would be an affectation of condescension supremely absurd.

Therefore, when we hear our Lord particularly and especially calling Himself by this name, we are compelled to think of it as contrasted with His higher Nature and we see a deep condescension in His choosing to be called the Son of Man, when He might have been called the Son of God. O my Soul, He who is come to save you, is so plainly God that He sees reason to remind you that He is also the Son of Man, lest you should doubt it! No angel’s arm is stretched out for your help, but the arm of Him who created all worlds!

In speaking of Himself as the Son of Man, our Lord shows us that He has come to us in a condescending Character. Not in flames of fire has Jesus descended from Heaven. Not in His chariot of wrath, girt with the sword of vengeance, does Jehovah Jesus come to men. He is come upon His errand of mercy as One who has lain upon a woman’s breast, who has known weakness, suffering and need. He is come as One who knows, by personal experience, the lowliness of your estate. Oh, Sinner, is it not joy to know that the Son of God has come to save you as the Son of Man? “The Son of Man”—that describes also the tenderness of His Character.

A man can sympathize with a man. Jesus, the tender-hearted One, was full of sympathy and in loving gentleness He is come to save sinners. He is no stern Rhadamanthus, no judge of severe countenance, no Draco with bloody edicts, but Jesus, the Man of Sorrows and the acquaintance of grief. It is as your Brother, touched with a feeling of your infirmities, that Jesus comes to you. He has, moreover, come in His mediatorial Character, for, “There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.” He can put His hand upon you, and, at the same time, lay His hand upon God. He who bridges the gulf between the misery of fallen manhood and the eternal dignity of the unsullied God is come to save the lost! What a joy is this!

Our Lord is come in His representative Character, for He calls Himself the Son of Man, as if to note that He is Man for men, the representative Man, the Son of Man. He is come as the Covenant Substitute, representing Man. He has suffered in our place, died in our place, paid our debts in our place, risen in our place, and gone to Heaven as our Forerunner! It is the Son of Man who, in all things, has acted for men, who is, “come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Now, it seems to me, dear Friends, if the Spirit of God would only help poor troubled hearts to see it, that the wording of this part of my text, though very simple, is full of the richest consolation.

Soul, what an attractive Savior have you to deal with! God is a consuming fire—you cannot, O guilty one, go to Him—but Jesus is your Brother, your Friend. He is the Friend of Sinners who received them and ate with them. And He it is, great as He is, who is “come to seek and to save that which was lost.” I tell you what I would have you do. Go to Him without fear or trembling before yon sun goes down and ends this day of mercy.

Go and tell Him you have broken the Father's Laws—tell Him that you are lost and you need to be saved. Tell Him that He is a Man, and appeal to His manly heart and to His brotherly sympathies.

Pour out your broken heart at His feet—let your soul flow over in His Presence—and I tell you He cannot cast you away! Though your prayers are feeble as the spark in the flax, He will not quench them! And though your heart is bruised like a reed, He will not break it! May the Holy Spirit bless you with a desire to go to God through Jesus Christ. And may He encourage you to do so by showing that Jesus is meek and lowly of heart, gentle, and tender, and full of pity.

III. I pass on to our third point and that, also, is full of comfort, though I will only touch upon it. You that seek salvation should joyfully observe HOW OUR LORD'S PAST ACTION IS DESCRIBED—"The Son of Man is come." Note, not, "shall come," but, "IS come." His coming is a fact accomplished. We could not have said this before the days of Bethlehem's wondrous birth. We would have had to say the Son of Man "will come," and then you would have needed extraordinary faith to believe that the Son of God would become the Son of Man to save you. But He "is come." That part of the salvation of a sinner which is yet to be done is not at all so hard to be believed as that which the Lord has already accomplished.

That Jesus Christ, after being Incarnate, and after having suffered for sin, should pardon sinners for whom He has died does not seem to me to be extraordinary—the extraordinary matter lies in this, that He should come from Heaven, that He should be born in Bethlehem, that He should tarry here on earth, that He should go up to the Cross and down to the grave and bear and suffer in the sinner's place—yet, our Lord has done all that. The greatest part of the work He has accomplished! Your salvation, if you believe in Jesus, is comparatively an easy matter—He has but to apply that which is already prepared and hand over to your faith that which He has laid by in store.

The state of the case since Jesus has come may be illustrated thus—Certain of our fellow countrymen were the prisoners of the Emperor Theodore, in Abyssinia, and I will suppose myself among them as a captive. I hear that the British Parliament is stirring in the direction of an expedition for my deliverance and I feel some kind of comfort, but I am very anxious, for I know that amidst party strifes in the House of Commons many good measures are shipwrecked. Days and months pass wearily on, but at last I hear that Sir Robert Napier has landed with a delivering army. Now my heart leaps for joy! I am shut up within the walls of Hagdala but in my dungeon I hear the sound of the British bugle and I know that the deliverer is come! Now I am full of confidence and am sure of liberty! If the general is already come, my rescue is certain!

Mark well, then, O you prisoners of hope, that Jesus is come! Do you not hear it? The Gospel bugle is sounding! Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! The Captain of our salvation is come! He is at our dungeon gates! He has come to our rescue! He is come! He is come! Jesus has come and by His Holy Spirit He is still here! And we may depend upon it, that if He has actually come to the work, He means to go through with it, for He never draws back His hand. When He said He would save men, it

was certain He would do so. And now He has come to do it, it is more than certain!

Behold the Lord of Glory has disrobed Himself for work. He has hung up His royal robes and put on a workman's garb, a human toiler's garments! He means work, stern, persevering work. He has cast His azure mantle across the sky and come down here to the city of David robed in mortal clay to wear the garment without seam. O, Sirs, He means to do His Father's business! He is in real earnest, be sure of that—He has come to do it and means to accomplish His design of love. Besides, He is not like a foolish one who comes to His work and leaves His tools behind Him—Jesus would not come unprepared! The Son of Man is an infinitely wise Savior and you may depend upon it, having come with His Father's consent and anointed with the Holy Spirit, He is come with everything that is needed to accomplish His purpose.

He is come to do a work which He can do and will do, and in which He will not be baffled though all the powers of earth and Hell should contend with Him. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." My heart rejoices as I feel how sure it is that the lost ones will be saved. If we had heard the sons of the morning sing in solemn symphony, "God Himself has come to scatter the primeval darkness, to bring order out of chaos, and to create life in the earth which lies without form and void," we should have felt certain of the result! If God had come to create, He would create—and it would have been no matter of surprise to us to have seen the round earth glowing in the morning light, verdant with newborn vegetation and populous with variety of life.

We are sure that what God comes to do He will do. In the night when Israel was pursued by the Egyptians and overtaken at the sea, even at the Red Sea, it was a sign of victory when the Lord came to deliver His people. The pillar of cloud went to the rear, turning its black side on the foe and its bright side on the chosen. God was come to smite Pharaoh and to rebuke the proud tyrant! And oh, you might be sure He would do it—failure was out of the question. When, next morning, the placid deep swept over the angry armies and all was peace where Pharaoh and his hosts had raged so furiously—and instead of the shouts of men-at-arms—were heard the sweet voices of damsels, singing, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," it was but natural it should be so, for if God came to avenge His Israel! Who could stand before Him?

The Son of Man is come to save. Rejoice, you heavens, and be glad, O earth! He will do all His pleasure! Neither earth nor Hell can stand against Him! Seeking, He will save! Yes, He will save that which is lost! All glory be unto His name!

IV. The last point is to be this—there is much of deepest comfort in THE DESCRIPTION WHICH IS HERE GIVEN OF OUR LORD'S WORK. He is come "to seek and to save." The enterprise is one, but has two branches. I would have you first notice what our Lord has *not* come to do. He has not come to aid those who, in their own esteem, are almost as good as they ought to be, to become a little better and so to enter Heaven by their own efforts. I believe that such is the general persuasion of mankind. If they were to put their beliefs into plain English their notion is as

nearly as possible what I have said. According to them you are to attend a place of worship regularly, say prayers, give to the poor and be as good as ever you can. And then, inasmuch as there will be a little bit in which you will be lacking, you are to trust to Jesus Christ to make up the rest.

Now, mark my word, this is a gross and fatal delusion! There is not between the two covers of this Bible one single word of hope held out to any man who believes in that manner—no, but there is the solemn utterance that Christ has not come to save people of that sort at all, for thus it is written—“The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse. If any of you are very good people and have no sins. If you have done no wrong and are nearly as good as you ought to be. If you only need just to say a little about the blood of Christ, Christ has *not* come to save such as you are—He has “come to seek and to save that which was lost.” If you are *not lost* you have no part nor lot in this matter!

Moreover, the Lord Jesus has not come to aid us in self-sufficient endeavors to save ourselves. I wonder how Christian people can sing that verse—

**“A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.”**

It might suit a Jew at the foot of Sinai, but a Christian should have none of it! If we have to save our own souls it is all over with us. What? Can we fit our souls for the sky? We, save our own souls? Why, this is the clean opposite of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The theory of some is that there is much natural goodness in men and they have only to work it out and gradually improve themselves into a state of Grace. No, Sir, you are on the wrong tack. Do you know what is the very first ceremony of the Christian religion?

“Yes,” you say, “Baptism.” So it is. And what is Baptism? “Buried with Christ in Baptism.” Who are buried, then? Living people? No! *Dead* people. The very first lesson of the Gospel, after believing in Christ, is that you are, before the Law, dead, through having been crucified with Christ, and therefore you must be buried. There is no improving your old nature, mending it up and beautifying it into perfection—the thing is hopeless, and it must die and be buried! The Scripture does not say, “You must be improved.” “You must be born-again”—that is quite another thing. You must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” A new creation is needed—not an improvement of the old creature.

What does the Apostle say?—“The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be.” There he ends it—“Neither, indeed, can be.” It is all over with the flesh, for corruption has seized upon it. This the Believer accepts as fact, “because,” says the Apostle, “we thus judge, that if One died for all, then all died.” The death of Jesus, as a punishment for sin, was *our* death and we died in Him so that we now live as new men, and risen men, and not as though the old life

had been improved into something better! The old nature is put into the place of death and then the man receives life in Christ—that is how we are saved—not by improving ourselves into something better, but by being newly created by the Divine power of the Holy Spirit.

“Very discouraging,” says one. Yes! And such discouragement is much needed now-a-days. If I saw a man trying to climb to the top of a mountain by a path which was quite impassable and full of dangers, I should be his true friend if I discouraged him from dashing himself to pieces. The way to Heaven is not by our own works. You who think that you can climb to Heaven by the way of Sinai should look to the flames that Moses saw—and sink and tremble, and despair! There is no road to God by the way of Sinai! There, at Calvary, is the way—all crimson with the Savior’s blood. Salvation is ours through His atoning Sacrifice—“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Now, having cleared away the rubbish, let us come to the Truth of God. Jesus is come to seek the lost. He did that personally. There was a lost woman at Samaria and Jesus said He must go through Samaria. There was a lost man at Jericho and Jesus said He must abide in that man’s house. What He did personally He now does under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in His Providence. Sometimes Providence takes away a child, lays a man on a bed of sickness, deprives him of his wealth—and all these trials are intended to bring him to Jesus. It is Jesus seeking him. It is an odd thing, my Friend, that you should be here this morning—you did not reckon upon being here. Strange circumstances brought you.

Suppose the Lord means to save you this morning? Then the Providence which brought you to this spot is Jesus seeking you. As our Lord seeks souls by His Providence He also seeks them by the Word. It is very wonderful how the Word of God will come home to people. It is a part of every preacher’s business, who is sent of God, so to preach that persons in the congregation may perceive that he speaks of them. What remarkable things have happened in our ministry and in the ministries of all who are sent of God.

Why, they speak to people as if they knew them! Though they never saw them before, they tell their case and picture their state. God guides His servants and gives them words that they never thought of till the time came to utter them, so that on the spur of the moment they pick out the character as well as if they had known the man from childhood! Thus Jesus seeks the sinner. If there is anything in this sermon which suits your case, dear Friend, do not talk about what relation it may have to anybody else, but be sure Jesus is seeking you! Are you a lost one? Have you come here in such a condition of heart that you cannot deny your lost state? Jesus is seeking you!

Look how the Lord saved Zacchaeus. It seemed an odd thing that when the Lord was under the tree, He should look up and say, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down.” But Jesus does the same thing, still, in the preaching of the Gospel. He applies the Word with power to individual consciences and makes men perceive that He speaks of them. God has a message of love to their souls and they are compelled to hear it—they cannot shut their ears to it—they must receive it for the Spirit of God

comes with it and sends it home with power to their soul. That is Jesus seeking sinners. And whom Jesus seeks He saves.

There is the second part of it—"To seek and to save." And how is the saving done? That is done, first of all, by the complete pardon of all the sinner's sins. The very instant that a man trusts Christ with all his heart, the past is blotted out as if it had never existed—all the sins he has ever committed in thought, in word, in deed, however crimson in color, go at once—they are sunk as in the sea, never to be found again. And this is done upon this one solitary condition—that the sinner believe in Jesus! And even that is not a *condition*, for He that bade him believe *enables* him to believe and *gives* him the faith which saves his soul!

Then the sinner is saved in another way. From the moment that a person believes in Jesus his nature becomes different from what it was before—he receives a new heart—another influence takes possession of him. Another love engrosses him. When a man is absorbed by some master-passion, what a different man he becomes! The passion for wealth will work marvels! We have known idle persons become very diligent and profuse voluptuaries become even self-denying and mortifying to their flesh in their ambition to acquire riches. Now, God gives us another passion—the passion of *gratitude* to Christ, and love to the God that saved us—and that becomes a master-principle and rules the entire man.

He who loved self now loves God and lives for Him. And is that change possible to the most degraded? Yes, possible with God. If a man has committed every crime in the whole catalog of villainy and his heart has become hard as the nether millstone—and his disposition altogether base, mean, groveling, sensual and devilish—the Spirit of God can turn that man, in a single moment, into a lover of that which is true and right and just! He can break his heart concerning the past, make him angry with himself for having lived as he has done and can passionately inflame him with the desire to be perfectly holy!

And that passion within the man can carry him on until he loves his fellow creatures as himself and makes great sacrifices for them—and all for the sake of Jesus, that blessed, crucified Son of Man, who came "to seek and to save that which was lost." We do not preach that Christ forgives men and then lets them live as before. But we assert that the moment He gives the pardon of sin, He gives the new nature, too. The Gospel hospital is not merely a place where lepers are harbored, but where lepers are *healed*—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Brothers and Sisters, let us cry to Jesus this morning to save us! I will put myself down among the lost by nature and by practice. If there is no one else here that is lost by nature, I am such, and I bless my Lord that He is "come to seek and to save" me, a lost man. Brothers and Sisters, some of you have known His love for many years. Did you not come at first to Him as lost ones? And will you not confess, this morning, that were it not for His infinite mercy you would still be as lost as ever? What a mercy it is to know we are lost and to trust to Christ who saves the lost! What a blessing to be among the dead who died in Christ, whose life is a

new life in Him—“for you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

Martin Luther speaks in his book on Galatians of cutting the devil’s head off with his own sword—“There,” says Martin to the devil, “you say I am a great sinner. I thank you for that, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and so I feel He came to save me.” And if the devil says to any one of you this morning, “You are lost altogether,” off with his head, my Brother, my Sister—with his own sword, and this very day rejoice that “the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Is there anyone here who is not lost? Anyone in this congregation who does not need saving? Well, then, I cannot say, in God’s name, a single word of consolation to you. You are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing, so you say. But this is what the Lord says to you—“He has put down the mighty from their seat, and He has exalted them of low degree: He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away.” That is the only Gospel for you! But every poor, heavy-laden, troubled heart—and every soul that feels itself to be lost by nature has this gracious word—“The Son of Man is come to seek and to gave that which was lost.”

The last word is this—Let us who are saved seek the lost ones. Jesus did it. O follower of Jesus, do likewise! Is there any work that you could undertake among the worst of people? Undertake it! Never be ashamed of mingling with the poorest of the poor and the vilest of the vile, for Christ’s sake. I always feel intense satisfaction at the remembrance of such useful members of our Church as Brother Orsman, engaged as he is from day to day in the very worst part of London, in Golden Lane, seeking that which is lost.

I hope there are many here imitating him. I know there are some. There is room for many more laborers in that department to seek those that are lost—pre-eminently lost. You need not, however, go to Golden Lane, or Seven Dials—there are plenty of lost people around you—lost people who come to the Tabernacle, lost people who go to Church and lost people who go nowhere on Sunday. Go and seek them! If you are saved yourself, I beseech you by the blood that bought you, by the Christ who loved you, and by the Christ whom you love, go out this very day to seek and to save that which was lost! Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE, SERMON—Luke 19:1-27.

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THE MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN

(Particular Redemption)

NO. 204

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 11, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10.***

How fond our Master was of the sweet title, the “Son of Man”! If He had chosen, He might always have spoken of Himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Prince of Peace. He has a thousand gorgeous titles, resplendent as the throne of Heaven, but He cares not to use them. To express His humility and let us see the lowliness of Him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, He calls not Himself the Son of God, but He speaks of Himself evermore as the Son of Man who came down from Heaven.

Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Savior. Let us never court great titles, nor proud degrees. What are they, after all, but beggarly distinctions whereby one worm is known from another? He that has the most of them is a worm still and is in nature no greater than his fellows. If Jesus called Himself the Son of Man when He had far greater names, let us learn to humble ourselves unto men of low estate, knowing that he that humbles himself shall in due time be exalted.

Methinks, however, there is a sweeter thought than this in that name, Son of Man. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much that He always desired to honor it. And since it is a high honor and, indeed, the greatest dignity of manhood that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, He desires to display this name, that He may, as it were, put rich stars upon the breast of manhood and put a crown upon its head. *Son of Man*—whenever He said that word He seemed to put a halo round the head of Adam’s children.

Yet there is perhaps a more lovely thought still. Jesus Christ called Himself the Son of Man because He loved to be a man. It was a great stoop for Him to come from Heaven and to be Incarnate. It was a mighty stoop of condescension when He left the harps of angels and the songs of cherubim to mingle with the vulgar herd of His own creatures. But condescension though it were, He loved it. You will remember that when He became incarnate He did not become so in the dark. When He brings forth the only begotten into the world He said, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

It was told in Heaven. It was not done as a dark secret which Jesus Christ would do in the night that none might know it. But all the angels of God were brought to witness the advent of a Savior a span long, sleeping upon a Virgin’s breast and lying in a manger. And ever afterwards and

even now, He never blushed to confess that He was Man—never looked back upon His incarnation with the slightest regret. He always regarded it with a joyous recollection, thinking Himself thrice happy that He had ever become the Son of Man. All hail blessed Jesus! We know how much You love our race. We can well understand the greatness of Your mercy towards Your chosen ones, inasmuch as You are evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that they are bone of Your bone and flesh of Your flesh and You are one of them, a Brother and a near kinsman!

Our text announces as a declaration of our Savior, that He, the Son of Man, is come to seek and to save that which was lost. In addressing you this morning I shall simply divide my discourse thus—First, I shall lay it down as a self-evident Truth, that *whatever was the intention of Christ in His coming into the world that intention most certainly shall never be frustrated*. We shall then in the second place, look into *the intention of Christ*, as announced in the text, viz., “to seek and to save that which was lost.” Then, in concluding, we shall derive *a word of comfort* and perhaps one of *warning*, from the intention of our Savior in coming into the world “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

I. You are aware that there has been a very great discussion among all Christians about the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is one class of men who believe in what is called *general redemption*, affirming it to be an undoubted truth that Jesus Christ has shed His blood for every man and that the intention of Christ in His death was the salvation of men considered as a whole. They have, however, to overlook the fact that in this case Christ’s intention would be frustrated in a measure.

There are others of us who hold what is called the doctrine of *Particular Redemption* or *Limited Atonement*. We conceive that the blood of Christ was of an infinite value, but that the intention of the death of Christ never was the salvation of *all* men. For if Christ had designed the salvation of *all* men, we hold that *all* men would have been saved. We believe that the intention of Christ’s death is just equal to its effects, and therefore I start this morning by announcing what I regard to be a self-evident Truth—that whatever was the intention of Jesus Christ in coming into the world—that intention most certainly shall be fulfilled.

But I shall make use of a few arguments to strengthen this doctrine, although I believe that on the very first announcement it commends itself to every thinking mind.

In the first place, it seems to be *inconsistent with the very idea of God that He should ever intend anything which should not be accomplished*. When I look at man I see him to be a creature so distracted with folly and so devoid of power that I do not wonder that he often begins to build and is not able to finish. I do not marvel that full often he stops short because he has not counted the cost. I wonder not, when I think how much there is that is above man’s control that he should sometimes propose but that God should dispose far differently from his proposition.

I see man to be the insect of a day, a mere speck upon the bay leaf of existence. And when I see him as a mere drop in the great sea of creation, I do not wonder that when he is ambitious he sometimes fashions in him-

self great designs which he is unable to accomplish because the wheels of Providence and destiny will often run quite contrary to all the frolic of his will. But when I think of God whose name is, "I AM that I AM," the self-existent One, in whom we live and move and have our being, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the Almighty God. When I think of Him as filling immensity, having all power and strength, knowing all things, having a fullness of wisdom—I cannot associate with such an idea of God the supposition of His *ever* failing in any of His intentions.

It would seem to me that a God who could intend a thing and fail in His intention would not be God—but be a thing like ourselves—perhaps superior in strength, but certainly not entitled to worship. I cannot think of God as a true and real God like Jehovah, except as a Being who wills and it is accomplished. Who speaks and it is done. Who commands and it stands fast—forever—settled in Heaven. I cannot therefore imagine, since Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that in His atonement and redemption His real intention and desire can in any way be frustrated. If I were a Socinian and believed Jesus Christ to be a mere man, I could, of course, imagine that the result of His redemption would be uncertain. But believing that Jesus Christ was very God of very God, equal and co-eternal with the Father, I dare not, lest I should be guilty of presumption and blasphemy, associate with that name of Jehovah Jesus any suspicion that the design of His death shall remain unaccomplished.

But again, we have before us the fact, that *up to now, all the works of God have accomplished their purpose*. Whenever God has uttered by the lips of His servants a prophecy, it has surely come to pass. The instruments of accomplishing that purpose have often been the most factious and rebellious of men. They had no intention whatever of serving God. They have run contrary to His Laws. But you will observe that when they have dashed wildly along, His bit has been still in their mouth and His bridle in their jaws.

A great monarch has acted like leviathan in the sea—he has moved himself wherever he pleased. He has seemed mighty among the sons of men—all the rest of mankind were as minnows, while he was a huge leviathan. But we discover that God has been overruling his thoughts, that He has been in his council chamber, that the wildest speculations of his ambition have, after all, been but the fulfilling of Jehovah's stern decrees. Look abroad through all the nations of the earth and tell me—is there one prophecy of God that has failed? May He not still say, "Not one of them has lost her mate"?

Every Word of God has certainly been accomplished. The kings of the earth stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break His bands asunder and cast His cords from us. But He that sits in the heavens did laugh at them. The Lord did have them in derision. Still He worked His own sovereign will. Let them do as they pleased, God was over them all, reigning and ruling evermore. If, then, God's purpose in Providence certainly never has been frustrated, am I to imagine that God's purpose in the glorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ shall be null and void?

If there are any of you who have arrived at such a contortion of intellect as to conceive that a less work being accomplished, a greater one shall fail, I must leave you to yourselves. With you I could not argue—I should think you incapable of an argument. Surely, if God the Master, the Judge, the King, has in all things done according to His own pleasure in this lower world, in the mere creation and preservation of men, it is not to be dreamed of for a moment, that when He stoops Himself from the highest Heaven, to give His own heart's blood for our redemption, He shall in that be foiled! No, though earth and Hell are against Him, every purpose of Jesus on the Cross shall be consummated and as the price was “finished,” so shall the purchase be. As the means were fully provided, so shall the end be accomplished to its utmost jot and tittle.

But again, I invite you to stand at *the foot of the Cross* and take a view of Jesus Christ. And then I will put it to you whether you can imagine that Jesus Christ could in any measure have died in vain. Come, Believer, place yourself in the garden of Gethsemane, hide yourself among those dark olives and listen to yonder Man who is in agony. Do you hear those groans? They are the groans of an incarnate God. Do you hear those sighs? They are the sighs of the Son of Man, God over all, blessed forever. Do you hear those strong cries and do you see those tears? They are the crying and the tears of Him who is equal with His Father, but who condescended to be a Man.

Rise, for He has risen, Judas has betrayed Him and taken Him away. Look on that ground. Do you see those clots of gore? It is the bloody sweat of the Man Christ Jesus. I beseech you, answer this question. Standing in the garden of Gethsemane, with those blood clots staining the white frost of that cold midnight, can you believe that one of those clots of blood shall fall to the ground and not effect its purpose? I challenge you, O Christian, whatever your doctrinal opinions, to say to me, “Yes,” to such a question as that!

Can you imagine that a sweat of blood from the veins of incarnate Deity shall ever fall to the ground and fail? Why, Beloved, the *Word* of God which comes forth out of His mouth shall not return unto Him void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases. How much more shall the Great WORD of God, which came forth from the loins of Deity, accomplish the purpose whereunto God has sent Him, and prosper in the thing for which it pleased God to ordain Him!?

But now come with me to *the hall of judgment*. See there your Master placed in mock state in the midst of a ribald band of soldiers. Do you see how they spit on those blessed cheeks, how they pluck His hair, how they buffet Him? Do you see the crown of thorns with its ruby drops of gore? Hark! Can you hear the cry of the multitude, as they say, “Crucify Him, crucify Him”? And will you now stand there and look at this Man whom Pilate has just brought forth, still bleeding from the lash of the scourge, covered with shame and spit and mockery and as this “*Ecce Homo*” is presented to you, will you believe that *this*, the *incarnate Son of God*, shall be made such a spectacle to men, to angels and to devils—and yet fail of His design?

Can you imagine that one lash of that whip shall have a fruitless aim? Shall Jesus Christ suffer this shame and spitting and yet endure what was far worse—a disappointment in the fulfillment of His intentions? No, God forbid! No! By Gethsemane and Gabbatha, we are pledged to the strong belief that what Christ designed by His death must certainly be accomplished.

Then again, see him *hanging on His Cross*. The nails have pierced His hands and feet and there in the broiling sun He hangs—He hangs to die. The mockery has not ceased. Still they put out the tongue and wag the head at Him. Still they taunt Him with, “If you are the Son of God come down from the Cross.” And now His bodily pains increase, while His soul’s anguish is terrible even unto death. Christian, can you believe that the blood of Christ was shed in vain? Can you look at one of those precious drops as it trickles from His head or His hands or His feet and can you imagine that it shall fall to the ground and perish there? Trust the waters may fail from the sea, the sun may grow dim with age, but I never can imagine that the value, the merit, the power of the blood of Jesus ever shall die out, or that its purpose shall be unaccomplished. It seems to me as clear as noonday, that the design of the Savior’s death must certainly be fulfilled—be it what it may.

I might use a hundred other arguments. I might show that every attribute of Christ declares that His purpose must be accomplished. He certainly has love enough to accomplish His design of saving the lost, for He has a love that is bottomless and fathomless, even as the abyss itself. He certainly has no objection to the accomplishment of His own design, for, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” And certainly the Lord cannot fail for want of *power*, for where there is omnipotence there can be no deficiency of strength.

Nor again can the design be unaccomplished because it was *unwise*, for God’s designs cannot be unwise, simply because they are of God—that is to say—they are of infinite wisdom. I cannot see anything in the Character of Christ, nor anything the wide world over, that can for one moment make me imagine that Christ should die and yet it should be said afterwards, “This Man died for a purpose which He never lived to see accomplished—the object of His death was only partially fulfilled. He saw of the travail of His soul, but He was not satisfied, for He did not redeem all whom He intended to redeem.”

Now, some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say it so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for *all* men. It commends itself, they say, to the instincts of humanity. There is something in it full of joy and beauty. I admit there is. But beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might well admire in the theory of universal redemption but let me just tell you what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His Cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were damned before He died. If the doctrine is true, that He died for *all* men, He died for some

that were in Hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there were myriads there that had been cast away.

Once again, if it were Christ's intention to save *all* men, how deplorably has He been disappointed! We have His own evidence that there is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone and into that pit must be cast some of the very persons who, according to that theory, were bought with His blood. That seems to me a thousand times more frightful than any of those horrors which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of Particular Redemption.

To think that my Savior died for men in Hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to imagine—that He was the Substitute for the sons of men and that God having first punished the Substitute punished men again, seems to me to be in conflict with any idea of justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of men and that afterwards those very men should be punished for the sins which Christ had already atoned for, seems to me, to be the most marvelous monstrosity that ever could have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, yes, to the god of the Thugs, or the most diabolical heathen demons. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the Just and Wise. If Christ has suffered in man's stead, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and save us from all unrighteousness.

II. I have thus stated the first thought that the intention of Christ's death cannot be frustrated. And now methinks everyone will anxiously listen and every ear will be attentive and the question will arise from every heart, "WHAT THEN, WAS THE INTENTION OF THE SAVIOR'S DEATH? AND IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I CAN HAVE A PORTION IN IT?" For whom, then, did the Savior die—and is there the slightest probability that I have some lot or portion in that great atonement which He has offered? Beloved, my text is the answer to the question—"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, our text tells us two things—first, the subjects of the Savior's atonement, the lost. And, secondly, the purpose of it—He came to seek and save.

I must now endeavor to pick out the objects of the Savior's atonement. He came "to seek and to save that which was *lost*." Some of you may turn your heads away at once and conclude that up to now you have given no evidence that you have any portion in the death of Christ. You are very good sort of people. You never did much that was wrong—perhaps a little now and then. But nothing particular ever troubles your conscience. You have a notion that you shall certainly enter into the kingdom of Heaven, for you are no worse than your neighbors and if you are not saved, God help other people! If you do not go to Heaven, who will?

You are trusting in your own good works and believing you are righteous. Now let us decide your case at once. Since you are ashamed to put yourselves among those who are lost, I have no Christ to preach to you till you are ready to come and confess that you are lost. For Christ himself tells us that He came, "not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance." And inasmuch as you belong to the righteous and trust in yourselves that you are good and excellent, you may turn upon your heel and

go. In the blood of Christ there is no portion for men who live and die trusting in their own self-righteousness.

But I may dismiss another part of you. Some of you are saying, "Well, Sir, I know I am guilty, but still I am persuaded that by attention to the Law of God, I shall certainly be able to take away the demerit of my guilt. I intend henceforward to reform and I believe that by a consistent course of attention to religious ordinances and by carefully regarding that which is right and wrong between God and man, and man and man, I shall, without doubt, make an atonement for the sins of the past." Ah, my Friend, up to now you give me no hope that you have any portion in the death of Christ. Christ came not to die for men who can *save themselves* without Him. If you think you can save yourself remember the door of mercy is shut in your face.

Christ came to bring robes from Heaven, but not for you who can spin for yourselves. He came to bring bread for the hungry, but He will give none of it to you who can sow and reap and make bread for yourselves. Christ helps the helpless, but they who can help themselves and have sufficient of their own strength and merit to carry them to Heaven may fight their way there alone, if they can—they shall have no help from Him. Whom, then, did Christ die to save? It is said, He came to save "that which was lost."

Now, you must bear with me while I run over the different ways in which a man may be lost. And then I will conclude by noticing the term as it is used in the proper sense. We may affirm that Christ died for the lost. We know that all men are lost in Adam—as soon as we are born into this world, we are lost. When the tiny boat of the infant is launched upon the river of life it is lost. Unless Sovereign Grace shall stretch forth its hand and save it in infancy and carry it to Heaven or save it afterwards, when it shall have grown up—that infant is lost. "Behold," says David, "I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity. In sin did my mother *conceive* me." "In Adam all die." The Fall of Adam was the fall of the human race. Then you and I and *all of us* fell down.

Again, we are all lost by practice. No sooner does the child become capable of knowing right and wrong than you discover that he chooses the evil and abhors the good. Early passions soon break out like weeds immediately after the shower of rain—speedily the hidden depravity of the heart makes itself manifest and we grow up to sin and so we become lost by *practice*. But mark, a man may be lost in Adam and lost by practice and yet be saved by Christ. Christ is able to save you—though you are twice lost—His salvation is able to redeem you from death.

Then there are some who go further still. The deadly tree of sin grows taller and taller and some become lost to the Church. After having been trained up religiously in our midst, they turn aside—they give up all outward regard to the worship of God. The ministry of the Gospel is neglected, the house of prayer is forsaken and the Church tolls its bell and says of such an one, "He is lost to the Church." Some go further still. They are lost to society. I have seen many who are dead while they live. We have in the midst of us the harlot and the drunkard, who, like the leper in

the camp of Israel, have to be put away lest the contagion should spread. And those who seek after right are obliged to turn away from them lest the evil should spread in the midst of the flock.

Now there are many who are lost to society whom Jesus Christ came to save and whom He *will* save. But a man may be lost to society and may be lost everlastingly. It is no proof that Christ will save him, because he is thus lost—while at the same time it is no proof that He will *not* save him, for Christ came to save even men who are lost like this. Again, the man may go further and be lost to the family. We have known those who have become so vile that even after society has shut them out a parent has been obliged to shut them out, too. That must be a Hell of sin, indeed, which can make a father say to his son, “My Son, you shall not want bread while I have any, but I must forbid you my house, for your brothers and sisters cannot endure your society. I feel you would destroy their souls if I should allow you to associate with them.” Now, a man may be lost thus to his own family and yet Sovereign Grace will save him. But, mark, a man may be lost to his family and yet not be saved. Yes, that may be the increase of his condemnation, that he sinned against a mother’s prayers and against a father’s exhortations.

Now I will tell you the people whom Christ will save—they are those who are *lost to themselves*. Just imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm—the ship leaks and the captain tells the passengers he fears they are lost. If they are far away from the shore and have sprung a leak, they pump with all their might as long as they have any strength remaining. They seek to keep down the devouring element. They still think that they are not quite lost while they have power to use the pumps. At last they see the ship cannot be saved. They give it up for lost and leap into the boats.

The boats are beating for many a day, full of men who have but little food to eat. “They are lost,” we say, “lost out at sea.” But they do not think so. They still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship may pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship in the horizon. They strain their eyes to look at her. They lift each other up. They wave a flag. They rend their garments to make something which shall attract attention. But she passes away—black night comes and they are forgotten.

At length the very last mouthful of food has been consumed. Strength fails them and they lay down their oars in the boat and lay themselves down to die. You can imagine, then, how well they understand the awful meaning of the term—“lost.” As long as they had any strength left they felt they were not lost. As long as they could see a sail they felt there was yet hope. While there was yet a moldy biscuit left, or a drop of water, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone and the water is gone—now strength has departed and the oar lies still.

They lie down to die by each other’s side, mere skeletons—things that should have been dead days ago if they had died when all enjoyment of life had ceased. Now they know, I say, what it is to be lost and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their death-knell pealing forth that awful word, Lost! Lost! Lost! Now, in a spiritual sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, you, too, are condemned. Our Father

Adam steered the ship awry and she split upon a rock and she is filling even to her bulwarks now. And pump as philosophy may, it can never keep the waters of her depravity so low as to prevent the ship from sinking.

Seeing that human nature is of itself lost, it has taken to the boat. She is a fair boat, called the boat of Good Endeavor and in her you are striving to row with all your might to reach the shore. But your strength fails you. You say, "Oh, I cannot keep God's Law. The more I try to keep it, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb. But the higher I climb, the higher is the top above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was but a moderate hill but now I seem to have ascended half-way up its steps—there it is, higher than the clouds—and I cannot discern the summit."

However, you gather up your strength, you try again. You row once more and at last unable to do anything, you lay down your oars, feeling that if you are saved, it cannot be by your own works. Still you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of moldy biscuit remaining. You have heard that by attention to certain ceremonies you may be saved and you munch your dry biscuit. But at last that fails you and you find that neither Baptism, nor the Lord's Supper, nor any other outward rites can make you clean—for the leprosy lies deep within.

That done, you still look out. You are in hopes that there may be a sail coming and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma, some fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship—it is gone and there you are left at last, with the burning sky of God's vengeance above you—with the deep waters of a bottomless Hell beneath you. Fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship which once was so full of hope, you lie down despairing and you cry—"Lord save me, or I perish!"

Is that your condition this morning, my Friend, or has that *ever* been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save *you*. And you He *will* save and no one else. He will save only those who can claim this for their title—"Lost"—who have understood in their own souls what it is to be lost, as to all self-trust, all self-reliance and all self-hope.

I can look back to the time when I knew myself to be lost. I thought that God meant to destroy me. I imagined that because I felt myself to be lost, I was the special victim of Almighty vengeance. For I said unto the Lord, "Have You set me as the target of all Your arrows? Am I a seal or a whale, that You have set a mark upon *me*? Have You sewed up my iniquities in a bag and sealed my transgressions with a seal? Will You never be gracious? Have You made me to be the center of all sorrow, the chosen one of Heaven to be cursed forever?"

Ah, fool that I was! I little knew, then, that those who have the curse in themselves are the men whom God will bless—those that have the sentence of death in ourselves—those that should not trust in ourselves, but in Him who died for us and rose again. Come, I will put the question once again—can you say that you are lost? Was there a time when you traveled with the caravan through this wild wilderness world? Have you left the

caravan with your companions and are you left in the midst of a sea of sand—a hopeless, arid waste? And do you look around you and see no helper? And do you cast your eyes around and see no trust? Is the death bird wheeling in the sky, screaming with delight because he hopes soon to feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water bottle dry and does the bread fail you?

Have you consumed the last of your dry dates and drunk the last of that brackish water from the bottle? And are you now without hope, without trust in yourself—ready to lie down in despair? Listen! The Lord your God loves you! Jesus Christ has bought you with His blood! You are, you shall be His. He has been seeking you all this time and He has found you at last in the vast howling wilderness and now He will take you upon His shoulders and carry you to His house rejoicing! And the angels shall be glad over your salvation. Now, such people must and shall be saved and this is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Whom He came to save He will save. You, you lost ones—lost to all hope and self confidence, shall be saved. Though death and Hell should stand in the way, Christ will perform His vow and accomplish His design.

I shall be very brief in concluding my discourse. But we have now to notice THE OBJECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST—He came “to *seek* and to *save* that which was lost.” I am so glad that these two words are both there, for if they were not, what hope would there be for any of us? The Arminian says Christ came to save those that *seek Him*. Beloved, there is a sense in which that is true. But it is a lie. Christ did come to save those that seek Him but no one ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ unless the Lord Jesus first sought him. Christ does not leave it to ourselves to seek Him, or else it would be left indeed, for so vile is human nature that although Heaven is offered and though Hell thunders in our ears, yet there never was and there never will be any man unconstrained by Sovereign Grace, who will run in the way of salvation and so escape from Hell and flee to Heaven.

It is all in vain for me to preach to you and all in vain for the most earnest exhortations to be addressed to any of you unless the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to back them up. For man is so infatuated—his disease is one which causes such a madness of the brain—that he refuses the remedy and puts away from him the healing draught which alone can give him life from the dead. “You will not come unto Me that you might have life.” Let man alone—and with the Cross of Christ before him and all Hell behind him—he will shut his eyes and prefer to be damned rather than enter into eternal life by the blood of Christ the Lord.

Hence Christ came first to *seek* men, and *then* to save them. Ah, what a task that is of seeking men! There are some of you today on the tops of the mountains of pride and others of you in the deep glens of despair. Methinks I see the Savior coming forth to seek you. He finds you today in the green pastures of the sanctuary. He comes near to you and by these hands of mine He seeks to lay hold of you—but no sooner do you discern His approach—than you run far away into the wild desert of sin. Perhaps this evening you will be spending the remnant of the Sabbath in profaning

God's Day. One of you at least I know who will be in the public house as soon as the evening sermon is over and most probably will go home very late.

If Christ intends to save you, He will go to you there. And while you are in that wild waste of sin, He will send some Providence after you and save you there. Away you fly, then, to the marshes of reformation and you say, "The Shepherd cannot overtake me. I shall be beyond His reach now, I have left off my drunkenness, I have given up my cursing." But He will come to you there and wade for you ankle deep in your own self-righteousness. And then you will run away again and jump into the deep pit of despair and there you will say to yourself, "He can never find me here."

But I see Him coming with that crook of His—He enters the pit, takes you by the feet and casts you round His neck and carries you home rejoicing, saying, "I have found him at last! Wherever he wandered, I sought him and now I have found him." It is strange what strange places Christ finds some of His people! I knew one of Christ's sheep who was found out by his Master while committing robbery. I knew another who was found out by Christ while he was spiting his old mother by reading the Sunday newspaper and making fun of her.

Many have been found by Jesus Christ even in the midst of sin and vanity. I knew a preacher of the Gospel who was converted in a theater. He was listening to a play, an old-fashioned piece, that ended with a sailor's drinking a glass of gin before he was hung and he said, "Here's to the prosperity to the British Nation and the salvation of my immortal soul." Down went the curtain. And down went my friend, too, for he ran home with all his might. Those words, "The salvation of my immortal soul," had struck him to the quick. And he sought the Lord Jesus in his chamber. Many a day he sought Him and at last *Jesus found him* to his joy and confidence.

But for the most part Christ finds His people in His own house. But He finds them often in the worst of tempers, in the most hardened conditions. And He softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride and takes them to Himself. But never would they come to Him unless He came to them. Sheep go astray, but they do not come back again of themselves. Ask the shepherd whether his sheep come back and he will tell you, "No, Sir. They will wander, but they never return." When you find a sheep that ever came back of himself, then you may hope to find a sinner that will come to Christ of himself. No. It must be Sovereign Grace that must seek the sinner and bring him home.

And when Christ seeks him He SAVES him. Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, He does not take a knife and slay him as the sinner expects—but He takes him by the hand of mercy and begins to comfort and to save. Oh, you lost Sinners, the Christ who seeks you today in the ministry and who has sought you many a day by His Providence will save you! He will first find you when you are emptied of self and then He will save you. When you are stripped He will bring forth the best robe and put it on you.

When you are dying He will breathe life into your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned He will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Fear not, you hopeless and helpless souls, Christ seeks you today and seeking, He will save you—save you here, save you living, save you dying, save you in time, save you in eternity and give you, even you, the lost ones, a portion among them that are sanctified. May the Lord now bless these words to your consolation!

III. I shall not say more, as I intended to have done, lest I should weary you. Let me only remind you that the time is coming when that word “lost” will have a more frightful meaning to you than it has today. In a few more months, some of you, my Hearers, will hear the great bell of eternity tolling forth that awful word—lost, lost, lost! The great sepulchers of Hell will toll out your doom—lost, lost, lost! And through the shades of eternal misery this shall forever assail your ear, that you are lost forever.

But if that bell is ringing in your ear today—that you are lost—oh, be of good cheer, it is a good thing to be so lost—it is a happy thing to be lost to self and lost to pride and lost to carnal hope! Christ will save you! Believe that. Look to Him as He hangs upon His Cross. One look shall give you comfort. Turn your weeping eyes to Him as He bleeds there in misery. He can, He will, save you. Believe on Him, for He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not must be damned. But whosoever among the lost ones will now cast himself on Christ Jesus, he shall find everlasting life through His death and righteousness. May the Lord now gather in His lost sheep, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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THE MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN (Particular Redemption) NO. 204

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 11, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10.*

How fond our Master was of the sweet title, the “Son of Man”! If He had chosen, He might always have spoken of Himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Prince of Peace. He has a thousand gorgeous titles, resplendent as the throne of Heaven, but He cares not to use them. To express His humility and let us see the lowliness of Him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, He calls not Himself the Son of God, but He speaks of Himself evermore as the Son of Man who came down from Heaven.

Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Savior. Let us never court great titles, nor proud degrees. What are they, after all, but beggarly distinctions whereby one worm is known from another? He that has the most of them is a worm still and is in nature no greater than his fellows. If Jesus called Himself the Son of Man when He had far greater names, let us learn to humble ourselves unto men of low estate, knowing that he that humbles himself shall in due time be exalted.

Methinks, however, there is a sweeter thought than this in that name, Son of Man. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much that He always desired to honor it. And since it is a high honor and, indeed, the greatest dignity of manhood that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, He desires to display this name, that He may, as it were, put rich stars upon the breast of manhood and put a crown upon its head. *Son of Man*—whenever He said that word He seemed to put a halo round the head of Adam’s children.

Yet there is perhaps a more lovely thought still. Jesus Christ called Himself the Son of Man because He loved to be a man. It was a great stoop for Him to come from Heaven and to be Incarnate. It was a mighty stoop of condescension when He left the harps of angels and the songs of cherubim to mingle with the vulgar herd of His own creatures. But condescension though it were, He loved it. You will remember that when He became incarnate He did not become so in the dark. When He brings forth the only begotten into the world He said, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

It was told in Heaven. It was not done as a dark secret which Jesus Christ would do in the night that none might know it. But all the angels of God were brought to witness the advent of a Savior a span long, sleeping upon a Virgin’s breast and lying in a manger. And ever afterwards and even now, He never blushed to confess that He was Man—never looked back upon His in-

carnation with the slightest regret. He always regarded it with a joyous recollection, thinking Himself thrice happy that He had ever become the Son of Man. All hail blessed Jesus! We know how much You love our race. We can well understand the greatness of Your mercy towards Your chosen ones, inasmuch as You are evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that they are bone of Your bone and flesh of Your flesh and You are one of them, a Brother and a near kinsman!

Our text announces as a declaration of our Savior, that He, the Son of Man, is come to seek and to save that which was lost. In addressing you this morning I shall simply divide my discourse thus—First, I shall lay it down as a self-evident Truth, that *whatever was the intention of Christ in His coming into the world that intention most certainly shall never be frustrated*. We shall then in the second place, look into *the intention of Christ*, as announced in the text, viz., “to seek and to save that which was lost.” Then, in concluding, we shall derive *a word of comfort* and perhaps one of *warning*, from the intention of our Savior in coming into the world “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

I. You are aware that there has been a very great discussion among all Christians about the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is one class of men who believe in what is called *general redemption*, affirming it to be an undoubted truth that Jesus Christ has shed His blood for every man and that the intention of Christ in His death was the salvation of men considered as a whole. They have, however, to overlook the fact that in this case Christ’s intention would be frustrated in a measure.

There are others of us who hold what is called the doctrine of *Particular Redemption* or *Limited Atonement*. We conceive that the blood of Christ was of an infinite value, but that the intention of the death of Christ never was the salvation of *all* men. For if Christ had designed the salvation of *all* men, we hold that *all* men would have been saved. We believe that the intention of Christ’s death is just equal to its effects, and therefore I start this morning by announcing what I regard to be a self-evident Truth—that whatever was the intention of Jesus Christ in coming into the world—that intention most certainly shall be fulfilled.

But I shall make use of a few arguments to strengthen this doctrine, although I believe that on the very first announcement it commends itself to every thinking mind.

In the first place, it seems to be *inconsistent with the very idea of God that He should ever intend anything which should not be accomplished*. When I look at man I see him to be a creature so distracted with folly and so devoid of power that I do not wonder that he often begins to build and is not able to finish. I do not marvel that full often he stops short because he has not counted the cost. I wonder not, when I think how much there is that is above man’s control that he should sometimes propose but that God should dispose far differently from his proposition.

I see man to be the insect of a day, a mere speck upon the bay leaf of existence. And when I see him as a mere drop in the great sea of creation, I do not wonder that when he is ambitious he sometimes fashions in himself great designs which he is unable to accomplish because the wheels

of Providence and destiny will often run quite contrary to all the frolic of his will. But when I think of God whose name is, “I AM that I AM,” the self-existent One, in whom we live and move and have our being, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the Almighty God. When I think of Him as filling immensity, having all power and strength, knowing all things, having a fullness of wisdom—I cannot associate with such an idea of God the supposition of His *ever* failing in any of His intentions.

It would seem to me that a God who could intend a thing and fail in His intention would not be God—but be a thing like ourselves—perhaps superior in strength, but certainly not entitled to worship. I cannot think of God as a true and real God like Jehovah, except as a Being who wills and it is accomplished. Who speaks and it is done. Who commands and it stands fast—forever—settled in Heaven. I cannot therefore imagine, since Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that in His atonement and redemption His real intention and desire can in any way be frustrated. If I were a Socinian and believed Jesus Christ to be a mere man, I could, of course, imagine that the result of His redemption would be uncertain. But believing that Jesus Christ was very God of very God, equal and co-eternal with the Father, I dare not, lest I should be guilty of presumption and blasphemy, associate with that name of Jehovah Jesus any suspicion that the design of His death shall remain unaccomplished.

But again, we have before us the fact, that *up to now, all the works of God have accomplished their purpose*. Whenever God has uttered by the lips of His servants a prophecy, it has surely come to pass. The instruments of accomplishing that purpose have often been the most factious and rebellious of men. They had no intention whatever of serving God. They have run contrary to His Laws. But you will observe that when they have dashed wildly along, His bit has been still in their mouth and His bridle in their jaws.

A great monarch has acted like leviathan in the sea—he has moved himself wherever he pleased. He has seemed mighty among the sons of men—all the rest of mankind were as minnows, while he was a huge leviathan. But we discover that God has been overruling his thoughts, that He has been in his council chamber, that the wildest speculations of his ambition have, after all, been but the fulfilling of Jehovah’s stern decrees. Look abroad through all the nations of the earth and tell me—is there one prophecy of God that has failed? May He not still say, “Not one of them has lost her mate”?

Every Word of God has certainly been accomplished. The kings of the earth stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break His bands asunder and cast His cords from us. But He that sits in the heavens did laugh at them. The Lord did have them in derision. Still He worked His own sovereign will. Let them do as they pleased, God was over them all, reigning and ruling evermore. If, then, God’s purpose in Providence certainly never has been frustrated, am I to imagine that God’s purpose in the glorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ shall be null and void?

If there are any of you who have arrived at such a contortion of intellect as to conceive that a less work being accomplished, a greater one shall fail, I must leave you to yourselves. With you I could not argue—I should think you incapable of an argument. Surely, if God the Master, the Judge, the King, has in all things done according to His own pleasure in this lower world, in the mere creation and preservation of men, it is not to be dreamed of for a moment, that when He stoops Himself from the highest Heaven, to give His own heart's blood for our redemption, He shall in that be foiled! No, though earth and Hell are against Him, every purpose of Jesus on the Cross shall be consummated and as the price was “finished,” so shall the purchase be. As the means were fully provided, so shall the end be accomplished to its utmost jot and tittle.

But again, I invite you to stand at *the foot of the Cross* and take a view of Jesus Christ. And then I will put it to you whether you can imagine that Jesus Christ could in any measure have died in vain. Come, Believer, place yourself in the garden of Gethsemane, hide yourself among those dark olives and listen to yonder Man who is in agony. Do you hear those groans? They are the groans of an incarnate God. Do you hear those sighs? They are the sighs of the Son of Man, God over all, blessed forever. Do you hear those strong cries and do you see those tears? They are the crying and the tears of Him who is equal with His Father, but who condescended to be a Man.

Rise, for He has risen, Judas has betrayed Him and taken Him away. Look on that ground. Do you see those clots of gore? It is the bloody sweat of the Man Christ Jesus. I beseech you, answer this question. Standing in the garden of Gethsemane, with those blood clots staining the white frost of that cold midnight, can you believe that one of those clots of blood shall fall to the ground and not effect its purpose? I challenge you, O Christian, whatever your doctrinal opinions, to say to me, “Yes,” to such a question as that!

Can you imagine that a sweat of blood from the veins of incarnate Deity shall ever fall to the ground and fail? Why, Beloved, the *Word* of God which comes forth out of His mouth shall not return unto Him void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases. How much more shall the Great WORD of God, which came forth from the loins of Deity, accomplish the purpose whereunto God has sent Him, and prosper in the thing for which it pleased God to ordain Him!?

But now come with me to *the hall of judgment*. See there your Master placed in mock state in the midst of a ribald band of soldiers. Do you see how they spit on those blessed cheeks, how they pluck His hair, how they buffet Him? Do you see the crown of thorns with its ruby drops of gore? Hark! Can you hear the cry of the multitude, as they say, “Crucify Him, crucify Him”? And will you now stand there and look at this Man whom Pilate has just brought forth, still bleeding from the lash of the scourge, covered with shame and spit and mockery and as this “*Ecce Homo*” is presented to you, will you believe that *this*, the *incarnate Son of God*, shall be made such a spectacle to men, to angels and to devils—and yet fail of His design?

Can you imagine that one lash of that whip shall have a fruitless aim? Shall Jesus Christ suffer this shame and spitting and yet endure what was far worse—a disappointment in the fulfillment

of His intentions? No, God forbid! No! By Gethsemane and Gabbatha, we are pledged to the strong belief that what Christ designed by His death must certainly be accomplished.

Then again, see him *hanging on His Cross*. The nails have pierced His hands and feet and there in the broiling sun He hangs—He hangs to die. The mockery has not ceased. Still they put out the tongue and wag the head at Him. Still they taunt Him with, “If you are the Son of God come down from the Cross.” And now His bodily pains increase, while His soul’s anguish is terrible even unto death. Christian, can you believe that the blood of Christ was shed in vain? Can you look at one of those precious drops as it trickles from His head or His hands or His feet and can you imagine that it shall fall to the ground and perish there? Trust the waters may fail from the sea, the sun may grow dim with age, but I never can imagine that the value, the merit, the power of the blood of Jesus ever shall die out, or that its purpose shall be unaccomplished. It seems to me as clear as noonday, that the design of the Savior’s death must certainly be fulfilled—be it what it may.

I might use a hundred other arguments. I might show that every attribute of Christ declares that His purpose must be accomplished. He certainly has love enough to accomplish His design of saving the lost, for He has a love that is bottomless and fathomless, even as the abyss itself. He certainly has no objection to the accomplishment of His own design, for, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” And certainly the Lord cannot fail for want of *power*, for where there is omnipotence there can be no deficiency of strength.

Nor again can the design be unaccomplished because it was *unwise*, for God’s designs cannot be unwise, simply because they are of God—that is to say—they are of infinite wisdom. I cannot see anything in the Character of Christ, nor anything the wide world over, that can for one moment make me imagine that Christ should die and yet it should be said afterwards, “This Man died for a purpose which He never lived to see accomplished—the object of His death was only partially fulfilled. He saw of the travail of His soul, but He was not satisfied, for He did not redeem all whom He intended to redeem.”

Now, some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say it so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for *all* men. It commends itself, they say, to the instincts of humanity. There is something in it full of joy and beauty. I admit there is. But beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might well admire in the theory of universal redemption but let me just tell you what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His Cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were damned before He died. If the doctrine is true, that He died for *all* men, He died for some that were in Hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there were myriads there that had been cast away.

Once again, if it were Christ’s intention to save *all* men, how deplorably has He been disappointed! We have His own evidence that there is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone and into that pit must be cast some of the very persons who, according to that theory, were bought

with His blood. That seems to me a thousand times more frightful than any of those horrors which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of Particular Redemption.

To think that my Savior died for men in Hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to imagine—that He was the Substitute for the sons of men and that God having first punished the Substitute punished men again, seems to me to be in conflict with any idea of justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of men and that afterwards those very men should be punished for the sins which Christ had already atoned for, seems to me, to be the most marvelous monstrosity that ever could have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, yes, to the god of the Thugs, or the most diabolical heathen demons. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the Just and Wise. If Christ has suffered in man's stead, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and save us from all unrighteousness.

II. I have thus stated the first thought that the intention of Christ's death cannot be frustrated. And now methinks everyone will anxiously listen and every ear will be attentive and the question will arise from every heart, "WHAT THEN, WAS THE INTENTION OF THE SAVIOR'S DEATH? AND IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I CAN HAVE A PORTION IN IT?" For whom, then, did the Savior die—and is there the slightest probability that I have some lot or portion in that great atonement which He has offered? Beloved, my text is the answer to the question—"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, our text tells us two things—first, the subjects of the Savior's atonement, the lost. And, secondly, the purpose of it—He came to seek and save.

I must now endeavor to pick out the objects of the Savior's atonement. He came "to seek and to save that which was *lost*." Some of you may turn your heads away at once and conclude that up to now you have given no evidence that you have any portion in the death of Christ. You are very good sort of people. You never did much that was wrong—perhaps a little now and then. But nothing particular ever troubles your conscience. You have a notion that you shall certainly enter into the kingdom of Heaven, for you are no worse than your neighbors and if you are not saved, God help other people! If you do not go to Heaven, who will?

You are trusting in your own good works and believing you are righteous. Now let us decide your case at once. Since you are ashamed to put yourselves among those who are lost, I have no Christ to preach to you till you are ready to come and confess that you are lost. For Christ himself tells us that He came, "not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance." And inasmuch as you belong to the righteous and trust in yourselves that you are good and excellent, you may turn upon your heel and go. In the blood of Christ there is no portion for men who live and die trusting in their own self-righteousness.

But I may dismiss another part of you. Some of you are saying, "Well, Sir, I know I am guilty, but still I am persuaded that by attention to the Law of God, I shall certainly be able to take away the demerit of my guilt. I intend henceforward to reform and I believe that by a consis-

tent course of attention to religious ordinances and by carefully regarding that which is right and wrong between God and man, and man and man, I shall, without doubt, make an atonement for the sins of the past.” Ah, my Friend, up to now you give me no hope that you have any portion in the death of Christ. Christ came not to die for men who can *save themselves* without Him. If you think you can save yourself remember the door of mercy is shut in your face.

Christ came to bring robes from Heaven, but not for you who can spin for yourselves. He came to bring bread for the hungry, but He will give none of it to you who can sow and reap and make bread for yourselves. Christ helps the helpless, but they who can help themselves and have sufficient of their own strength and merit to carry them to Heaven may fight their way there alone, if they can—they shall have no help from Him. Whom, then, did Christ die to save? It is said, He came to save “that which was lost.”

Now, you must bear with me while I run over the different ways in which a man may be lost. And then I will conclude by noticing the term as it is used in the proper sense. We may affirm that Christ died for the lost. We know that all men are lost in Adam—as soon as we are born into this world, we are lost. When the tiny boat of the infant is launched upon the river of life it is lost. Unless Sovereign Grace shall stretch forth its hand and save it in infancy and carry it to Heaven or save it afterwards, when it shall have grown up—that infant is lost. “Behold,” says David, “I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity. In sin did my mother *conceive* me.” “In Adam all die.” The Fall of Adam was the fall of the human race. Then you and I and *all of us* fell down.

Again, we are all lost by practice. No sooner does the child become capable of knowing right and wrong than you discover that he chooses the evil and abhors the good. Early passions soon break out like weeds immediately after the shower of rain—speedily the hidden depravity of the heart makes itself manifest and we grow up to sin and so we become lost by *practice*. But mark, a man may be lost in Adam and lost by practice and yet be saved by Christ. Christ is able to save you—though you are twice lost—His salvation is able to redeem you from death.

Then there are some who go further still. The deadly tree of sin grows taller and taller and some become lost to the Church. After having been trained up religiously in our midst, they turn aside—they give up all outward regard to the worship of God. The ministry of the Gospel is neglected, the house of prayer is forsaken and the Church tolls its bell and says of such an one, “He is lost to the Church.” Some go further still. They are lost to society. I have seen many who are dead while they live. We have in the midst of us the harlot and the drunkard, who, like the leper in the camp of Israel, have to be put away lest the contagion should spread. And those who seek after right are obliged to turn away from them lest the evil should spread in the midst of the flock.

Now there are many who are lost to society whom Jesus Christ came to save and whom He *will* save. But a man may be lost to society and may be lost everlastingly. It is no proof that Christ will save him, because he is thus lost—while at the same time it is no proof that He will *not* save him, for Christ came to save even men who are lost like this. Again, the man may go fur-

ther and be lost to the family. We have known those who have become so vile that even after society has shut them out a parent has been obliged to shut them out, too. That must be a Hell of sin, indeed, which can make a father say to his son, “My Son, you shall not want bread while I have any, but I must forbid you my house, for your brothers and sisters cannot endure your society. I feel you would destroy their souls if I should allow you to associate with them.” Now, a man may be lost thus to his own family and yet Sovereign Grace will save him. But, mark, a man may be lost to his family and yet not be saved. Yes, that may be the increase of his condemnation, that he sinned against a mother’s prayers and against a father’s exhortations.

Now I will tell you the people whom Christ will save—they are those who are *lost to themselves*. Just imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm—the ship leaks and the captain tells the passengers he fears they are lost. If they are far away from the shore and have sprung a leak, they pump with all their might as long as they have any strength remaining. They seek to keep down the devouring element. They still think that they are not quite lost while they have power to use the pumps. At last they see the ship cannot be saved. They give it up for lost and leap into the boats.

The boats are beating for many a day, full of men who have but little food to eat. “They are lost,” we say, “lost out at sea.” But they do not think so. They still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship may pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship in the horizon. They strain their eyes to look at her. They lift each other up. They wave a flag. They rend their garments to make something which shall attract attention. But she passes away—black night comes and they are forgotten.

At length the very last mouthful of food has been consumed. Strength fails them and they lay down their oars in the boat and lay themselves down to die. You can imagine, then, how well they understand the awful meaning of the term—“lost.” As long as they had any strength left they felt they were not lost. As long as they could see a sail they felt there was yet hope. While there was yet a moldy biscuit left, or a drop of water, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone and the water is gone—now strength has departed and the oar lies still.

They lie down to die by each other’s side, mere skeletons—things that should have been dead days ago if they had died when all enjoyment of life had ceased. Now they know, I say, what it is to be lost and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their death-knell pealing forth that awful word, Lost! Lost! Lost! Now, in a spiritual sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, you, too, are condemned. Our Father Adam steered the ship awry and she split upon a rock and she is filling even to her bulwarks now. And pump as philosophy may, it can never keep the waters of her depravity so low as to prevent the ship from sinking.

Seeing that human nature is of itself lost, it has taken to the boat. She is a fair boat, called the boat of Good Endeavor and in her you are striving to row with all your might to reach the shore. But your strength fails you. You say, “Oh, I cannot keep God’s Law. The more I try to keep it, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb. But the higher I climb, the

higher is the top above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was but a moderate hill but now I seem to have ascended half-way up its steps—there it is, higher than the clouds—and I cannot discern the summit.”

However, you gather up your strength, you try again. You row once more and at last unable to do anything, you lay down your oars, feeling that if you are saved, it cannot be by your own works. Still you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of moldy biscuit remaining. You have heard that by attention to certain ceremonies you may be saved and you munch your dry biscuit. But at last that fails you and you find that neither Baptism, nor the Lord’s Supper, nor any other outward rites can make you clean—for the leprosy lies deep within.

That done, you still look out. You are in hopes that there may be a sail coming and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma, some fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship—it is gone and there you are left at last, with the burning sky of God’s vengeance above you—with the deep waters of a bottomless Hell beneath you. Fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship which once was so full of hope, you lie down despairing and you cry—“Lord save me, or I perish!”

Is that your condition this morning, my Friend, or has that *ever* been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save *you*. And you He *will* save and no one else. He will save only those who can claim this for their title—“Lost”—who have understood in their own souls what it is to be lost, as to all self-trust, all self-reliance and all self-hope.

I can look back to the time when I knew myself to be lost. I thought that God meant to destroy me. I imagined that because I felt myself to be lost, I was the special victim of Almighty vengeance. For I said unto the Lord, “Have You set me as the target of all Your arrows? Am I a seal or a whale, that You have set a mark upon *me*? Have You sewed up my iniquities in a bag and sealed my transgressions with a seal? Will You never be gracious? Have You made me to be the center of all sorrow, the chosen one of Heaven to be cursed forever?”

Ah, fool that I was! I little knew, then, that those who have the curse in themselves are the men whom God will bless—those that have the sentence of death in ourselves—those that should not trust in ourselves, but in Him who died for us and rose again. Come, I will put the question once again—can you say that you are lost? Was there a time when you traveled with the caravan through this wild wilderness world? Have you left the caravan with your companions and are you left in the midst of a sea of sand—a hopeless, arid waste? And do you look around you and see no helper? And do you cast your eyes around and see no trust? Is the death bird wheeling in the sky, screaming with delight because he hopes soon to feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water bottle dry and does the bread fail you?

Have you consumed the last of your dry dates and drunk the last of that brackish water from the bottle? And are you now without hope, without trust in yourself—ready to lie down in despair? Listen! The Lord your God loves you! Jesus Christ has bought you with His blood! You are, you shall be His. He has been seeking you all this time and He has found you at last in the

vast howling wilderness and now He will take you upon His shoulders and carry you to His house rejoicing! And the angels shall be glad over your salvation. Now, such people must and shall be saved and this is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Whom He came to save He will save. You, you lost ones—lost to all hope and self confidence, shall be saved. Though death and Hell should stand in the way, Christ will perform His vow and accomplish His design.

I shall be very brief in concluding my discourse. But we have now to notice THE OBJECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST—He came “to *seek* and to *save* that which was lost.” I am so glad that these two words are both there, for if they were not, what hope would there be for any of us? The Arminian says Christ came to save those that *seek Him*. Beloved, there is a sense in which that is true. But it is a lie. Christ did come to save those that seek Him but no one ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ unless the Lord Jesus first sought him. Christ does not leave it to ourselves to seek Him, or else it would be left indeed, for so vile is human nature that although Heaven is offered and though Hell thunders in our ears, yet there never was and there never will be any man unconstrained by Sovereign Grace, who will run in the way of salvation and so escape from Hell and flee to Heaven.

It is all in vain for me to preach to you and all in vain for the most earnest exhortations to be addressed to any of you unless the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to back them up. For man is so infatuated—his disease is one which causes such a madness of the brain—that he refuses the remedy and puts away from him the healing draught which alone can give him life from the dead. “You will not come unto Me that you might have life.” Let man alone—and with the Cross of Christ before him and all Hell behind him—he will shut his eyes and prefer to be damned rather than enter into eternal life by the blood of Christ the Lord.

Hence Christ came first to *seek* men, and *then* to save them. Ah, what a task that is of seeking men! There are some of you today on the tops of the mountains of pride and others of you in the deep glens of despair. Methinks I see the Savior coming forth to seek you. He finds you today in the green pastures of the sanctuary. He comes near to you and by these hands of mine He seeks to lay hold of you—but no sooner do you discern His approach—than you run far away into the wild desert of sin. Perhaps this evening you will be spending the remnant of the Sabbath in profaning God’s Day. One of you at least I know who will be in the public house as soon as the evening sermon is over and most probably will go home very late.

If Christ intends to save you, He will go to you there. And while you are in that wild waste of sin, He will send some Providence after you and save you there. Away you fly, then, to the marshes of reformation and you say, “The Shepherd cannot overtake me. I shall be beyond His reach now, I have left off my drunkenness, I have given up my cursing.” But He will come to you there and wade for you ankle deep in your own self-righteousness. And then you will run away again and jump into the deep pit of despair and there you will say to yourself, “He can never find me here.”

But I see Him coming with that crook of His—He enters the pit, takes you by the feet and casts you round His neck and carries you home rejoicing, saying, “I have found him at last! Wherever he wandered, I sought him and now I have found him.” It is strange what strange places Christ finds some of His people! I knew one of Christ’s sheep who was found out by his Master while committing robbery. I knew another who was found out by Christ while he was spiting his old mother by reading the Sunday newspaper and making fun of her.

Many have been found by Jesus Christ even in the midst of sin and vanity. I knew a preacher of the Gospel who was converted in a theater. He was listening to a play, an old-fashioned piece, that ended with a sailor’s drinking a glass of gin before he was hung and he said, “Here’s to the prosperity to the British Nation and the salvation of my immortal soul.” Down went the curtain. And down went my friend, too, for he ran home with all his might. Those words, “The salvation of my immortal soul,” had struck him to the quick. And he sought the Lord Jesus in his chamber. Many a day he sought Him and at last *Jesus found him* to his joy and confidence.

But for the most part Christ finds His people in His own house. But He finds them often in the worst of tempers, in the most hardened conditions. And He softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride and takes them to Himself. But never would they come to Him unless He came to them. Sheep go astray, but they do not come back again of themselves. Ask the shepherd whether his sheep come back and he will tell you, “No, Sir. They will wander, but they never return.” When you find a sheep that ever came back of himself, then you may hope to find a sinner that will come to Christ of himself. No. It must be Sovereign Grace that must seek the sinner and bring him home.

And when Christ seeks him He SAVES him. Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, He does not take a knife and slay him as the sinner expects—but He takes him by the hand of mercy and begins to comfort and to save. Oh, you lost Sinners, the Christ who seeks you today in the ministry and who has sought you many a day by His Providence will save you! He will first find you when you are emptied of self and then He will save you. When you are stripped He will bring forth the best robe and put it on you.

When you are dying He will breathe life into your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned He will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Fear not, you hopeless and helpless souls, Christ seeks you today and seeking, He will save you—save you here, save you living, save you dying, save you in time, save you in eternity and give you, even you, the lost ones, a portion among them that are sanctified. May the Lord now bless these words to your consolation!

III. I shall not say more, as I intended to have done, lest I should weary you. Let me only remind you that the time is coming when that word “lost” will have a more frightful meaning to you than it has today. In a few more months, some of you, my Hearers, will hear the great bell of eternity tolling forth that awful word—lost, lost, lost! The great sepulchers of Hell will toll out

your doom—lost, lost, lost! And through the shades of eternal misery this shall forever assail your ear, that you are lost forever.

But if that bell is ringing in your ear today—that you are lost—oh, be of good cheer, it is a good thing to be so lost—it is a happy thing to be lost to self and lost to pride and lost to carnal hope! Christ will save you! Believe that. Look to Him as He hangs upon His Cross. One look shall give you comfort. Turn your weeping eyes to Him as He bleeds there in misery. He can, He will, save you. Believe on Him, for He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not must be damned. But whosoever among the lost ones will now cast himself on Christ Jesus, he shall find everlasting life through His death and righteousness. May the Lord now gather in His lost sheep, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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SAVING THE LOST

NO. 2756

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON, LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 8, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 17, 1879.

*“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10.*

OUR Lord's mission upon earth was a very gracious one. It had a narrow side to it, for He came only as a Minister—not as a Savior, mark you, but as Minister—to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He was, as the Apostle Paul reminds us, “a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God.” And He did not traverse any other country but Palestine, in order to preach the Gospel to the people, but He kept Himself to the seed of Abraham.

Yet there was abundant room for one personal ministry within that realm alone. If a Christian worker were to say that he would confine his labors to London, he certainly need not think that he would have a restricted range! And our Savior's personal preaching in Palestine gave Him more work than any one man could accomplish. But, even in that restricted sense, it is remarkable that He should have said to the woman of Canaan, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The lost sheep were the peculiar desire of His heart—not so much Israel, as “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” His eye was especially fixed upon them, His Grace sought out the objects most needing it. His mercy hungered after human misery in order that He might relieve it so that there were always uppermost in His mind, thoughts of pity and love towards the sons of men.

At this present moment, under the Gospel dispensation, there is no division between Israel and the Gentile. I do not care whether I am an Israelite or not, after the flesh, because in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile. That is all abolished and all the fuss that some people make about whether we are descended from the Jews is nonsense and nothing better! If it is so, it does not matter in the least. For now “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free—but Christ is all and in all.” The middle wall of partition has been taken down once and for all and, now, all over the world, this Truth of God stands in reference not to this nation, or to that, alone, but to the whole human race, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Still do His eyes, with eagle keenness, spy out the lost. Still do those eyes, with dove-like tenderness, weep for

the lost! Still does the eternal Savior live that He may seek and save that which was lost!

If you were never lost, you have no part or lot in His work of salvation. But if you are lost, and know it, this is the very link which unites you to the Savior! He has come to seek and to save just such as you are and I hope, in the observations I am about to make, that I shall be able to show that He came to save you!

I. I shall speak concerning OUR LORD'S MISSION. He has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Notice, first, *what a gracious mission it was!* It was a mission of pure mercy and indescribable love. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to seek His own honor, but to seek and to save the lost. Not to get anything for Himself, but to give everything to those who are lost. His mission is one of undeserved goodness, on His part, towards those who have treated Him evilly and who deserve very different treatment at His hands. There was no law except His own love to compel Christ to come to save sinners. They had no claim upon Him. When He resolved to come, it was an act of matchless Grace. If He had not chosen to come, He would still have been the ever-blessed Son of the Highest, enshrined in everlasting Glory though everyone of us had perished! His coming was Infinite goodness, returning good for evil, coming down to our lost estate and determining, by superabundant affection, to save us from it! Our Savior is embodied Grace, Incarnate Love and His mission is Grace itself. Let us never forget that He came to save the lost—not to save the good and the excellent.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, Christ's eyes look in the opposite direction to ours. We usually look for some goodness on the part of men before we help them, but He looks to their sin, degradation and need. He is kind to the unthankful and the evil. He justifies those who are not, in themselves, just—while we were dead in trespasses and sins, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Grace, pure Grace, abounds in Him and is blessedly manifested in His mission of saving the lost.

Further, while that mission is a very gracious one, I call your attention to the fact that *it is also a great one.* Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost and there are plenty of them. It is no small charge that Christ has taken up when He speaks of saving the lost. What a mass of our fellow countrymen are lost! I mean, in the common use of the term, "the lost classes" that are morally gone astray and are, by universal consent, put down among the lost. Look at whole nations of mankind that are sunk up to their eyelids in infamous transgression, lost to every sense of shame and decency. Christ, however, has come to save just such as they are and, to tell the truth, the difference between us and them, by nature, is not more than skin deep! We are a little better washed on the outside than they are, but the inside of the cup and platter of fallen humanity is pretty much alike in all men. We may have been better taught. We may have been more restrained than they have been, but a viper is still a viper wherever he may live and man is, in every case, a lost man, a depraved and sinful creature. To my mind, it seems a won-

drous charge for Christ to undertake—to save “the lost” without any qualification added to the word—just “the lost.”

What a mission Christianity had when it first came, for instance, into Rome! When Christianity first came there it was inconceivably vile. Its emperors were madmen! I think I cannot truthfully say less of such monsters as Nero, Tiberius and Caligula, whose power seemed all to be bent to supply themselves with the means for the indulgence of the most abandoned forms of vice. The city of Rome was full of statues, the larger part of which, thank God, have been utterly destroyed—and I often wish the rest had been, for many of them are polluting and depraving even to look upon. The city was full of idols as well as of art and the principal images were not the more respectable ones, like Jupiter and Mercury, but Venus and Bacchus and other abominations from the filthy crowd of Olympus. The rich indulged themselves in every luxury. Women, while their maids waited upon them, and dressed them, practiced upon their female slaves cruelty of such a kind that one would think that everything feminine had gone out of them. Slaves were tortured and put to death—and nothing was ever said about such common crimes. In the amphitheatre, into which the multitudes crowded, scores and even hundreds of gladiators died in a single day—slaying each other in mutual conflict to make a Roman holiday! The nation was full of corruption, bribery, filthiness. A few characters shone out brightly, the more renowned because they were so few, but the land, as a whole, was such that, if Vesuvius had belched forth a torrent of fire high enough to set all Italy in a blaze, and an earthquake had opened its mouth and swallowed it all up, there would have been as much justification for its destruction as for that of Sodom and Gomorrah of old!

But Christianity came into Rome in the form of a poor fisherman and a tent-maker, and others like them. And they began to say, “We must love each other. You who are rich must count it a privilege to help the poor. We must all fear and serve the one true God, for there is but one. And God has made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth. You are not to treat men with cruelty. You are not to have these bloody games. You are not to indulge these licentious propensities. The Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Son, has died to save us from sin and all its consequences.” It was a very still small voice that was heard in Rome at first—and if it had not been for the supernatural power of God, it would speedily have been silenced! But its influence soon began to spread, for some of the rich men in the city and some of the soldiers on guard in Caesar’s palace, and many of the poor slaves embraced the new religion and everywhere they were renowned for kindness, gentleness, purity and love.

Then wicked men said, “We will put this new religion down,” and horrible persecutions followed. But, notwithstanding all that the Christians suffered, Rome became leavened with the influence of Christianity. By-and-by, slavery passed away, cruelties were no longer indulged, the amphitheatre was abolished and many of the idol gods were broken in pieces. The one invisible God was worshipped and the world rose up like

one that has been in an awful swoon, and dreamed dreadful things—and she looked into the mirror and saw her face as though she had been born-again! Christ had come to seek and to save lost society and He did it in a marvelous way, as He can always do it and He will continue to do it, for this is the great errand of my Master, that wherever men are sunken in sin and vice—wherever they are immersed in crime, or satisfied with their self-righteousness—He has come to save them from it!

Mark, also, that my Master's mission, while it is a gracious one and a great one, *is a very complete one*. He comes to seek, that is, to find, the lost. And coming into contact with lost humanity, He does not leave it lost, for He saves those whom He seeks.

And *what a condescending way of saving He has*, for the text says, "*The Son of Man has come.*" He was no "Son of Man" once—He was and always remains the eternal Son of God! But He deigned to take upon Him this poor Nature of ours. He became a Man like ourselves—a condescension so marvelous that though we hear of it now with little astonishment, yet, if we sat down to think it over, it would remain an unexplained mystery to bewilder us with its marvels of matchless Grace! Yes, the Son of God became the Son of Man! As such, He lived. As such, He bled away His life upon the Cross that He might redeem us! He has come as the Son of Man that He might lift us up to be the sons of God! And, blessed be His name, the deed is done and, by His Spirit's power, its glorious results are still bringing untold blessings to all who trust Him!

Just once more, *what a practical aim our Savior had in coming here!* Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to propound a philosophy. He did not come to explode ancient errors. He did not come to keep abreast of the times. He did not come to do the pretty things that many ministers are trying to do nowadays. He did not come to be rhetorical. He did not come to be popular. He did not come that He might gain the esteem of the multitude. He came to seek and to save the lost! Would God that His Church would keep to the same kind of work! But His Church seems to me to act in a great measure as if she were in the world simply to show off her pretty self with all her fineries—to play her grand music and tickle the ears of people with a Sunday concert and I know not what of floral show to increase the attraction of it. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and what are we who call ourselves His disciples, doing? Many of us are doing a thousand other things than this one great thing which alone is worthy of the service of the man who calls himself a *Christian* and who, therefore, ought to be one who is *like Christ*. He came to seek and to save the lost. Brothers and Sisters, try to get at this work as closely as you can. Whatever else you can or cannot do, do seek to be the means of saving souls! Whatever you can do, that is fine and grand and that will bring you into esteem among your fellow men, do try to save poor lost sinners, even though they should be among the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor! Do try to do what you are called to do in your Master's name, for, by the power of His matchless Gospel, you, also, can seek the lost and bring them to Him to save them!

Thus much about our Master's mission.

II. Now I want, in the second place, to give a MESSAGE TO THE LOST ONES FROM MY TEXT.

I do not know where you lost ones are, but here, somewhere, are some of you who know yourselves to be lost. I am not talking to these other people, but you and I will have a little conversation between ourselves.

And, first, I ask you to *think what an interest is excited about you*. You are lost and it seems that earth and Heaven, too, are concerned about your being lost, for the Son of Man who is also the Son of God blends Heaven and earth in one in being concerned about you! God's Church is interested in your salvation. Many Christians are praying for you and I am trying to speak out the common love of Christians to you. Because you are lost, we long that you may be saved! Suppose there is a little child in the family—not a very pretty child, not always quite clean, nothing very much to look at in anybody's eyes except her mother's. They are seven or eight in the family and the parents have not much time to waste in admiration of any one of them when they have to earn bread for so many. But, just now, little Mary is the principal object of thought in the family. Everybody's heart is taken up with Mary. There is nobody in the house who is not thinking of Mary—what is the reason? Why, Mary went out this morning, to go on an errand, and it is now evening and she has not come home! And they have been round to the police station, but they cannot find her. Mary is lost, so there is more thought of her than about Jane, or Hannah, or John, or Thomas, though, it may be, they are older and better children. But Mary, just now, is uppermost with everybody because Mary is lost!

It is so with regard to you, my dear Friend. You are in the uppermost thought of Christ just now, and you are in our uppermost thoughts, too, because you are lost. I do not want you to feel at all elated at being the subject of this interest, because it is not so much you, you know, or anything about you except the one fact that you are lost, which makes us so much interested in you!

Presently there is such joy, such kissing and hugging, such delight, such singing because Mary is found. Perhaps you step in and look at Mary—she is just as commonplace a little baby as ever sat on a mother's knee, but still, you see, she had been lost and she has been found and, therefore, they are rejoicing over her with great joy. All the prominence that Mary gets is not due to her goodness, but to the fact of the love that cannot bear that she should be lost. And it is so with you, my dear Friend. We would move Heaven and earth about you if we could! We would suspend the angels' songs and bid them lean upon their harps and look on, while all Heaven and earth, in the Person of the Well-Beloved, are seeking and saving that which is lost! So I bid you remember what interest is excited about you!

Next, notice *what power and what wisdom are engaged concerning you*—you poor lost body over there! The Son of Man has come to seek and to save you! It is not that the preacher is laboring to save the lost, but, you see, the pearly gates are swinging back on their golden hinges—the King's Palace gates are opening and there is One passing through

whose coming to the earth astounds cherubim and seraphim! It is He who descends, disrobing Himself as He comes down, hanging up His royal rings like new stars, doffing His azure mantle and stretching it across the sky, for, as George Herbert quaintly says, He has new clothes a-making down below! He comes here, to this poor earth, and you see Him as a babe at Bethlehem and a boy at Nazareth. Being here, He stoops continually lower and lower till He reaches the deepest depths of all upon the Cross of Calvary. And, all the while He goes about His daily task hunting for such as you! And what He literally did when He was here, He is still doing by the Divine Spirit—He is still watching, still waiting, still seeking, still going round the earth hunting after the lost!

It ought to greatly encourage you who are lost when you remember that there is such an One as the Lord Jesus Christ who has come after you. A child, lost in the woods, sits down and cries. The night is coming on, she is very weary and her sad little heart has only one comfort. "Father will begin to hunt after me, directly. He comes home and when mother tells him that his little girl is lost, he will search for me all night long. Father knows the forest trails and knows where I have been known to stray. Father will find me before the morning, so I will lay me down and sleep." And, dear lost one, you may have even more confidence that the Savior will search for you! Do not give up in despair because Jesus seems so long in coming to find you. He has piercing eyes to see you and swift feet to leap o'er mountains after you—and a ready hand to grasp you and strong shoulders on which to bear His wandering sheep home to the fold above. There is hope for you, lost one, for the Son of Man has come, bringing all His Godhead with Him and, in the Infinity of His power, and wisdom and love, He is seeking to save just such sinners as you!

I want you, however, to notice another thing—you lost one, I mean, for you and I are supposed to be talking together tonight. *Do you see what trouble you have caused?* The little child is troubled at being lost, but think what trouble there is at home on her account! Last Wednesday morning there came into my study a Brother-minister and I saw at once that he was in terrible trouble, He had come to see me about something else, but I could not help saying to him, "You have some great sorrow on your heart, have you not?" He answered, "Yes, I have. I lost my wife a year and a half ago, and that was a great grief to me, but I have a trial now which seems to cut me to the heart almost more than that bereavement did." "What is that?" I asked, and he replied, "Last Sabbath morning, when I went to preach, I thought my boy had come into the Chapel with me, but, after the service, I could not find him. I went home, but he did not come in to dinner, and I could not get any tidings of him anywhere. I had to preach, in the evening, with a heavy heart, for I still could not find him, and I spent the greater part of the night with others searching everywhere for him. "And now," he said, "it is Wednesday and I have not found him, nor have I heard a word concerning him."

Oh, you should have seen how sad he looked! "It is my eldest boy," he said, "and he is lost." Up to this present moment, I believe that he has

not heard anything of him. He would compass the whole land to find him, I know, but he does not know where to look for him. The boy is lost and, possibly, he does not know what trouble he is giving his father and all his friends. If he did, he would very soon be home. Ah, and sinners give great trouble because they are lost. You have heard what trouble sinners gave to the Lord Jesus Christ. That death of His upon the Cross was part of the trouble that fell upon His great heart because we will sin—because we will be lost—because we will not turn to Him and live. What trouble many of you sinners give to your friends on earth—and what trouble you gave to the Lord Jesus Christ! It threw Him into a bloody sweat even to think of you as lost and to take your place and bear the penalty of your guilt.

There is one other reflection, which will not, I hope, wipe out this one. That is, *what joy you would give if you were found!* Oh, what clapping of hands there would be and what singing of songs of thanksgiving in your home, if you have a pious mother or a godly father! Sometimes, members of this Church come to speak with me and I know, by their manner, that there is something very joyful that they have to tell me. They do not laugh—they seem very quiet about their joy but there is a deep under-current of gladness. One said to me, lately, “God has been very gracious to me, for both my son and my daughter have just found the Savior.” You know that fathers and mothers, when they are right-hearted, are much more glad about such good news as this than they are when they say, “My son has gained a fortune,” or, “My daughter has married into a rich family.” Oh, yes, to be able to say they are saved is the best thing that can possibly be said about them! I feel such gladness as I can never express when I think of my own dear sons, whom God has brought to the feet of Jesus and called to preach the Gospel which their father loves! O you poor sad sinners, you would be the cause of great joy on earth if you came to Christ—and you would make Christ Himself glad, too! That is the greatest wonder of all—that He who sits upon the Throne of God in ineffable bliss, can have an increase to His joy if you are saved! Yet we know that it is so, for “there is joy”—not only among the angels—but Christ said, “there is joy in the *Presence* of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” That is to say, it is God Himself who has the joy, and Christ who rejoices over one sinner that repents!

That is my special word with you, poor lost sinners. May God bless it to you and may you speedily be found by the seeking Savior!

III. Now I come to the closing portion of my discourse which is to be a WORD TO OURSELVES.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, the workers in this Church, I want to speak to you and to myself. And what I want to say is just this—if Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, has come to seek and to save that which was lost, *what honorable work is yours and mine when we try to be the means of saving souls!* The Grand Worthy Chief Master of the Confraternity of Soul-Sinners is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Those who belong to that blessed company have Jesus Christ as their Head. I always feel that it is a high honor to be a minister of the Gospel when I remember what

the old Puritan said. He said that the Lord God had only one Son, and He made a Minister of Him—what could He do better with Him? So, today there is no higher rank on earth than that of a winner of souls! Be you in whatever position in life you may, if you are seeking to bring eternal salvation to men, you have far higher employment than falls to the lot of the mightiest of earth's kings and princes!

Next, think *how thorough your efforts ought to be in this work*. You ought to go after souls, to seek them, as the Son of Man came to seek them. If they will not come into the place where you usually speak, go and speak to them where they are. If you have not got the children you want to have in your class in the Sunday school, go and seek to bring them in and then, when you have sought them and gathered them around you, do not be satisfied till they are saved! It is a great mercy to have the House of Prayer filled with people listening to the Gospel. I am always glad to see such a sight, but oh, if you hearers are not saved, what is the good of your coming here? If my Master will not give me your souls for my hire, I can scarcely thank Him for allowing me to preach to you, for I am doing you harm rather than good, being “the savor of death unto death,” rather than “of life unto life,” if you hear the Word, but are not saved by it! O dear unsaved souls, we can never be satisfied concerning you until you are truly converted to God! Dear Christian workers, do not rest until those who listen to the Gospel message believe it and so find eternal salvation!

Notice next *how naturally some of you ought to take to the work of soul-winning*. When a child is lost, who should seek it? Why, its mother and father, of course! They are sure to do so. Well, do you seek the souls of your own children? Do you pray for them? Do you try, by your teaching, and by your example, to bring them to Christ? If you do not, shame on you that you bear the Christian name! I hope all of you who are Christian parents are seeking the salvation of your own children. The next person to go in search of a lost child, after its parents, I should think, is its brother. A lad hears that his dear little sister is lost. I see the hot tears in the boy's eyes as he says, “Mother, I will go anywhere, I will go everywhere if I can but find her.” Well, now, you who are brothers, you who are related to one another—and you are all brothers of the one great human family—you all ought, for that very reason, to be concerned about finding these lost ones! But if there is one member of the family who is affected the most by the loss of the child, it is, probably, the older sister who was especially charged to take care of it. Or if the big brother is responsible, because the child was entrusted to his charge, he will not be able to bear himself! He will cry, “Oh, that I should have lost her!—that I should be the cause of her wandering away!” He will not rest at night, I am sure, unless he has found her.

Some of us are very specially put in charge of souls. You are teachers. You are evangelists. You are ministers and I am, as I know full well. What if I should ever be the cause of the loss of any one of you? I would not have it so. God grant that it may never be, that any word of mine, spoken in a thoughtless manner, or anything that I might say too coldly,

or with too much levity, should ever lead an immortal spirit to turn away from hope and from the Lord Jesus Christ! It would be a dreadful thing if that were to happen—and if it ever has, let us henceforth be among the first to seek to find those who have gone astray.

I will tell you, too, who would be sure to look after a lost child, and that is a child who was once lost and who has been found. It may have happened years ago, but the lad says to his mother, “I know what it is to be lost, for I was once lost in the woods. Let me go and find the little one, as somebody came and found me.” You who know the smart of sin, the sorrow that sin brings, will be among the very first to try to find the lost ones. I am sure you will, so I scarcely need say a word to urge you to this holy service.

Then there are those who are acquainted with the ground where the lost ones are—they are sure to go seek them. A child lost in our London streets will probably be found again, but a child lost in the backwoods of America may never be discovered until its bones are found. We who know the dangers of the road—that roaring lion, those pitfalls and traps—we cannot but feel that we must be among the first to go to seek the lost!—

***“Oh, come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam.
At the close of the day ‘twill be sweet to say,
I have brought some lost one home.”***

And we may, with great hopefulness, go about the work of seeking the lost *because there is One with us, in the seeking party, who is sure to find them.* “Come,” we say to one another, “let us gather together, and let us go and search the woods to find the lost one.” But we know so little about the work and we are so weak and feeble that we soon become dispirited. But here comes the One who is going to lead the search party! You know Him! Look at His pierced hands and feet and brow. Mark that ensign of the Son of Man, the spear gash in His side. Look at His dear face! Was there ever on any other countenance, such beauty of compassionate love? He comes forward, girt with His golden belt, with His eyes brighter than flames of fire, and He says, “I will lead the search. You take your orders from Me. I will tell you where to go and I will go with you. And so My lost ones shall all be found.”

Dear Master, we are only too glad to go on such an errand! You shall not have to tell us twice and if any of us are inclined to linger, we think we see You lift Your pierced hand and say, “Who will go for Me? And whom shall I send?” And many of us, rising in our seats, would gladly raise our hand and dedicate ourselves from this very moment to this blessed service, each one of us saying, “Here am I Lord! Send me.”

Go thus, Brothers and Sisters, in the Holy Spirit’s might, and in your Savior’s name! And may He enable you to bring home, with rejoicing, many of the lost ones—and to Him shall be all the glory forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 21:23-46.**

Verse 23. *And when He was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching and said, By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?* Jesus knew that these men came to Him for no good purpose, and that they were only trying to trip Him up in His speech. He was always willing to teach when men were willing to learn, but He did not care to cast His pearls before swine. Therefore, mark the holy caution, the sacred ingenuity with which our Lord replied to these men.

24-27. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, where was it from? From Heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we say, From Heaven, He will say unto us, Why did you not, then, believe him? But if we say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a Prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And He said unto them, Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.* He carried the war into the enemy's camp. He answered His accusers by asking them a question which they could not answer in either way without condemning themselves!

28-32. *But what do you think? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, Sir: and went not. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said unto Him, The first. Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and you believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and you, when you had seen it, repented not afterward, that you might believe him.* Those poor fallen women and degraded tax gatherers practically said, by their conduct, "We will not serve the Lord." Their past evil life had been a deliberate rejection of the authority of God and yet, when John the Baptist came, they repented and they believed! Each of them had said, like the elder son, "I will not," yet they did! But as for these chief priests and elders, who all their lives had been outwardly serving the Lord and saying, "We will go and work in God's vineyard," when John came and pointed them to God's own Son, they would not accept Him.

They had, just now, by refusing to tell whether the Lord's messenger was from Heaven or of men, again rejected Him and proved that they had not repented. They did not believe John—they had themselves confessed that it was so—and, therefore, out of their own mouths they were condemned! I wonder whether there is any lesson in this parable to some who are here. I should not be surprised if there is. I hope that there are some among you who up to now have said, "I will not go," who will repent and go and serve your God! And, on the other hand, it is to be feared that there may be some here who have always been saying, "I go, Sir," who nevertheless have not gone and, perhaps, never will go—but will remain

to the last, disobedient to the command of God. The Lord grant that it may not be so!

33-41. *Hear another parable. There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They said unto Him, he will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.* You see at once how this parable related to the leaders of the Jewish people! From generation to generation, they scorned the Prophets of God, persecuted them and put them to death. And when our Lord Himself appeared, though His Glory might easily have been seen by them, yet they cast Him out from among them and put Him to death!

Yet, beloved Friends, we must never regard the Scriptures as referring only to strangers and people of past ages! We must also look to see what bearing they have upon ourselves. The rejection of God's Prophets is the sin of our common humanity. And the murder of the Son of God was the crime, not of the Jews only, but of the whole human race. We, too, have a share in it, for we have rejected the Son of the Highest. "But we were not there," you say. No, and yet we may have repeated that terrible tragedy in our own lives. God has sent you many messengers and if you remain, at this moment, unconverted, you have not treated them well, otherwise you would have yielded your heart to God. Some of them you have rejected by your neglect and others have been the subject of your ridicule and contempt. Against some you have reacted violently, for your conscience has been touched and you have had to do violence to conscience in order to reject their message!

Last of all, the Son of God Himself has come to you in the preaching of the Gospel. You have heard of His death and of His atoning Sacrifice, but you have rejected them and, in acting thus, you have done, as far as you could, the same as they did who crucified the Savior! You still refuse to have Him for your Savior. You disown Him as your King. You strive against His righteous sway. You tell me that you do not. Well, then, you have yielded to Him and you are saved. But if that is not the case, you still remain such an adversary of God that you reject His Son! Take care lest of you, also, that prophecy should become true—He will miserably destroy those wicked men and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

42. *Jesus said unto them, Did you never read in the Scriptures? What a question this was for our Lord to put to men who professed to have the whole of the Scriptures at their fingertips and to be the only qualified interpreters of them! “Did you never read in the Scriptures?”*

42, 43. *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the chief cornerstone: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* And, at this day, we Gentiles enjoy the privileges of the Gospel, while poor Israel is scattered to the four winds of Heaven! But He that spared not the natural olive, will not spare the engrafted branches if we are found unfruitful. God takes the Gospel away from one nation and gives it to another. But if it is not accepted by the other one and if He has not all the Glory of it ascribed to Him, He will take it away from that nation, too! He may deal thus with us—if England becomes and remains a drunken nation, a cruel nation, a proud nation, an unbelieving nation, a superstitious nation and brings forth the evil fruits of the vine of Sodom—we may not expect that God will always continue His Kingdom among us! He will say to us, as Christ said to these chief priests and elders, “The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

44. *And whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken.* If you stumble over Christ, the chief Cornerstone of God’s building, you will be broken in pieces! If you reject Him, you shall suffer serious loss!

44. *But on whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.* If you arouse the wrath of Christ and the Rock of Ages falls on you—a huge cliff comes toppling from its lofty height upon the traveler and crushes him past all recognition—you will be ground to powder.

46, 46. *And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spoke of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude, because they took Him for a Prophet.* Unhappy people, to reject Him who alone could bless them—and yet to stand in fear of Him whom they tried to despise! Let it not be so with any of us, but may Jesus become our Teacher, our Friend and our Savior forever, by His abounding Grace! Amen.

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

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

THE ERRAND OF MERCY

NO. 3050

A SERMON
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*“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10.*

GOD came down from Heaven but once to be united with human flesh. *On what errand did He come and who were the objectives of it? What messenger was sent on that errand? What method was pursued by Him? With what success was it attended?* Our text gives us the information—“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Let us speak briefly upon these four points.

I. First, AS TO THE OBJECTIVE OF CHRIST’S ERRAND—“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

That word, “lost,” is constantly applied by desponding and despairing persons to themselves. Such people say, “We are lost—we feel that we are lost, wholly lost. There is no hope for us.” Herein they betray both their ignorance and their unbelief—their ignorance, for to be lost is nothing so peculiar that they should claim to be heritors of a strange doom since the whole human race is lost! And their unbelief since Christ came especially to seek and to save the lost. Therefore, their being lost is not a ground for despair, but may be construed into a ground of hope! Let us think over that word, “lost,” and see in what sense those are lost whom Christ came to save.

Christ came to save those who were *lost hereditarily*. You often hear people say, “Man is in a state of probation.” No such thing! There is no man now in a state of probation. Adam was in a state of probation and man in Adam was in a state of probation in the Garden as long as he stood in obedience to the test that was given. He was upon his trial, but the moment that Adam tasted of the forbidden fruit, the probation was over—he was a lost man! And our probation was over, too, for we were lost in him. Man, in this world, is either in a state of condemnation or a state of salvation. “He that believes not” is not in a state of probation—he is “condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” We have Divine authority for this. A man who has believed in Jesus is not in a state of probation, for “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” and, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” The fact is that we are all absolutely lost through the sin of Adam and we need a Revelation to show us that we

are absolutely saved in the righteousness of Christ! It is not a question whether I shall fall or not—I have fallen in Adam. “By one man’s disobedience,” says the Apostle, “many were made sinners.” I stood in Adam as long as he stood, but when Adam fell, he so represented me and all my kith and kin, that I fell in him—and fell so as to be hopelessly and forever lost—if Jesus Christ had not stepped in “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

We are lost, again, in another sense. We are *lost naturally*. It is supposed by some that man has it now in his power to choose his own character and so become the arbiter of his own destiny. They say that his nature is, at first, in such a state of equilibrium that he can select either the strait and narrow path of rectitude, or pursue the broad road which leads to destruction. No, my dear Friends, both Scripture and experience teach us otherwise! We are born with natures that incline towards that which is evil and never of themselves tend towards that which is good! “Behold,” says David, “I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Well did Job ask, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one.” How, then, can he be pure who is born of a woman who is herself sinful? How can we, who are impure, be the parents of pure children? Such a thing is not possible! The whole head of human nature is sick and the whole heart faint. Naturally from our very birth we go astray, speaking lies! There is written upon human nature, by the finger of our first parent, this word, “Lost!”—lost to God, therefore lost to the virtuous exercise of the affections and the true balance of the judgment, lost to rectitude, the will lost to obedience, the mental vision lost as to a sight of God, the moral sense lost as to that proper sensibility of conscience by which it shall stand out against sin. The reigning power in man is dislodged from its place—manhood’s glory, his victory and integrity lost, lost forever—unless some greater Man shall restore it. This is how we truthfully describe the whole human race and so, surely, those whom Christ came to save were hereditarily and naturally lost.

Among these, *there are some so totally lost to all feeling that they do not know they are lost*. Even the preaching of the Gospel does not suffice to bring them to a consciousness of their condition. Their conscience has become seared and their heart hardened by perversity in sin. If they once knew what it was to tremble at the wrath to come, that time is past. Even the wooing of Divine Mercy fall upon them as oil would fall upon marble and runs off without producing any effect. They wish they could feel. They envy souls that despair and wish that they could, themselves, despair. They despair, however, of ever being able to get into a good enough state of heart to despair! “If anything is felt,” they say, “’tis only pain to find we cannot feel,” and not much of that is felt. Now, even such Jesus Christ came to save—and we know this because such were some of us! Do not I recollect the time when I would have given my eyes for a tear and would have been willing to suffer anything if I could have but bent my knees and uttered one groan? But my heart would not yield a

sigh or my eyes a tear! I turned to the Book of God but that did not move me. I listened to the preacher without emotion. It seemed as if even a dying Savior's groans could never move a heart so base as mine—and yet I bear witness that Christ came to save such, for I do myself rejoice in His salvation! You who are lost to all feeling may well catch at this text, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Then there are others who are *lost to all hope*. It is in vain that you pray with them. They rise up from their knees and thank you for your prayers, but they are assured that God will never hear them. They sometimes pray—necessity drives them to their knees—but they pray with the conviction that they are merely talking to a God whose mind is made up about them and determined to cast them forever from His Presence. Comforts that are available to others are of no use to them. You may skillfully seek to adjust your consolation so as to suit their case, but they ward off your comfort as skillfully as a warrior guards himself from the enemy's arrow with his shield. They will not hear a word of comfort, charm you ever so wisely. They have made up their minds that there cannot be anything in the Book of God for them except thunder and lightning and "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Yes, and if they had their own names put in the Bible and a promise appended to their names, they would deny their own names and the promise too! They have come to be in such a state of subjection to that tyrant, Unbelief, that they say, "Never shall we have hope. It is impossible that such sinners as we are, should ever be partakers of eternal life." If you ask them the reason for their despair, they cannot always tell you. "No," they say, "we would not tell any man living what we have done and what we feel." In one case it is some overwhelming sin. In another case it is having resisted at certain periods the convictions of conscience. Or yet again, it is old age—their having been living so long a time in impenitence. They have all different arguments and none of them are the arguments of truth.

They believe Satan's lie that God is not willing to forgive, in preference to God's own oath—"As I live," says the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." I do not know how it is that these poor souls manage to get away from such texts as these—"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." And such an one as this—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." I say again that I do not know how they escape from the soothing influence of such words of hope, but they do manage, by some means, to fly from them! And still they hug their chains and sit in a sort of willful bondage in the darkness of their dungeon. Yet Jesus came to save just

such sinners as those and there are some here of elastic step and bright eyes who once were “bound in affliction and iron!” But you have been brought out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death and Christ has broken your bonds asunder! You can now sing praises unto God and your songs shall testify to others, who were your fellow captives, that Jesus Christ has come “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Some whom Christ saves are *lost socially*. Their names are not mentioned in the family—they would bring such a pang to the mother’s heart, such a flush to the father’s cheek. They could not now enter into any respectable society—they are marked men and marked women. There are some who are lost even before the law of the land. The hand of justice has been laid upon them and they are held in bonds under the law. It may be that they are even marked as felons. Yet the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who are socially lost! When the gates of society are shut, the gates of Mercy are not shut. When man considers the case to be utterly hopeless and the social outcasts are put into a sort of leper colony lest the infection should spread, Jesus walks into the colony and touches the leper and says, “Be you clean.” You may shut them out from yourselves, but not from the Savior! When they have come to their worst and have run the whole round of dissipation till they are jaded and sick, still can the Master step in and whisper into that ear rendered attentive by pain and sickness—and snatch the fire-brand from the flame—to the Glory of His own Grace!

Others whom the Savior doubtless came to save, were, at one time, *lost avowedly and determinedly*. There have been those who have made a league with Satan and a covenant with death. They have said, “Turn to God? Never! We will burn first.” They have not only resisted conscience, but they have, as it were, proclaimed war to the knife against God Himself! They have called Heaven and earth to witness that they were the slaves of Satan and had chosen him to be their master—and would serve him to their dying hour! Yet their covenant with death has been broken and their league with Hell has been broken! God has, by mighty Grace, made them quite as decidedly His servants as they were once the servants of the Evil One! Oh, what has not Grace done, and what can it not still do? Take the word, “lost,” in the very worst possible sense that you can attach to it and still my text shall apply to it also—“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Perhaps of all lost souls, *the most miserably lost are those who perish under the sound of the Gospel*. There are some of you who have been prayed over, preached at and wept over year after year till you seem to be hopeless cases. You yourselves feel that there is a hardness which is begotten in the light of the Gospel which is not begotten anywhere else. The same sun which melts wax hardens clay and it has hardened you after an awful fashion till, now, you really dread to hear the Gospel lest you should drift still further away from God! Well, even such lost ones Jesus came to save! I am conscious that my language cannot sufficiently

express the extent to which the word, “lost,” may be applied. Some of you think there is very little difference between you and the damned in Hell—they *feel* the flame—you are *waiting* for it. You feel that they are undergoing the execution while you are in the condemned cell. They have heard Christ say, “Depart, you cursed.” You feel that you are cursed though He has not yet said to you, “Depart.” You think (though you think wrongly, let me say), that your death warrant has been signed and sealed—you declare that you might as well be banished from this world, for you know that if you live ever so long, you will live and die without hope and without God! Ah, poor Soul! Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save just such sinners as you are! And I trust, notwithstanding all you say to the contrary, He has come to seek and to save you—even *you*.

Such are the woe-begone objects of this mission of mercy! Now let us turn to the Messenger of mercy—the Savior of the lost!

II. If the lost are to be saved, someone of extraordinary character must come to do it. No, IF THEY ARE TO BE SOUGHT AND FOUND, THERE MUST BE A SPECIAL MESSENGER.

Ordinary men, if they go to seek the lost ones, soon grow weary in the search. Perhaps they have to seek them where pride does not like to go, or to follow them when their perseverance fails and their patience cannot endure. It needs a special One to seek the lost. But when the sinner is found, who can *save* the found one? No human arm is long enough, no human merits strong enough, no human plea prevalent enough—it is delightful, therefore, to read that “the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Who is this Son of Man? “*Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever.*” Though peerless in dignity, He assumes a humble title with a lowly estate when He condescends to undertake this menial service. Before He came to be the Son of Mary, He was the eternal Son of God! He sat upon the Throne of His Glory, adored by the spirits which His own hand had made, but He came down from yonder starry sky to seek and save the lost! This proves how full of pity, how condescending and how kind was God’s eternal Son. Lost one, here is some comfort for you! If Jesus, from His Throne of Glory, pitied you in your lost estate and if it is the same pitying One who is come to seek and to save the lost, then is He not the One to find and to save you?

But remember who He is, “*the Son of Man.*” He gives Himself that title, “the Son of Man!” He feels as you feel. He was tempted in all points like you are tempted. He never had a single sin of His own, but He bore the sins of many and He knows what the weight of sin is. You think Christ has forsaken you and Christ once thought His Father had forsaken Him—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” He cried. You are broken in heart. He knows what that means for He said, “Reproach has broken My heart.” You think that all God’s waves and billows have gone over you. He said they had all gone over Him and in very truth they had!

It is not possible that you should have a grief deeper than that which the Savior knew. You cannot plunge lower than He went. What if I say that though sin is come over you so that you cannot look up, there cannot be so black a cloud of sin between you and God as there was once between the Substitute and the Father—for ALL the sins of His elect ones rolled like an ocean's tempest between the God of Justice and the Surety who was smitten in our place! Think of Christ, you who are lost, as being just such an One as yourself, except in the matter of sin—poor, having not where to lay His head—destitute, afflicted and tormented as much as you can be. He is the Son of Man! Oh, rest you upon that tender bosom and confide in that compassionate heart!

If it were merely that He came from Heaven, it would be a proof of love and a token of sympathy, but that is not enough. It is written, "He is come to seek and to save." Here is a proof of His activity. He does not sit still and pity men, does not stand up and propose a plan for them, but He is come to seek and to save them! The angels celebrated His Advent when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The Son of Man is *come!* They watched Him in His journey through the 30 years of His earthly pilgrimage and they seemed to sing, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save." But how the song must have deepened with a wondrous emphasis when they saw Him sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane, when they saw Him bound, scourged and tormented by the Roman soldiers, when they saw Him bearing the weight of the Cross, when they marked Him fastened to the accursed tree, pouring out His soul in streams of blood! How they must have felt, then, that the Son of Man was come to seek and to save! Earth heard the note, "The Son of Man is come." Sin heard it and Death heard it—and when the Savior bowed His head upon the Cross, there went up a great shout, "The Son of Man is come!" And startled Hell heard it when Satan saw those whom he had expected to be his prey, delivered by the strong arm of the dying Sufferer! Heaven heard it as the peal rolled upward and angels said, "The Son of Man is come to bring up here that which was lost." So, then, there is *activity* in the Savior and on this you may rely!

I shall say but little more concerning the Savior, except these few thoughts on which you may meditate at your leisure. He who has come to save the lost, loved sinners from before the foundation of the world, was appointed of God to be their Savior, comes on a Divine mission clothed with the Spirit of Power, comes with an atoning Sacrifice in His hands, comes with a plea in His mouth—the voice of blood, "which speaks better things than that of Abel"—comes with love beaming from His eyes and overpowering compassion in His heart! He comes not to those who come to Him, but to those who cannot come and are afraid to come! The Son of Man, none other than He who said, "I am meek and lowly of heart," has come to seek and to save the lost!

III. Now notice THE PLAN OF THIS LOVING COMMISSION.

It does not say, “He is come to save” merely, but, “to seek and to save.” It is an astounding thing and a great proof of human depravity that men do not, themselves, seek salvation. They even deny the necessity of it and would sooner run away than be partakers of it! If you pass by a dispensary in the morning, you will often see the poor outpatients at the door. And when the time comes for the doctor to see them, many will be found waiting in his outer room, but you do not often hear of a doctor who goes out seeking for *gratis* patients. But my Savior not only cures, but seeks the patients out—and if He did not, He would never have patients, for our sickness is of a kind that never brings men to the Physician, but drives them farther and farther from Him!

He is come to seek them. *He seeks them by the Gospel.* Tonight He seeks some of you. *He seeks them by Providence.* Sometimes His *rough* Providences seek them. At other times the daily mercies of His goodness beckon them to come. He seeks them by the death of their fellows—a mother’s dying bed, the snatching of a baby to Heaven—all these are the ways in which Jesus is seeking that which was lost. *He seeks them effectually by His Spirit.* His Spirit comes and reveals to them their darkness, points them to Christ, the true Light, and thus clearly they are found out, just where they are, and stand discovered to themselves in their ruin.

But it is added that He not only came to seek, but to save. “Oh!” says one, “I don’t need any seeking. I am found. Convinced of my folly, here I sit, and acknowledge my sin. I am indeed sought out and found, but I need saving.” Now, Friend, the Son of Man has come to save the lost, as well as to seek them. And He does it in this way—*He saves them from the guilt of past sin.* In one moment, as soon as ever the blood of Christ is applied to the conscience, every past sin is gone and the man is, in God’s sight, as if He had never sinned. Christ puts away iniquity in a moment. The next thing He does is that *He kills the power of sin within* and makes the man “a new creature.” He does not merely save him from the guilt of the past, but from the power of sin in the present! If He does not tear up sin by the roots, He at least cuts it down. And sin does not have dominion over us because we are not under the Law, but under Grace. The man who has trembled long, trembles no longer! He who was sinking deeper and deeper in the mire feels that there is a new song in his mouth and that his goings are established. And as He saves him from the power of sin in the present, so *He saves him from future falling.* He saves, not only for a year, or for ten years and then lets men fall, but He finally and completely saves that which was lost! And this one act will enable you, sinner, to realize all this blessedness—cast your guilty soul on Him who saves you! Do this with your whole heart and your sin is blotted out—your soul is saved and you may go in peace!

IV. Lastly, let us rejoice in THE SUCCESS OF THIS BLESSED SCHEME. “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was

lost.” Does He succeed in what He came to do? He does, thank God! And in these later times we live to see how the Master saves that which was lost. The opening of the theatres for the preaching of the Word has been a very blessed thing. The raising up of Evangelists who have gone throughout the land preaching the Word has been a proof that the Son of Man has not ceased to seek and to save! When I look back to 11 years ago, when I commenced my pastorate in London, [1851] I recollect that there seemed to be very little care, then, about the preaching of the Word. We could not, then, do what we now can—count up some 20 Evangelists always going through the country, and all of them in their measure useful men—I mean such men as Richard Weaver, Reginald Radcliffe and Brownlow North and a great many others, all in their way adapted to the work. It seemed then as if the Church of Christ had given up seeking the lost—but God has raised up one and another for the purpose of preaching the Word, fulfilling this Scripture, that “the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Some say, “If the people want to hear the Gospel, let them go to church or chapel—they can always hear the Gospel when they like.” That is not Christ’s way! We are to go and seek them! Open-air preaching is a blessed institution and though you may sometimes block up a thoroughfare, it is better to do that than that the thoroughfare to Hell should be crowded! If you can turn a soul from the road to Hell, it will not matter though you may turn some passenger in the street out of his way, so that he may have to muddy his boots! Midnight services, hunting after the poor sinners in the streets at midnight, the opening of Ragged Schools and Reformatories—all these things are the fulfilling of the word, “The Son of Man is come to seek that which was lost.”

We know that He seeks, but does He save them? If I must give an answer from my own observation, I can point to many members of this congregation and say, “Save them? Indeed He does! Has He not delivered them from the bonds of sin? Has He not made them new creatures in Christ Jesus?” But if you look anywhere, wherever a faithful Gospel is preached, you will see that salvation-work does go on! I hope it may go on with us for many and many a year until Christ shall come. Christ is not disappointed in the souls He came to save. All for whom He stood as Substitute shall sing His praise in Heaven. He has not redeemed souls that may afterwards be cast into Hell. He did not suffer for my sins that I might suffer for them, too! His Atonement is effectual! Every sinner He died to save He does save. He is not foiled at any point, nor disappointed in any single aim. The lost He came to seek and save, He finds and saves! And in eternity we shall find, when turning over the register of the chosen, that every one of them has been gathered around the Eternal Throne singing the praise of His Sovereign Grace!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 19.**

Verses 1-5. *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house.* Remember that the Lord Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to suffer and to die. And there He was, the patient, suffering Lamb of God—but here He speaks in that commanding tone which well became the Prince of the House of David—“Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house.”

6. *And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.* Solomon said, “Where the word of a king is, there is power.” Omnipotence went with the word of this King of kings, so Zacchaeus was bound to obey it.

7-11. *And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, for as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And as they heard these things, He added and spoke a parable, because He was near to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear.* Their minds were full of thoughts concerning Christ’s coming as a King—and they had very mistaken notions concerning His Kingdom, so He indicates to them that, for the present, the practical matter to be remembered was that He had come “to seek and to save that which was lost.” If they had not been so full of their idle dreams of a temporal sovereignty, they would have perceived that in the calling of Zacchaeus, Christ had manifested His Kingship in the realm of mercy and had there exercised the Sovereignty of His Grace. In order that they might be able the better to understand the meaning of His spiritual Kingdom and not have their eyes so dazzled by the illusions which had so long deceived the Jews, our Lord pointed out to them, in the parable of the pounds, the practical way of preparing for His Second Coming.

12-15. *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he*

might know how much every man had gained by trading. It would have been well if our translators, instead of using that ugly Latin word, “occupy,” had kept to the expression, “trade with it,” for here we get the same words again—“that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.”

16. *Then came the first, saying, Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds.* The genuine servant, with due humility, puts himself in the background. It is not he who has “gained ten pounds”—it is his lord’s pound that has done it. He is pleased to bring the ten pounds, yet he claims no credit for himself, but says, “Lord, *your* pound has gained ten pounds.”

17. *And he said unto him, Well, you good servant: because you have been faithful in a very little, have you authority over ten cities.* There is no comparison between the servant’s work and the reward for its faithful performance. That ten pounds, if his lord had given it all to him, would not have bought a house in a village, unless it had been a very tiny one—“a cottage in a vineyard,” or “a lodge in a garden of cucumbers.” Yet his lord gives him “authority over ten cities.”

18, 19. *And the second came, saying, Lord, your pound has gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be you also over five cities.* How he must have opened his eyes when he received authority over five cities!

20. *And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is your pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.* The napkin with which he ought to have wiped away the sweat from his brow, he had used merely as a wrapper for the pound that his lord had entrusted to him for the purpose of trading with it. He had done nothing with the pound—he thought he was all right because he had not done any harm with his lord’s money. He had not joined the revolting citizens who said, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” He had not spent the pound, nor embezzled his master’s money—in fact, he had been very careful to keep intact the treasure that had been entrusted to him—and he felt proud of his own prudence and said, “Lord, behold, here is your pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.”

21. *For I feared you, because you are an austere man: you take up that you lay not down, and reap that you did not sow.* This was impudence indeed! But his master took him on his own ground and showed that even if his statement had been true, he ought to have been the more diligent in obeying his lord’s command.

22, 23. *And he said unto him, Out of your own mouth will I judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: therefore then gave not you my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required my own with usury?* “You might have done that, at any rate, even if you were afraid to trade with it, as I bade you.” God often deals with men on their own ground and condemns them out of their own mouth. They say that God is very severe in threatening them with “the wrath to come.” Well, if

you so believe and so speak, there is the more reason why you should fear to disobey Him and so to incur His just displeasure! If, in spite of such terrible threats, you still defy Him, it only brings out the more clearly the greatness of your guilt!

24, 25. *And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that has ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he has ten pounds). They were quite astonished. "What? Give more to the man who has so much already?" "Yes," says the master, "that is my command."*

26. *For I say unto you, That unto everyone which has shall be given; and from him that has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Hear again the note of sovereignty. Christ will do as He wills! And His mode of action shall sometimes be so singular that even His own attendants will wonder at the strangeness of His procedure and will begin to ask, "How is this?" But, as Elihu said to Job, "He gives not account of any of His matters."*

27-31. *But those my enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before me." And when He had thus spoken, He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He was come near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, saying, Go you into the village over against you; in the which at your entering you shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him here. And if any man asks you, Why do you loose him? Thus shall you say unto him, Because the Lord has need of him. Here we see Christ's true royalty again flashing out from beneath the humiliation of His Humanity! He lets us know that although He is going up to Jerusalem to die, it is not because He is not Lord of All! But that being Lord of All, He makes Himself of no reputation, takes upon Himself the form of a Servant, is made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a Man, He humbles Himself and becomes "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."*

32-34. *And they that were sent went their way, and found even as He had said unto them. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose you the colt? And they said, The Lord has need of him. The word of the King was again with power and the owners of the colt were willing to let the animal go since the King had "need of him." They may have been secret disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we have no information upon that point. Our King's warrant runs anywhere—and even when His personal Presence is not consciously realized, His royal and Divine word still rules the minds and hearts of men!*

35-38. *And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as He went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when He was come near, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began*

to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen. Saying, Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord: peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest. They were so jubilant that they seemed to have caught some notes from the song that the angels sang at the Savior's birth—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." There had been war in Heaven, but these disciples of Christ sang, "Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest."

39-41. *And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Your disciples. And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. And when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it.* What a contrast! The King's courtiers shouting for joy and the King, Himself, weeping over the guilty city where the greatest tragedy in the history of the whole universe was about to take place! The King saw, in the near and more remote future, what no one else could see, so, "when He was come near, and beheld the city, He wept over it."

42-48. *Saying, If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you that your enemies shall cast a trench about you, and compass you round, and keep you in on every side, and shall lay you even with the ground, and your children within you; and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another; because you knew not the time of your visitation. And He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the House of Prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves. And He taught daily in the Temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.* There was a popular wave of enthusiasm in His favor but, alas, it soon ebbed away and then the multitudes that had cried, "Hosanna!" were just as loud in their shouts of, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

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

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

CHRIST THE SEEKER AND SAVIOR OF THE LOST NO. 3309

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 4, 1912.

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

***“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are Sermons #204, Volume 4—
THE MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN; #1100, Volume 19—GOOD NEWS
FOR THE LOST; #2756 Volume 47—SAVING THE LOST and
#3050, Volume 53—THE ERRAND OF MERCY—
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We have now considered six of the glorious achievements of our Divine Lord and Savior and it is time to conclude the series. [The other Sermons in the series are #1325, Volume 22—CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW; #1326, Volume 22—CHRIST THE CONQUEROR OF SATAN; #1327, Volume 22—CHRIST THE OVERCOMER OF THE WORLD; #1328, Volume 22—CHRIST THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS NEW; #1329, Volume 22—CHRIST THE DESTROYER OF DEATH and #273, Volume 5—CHRIST TRIUMPHANT—read/download all these sermons free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] How shall we crown the edifice? The best wine should be kept for the last, but where shall we find it? The choice is wide, but amid so many wonders, which shall we select? What shall be the seventh great work concerning which we shall extol Him? Many marvels suggested themselves to me and each one was, assuredly, worthy to occupy the place, but as I could not take all, I resolved to close with one of the simplest and most practical. *His saving sinners* seemed to me to be practically the chief of all His works, for it was for this purpose that the rest of His achievements were attempted and performed. Had it not been for the salvation of men, I know not that we had ever known our Lord as the Destroyer of Death or the Overcomer of Satan and, certainly, if He had not saved the lost, I am unable to perceive what Glory there would have been in the overcoming of the world, or in the creation of all things new. The salvation of men was the prize of His life's race—for this He girded up His loins and distanced every adversary! The salvation of the lost was “the joy which was set before Him,” for the sake of which He “endured the Cross, despising the shame.”

Although it seems, at first sight, that in selecting our present topic we have descended from the transcendent glories of our Champion to more common things, it is, indeed, *not* so. The victories of our Lord which are written in the Book of the wars of the Lord, when He led captivity captive and robbed death of his sting, may strike us as more astounding, but yet in very truth this is the summing-up of His great works—this is the issue, the flower, and crown of all! “The Son of Man is come to seek and to

save that which was lost,” is a sentence as majestic as Prophet ever penned when in fullest Inspiration he extolled the Prince of Peace!

I. Notice, first, OUR LORD’S GRACIOUS MISSION—“*The Son of Man is come.*”

When He was here among men, He could use the present tense and say, “*is come.*” That was an improvement upon what Prophets had to say, for they only spoke of Him as The Coming One—as One who, in the fullness of time, would be manifested. The promise was amazing, but what shall I say of the actual performance when the Word made flesh could say, “The Son of Man *is come*”? To us, today, the coming of Christ to seek and to save the lost is an accomplished fact, a matter of history, most sure and certain. And what a fact it is! You have often thought of it, but have you ever worked your mind into the very heart of it—that God has actually visited this world in human form—that He before whom angels bow has actually been here, in fashion like ourselves, feeding the hungry crowds of Palestine, healing their sick and raising their dead? I know not what may be the peculiar boast of other planets, but this poor star cannot be excelled, for on this world the Creator has stood! This earth has been trodden by the feet of God and yet it was not crushed beneath the mighty burden because He designed to link His Deity with our humanity! The Incarnation is a wonder of wonders, but it does not belong to the realm of imagination or even of expectation, for it has actually been beheld by mortal eyes! We claim your faith for a fact which has really taken place. If we asked you by faith to expect a marvel yet to come, we trust the Spirit of God would enable you to do so, that, like Abraham, you might foresee the blessing and be glad. But the miracle of miracles has been worked! The Son of the Highest *has been here*. From Bethlehem to Calvary, He has traversed life’s pilgrimage. Thirty years or more yonder canopy of sky hung above the head of Deity in human form. O wondrous joy! Say rather, O matchless hive of perfect sweets, for a thousand joys lie close compacted in the word, “Immanuel”—God With Us!—

“Welcome to our wondering sigh.

Eternity within a span!

Summer in winter! Day in night!

Heaven in earth! And God in man!

Great Little One, whose glorious birth

Lifts the earth to Heaven, stoops Heaven to earth.”

Our Lord had come upon His sacred mission as soon as He was really the Son of Man, for before He was known only as the Son of God. Others had borne the name of “son of man,” but none deserved it so well as He. Ezekiel, for reasons which we need not now stay to consider, is called, “son of man,” a very large number of times. Perhaps, like John in Christ’s own day, Ezekiel had much of the spirit and character which were manifest in our Lord—and so the name was the more suitable to him. Certainly he had Christ’s eagle eyes, Christ’s spiritual Nature and was filled with light and knowledge—and so, as if to remind him that he who is like his Lord in excellence must also have fellowship with Him in lowliness, he is again and again reminded that he is still “the son of man.”

When our Lord came into this world, He seemed to select that title of "Son of Man" for Himself and make it His own special name—and worthily so, for other men are the sons of this man or that, but His is no restricted humanity—it is manhood of the universal type. Jesus is not born into the race of the Jews so much as into the human family. He is not to be claimed for any age, place, or nationality—He is "the Son of Man"—and this, I say, is how He comes to man. So that as long as Christ is the Son of Man, we may still say of Him that He comes to seek and to save the lost! I know that, in Person, He has gone back to Heaven. I know that the cloud has received Him out of our sight. But the very taking upon Himself of our humanity was a coming down to seek and save the lost—and as He has not laid that Humanity aside, He is still with men, continuing to seek and to save even to this day! "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." So that, if I treat the text as if Jesus were still among us, I would not err, for He is here in the sense of seeking the same end, though it is by His Spirit and by His servants rather than by His own bodily Presence! He has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," and that saying is found in connection with the agency which He has established for seeking and saving lost men, by making men disciples and teaching them the way of life! As long as this dispensation lasts, it will still be true that the great Savior and Friend of man has come among us and is seeking and saving the lost!

II. Now, secondly, let us see HIS MAIN INTENT IN COMING HERE BELOW—"The Son of Man is come *to seek and to save that which was lost.*" The intent breaks itself up into two points, the persons—the lost. And the purpose—the seeking and the saving of them.

Christ's main intent in coming here bore upon *the lost*. Proud men do not like us to preach this Truth of God. It was but yesterday that I saw it alleged against Christianity that it discourages virtue and patronizes the guilty. They say that we ministers lift the sinful into the most prominent place and give them the preference above the moral and excellent in our preaching. This is a soft impeachment to which, in a better sense than is intended by those who bring it, we are glad to plead guilty! We may well be excused if our preaching seeks the lost, for these are the persons whom our Lord has come to seek and to save. The main stress and intent of the Incarnation of God in the Person of Christ lies with the guilty, the fallen, the unworthy, the lost. His errand of mercy has nothing to do with those who are good and righteous in themselves, if such there is, but it has to do with sinners—real sinners, guilty not of nominal but of actual sins—and who have gone so far therein as to be lost! Why do you quibble at this? Why should He come to seek and to save that which is not lost? Should the Shepherd seek the sheep which has not gone astray? Answer me. Why should He come to be the Physician of those who are not lost? Should He light a candle and sweep the house to look for pieces of silver which are not lost, but lie bright and untarnished in His hand? To what

purpose would this be? Would you have Him paint the lily and gild it with refined gold? Would you make Him a mere busybody offering superfluous aid? With those who think themselves pure, what has the cleaning blood of Jesus to do? Is the Savior a needless Person and was His work a needless business? It must be so if it is intended for those who do not need it!

Who needs a Savior most? Answer this. Should not mercy exercise itself where there is most need for it? This world is like a battlefield over which the fierce hurricanes of conflict have swept and the surgeons have come to deal with those who lie upon its plains. To whom shall they go first? Shall they not turn first to those who are most terribly wounded and who are bleeding almost to the death? Will you quarrel with us if we declare that the first to be taken to the hospital should be those who are in direst need? Will you be angry if we say that the liniment is for the wounded, that the bandages are for the broken limbs and that the medicine is for the sick? A strange quarrel this would be! If ever it should begin, a fool must begin it, for no wise man would ever raise the question! Blessed Christ of God, we will not quibble because You also come in Your mercy to those who need You most, even to the lost!

And who do you think will love Him best and so reward Him best if He comes to them? The proud Pharisee in his perfection of imaginary holiness—will he value the Christ who tells him that He comes to wash away his sin? He turns upon his heels with scorn! What sin has *he* to wash away? The self-satisfied moralist who dares to say, “All these commands I have kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?”—is he likely to become a disciple of the Great Teacher whose first lessons are, “Yet must be born-again,” and, “Except you are converted and become as little children you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven”? The fact is that Jesus has no form nor comeliness to those who have a beauty of their own! Christ gets most love where He pardons most sin. And the sweetest obedience to His command is rendered by those who once were most disobedient, but who are gently led beneath His sway by the force of grateful love. Yon sterile hills of fancied holiness yield Him no harvest and, therefore, He leaves them to their own boastfulness. But meanwhile, He scatters plentiful grain among the lowlands where the ground is broken and lies ready for the seed. He preaches pardon to those who know that they have sinned and confess the same—but those who have no sin, have no Savior.

But after all, dear Friends, if Jesus did not direct His mission of salvation to the lost, to whom else could He have come? For truth to say, there are none but the lost on the face of this whole earth! The proudest Pharisee is but a sinner and all the more a sinner for his pride. And the moralist who thinks himself so clean is filthy in the sight of God! Though he labors to conceal the spots, the self-righteous man is a leper and will forever remain so unless Jesus cleanses Him. It is a thrice-blessed fact that Christ came to save the lost, for such are we all—and had He not made

lost ones the object of His searching and saving, there would have been no hope for us!

What is meant by "*the lost*"? Well, "lost" is a dreadful word. I would need much time to explain it, but if the Spirit of God, like a flash of light, shall enter into your heart and show you what you are by nature, you will accept that word, "lost," as descriptive of your condition and understand it better than a thousand words of mine could enable you to do! Lost by the Fall! Lost by inheriting a depraved nature! Lost by your own acts and deeds! Lost by a thousand omissions of duty and lost by countless deeds of overt transgressions! Lost by habits of sin! Lost by tendencies and inclinations which have gathered strength and dragged you downward into deeper and yet deeper darkness and iniquity! Lost by inclinations which never turn of themselves to that which is right, but which resolutely refuse Divine Mercy and Infinite Love! We are lost willfully and willingly—lost perversely and utterly! But still lost of our own accord which is the worst kind of being lost that can possibly be! We are lost to God, who has lost our heart's love, lost our confidence and lost our obedience! We are lost to the Church, which we cannot serve. Lost to the Truth of God which we will not see. Lost to right, whose cause we do not uphold. Lost to Heaven, into whose sacred precincts we can never come! Lost—so lost that unless Almighty Mercy shall intervene, we shall be cast into the Pit that is bottomless to sink forever! "LOST! LOST! LOST!" The very word seems to me to be the knell of an impenitent soul. "*Lost! Lost! Lost!*" I hear the dismal tolling! A soul's funeral is being celebrated! Endless death has befallen an immortal being! It comes up as a dreadful wail from far beyond the boundaries of life and hope, forth from those dreary regions of death and darkness where spirits dwell who would not have Christ to reign over them. "*Lost! Lost! Lost!*" Ah me, that ever these ears should hear that doleful sound! Better a whole world on fire than a lost soul! Better every star quenched and yon skies a wreck than a single soul to be lost!

Now, it is for souls that soon will be in that worst of all conditions and are already preparing for it, that Jesus came here seeking and saving. What joy is this! In proportion as the grief was heavy, the joy is great. If souls can be delivered from going down into such a state, it is a feat worthy of God, Himself. Glory be to His holy name!

Now note the purpose—He "*came to seek and to save that which was lost.*" Ah, this is a Truth of God worth preaching—this Doctrine that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save sinners. Some people tell me that He comes "*to make men salvable*"—to put all men into such a condition that it is possible that they may be saved. I believe that men *may* be saved, but I see no very great wonder in the fact. It does not stir my blood, or incite me to dance for joy. I do not know that it makes even the slightest impression upon me! I can go to sleep and I am sure I shall not wake up in the night and long to get up at once to preach such poor news as that Jesus came to make men salvable! I would not have become a minister to

preach so meager a Gospel! But that our Lord came to *save* men—that is substantial and satisfying news, far exceeding the other! To make men salvable is a skeleton, bones and skin—but to save them is a living blessing! To make men salvable is a farthing blessing, but to save them is untold wealth!

They say also that Jesus came into the world to let men be saved if they will. I am glad of that. It is true and good. I believe that every truly willing soul may be saved, yes, such an one is, in a measure, saved already! If there is a sincere will towards salvation—understand, towards *true salvation*—that very will indicates that a great change has commenced within the man and I rejoice that it is written, “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” But now just read our text as if it ran thus—“The Son of Man is come that whoever wills to be saved may be saved.” The sense is good, but very feeble! How the wine is mixed with water! But, oh, what flavor, what essence, what marrow, what fatness there is in this, “The Son of Man is come to *seek and to save that which was lost*!” This is the Gospel! And the other is but a part of the Good News. Again, read the text another way, “The Son of Man is come to help men to save themselves.” This will not do at all. It is something like helping men to march who have no legs, or helping blind men to judge colors, or helping dead men to make themselves alive. Help to those who can do nothing at all is a miserable mockery. No, we cannot have our Bibles altered that way! We will let the text stand as it is—in all its fullness of Divine Grace!

Nor is it even possible for us to cut down our text to this, “The Son of Man is come to save those who seek Him.” If it ran so, I would bless God forever for it, for it would be a glorious Gospel text even then. There are Scriptures which teach that Doctrine and it is a blessed Truth for which to be supremely grateful. But my text goes very much further, for it says, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” I met with a question and answer the other day, “Where did the Samaritan woman find the Savior? She found Him at the well.” I do not quibble at that mode of expression, but mark you, that is not how I would ask the question! I should rather enquire, “Where did the Savior find the woman?” For, surely, she was not seeking Him—I see no indication that she had any such idea in her mind! She was looking after water from the well—and if she had found that—she would have gone home satisfied. No, those are the finders, surely, who are the seekers! And so it must be that Christ found the woman, for He was looking after her. While I bless my Lord that He will save you if you seek Him, I am still more thankful that there are men and women whom He will seek as well as save! No, that there never was a soul saved yet but Christ sought it first! He is the Author as well as the Finisher of faith. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending of the work of Grace! Let His name be praised for it! The text must stand as it is and we will adore the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love which has made it true!

Successful seeking and complete saving belong to the Son of Man—some of us have experienced both. Oh, that all of us might yet do so!

III. Now we pass on, thirdly, to notice A DOUBLE DIFFICULTY. We see Christ's errand and we at once perceive that He has come to deal with people who are lost in two senses and in each sense a miracle of Grace is needed for their deliverance. They are so lost that they need *saving*, but they are also so lost that they need *seeking*. Persons may be so lost on land or on sea as to need saving and not seeking—but we were spiritually lost so as to need both saving and seeking too.

I heard, a little while ago, of a party of Friends who went to the lakes of Cumberland and endeavored to climb the Langdale Pikes. One of the many found the labor of the ascent too wearisome and so resolved that he would go back to the little inn from which they started. Being a wiser man than some, in his own esteem, he did not take the winding path by which they had ascended. He thought he would go straight down, for he could see the house just below, and fancied he should pitch upon it all of a sudden and show the mountaineers that a straight line is the nearest road! Well, after descending and descending, leaping many a rugged place, he found himself, at last, on a ledge from which he could go neither up nor down. After many vain attempts, he saw that he was a prisoner. In a state of wild terror, he took off his garments and tore them into shreds to make a line and, tying the pieces together, he let them down, but he found that they reached nowhere at all in the great and apparently unfathomable abyss which yawned below him. So he began to call aloud, but no answer came from the surrounding hills except the echo of his own voice! He shouted by the half-hour together, but there was no answer, neither was there anyone within sight. His horror nearly drove him out of his wits. At last, to his intense joy, he saw a figure move in the plain below and he began to shout again. Happily it was a woman, who, hearing his voice, stopped. And as he called again, she came nearer and called out, "Stay where you are. Do not stir an inch. Stay where you are!" He was lost, but he no longer needed seeking, for some friendly shepherds soon saw where he was. All he needed was saving—and so the mountaineers descended with a rope, as they were known to do when rescuing lost sheep—and soon brought him out of danger. He was lost, but he did not need seeking—they could see where he was.

A month or two ago, you must have noticed in the papers a notice about a gentleman who had left Wastwater some days before to go over the hills and had not been heard of since. His friends had to *seek* him so that, if still alive, he might be saved. And there were those who traversed hill and moor to find him, but they were unable to save him because they could not find him. If they could have found out where he was, I do not doubt that had he been in the most imminent peril, the bold hill-men would have risked their lives to rescue him. But, alas, he was never found or saved—his lifeless corpse was the only discovery which was ultimately made. This last is the true image of our deplorable condition—

we are by nature, lost—so that nothing but seeking and saving together will be of a service to us.

Let us see how our Lord accomplished *the saving*. That has been done, completely done. My dear Friends, you and I were lost in the sense of having broken the Law of God and having incurred His anger. But Jesus came and took the sin of men upon Himself and, as their Surety and their Substitute, He bore the wrath of God so that God can henceforth be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. I would like to die talking of this blessed Doctrine of Substitution and I intend, by Divine Grace, to live proclaiming it, for it is the keystone of the Gospel! Jesus Christ did literally take upon Himself the transgression and iniquity of His people and was made a curse for them, seeing that they had fallen under the wrath of God! And now every soul that believes in Jesus is saved because Jesus has taken away the penalty and the curse due to sin. In this let us rejoice!

Christ has also saved us from the power of Satan. The Seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head so that Satan's power is broken. Jesus has, by His Almighty Power, set us free from Hell's horrible yoke by vanquishing the Prince of Darkness and has, moreover, saved us from the power of death, so that to Believers it shall not be death to die! Christ has saved us from sin and all its consequence by His most precious death and Resurrection—

***“See God descending in the Human frame,
The Offended suffering in the offender's name!
All your deeds to Him imputed see,
And all His righteousness devolved on thee.”***

Our Lord's saving work is, in this sense, finished, but there is always going on in the world His *seeking* work—and I want you to think of it.

He can save us, blessed be His name! He has nothing more to do in order to save any soul that trusts Him. But we have wandered very far away, and are hidden in the wilds of the far country. We are very hungry and though there is bread enough and to spare, what is the use of it while we are lost to the home in which it is so freely distributed? We are very ragged—there is the best robe and it is ready to be put on us—but what is the good of it while we are so far away? There are the music and the dancing to make us glad and to cheer us, but what is the use of them while we still tarry among the swine? Here, then, is the great difficulty. Our Lord must find us, follow our wanderings and, treating us like lost sheep, He must bear us back upon His shoulders rejoicing!

Many need seeking because they are lost in bad company. Evil companions gather around men and keep them away from hearing the Gospel by which men are saved. There is no place to be lost in like a great city. When a man wants to escape the police, he does not run to a little village—he hides away in a thickly populated town. So this London has many hiding places where sinners get out of the Gospel's way! They lose themselves in the great crowd and are held captives by the slavish customs of the evil society into which they are absorbed. If they do but relent

for a moment, some worldling plucks them by the sleeve and says, "Let us be merry while we may! Why are you so melancholy?" Satan carefully sets a watch upon his younger servants to prevent their escaping from his hands. These pickets labor earnestly to prevent the man from hearing the good news of salvation lest he should be converted. Sinners therefore need seeking out from among the society in which they are imbedded—they need as much seeking after as the pearls of the Arabian Gulf!

The Lord Jesus Christ, in seeking men, has to deal with deep-seated prejudices. Many refuse to hear the Gospel—they would travel many miles to escape its warning message! Some are too wise, or too rich to have the Gospel preached to them. Pity the poor rich! The poor man has many missionaries and evangelists seeking him out, but who goes after the great ones? Some come from the East to worship, but who comes from the West? Many more will find their way to Heaven out of the back slums than ever will come out of the great mansions and palaces! Jesus must seek His elect among the rich under great disadvantages, but blessed be His name, He does seek them!

See how vices and depraved habits hold the mass of the poor classes! What a seeking out is needed among working men, for many of them are besotted with drunkenness! Look at the large part of London on the Lord's-Day—what have the working population been doing? They have been reading the Sunday newspaper and loafing about the house in their shirtsleeves and waiting at the posts of the doors—not of wisdom, but of the drink shop! These have been thirsting, but not after righteousness. Baachus still remains the god of this city and multitudes are lost among the beer barrels and the spirit casks! In such pursuits men waste the blessed Sabbath hours. How shall they be sought out? The Lord Jesus is doing it by His Holy Spirit!

Alas, through their ill ways, men's ears are stopped, their eyes are blinded and their hearts hardened so that the messengers of mercy have need of great patience! It would be easy work to save men if they could but be made willing to receive the Gospel, but they will not even *hear* it. When you do get them for a Sabbath-Day beneath the sound of a faithful ministry, how they struggle against it! They need seeking out 50 times over! You bring them right up to the Light of God and flash it upon their eyes, but they willfully and deliberately close their eyelids to it! You set before them life and death, and plead with them even unto tears that they would lay hold on eternal life—but they choose their own delusions. So long and so patiently must they be sought that this seeking work as much reveals the gracious heart of Jesus as did the saving work which He fulfilled upon the bloody tree!

Notice how He is daily accomplishing His search of love. Every day, Beloved, Jesus Christ is seeking men's *ears*. Would you believe it? He has to go about with wondrous wisdom even to get a hearing. They do not want to know the love message of their God. "God so loved the world"—they know all about that and do not want to hear any more.

There is an Infinite Sacrifice for sin—they turn on their heels at such stale news. They would rather read an article in an infidel Review or a paragraph in the *Police News*. They want to know no more of spiritual matters! The Lord Jesus, in order to get at their ears, cries aloud by many earnest voices. Thank God He has ministers yet alive who mean to be heard and will not be put off with denials! Even the din of this noisy world cannot drown their testimony. Cry aloud, my Brother! Cry aloud and spare not, for cry as you may, you will not cry too loudly, for man will not hear if he can help it. Our Lord, to win men's ears, must use a variety of voices—musical or rough—as His wisdom judges best. Sometimes He gains an audience by an odd voice whose quaintness wins attention—He will reach men when He means to save them!

That was an odd voice—surely the oddest I ever heard of—which came a little time ago in an Italian town to one of God's elect ones there. He was so depraved that he actually fell to worshipping the devil rather than God! It chanced, one day, that a rumor went through the city that a Protestant was coming there to preach. The priest, alarmed for his religion, told the people from the altar that Protestants worshipped the devil and he charged them not to go near the meeting room. The news, as you may judge, excited no horror in the devil-worshipper's mind. "Yes," he thought, "then I shall meet with brethren!" And so he went to hear our beloved missionary who is now laboring in Rome. Nothing else would have drawn the poor wretch to hear the Good Word—but this lie of the priest's was overruled to that end! He went and heard, not of the devil, but of the devil's Conqueror—and before long was found at Jesus' feet—a sinner saved!

I have known my Lord, when His ministers have failed, take out an arrow from His quiver and fix upon it a message, put it to His bow and shoot it right into a man's bosom till it wounded him. And as it wounded him and he lay moaning upon his bed, the message has been and accepted. I mean, that many a man in sickness has been brought to hear the message of salvation. Often, losses and crosses have brought men to Jesus' feet. Jesus seeks them so. When Absalom could not get an interview with Joab, he said, "Go and set his barley field on fire." Then Joab came down to Absalom and said, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" The Lord sometimes sends losses of property to men who will not otherwise hear Him—and at last their ears are gained! Whom He seeks, He in due time finds!

Well, after my Lord has sought men's ears, He next seeks their *desires*. He will have them long for a Savior—and this is not an easy thing to accomplish! But He has a way of showing men their sins—and then they wish for mercy. He shows them at other times the great joy of the Christian life—and then they wish to enter into the same delight. I pray that at this hour He may lead some of you to consider the danger you are in while you are yet unconverted, that so you may begin to desire Christ and in this way may be sought and found by Him!

Then He seeks their *faith*. He seeks that they may come and trust Him—and He has ways of bringing them to this, for He shows them the suitability of His salvation and the fullness and the freeness of it! And when He has exhibited Himself as the sinners' Savior, and such a Savior as they need, then do they come and put their trust in Him. Then has He found them and saved them!

He seeks their *hearts*, for it is their hearts that He has lost. And oh, how sweetly does Christ, by the Holy Spirit, win men's affection and hold them fast! I shall never forget how He won mine—how first He gained my ear and then my desires, so that I wished to have Him for my Lord! And then He taught me to trust Him. And when I had trusted Him and found that I was saved, then I loved Him and I love Him still! So, dear Hearer, if Jesus Christ finds you, you will become His loving follower forever! I have been praying that He would bring this message under the notice of those whom He means to bless. I have asked Him to let me sow in good soil. I hope that among those who read these pages, there will be many whom the Lord Jesus has specially redeemed with His most precious blood—and I trust that He will appear at once to them and say to each one of them, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." May the eternal Spirit open your ears to hear the still small voice of love! By Omnipotent Grace may you be made to yield to the Lord with the cheerful consent of your conquered will and accept that glorious Grace which will bring you to praise the seeking and saving Savior in Heaven! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 31:29-37.**

(Concluded from Sermon #3308).

29, 30. *In these days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.* God was going to deal with the Israelites individually, personally—and that is how He will deal with us.

31. *Behold.* Here is something worth beholding—read this great promise with tears in your eyes—

31-33. *The days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the Land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto you, says the LORD: but this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people.* [See Sermons #1687, Volume 28—THE LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART and #2992, Volume 52—GOD'S WRITING UPON MAN'S HEART—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at

<http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is all wills and shalls—it is all Covenant life! No longer the Law engraved upon the tablets of stone, but the Law written on the heart—no more the Lord’s command without man’s power and will to obey it, but God will renew our nature and change our disposition so that we shall love to do what once we loathed—and shall loathe the sins that we once loved! What a wonderful mass of mercies is included in the Covenant of Grace!

34. *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for they shall all know Me—“All your children shall be taught of the Lord.” All Believers, whatever else they may not know, do know their Lord—“they shall all know Me”—*

34. *From the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD.* How will they learn to know the Lord? Well, it will be in a very wonderful way—

34. *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* [See Sermon #2006, Volume 34—KNOWING THE LORD THROUGH PARDONED SIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Let me read that again, and may some poor wandering children of God hear the promise and be glad that it applies to them—“I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

35-37. *Thus says the LORD, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea when the waves thereof roar. The LORD of Hosts is His name: if these ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever. Thus says the LORD; If Heaven above can be measured, and the foundation of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD.*

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

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

THE SERVANTS AND THE POUNDS

NO. 1960

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 24, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself
a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants
and delivered to them ten pounds,
and said to them, Do business till I come.”
Luke 19:12, 13.***

WE are told the reason for the Savior's delivering this parable at this particular time. He was going up to Jerusalem and the ignorant and enthusiastic crowd hoped that He might now set up a *temporal* sovereignty. “They thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear.” Their minds were crowded with mistakes and the Savior would set them right upon this matter. To banish from their minds the idea of a Jewish empire in which every Hebrew would be a prince, our Lord told them this story—I use the word advisedly, for his parable was also a *fact*. He would show them that as yet they were not to be partakers in a kingdom, but were soon to be waiters for an absent Lord who had gone to receive a Kingdom and to return. In His absence, His disciples were to be in the position of servants put in trust with property while their Master was gone far away to receive a Kingdom and then to come again. He was now like a nobleman who may be one among many citizens, but He was going away to a court where He would be invested with royal authority—and He would come back a King. They were to be put in trust with certain pounds till He should return.

I confess I never thoroughly saw the meaning of this parable till I was directed by an eminent expositor to a passage in Josephus, which, if it is not the key of it, is a wonderfully close example of a class of facts which, no doubt, often occurred in the Roman empire in our Savior's day. Herod, you know, was king over Judea, but he was only a subordinate king under the Roman emperor. Caesar at Rome made and unmade kings at his pleasure. When Herod died, he was followed by his son, Archelaus, of whom we read in Matthew's account of our Lord's infancy that when Joseph heard that Archelaus was king in Judea in the place of his father, Herod, he was afraid to go there. This Archelaus had no right to the throne till he obtained the sanction of Caesar and, therefore, he took a ship with certain attendants and went to Rome, which, in those days, was a far country, that he might receive the kingdom and return.

While he was on the way, his citizens, who hated him, sent an embassy after him, so has the Revised Version correctly worded it—and this embassy bore this message to Caesar—“We will not that this man reign

over us.” The messengers represented to Caesar that Archelaus was not fit to be king of the Jews. Certain of the pleadings are recorded in Josephus and they show that barristers 1,900 years ago pleaded in much the same style as their brethren of today! The people were weary of the Herods and preferred *anything* to their cruel rule. They even asked that Judea might become a Roman province and be joined to Syria, rather than they should remain under the hated yoke of the Idumaeen tyrants. It is evident that in the case of Archelaus his citizens hated him and said, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” It pleased Caesar to divide the kingdom and to put Archelaus on the throne as ethnarch, or a ruler with less power than a king.

When Archelaus returned, he took fierce revenge upon those who had opposed him and rewarded his faithful adherents most liberally. This story of what had been done 30 years before would, no doubt, rise up in the recollection of the people when Jesus spoke, for Archelaus had built a palace for himself very near to Jericho—and it may be that under the walls of that palace the Savior used the event as the basis of His parable. Those who lived in our Lord’s day must have understood His allusions to current facts much better than we do who live 19 centuries later. The Providence of God provided that observant Jew, Josephus, to store up much valuable information for us. Read the passage in his history and you will see that even the details tally with this parable. There is the story.

The Savior, without excusing Archelaus or commending him in the least degree, simply makes his going to Rome an illustration. Here is a noble personage who is to be a king, but to obtain the throne he must journey to the distant court of a superior power. While he is going, his citizens, who hate him so, send an embassy to oppose his claims, for they will not have him for their king. However, he receives the kingdom and returns to rule it. When he does so, he rewards those who have been faithful to him and he punishes with overwhelming destruction those who have tried to prevent his reigning. There is the story—let me further interpret it.

The Savior likens Himself to a nobleman. He was here on earth a Man among men and truly a Nobleman in the midst of His fellow citizens! It was His to become king, king of all the earth! Indeed, He is such by Nature and by right, but He must first go, by death, resurrection and ascension, away to the highest courts and there, from the great Lord of All, He must receive for Himself a Kingdom. It is written, “Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance.” And therefore Jesus must plead His claims before the King and win His suit. The day is coming when He will return, clothed with glory and honor, to take unto Himself His great power and reign, for He must reign till all enemies are put under His feet. When He comes, His enemies will be destroyed and His faithful servants will be abundantly rewarded.

Let us now draw near to this feast of Divine teaching! May the Spirit of God help us to gather practical lessons from this parable!

I. First, I invite you to notice that THERE ARE HERE TWO SETS OF PERSONS. We see the enemies who would not have this man to reign over

them and the servants who had to trade with his money. There are many divisions among men into nationalities, ranks, offices and characters, but, after all, the deep divisions will always be two—the enemies and the servants of Christ Jesus. You that are not servants, are enemies! You that are not enemies must take care that you are servants. I find no class of persons mentioned in the parable but these two and I feel certain that there are no others on the face of the earth. You are all either enemies or servants of Jesus Christ!

Consider *the enemies!* The person hated was a nobleman. He was a man, but a noble man. What a Man is the Lord Jesus! Forgetting His Godhead for the moment, regard Him only as the Man, Christ Jesus, and what a Man! I need not dwell upon the nobility of His birth, of the seed of David. But I would remind you of the nobility of His Character, for that is where true nobility resides. In this respect, where is there nobility to be compared to His? Brothers, it would be difficult to find a second to the Man, Christ, within measurable distance of Him—even those who copy Him most nearly confess, regretfully, that in many things they fall short of His Glory. There was nothing petty, mean, or selfish about Jesus of Nazareth. He was altogether the noble Man!

He deigned, for gracious purposes, to become a Citizen among others, for since we read of His being anointed above His fellows, it is implied that some were His fellows. He was a Man among men! He was of the society of carpenters! He was also free of the company of itinerant preachers. He associated with men of the sea, with men that handled the net and the oar. He went in and out among the peasantry and in His dress and style of living there was nothing to distinguish Him from the rest of the citizens. Truly, He was separate from them by His holier Character, but the separation was not caused by His unwillingness to come down to them, but by their inability to go up to Him!

The citizens hated Him and they hated Him without cause. There is always some cause for dislike in us, but there was none in Him. In tone, or manner, or spirit, the best give some cause of offense—but in Him there was nothing which could excuse their hate—it was a wanton rejection of the fittest to reign.

As He claimed to be the King of the Jews, they especially hated His royalty, saying, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” And again, “We have no king but Caesar.” “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, merely regarding Jesus as a Man, if we wanted a king, He ought to be elected by the universal suffrages of mankind—openly given by uplifted hands and joyful acclamations, *Io triumphe!* Mighty Conqueror, reign forever! Prince of the kings of the earth, lover of the sons of men, who did, for our sake, pour out Your precious blood, You deserve to be King of all! The most kingly of men should be king of men. Yet they hated His royal claims and this, also, without cause. Which of them had He oppressed? What revenue did He extort from the people? What Law of His was hard or cruel? In what case did He ever judge unrighteously? Yet His citizens hated Him!

There is that same hate of Christ in the world today. Do any of you hate Him? “No,” you say. Yet are not some of you who do not *oppose* Him, treating Him with greater contempt than if you *did* oppose Him? You pass Him by altogether! He is not in all your thoughts! You act as if He were not worthy, even, to be opposed—you make nothing of Him! He is not among the objects for which you live. Sometimes you may speak with a partial admiration of His Character, but earnest admiration leads to imitation. If Jesus is a Savior, what worse can you do to Him than to refuse to be saved by Him? I charge you indifferent ones with being, in the core of your hearts, His worst enemies! Oh that you would repent of this and turn to Him, for He is coming again and when He comes, He will say, “As for these, My enemies, slay them before My eyes.” The expression is full of terror! To be slain before the eyes of injured love is doubly death! The Lord, by His Grace, deliver us from so dread a doom!

The other set of persons in the parable were *his servants*—the original would justify the translation, his bond-servants. Those who were not his enemies were his faithful servants. I suppose that the nobleman had bought them with his money, or that they had been born in his house, or that they had willingly bound themselves by indentures to him. When I said that these were only his slaves, you inwardly said, “Then you that believe in Jesus are His bond-servants.” Spare us not even the harsher word, “slaves!” We were never free till we came under bonds to Jesus—and we grow in freedom as we yield to Him! Paul said, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” as if the hot iron of affliction had branded him with the name of Christ!

Yes, we are the property of the Lord Jesus and not our own! We cannot, somehow, find words which will, in all their fullness express our belonging to Jesus—we wish to sink into Christ and to become as nothing for His sake. Truly He has called us friends, but we call ourselves His servants. We take a great delight in acknowledging Him as Master. like David, who said, “I am Your servant,” and then again, “I am Your servant,” and then again, “and the son of Your handmaid.” He was born a servant, born of a mother who was also, herself, a servant. After all this, he added, “You have loosed my bonds.” Servitude to Christ is perfect freedom and, in every respect, we have found it so! We never expect to know perfect freedom until He has brought every thought, every conception, imagination and desire into captivity to Himself! We have been bought with His money and we cost Him dearly. We have also been born in His house by a second birth and we are bound to Him by indentures which we have gladly signed and sealed—and are ready to sign and seal again—

**“High Heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear!
Till in life’s latest hour we bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”**

Thus we are truly on the opposite side of His enemies, for we are *willingly* His servants!

I have thus introduced to you the two classes. Before we go any further, may the Holy Spirit operate upon us to make us discern to which of these

two we belong! If we are enemies, may we become servants from this time forth!

II. We now advance a step further and notice THE ENGAGEMENTS OF THESE SERVANTS. Their lord was going away and he left his 10 servants in charge with a little capital with which they were to “do business,” or *trade* for him till he returned. He did not tell them how long he would be away, perhaps he did not know, himself—I mean the king in the story—but even our Master says, “Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of Heaven.” “I am going away,” the nobleman said, “you are my servants and I leave you as my servants in the midst of my enemies. Be loyal to me and, to prove your faithfulness, continue to trade in my name. I shall entrust to each of you a very small sum of money, but it will keep you occupied and your trading on my account will be your daily acknowledgment that you are loyal to me, whatever others may be.”

Notice, first, that *this was honorable work*. They were not entrusted with large funds, but the amount was enough to serve as a test. It put them upon their honor. If they were really attached to their master, they would feel that he had placed a confidence in them which they must justify. Slaves are not always to be entrusted with money. In fact, the tendency of bondage has always been to take away from men the quality of trustworthiness—our bondage to Christ has the opposite effect because it is no bondage at all! These servants of the master were treated in some respect as partners, they were to have fellowship with him in his property. They were his confidants and trustees. His eyes were not watching them, for he had gone into a far country and he trusted them to be a law unto themselves. They were not to render a daily account, but to be left alone until he returned.

Now that is just how the Master has treated us! He has put us in trust with the Gospel and He relies upon our honor. He does not call us at once to an audit, for He is not here. I do not think that systems of Church government which involve a measure of the spy system are at all after our Lord’s mind. If Christians are what they ought to be, they can be trusted—they are a law unto themselves. The Lord puts you not under certain rules and regulations so as to ordain that you shall give a tenth, though I wish you did give that much at least. He does not say, “You shall subscribe so much at such a time and work in such a way.” No—you are not under Law, but under Grace. If you love your Master, you will soon discover what to do for Him and you will do it with delight!

The nobleman does not lay down rigid rules and order that at such an hour in the morning the servants must begin work—and that they must work on for so many hours. No. He says, “Take my pound and trade with it.” Our version, “Do business till I come,” is a lumbering Latin way of saying, “Trade with it till I come.” And our Lord has put us on the same footing of confidence, appealing to our honor and love. He will not come and look after us today or tomorrow, though He will ultimately have a strict reckoning with us. Meanwhile He has gone, but He has left us here in the midst of His enemies—to show His enemies that He has some friends—and that He must be a good Master since even those who acknowledge

themselves to be His vassals, rejoice to spend their whole lives in His service!

It was work for which the nobleman gave them capital. He gave to each of them a pound. “Not much,” you will say. No, he did not intend it to be much. They were not capable of managing very much. If he found them faithful in “a very little,” he could then raise them to a higher responsibility. I do not read that any of them complained of the smallness of his capital, or wished to have it doubled.

Brothers and Sisters, we need not ask for more talents—we have quite as many as we shall be able to answer for. Preachers need not seek for larger spheres—let them be faithful in those which they now occupy. A Brother recently said to me, “I cannot do much with a hundred hearers,” and I replied, “You will find it hard work to give in a good account for even a hundred people.” I confess it very quietly, but I have often wished that I had a little congregation, that I might watch over every soul in it. But now I am doomed to an everlasting dissatisfaction with my work, for what am I among so many? I can only feel that I have not even begun to do the hundredth part of what needs to be done in such a Church as this!

Each one had a pound in his hand and his lord only said, “Do business till I come.” He did not expect them to do a wholesale business on so small a stock, but they were to trade as the market would allow. He did not expect them to make more than the pound would fairly bring in, for, after all, he was not “an austere man.” “Take that pound,” he said, “and do your best. I know the times are bad, for you have to trade among enemies. You could not, perhaps, manage to put out 20 pounds under such circumstances, but you can turn over a pound and use every shilling of it.” Thus he gave them a sufficient capital for his purpose.

My friend, have you that pound anywhere about you? “Alas,” says one, “I have no abilities at all.” How is that? Your Lord gave you a pound—what has become of it? You are one of His servants and if you are doing nothing, you are in an evil case and ought to be ashamed. What have you done with that pound? Put your hand in your pocket. It is not there. Is it in the napkin?—that napkin with which you ought to have wiped the sweat of labor from your brow? Have you got that pound? You say, “It is not much.” The Master did not say it *was* much, on the contrary, He called it, “very little.” But have you used that very little? This should go home to your consciences! You have been treated as confidential servants and yet you are not true to your Lord. Why is this?

What they had to do with the pound was prescribed in general terms. They were to trade with it, not to play with it. I dare say they were inclined to argue, “Our master’s cause is assailed, let us fight for him,” yet he did not say, “fight,” but trade! Peter drew his sword. Oh, yes, we are eager combatants, but slow merchants! Many manifest a defiant spirit and are never more satisfied than when they are in noise and strife. The servants in this parable were not to fight, but to trade, which is a much more cool-blooded and ignoble thing in common esteem. We may leave our Lord’s enemies to Himself—He will end their rebellions one of these days. We are to follow a much lowlier line of things.

No doubt certain of them might have thought that the pound would be useful to purchase them comforts, or even luxuries—one would buy a new coat and another would bring home a piece of furniture for his house—and others would solemnly say, “We have our families to think of.” Yes, but their lord did not say so! The master said, “Do business till I come.” They were neither to fight with it, nor hoard it, nor spend it, nor waste it, but to trade with it for *him*. The pound was not put into their hands for display. They were not to glory over others who had not so much as a penny to bless themselves with, for though they were little capitalists, that capital was their lord’s!

It is a pity when Graces or talents are boasted of as if they were our own. A tradesman who is prospering seldom has much money to show—it is all needed in his business. Sometimes he can scarcely put his hand upon a five-pound note because his cash is all absorbed—his golden grain is all sown in the field of his trade. Speaking for myself, I cannot find any room for glorying in myself, for if I have either Grace or strength, I certainly have none to spare! I have barely enough for the work in hand and not enough for the service in prospect. Our pound is not to be hung on our watch-chain, but to be traded with!

Trading represents a life which may be called commonplace, but it is eminently practical—and it has an exceedingly practical effect upon the person engaged in it. This is owing in part to the fact that it is an occupation in which there is great *scope for judgment*. They were not tied down to a special kind of trade. The man who made his one pound into 10 chose the best form of business. He sought not that which was most pleasant, but that which was most profitable. So you are left, dear Friends, to choose your own line of service for your Master—only you must trade for Him and for Him everything must be done well. At the present time no trading pays better than the mission to the Congo, or to the hill-tribes of India—large dividends come, also, from dealings with the poorest of the poor in the slums and as much from widows and orphans who are in extreme destitution. When men have to lay down their lives for the Lord Jesus, after a life languished away with fever, the returns are amazing! Where the need is greatest, our Lord receives most glory. It is left to you to judge what you can do, how you can do it and where you will do it. Do that which will most surely win souls and that which will best establish your Lord’s Kingdom. Exercise your very best judgment and get into that line of holy service in which you can bring in the largest revenue for your glorious Master.

The work which the nobleman prescribed was *one that would bring them out*. The man who never succeeds in trade, do you know him? I know him. He complains that he has a small head and usually the complaint is founded on fact. He needs to follow a business in which the bread and butter will be brought to his door ready spread and even then, unless it is cut up into dice pieces on his plate, he will get no breakfast. The man that is to succeed in trade in these times must have confidence, look alive, keep his eyes open and be all there. Our times are hard, but not so hard as those described in the parable when the faithful servants

were trading in the midst of traitors—they had need of sharp wits. Trade develops a man's perseverance, patience and courage. It tests honesty, truthfulness and firmness. It is a singularly excellent discipline for character.

When this nobleman gave his servant the pound, it was that the servant might see what stuff he was made of. Trade with small capital means personal work and drudgery, long hours and few holidays—plenty of disappointment and small gains. It means working with might and main and doing the thing with all your heart and mind. In such a manner are we to serve Christ. The word, "trade," has a world of meaning in it. I cannot bring it out this morning, but there is no need, for the most of you know more about trade than I do and you can instruct yourselves. You are to trade for the Lord Jesus Christ in a higher and yet more emphatic sense than that in which you have traded for yourselves. With your physical strength, your mental faculties, your substance, your family—with everything—you are to bring glory to God and honor to the name of Jesus! It is to be your life-business to work *for* Jesus and *with* Jesus.

Trading, if it is successfully carried on, is *an engrossing concern*, calling out the whole man. It is a continuous toil, a varied trial, a remarkable test, a valuable discipline—and this is why the nobleman put his bondsmen to it, that he might afterwards use them in still higher service. Brothers and Sisters, learn what is meant by trading and then carry on a spiritual trade with all your heart.

At the same time, let us notice that *it was work suitable to their capacity*. Small as the capital was, it was enough for them, for they were no more than bondsmen, not of a high grade of rank or education. Their master gave them only a pound, which did not mean more than £3 10s of our money. One could not get a large shop, or even a decent stock with that small amount. They could not complain that they were placed in a business which was too heavy for them to manage. They could, any of them, buy a few goods and hawk them. The Lord Jesus Christ does not ask you to do more than you can do. He does not break you down with cares beyond your capacity. We have not yet reached the limit of our powers—we *can* yet do more. Jesus is no exacting master. It is only a false and lying servant who will call Him "an austere Man, reaping where He has not sowed." Nothing of the kind! He has given us a light business—our work for Him is suited to our limited powers and He is ready, by His Holy Spirit, to assist us. Let us use well our single pound. Let it be our ambition to make 10 of it, at the very least, and may the Lord graciously prosper our endeavors, that we may have large interest to present to Him when He shall come!

Did you enquire as to how these men were to be supported? Their master did not tell them to live off his pound. No, they were his servants and so they lived under his roof—and he provided for all their needs. He had gone on a journey, but his establishment was not given up—the table was still spread and the children and the servants had bread enough and to spare. "Oh," says one, "that alters the case!" Just so, but it does not make it different from yours, or, if it does, I am sorry for you. Are you your own

provider? Do you cry, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink?" Do you not know that all these things do the nations of the earth seek after? Whereas Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things." As I understand my life, I am to do my Lord's work and He is to provide for me. He may do this through my own industry, but still it is *His* work to do it—not mine! If the Providence of God is not sufficient to provide for us, then I am sure we cannot provide for ourselves! And if it is sufficient, we shall be wise to cast all our care on the Lord and live undividedly for His praise! Remember that text, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." You, as a servant, are not to be entangled with carking cares about your own interests, but you are to give your whole thought and life to your Master's service. He will take care of you, now, and reward you when He shall come.

III. Thirdly, to understand this parable, we must remember THE EXPECTANCY WHICH WAS ALWAYS TO INFLUENCE THEM. They were left as trusted servants till he should return, but that return was a main item in the matter.

They were to believe that *he would return* and that he would return a king. The citizens did not believe it. They hoped that Caesar would refuse him the throne, but we are to be sure that *our noble Master will* receive the Kingdom. This rebel world does not believe that Jesus will ever be King. The other day we read of the "Eclipse of Christianity." Constantly we see His dominion assailed. They say that it is practically disproved by facts. Is it? Sirs, excuse me, I am desperately prejudiced, for I am His servant! I owe Him my life, my all! I am persuaded that He is and must be King of kings! I know Him so well that I am sure that He will prevail at the court to which He has gone. He is in very high favor there. The last time I saw the face of the great King, I obtained that favor through the use of His name. I receive anything I ask for when I mention His name and so I am sure that He is in wonderful high repute above. Why, His Father is *the* Sovereign! I am sure He will not deny the kingdom to His only-begotten Son! Jesus will come in His Kingdom—I am sure of it! Let us work in the full conviction that our absent Lord will soon be here, again, with a glorious diadem upon His brow. When He went away, He took with Him the scars of one who died a felon's death—and He will come again with them, but the nail prints will be no memorials of His shame—they will be as jewels to His hands!

The nobleman's servants were to regard their absent master as *already king* and they were so to trade among his enemies that they should never compromise their own loyalty. They were of the king's party and of no other. It is a very awkward position to be in—to trade among people that are enemies to your king! You need, in such a case, to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. This is precisely our position! We have to bring glory to God out of men who hate Him! We have to magnify our Lord among men who would, if they could, crucify Him again! We have to go in and out among them in such a manner that they can never say that we side with them in their rebellion, or wink at their disloyalty! We cannot be,

“Hail fellow: well met!” with those whose life is a practical insult to the crown rights of King Jesus! We must, above all things, prove ourselves loyal to our absent Lord lest He appoint us our portion among His enemies.

I find that the original would suggest to anyone carefully reading it, that they were to regard their master as *already returning*. This should be our view of our Lord’s Advent—He is even now on His way here! No sooner had He risen from the grave than, practically, our Lord was coming back! Strange paradox! But His ascension into Heaven was, in a certain sense, part of His coming back to us, for the way for Him, from the Cross on earth to the crown of the whole earth, was *via* the New Jerusalem. He is coming, now, as fast as Wisdom judges it to be right. I am sure our Savior will not delay a moment beyond what is absolutely necessary, for He loves the Church which is His bride—and as her Bridegroom, He will not delay the long-expected hour of their meeting—never to part again. *He is ready*—it is the bride that needs to make herself ready! Jesus desires to come! His heart is responsive to our cry when we say, “Come quickly!” He will come sooner than we think. We are bound to feel that He is, at this moment, on the road, and we are to live as if He might arrive at any moment!

We must trade on till our Lord has come. There must be no retiring from His business, even if we retire from our own. There must be no ceasing because we fancy we have done enough. Our rest will be when He comes! But till then, we must trade on.

Let us labor as in His actual Presence. How would you act with Jesus at your elbow? Act just so. He sees us as clearly as if His bodily Presence were in our midst. Be awakened and inspired by the Redeemer’s eyes. Thus will you live in this trial state after the best possible manner.

IV. Now comes the sweet part of the subject. Note well THE SECRET DESIGN OF THE LORD. Did it ever strike you that this nobleman had a very kindly design towards his servants? Did this nobleman give these men one pound each with the sole design that they should make money for him? It would be absurd to think so! A few pounds would be no item to one who was made a king. No, no! It was as Mr. Bruce says, “He was not money-making, but character-making.” His design was not to gain by them, but to educate them!

First, their being entrusted with a pound each was *a test*. This nobleman said to himself, “When I am a king, I must have faithful servants in power around me. My going away gives me an opportunity of seeing what my servants are made of. I shall thus test their capacity and their industry, their honesty and their zeal. If they prove faithful over a few things, they will be fit to be trusted with greater matters.” The test was only a pound and they could not make much mischief out of that, but it would be quite sufficient to try their capacity and fidelity, for he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful, also, in much. They did not all endure the test, but by its means he revealed their characters.

It was also a *preparation* of them for future service. He would lift them up from being servants to become rulers! They were, therefore, to be put

in a place of measurable responsibility and to be made men of thereby. They were to be rulers over a very little—say a pound and that which came of it—and this would be an education for them. In the process of trading, they would be in training to rule. The best way to learn to be a master is to be first a servant! And the reason why some masters are hard and tyrannical is because they do not know the heart of a servant by experience. They know nothing of *service* and so they have not the wisdom, the generosity and the tenderness which masters should show towards servants. So this nobleman was wise—he was at the same time testing and training his men.

Besides this, I think he was giving them a little *anticipation* of their future honors. He was about to make them rulers over cities and so he first made them rulers over pounds. They had been servants and taken orders from him every morning, but now they have no master to go to and must use their own discretion. They were, in effect, in a small sphere, made into little kings. In all that country the citizens had rebelled, but there was a little kingdom of the nobleman's own servants—and these obeyed him and did their best to maintain his interest in their little way. They were already made free, placed in a measure of authority and made to know the sweets and the burdens of personal responsibility.

Oh, you who work for God, when you are overseers of others for Him—when you win souls for Him and when you conquer adversaries in His name—you are already anticipating your eternal reward! We are fashioning our future position upon the anvil of our lives, for Heaven, though it is a state and a place prepared for us by the Lord Jesus, lies also mainly in *character*. The man is more the source of joy than the streets of gold in which he will walk. If you hide your pound and neglect your Master's service here, you are making for yourselves a dim and hazy future in that grand millennial reign of His! You that addict yourselves to your holy trade and consecrate yourselves entirely to your Lord shall have large honors when He comes to reign gloriously among His ancients!

For see, when the nobleman came to the man who had earned 10 pounds, he gave him 10 cities. Think of that! There is no proportion between the poor service and the rich reward! A pound is rewarded with a *city*! Their master was not bound to pay them *anything*—they were his bond-servants but what he gave them was of his overflowing generosity! I do not think that he who brought five pounds was in the least blamed. He may have been just as diligent as the other, but he had less capacity. But how he must have opened his eyes when his master gave him five *cities*! Perhaps he wondered more than the first. Fancy if any one of us had been put to trade with a pound upon commission and had received five cities for reward! The money earned would not buy the smallest house and yet it brings in to the worker five *cities*! What surprise filled the heart of the recipient of such bounty! It never entered into his heart to envy the brother who had 10 cities, for the five were so vast a recompense. He must have been carried away with rapture with the prospect before him!

Though there may be degrees of glory, the only difference will be in the capacity of the blessed to contain it. All the vessels will be full, but they

will not be all equally large—the man of the 10 pounds will simply be a larger vessel, full to the brim—the man with the five will be less capacious, but quite as full, to his own glad amazement and joyful bewilderment! However, let us go in for winning the 10 pounds if we can! For our Lord's sake, let us trade in spiritual things with all our hearts.

“But,” says one, “where and what will these cities be?” It may be that all this will *literally* happen during the millennial period, but I do not know. When Christ shall come, the dead in Christ will rise first and we read that, “the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished.” There may be space during that era for all the special rewards of the Gospel dispensation. It may also be, but I do not know, and so I cannot tell you, that we are, in future dispensations, to fill unto other worlds much the same office as angels fill to ours. Jesus has made us kings and priests—and we are in training for our thrones. What if in this congregation I am learning to proclaim my Master's Glory to myriads of worlds! Possibly the preacher who is faithful here may yet be made to tell forth His Lord's Glory to constellations at a later time. What if one might stand upon a central star and preach Christ to worlds on worlds instead of preaching Him to these two galleries and to this area! Why not?

At any rate, if I should ever gain a voice loud enough to be heard for millions of miles, I would speak none other than those glorious Truths of God which the Lord has revealed in Christ Jesus! If we are faithful here, we may expect our Master to entrust us with higher service hereafter! Only let us see to it that we are able to endure the test and that we profit by the training. As our account comes out in the very little, so will it be with us on the grand scale of eternity. This puts another face upon the work of this lower sphere. Rulers over 10 cities! Rulers over five cities! Brothers and Sisters, you are not fit for such dignities if you cannot serve your Lord well in this world with the little He has entrusted to you. If you live wholly to Him here, you will be prepared for the glories unspeakable which await all consecrated souls. Let us go in for a devoted life at once! Time is so short and the things we deal with are comparatively so small! We are soon coming out of the eggshell of time—and when we break loose into eternity and see the vastness of the Divine purposes, we shall be altogether amazed at the service bestowed—which will be the reward of service done. O Lord, make us faithful! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 19:1-38*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—347, 856. 342.**

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OUR GLORIOUS LEADER

NO. 3545

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1917.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, JANUARY 4, 1872.**

*“And when He had thus spoken, He went on
ahead, ascending up to Jerusalem.”
Luke 19:28.*

A VERY beautiful spectacle it is to see the Lord Jesus marching in front and His followers eagerly following on behind. They were going up to Jerusalem, where it is true, He would receive some honor, but also where He would be betrayed into the hands of cruel men and put to a shameful death—but He went on ahead of them. As the shepherd goes before the sheep, not driving, but leading. As the captain goes before his soldiers as taking the post of danger, so our Lord went on before them. It was far better that He should go first than that they should, for the disciple is never more out of place than when he outruns his Master. If he will follow his Master's commands, he shall do well. But if he shall follow his own devices and invent his own way, he shall do badly. The pilgrimage behind the cloud is a safe one, but a rush before the cloud will end in a disaster. The Master must go first, not the disciple. But then, when the Master advances, it is right to see the disciple follow, ready of foot, quick at his Master's heel, delighted with his Master's company. One likes to think of that journey up to Jerusalem, with Jesus Christ just a little ahead in the front, and His disciples closely following Him. I thought it was a picture that might serve us as a model throughout the whole year. I am not going to talk to you long at this time, but wish just to sketch that picture before your mind's eyes and say, “So be it unto each one of us.” May Jesus be with us. May Jesus lead the way. And may His own Divine Spirit give us Grace to follow Him—not like Peter, afar off—but as loving disciples who keep closely under their Master's guidance! From the beginning of the year to the end of the year may we rejoice to feel that He goes ahead of us, but may we also, with cheerful willingness, follow close behind! I present it to you, I say, as the picture for this New Year of Grace, and may it be verified in your experience.

Very simply, then, I shall try to call attention to the blessed fact that *Jesus goes ahead of us* and, having done so, I shall ask you, in the second place, to *seek after a sweet sensation of this Truth of God*. And the first Truth, then, to consider is—

I. THE BLESSED FACT—He went ahead of them.

We have already said that *He was going the way of suffering*. He was going up to Jerusalem to suffer. When you are in the way of suffering, He will go before you. He was always *in the way of service*. There was more to be done at Jerusalem before He had finished His course. May we, in the way of service, always find Him going before us. And He was also, in the third place, *on the way to death*—and if we have any fears about our passage through the river, may this console us—He went before us!

To begin, then, at the beginning, here is the blessed fact that Christ has gone ahead of us in *the way of suffering*. He has done so by His own actual experience while He was here in the flesh. “He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” “In all our afflictions He was afflicted.” “He Himself took our sicknesses and carried our sorrows.” Rest assured that in whatever way of suffering you have to go in consequence of your being a child of man, and especially in consequence of your being a child of God, you will find that Christ has gone that way ahead of you! Are you full of bodily pain, stretched upon the bed? Are you apt to think that none ever suffered as you do? He suffered more than you! He went ahead of you along that flinty pathway. The pangs of His death must have been extreme. And remember His Passion in the Garden, His agony in Gethsemane. You have not in this matter yet come to having drops of blood oozing in sweat from your countenance. No, He has gone ahead of you there. In all the pangs of your bodily frame, Jesus has preceded you. Read the 22nd Psalm, with all its wonderful expressions—“I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint.” “You have brought Me into the dust of death.” He knew the fever and its thirst upon the Cross when He was dying there. He said, “You have brought Me to the dust of death.” You have not one suffering that may be imagined to be more exquisite than what He endured! Your griefs are molehills compared with the Alps of His sufferings!

But you will say that it is not exactly the pathway of personal bodily pain you are traversing, but you have endured much in the sufferings of others you have lost. You have had half your heart, perhaps, taken away at one time. Friend after friend has been carried to the tomb! But He went ahead of you in this pathway, also. Did you never read where it is written, “Jesus wept?” “Behold how He loved him,” said the Jews, as they beheld Him at the sepulcher of the most-beloved Lazarus. He knows what bereavements means as well as you—He has ahead of you. “Ah” you say, “but in consequence of the bereavement I have suffered, I am left a widow. How shall I be provided for? In addition to the woe of the loss, I have to look forward to the future! Will these hands be able to find me daily bread? My garments may become, by degrees, more and more thin and time-worn. I fear cold, nakedness and hunger.” And suppose it should come to that, as it will not, I trust, yet He went ahead of you! You are not so poor as He. Hear His voice tonight, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head.” To pay the common tax, He must borrow money from the fish

of the sea. His garment was the common seamless robe of peasants. He was but poorly clad—He was in all respects the child of poverty. First cradled in a manger, and then laid for His last sleep in a borrowed grave, for still He had not where to lay His head. In the sleep of death, Jesus went ahead of you! O son of poverty, O daughter of need, you may see the print of His footsteps all along that thorny way!

“Yes,” says one, “but still there is added to poverty in my case the fact that I have been forsaken by friends, and I am very fearful that even those who stood somewhat faithful to me will soon grow weary, and I shall be left alone.” And did you never hear Him say, “And I shall be left alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me”? And have you never read how they all forsook Him and fled, and Peter denied Him with oaths and curses and, worst of all, Judas, who had been trusted with His little stock, sold Him for the price of a slave? “He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me.” Ingratitude most cruel, treachery most base! Your Lord has suffered it! You may see the prints of His pierced feet along that pathway if you will but look for them. Jesus went ahead of you in actual suffering. And what if you have been serving your Lord with zeal and fervor, and you have been reproached, even by those who love Him? You have met with the cold shoulder where you expected to find encouragement. If your motives have been misrepresented by the very persons who ought to have supported you in your ardor, ah, what then? Was not He also a reproach among His mother’s brethren? When His zeal had eaten Him up, they said that He was mad—and even His mother and His brethren stood outside desiring that they might see Him because they thought Him bereaved of His wits! And if the wicked world has reproached you, did they not call the Master of the house, “Beelzebub”? Shall they have soft names and honorable titles for the men of His household? If they said of Him, “He has a devil, and is mad, why listen to Him?” do you think they will say great and flattering things of you? O you that are made ashamed for His sake, and made a spectacle unto men and unto angels, be not afraid! No strange thing has happened to you! Thousands of saints have passed along this road and, chief of all, your Master, Christ, has gone ahead of you! In the path of suffering, then, Jesus has gone ahead of us from the fact of having actually and literally experienced what we suffer!

He has gone before in another sense, namely, that now, though He reigns exalted high in the highest heavens, *He still goes ahead of us in the intense sympathy of His sacred heart.* Jesus is not separated from His people by the mere fact of distance. “Lo,” He has said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the world,” and you know what mysterious, yet real union exists between Christ, the Head, and all His members. It came out clearly in the case of Paul, when Jesus said to Him, “Why do you persecute Me?” He was persecuting only a few poor people in Jerusalem, or in Damascus, whom he despised, but Christ said, “Why do you perse-

cute Me?” because persecuting the saints was persecuting Christ! Christ suffering in His members. Christ suffering on the Cross was the Head suffering, but when His people were torn to pieces in the amphitheatre, when they were burned at Smithfield, and when, today, they are hooted and made a jest of, it is Christ suffering—still suffering in His members—and when any child of God suffers in any righteous cause, whenever affliction comes upon a saint in any form, Christ sympathizes with him. Rest assured—

***“In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows bears His part.”***

In all their affliction He was afflicted. A finger never suffers without the brain participating—and no humble member of the true Church of Christ ever suffers without Christ, the glorious Head, suffering in sympathy therewith.

Now this is very cheering to those who have faith to receive it, because very much of the heart-breaking that comes into the world is from a sense of loneliness. When men feel that somebody sympathizes with them. When those who are being beaten feel that others smart as they do, then they take courage. Oh, there is One who loves you more than you can love yourself, who sympathizes with you, you suffering saint, from the Throne of His Glory! Be you, therefore, glad! Be of good courage and let this comfort your heart!

There is a third way in which Christ goes ahead of us in the path of suffering—that is, *in the matter of Providence*. While He has Himself suffered, and sympathizes, in a third respect He always goes ahead of us in our sufferings, in preparing them for us, and preparing us for them. Our Lord has gone to Heaven to prepare a place for us—and I believe He has prepared all the road as well as a place at the end of it. You shall find, O child of God, when you come into the deep waters, that Christ is there—there by His Grace and Spirit, and there, also, by His Providence, to take care of you. It was appointed that Jacob and his tribes should all go down to Egypt. To Egypt they must go, but Joseph went down there before them and became lord over all Egypt—not for his own sake, but for the sake of his brothers, for all the wealth of Egypt shall be used, if necessary, in order that Jacob and all his household shall be preserved during the time of famine! Now if there is an Egypt to which you are to go, Jesus, your Joseph, has gone before you to make it ready for you, to find you a Goshen and to nourish you there till such day as you shall come from it. God, even your Savior, Jesus, leads the van! As the cloud, like a mighty banner of fire, went through all the mazes of the winding way of Israel over the desert, so Jesus marches before us, the Leader, the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand, always in the front and with His eternal power and Godhead making straight the pathway for His people’s feet! Let us be of good courage, then, in this respect. In the matter of suffering, He went ahead of you.

But now realize here the retrospect. If He goes ahead of you, then follow Him. You love not suffering. It were not suffering if you did love it, but still, if Jesus leads, look not to the way. It were better that that way should be full of thorns and briars which would tear your flesh, and Christ be with you, than that it should be a long green pathway, and your Shepherd lead you not! Go on! He went to His sufferings without a murmur. Moreover, even His flesh shrank and, at last, He said, "Not My will, but Yours be done." Say you, the same. Do you fear as you enter into the cloud? Within that cloud shall be the secret tabernacle of the Most High, wherein He will reveal Himself to you as He never did before! Some of us owe much to the anvil and the hammer, and the fire, much to suffering, much to trials—and we thank God we had them! And you will yet have to do the same, but, oh, stay not back! Remember, after all, a lack of resignation will not assist you in your suffering, but, on the contrary, nothing makes suffering so light as resignation to it—and a perfect acquiescence in the Divine Will does much to take away the gall from the cup! You must go where Jesus leads—go, therefore, willingly, cheerfully, trustingly and even joyfully, for it is a triumph to a Christian to bear the cross after Jesus—and to be crucified and buried with Him were a high honor to any child of God. Go on, then, for Christ leads the way!

But now I must not tarry so long on that part, but I observe it is said *Christ leads the way in service* as well as in suffering. He was going up to Jerusalem to accomplish the rest of His life-work before He surrendered His Spirit to His Father. Now you and I, and each of us, have a service to perform. We were redeemed and with a price that we might serve the Lord. We are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people. We have a priesthood to fulfill. All God's children, all God's servants are priest and kings, and they have a rule to discharge, and a priesthood to fulfill. Now we are beginning a new year of service. It will be a very sweet thing to us if we can know that Jesus Christ has gone ahead of us in the path of service. Beloved, I might take the same Truth of God and say that He has actually gone before us in having fulfilled the same service. If there is any good thing for you to do, Christ has done it before you! Are we called to preach the Gospel? You know how He was anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor. Are you called to teach the little ones? Did not He say, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"? Have you to feed the hungry? On what a large scale did He do it! Have you to visit the sick and to minister to their needs? Oh, how many thousands owed their opened eyes or restored limbs to Him! Christ's life anticipates all the service of the Church. One might very easily, in taking the life of Christ, find all the operations of a truly active Church prefigured there—all of them. There is nothing new under the sun, and when a man has found something, and thought, "Here is something that is fresh," you shall find Christ has looked after the halt, the blind and the lame before you—and if you seek to raise the fallen

woman, you will be made to remember Him who said, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.” I should be afraid to undertake any service in which I could not see that He has gone before. What Christ has done, it is right for us to do, save only in that work of Expiation where we cannot help Him. There He treads the winepress alone, and of the people there is none with Him—but in all in which He is our Exemplar, it is always a safe thing for us to follow very closely—and we shall find that He has gone before us!

And truly He goes before us in all our works by His Holy Spirit actively proving His Divine sympathy still with us. I do not look upon the Church of God as so many pious men and women at work by themselves, but I see God working by them, working in them, working through them! They are the workers to the eye, but no further. It is God who works in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure! If Satan saw in the work only the man, he would laugh at him, but he perceives “the hand of Joab” is there—a mightier hand than the hand of man and, therefore, it is that he is often put to the rout. O you that speak for Jesus, that pray for Jesus, that give to His cause and work for His name, let this be your joy and your comfort—that Jesus Christ is with you and goes ahead of you in all this service!

And so He does in *His Providence*. If we had but eyes to see it, and could know all things, we would perceive that when we come to preach the Gospel, God has been preparing men’s hearts to receive it. Many a time a man will come up to the House of Prayer, and he has a trouble that has been plowing up and down, and the minister has got a handful of seed to sow, which the birds would have devoured if they had fallen on hard soil—only God has plowed the man and made him like soil, ready to receive it! He has gone ahead of us! If ever I see these benches full, I feel a little distressed, and yet elated, because I always reckon that I have got a picked congregation and each man is sent with a design. Though there may not be salvation in every case, yet there are some to whom God will bless the Word, to which the Word will be fitted to the very letter, for God will guide the preacher and oftentimes as much reveals Himself from the pulpit as ever a Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was revealed again by Daniel when it was gone altogether from his mind. You shall be sure that God is in the Word if it comes home to you in that way! And if you are a Christian worker, you may expect that the Providence of God will prepare men’s hearts for that work which you are trying to do!

I would that the Church of God would now recollect that assuredly God is going ahead of her in all her service at this moment. The world is prepared for the Gospel if we were but willing to present the Gospel to the world! When our Lord Christ came into this world there was a universal peace, and the peace of the public mind and the state of the public pulse was just suitable for the preaching of the Gospel by the Lord and by His Apostles—and there is some such suitability as that now. Chains that long have galled unhappy nations have been filed through. The

people that sat in darkness have seen a great light—they have demanded liberty and won it with a good right hand—and mean to hold it! And now is the time when the darkness flies and light comes for those who have the still brighter light of the everlasting Gospel of the ever blessed God to spring into the gap and proclaim salvation by a Crucified Redeemer to all the sons of men! Up, Churches of London, and to your work! Even now the very demand for education among you, and the stir that there is among the people, the breaking up of hoary systems of abomination, the motion and commotion—all this means good to you! You have been embedded in the ice and frozen up these long wintry days, but, lo, the sun has risen and the long summer days shall soon come and your boat shall be freighted and put out to sea—and bring a blessed cargo of souls home to God their Father! Let us be up and doing, for Jesus goes ahead of us in the matter of Providence. May He help us to keep always near Him. What He would have us do, oh, may we do it! Word for word what He would have us speak, thought for thought what He would have us think, act for act what He would have us do! Let us never have a glorious Leader and be a laggard people. Oh, for the Grace that is in Him to bedew us plenteously, that as He goes ahead of us we may follow Him in the path of service!

Now very briefly upon one other point, which was *the path of death*. Our Lord was going to Golgotha, and there was to be, as far as this world was concerned, the end of His journey. To the Cross He must be nailed, and in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, the Lord Jesus must sleep. Death is not a pleasant thing. It matters not how you gild the pill, it is a pill. If the Lord comes not, however, before that time we shall have to pass through death, and we shall find it, if we are His people, to be infinitely less painful than the *fear* of death! We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, and if our faith were greater, we would have no fear of death. “Ah,” says one, “what I dread is parting, leaving my friends.” He went before them—He parted from them all, and from His mother. And He said to John, “Behold, your mother,” and to His mother, “Woman, behold your son,” as the light faded from His eyes. He went ahead of us in the path of death. “Ah, but I cannot bear to think of the pain of dying,” says one. You will never have such pain as His in death—He went ahead of you. He had a sense of sin in dying. He was made a curse for us, as it is written, “Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree,” but no curse can ever light on you, Believer. The blessing is yours because the curse was His! Oh, He has gone ahead of you—He has gone where you shall never go, for He suffered the wrath of God, which you never shall suffer, for that wrath is gone and passed away forever! There are none of the surroundings of a dying bed which can suggest such horror as that which surrounded the death of our Lord—so that He has gone ahead of you in everything that might alarm you in the prospect of your departure. He has gone ahead of you. Be content to follow Him to the grave. It is no more—

***“A charnel-house of sense,
Relics of lost innocence,
The place of ruin and decay;
The imprisoning stone is rolled away.”***

It is now a nest of sweetness since Jesus laid in it. The grave is no longer unfurnished—there are His grave clothes left for you and, moreover, the stone being rolled away, you have the promise that you shall come out of it again! When the trumpet of the archangel sounds, those poor bones shall arise and the body that was sown in weakness shall be raised in power! What joy it is, then, to think that He went ahead of us and how obediently, no, triumphantly, may we follow Him, even to death itself! Here, then, is the blessed fact, in suffering, or service, or departure, Christ goes ahead of us! Now the point we close with is this—

II. MAY WE, ALL OF US, HAVE A SWEET REALIZATION OF THIS TRUTH DURING THIS YEAR.

We believe a good deal of Doctrine which we have never yet realized. We know much to be food which we have never fed upon. Many Christians are like those who have sacks of flour in the house, but no bread. They have nothing available for present food. Some are like rich men that may happen to be abroad with thousands in gold, but no small silver, no spending money. May you be able to coin the bullion of precious promise so as to use it in the journey of life. May you make practical application of precious Truths of God, tasting the honey, drinking the wine and being satisfied with them. Now, then, to realize that Christ goes ahead of us is to realize that *we are never alone*. If I am in my study, and a problem staggers me, I am not alone—my Lord will teach me. You are in your little chamber with the needle, working hard for very scanty pay. You have to suffer—you have not got to suffer that alone. “I am with you when you pass through the fire; you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” But you have got to go into the workroom and there are those that point at you, and they have a jest for you, whom they know to be a follower of Christ. You have not to bear that alone! He has the heaviest end of that cross and He is persecuted in His persecuted members. But you are busy in business, and your cares afflict you. Blessed be God you have not got to bear those cares alone! No, nor yet at all, for concerning them He has said, “Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” I have got to come here and preach. Who is sufficient for these things? But I am not to preach alone—“My Grace is sufficient for you.” His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness. You have to go to that Sunday school class. Oh, how incorrigible those boys are and how careless those girls—but you have not got to win those souls alone—Jesus will go and His Spirit will be there, and you shall be helped in your work! Do try and realize all through this year that you are never alone. Not only is it, “You, God, see me,” but it is this, “Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God.” And Christ is not with you behind, or pushing you into the danger, but He is with you ahead of

you—He goes ahead of you—He is the shield catching the fiery darts upon Himself! You shall come behind the screen and be sheltered by His precious promise.

I do not know where you may be this year, but let this thought abide with you—He will be with you! Perhaps you will cross the sea. Your lot may be to help to colonize some distant land. Over the sea and on the billows, and on the shore so strange to you—He will be your near Companion! Perhaps this year there is a trial awaiting you, very heavy, or perhaps a temptation arising out of some new joy or fresh prosperity. Do not fear it—you shall be safe on the hilltops of joy and in the Valley of Humiliation. He is with you anywhere! A child is told, perhaps at nightfall, that he has to go a considerable distance. It is to a lonely farmhouse and the little one trembles to go across the moor in the dark. “Oh,” the mother says. “but Father is going with you.” Oh, then that changes the aspect of everything! The boy is pleased to go! Even the dangers that seemed so great, only attract him now—he will be glad to be with his father. Through the moor land of another year, you have to go, and it may be dark and cold, but your heavenly Father and your blessed Elder Brother will be with you! Therefore, be not afraid. You will have to contend this year for “the faith delivered once for all to the saints,” and to do much service, too. If you are to render a good account at the year’s end, you are to try and live this year, not at a slow rate, like the cold-blooded frog, but to have hot blood in you! Regulated by prudence, and yet boiling over with a burning zeal, you are to serve the Lord! And it may be you think you cannot do it. Is anything impossible when He helps you? Is any sacrifice impossible when it is for Him? Is any difficulty insurmountable when He, Himself, gives the all-sufficient strength? Oh, this is a very choice thought, though a very simple one, that Jesus will be with you all the year through!

The only other thought is, take care that you abide with Him. He is a quick walker. Idle souls will be left behind. He is a holy liver. Unclean spirits will find Him part company with them. Be you watchful, vigilant, sober, careful, zealous, and seek to have perpetual fellowship with Jesus Christ. I am sure those are the happiest that live nearest to God! I am certain of it. I do know it is not the wealthiest who are the happiest. It is not those who have the most health that are always happiest, and those who are most esteemed among their fellow men. There is one rule without any exception—he who lives nearest to God has the most of that profound peace of God which passes all understanding. He says to you, “Abide in Me.” May His words abide in you! May you abide in Him and may this be to each one of you, and to this Church, the very happiest year we have ever had! Oh, that some poor sinner would seek the Savior! May the Lord’s lovely attractions entice Him!

And I shall close by saying this—that if any soul longs for Christ, Christ is already longing for Him—and if you have a half of a desire towards

Him, He has a heart full of desire towards you! There never was a soul that had a head start on Christ in the matter of desire for salvation. God grant you Grace to touch Jesus and then to follow after Him, and to make His blessing abide with you, both now and forever. Amen and amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 35, HEBREWS 12:1-6.**

Verse 1. *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them.* They shall be so glad that they shall inspire gladness where all was desolation, brooding, melancholy and dragon's howls. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them."

1. *And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.* God's people are a happy-making people. They are a blessing in themselves and they shall be a blessing to others till all shall say, "These are the seed that the Lord has blessed." "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

2. *It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.* A wonderful sight to see, for there is one of the most lovely sights in the world when the Glory and excellency of God are to be seen in the works of His Grace in His own people. It is such a sight that it makes men first rejoice in their hearts and then rejoice with their tongues. They shall "rejoice with joy and singing," which is the double rejoicing of the heart and of the lips. Well, these must be a favored people who, wherever they go, can make others glad after this fashion! Brothers and Sisters, they must be full or they could not overflow! They must be alive, or else they could not quicken the desert places. They must be in flower, blooming like the rose, or they could not make the wilderness so full of verdure. The Lord grant that we may be in that state, that we may be able to go into the wilderness. There are some of God's people that cannot trust themselves to go where they are needed because they have not Divine Grace enough. They are so weak that they are like the weak man standing on the river's brink who cannot leap in to pull out a drowning man for fear he should be pulled in himself. But, oh, they are blessed, indeed, who dare go into the wildernesses and into the solitary places, and carry the transforming benediction of Heaven with them till the wilderness changes its dress—and the brown of the arid sand gives place to the ruddiness of the rose—because God has come there with His people!

3. *Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.* Are there such here tonight? No doubt there are—weak at work and weak at praying. The two things go together—weak hands and feeble knees. May they both be strengthened!

4. *Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will*

come and save you. It is very singular how salvation and vengeance are so often associated together in Scripture. It is the day of salvation, “and the day of vengeance of our God to comfort all who mourn.” Vengeance upon the false is the best consolation to the true! When God smites the sham, even to the heart, then does He bless those in which His Truth is found. “He will come and save you.”

5, 6. *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.* See what the Presence of Christ does? See what the presence of Christ’s people will do when He comes in them and with them! They make the wilderness rejoice. But, besides that, the dwellers that are found in the wilderness—these lame and deaf people—get the blessing. Oh, may God make us to be a desert to others of this sort!

7. *And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.* The greenest spots your eyes ever rested upon are just there where the grass is so rooted in the morass that it is always green with a delicate tinge, and the reeds and rushes spring up abundantly. O God, make poor parched hearts to become like this! You barren ones, you desolate ones—He can give you the best verdure that is possible! Your hearts shall be as green and fresh as the spots where there is grass with reeds and rushes.

8. *And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it: but it shall be for others: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.* Oh, what a blessing that is to us poor fools! We could err anywhere. To err is human and we seem to have come in for a double share of it. The more we look at our lives, the more we see the folly of our hearts. What a mercy it is that when we walk in the way of faith, in the way of Christ, fools as we are, we shall not err!

9, 10. *No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go on it, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* Like frightened things. They kept us company part of our road, but when the Lord appeared, they took to themselves wings and fled away. We could not tell where they were gone. We were surprised to find that they had quite vanished. Oh, for the appearing of the Lord tonight to His mourning people who may be here!

HEBREWS 12:1-8.

Verse 1. *Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us.* Or. “entangle us.”

1-3. *And let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God. For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds.* The Lord does not wish His people's hands to hang down and their knees to become weak, so in this passage, as in many others, He administers gracious remedies! Among the rest, He bids us consider His own dear Son. Shall we faint under our small afflictions when He endured so well under His heavy burdens? Come, be strengthened, my weak heart—

***“His way was much rougher and darker than thine—
Did Christ, your Lord, suffer, and will you repine?”***

4. *You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.* It has hardly come to blows and bruises yet—certainly not to bloody strokes! You have not yet lost blood for Christ.

5. *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him.* Neither think too little of it, nor too much of it—too little of it by despising it and not listening to the voice of the rod, nor too much of it by fainting when you are rebuked of Him.

6. *For whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.* Oh, what comfort there is here! Whenever we are under the scourging hand of God, how we ought to be cheered with the thought that this is a part of the heritage of the children! There are Elis who spoil their children. God is not one of them. He spares not the rod and the more He loves, often the more He corrects. A tree of common fruit may be left alone so long as there is some little fruit on it, but the very best fruit gets the sharpest pruning—and I have noticed that in those countries where the best wine is made, the vinedressers cut the shoots right close in, and in the winter you cannot tell that there is a vine there at all unless you watch very carefully! They must cut them back sharp to get sweet clusters. The Lord does thus with His beloved. It is not anger. Afflictions are not always anger. There are often tokens of great love!

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

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

PRAISE YOUR GOD, O ZION!

NO. 678

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING. FEBRUARY 25, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And when He was come near, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, Blessed is the King that comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest! And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Your disciples. But He answered and said unto them, I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”
Luke 19:37-40.*

THE Savior was “a Man of Sorrows,” but every thoughtful mind has discovered the fact that down deep in His innermost soul He must have carried an inexhaustible treasury of refined and heavenly joy. I suppose that of all the human race there was never a man who had a deeper, purer, or more abiding peace than our Lord Jesus Christ. “He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.” Benevolence is joy. The highest benevolence must, from the very nature of things, have afforded the deepest possible delight.

To be engaged in the most blessed of all errands, to foresee the marvelous results of His labors in time and in eternity, and even to see around Him the fruits of the good which He had done in the healing of the sick and the raising of the dead must have given to such a sympathetic heart as that which beat within the bosom of the Lord Jesus Christ much of secret satisfaction and joy. There were a few remarkable seasons when this joy manifested itself. “At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth.” Christ had His songs though it was night with Him. And though His face was marred and His countenance had lost the luster of earthly happiness, yet sometimes it was lit up with a matchless splendor of unparalleled satisfaction as He thought upon the recompense of the reward, and in the midst of the congregation sang His praise unto God. In this, the Lord Jesus is a blessed picture of His Church on earth.

This is the day of Zion’s trouble—at this hour the Church expects to walk in sympathy with her Lord along a thorny road. She is outside the camp—through much tribulation she is forcing her way to the crown. She expects to meet with reproaches. To bear the cross is her office, and to be scorned and counted an alien by her mother’s children is her lot. And yet the Church has a deep well of joy of which none can drink but her own children! There are stores of wine, and oil, and corn hidden in the midst of our Jerusalem upon which the saints of God are evermore sustained and

nurtured. And sometimes, as in our Savior's case, we have our seasons of intense delight for "there is a river, the streams which make glad the city of our God."

Exiles though we are, we rejoice in our King! Yes, in Him we exceedingly rejoice, while in His name we set up our banners! This is a season with us as a Church when we are peculiarly called upon to rejoice in God. The Lord Jesus, in the narrative before us, was going to Jerusalem as His disciples fondly hoped, to take the throne of David and set up the long-expected kingdom. Well might they shout for joy, for the Lord was in their midst—in their midst in state, riding amidst the acclamations of a multitude who had been glad partakers of His goodness. Jesus Christ is in our midst today! The kingdom is securely His. We see the crown glittering upon His brow. He has been riding through our streets, healing our blind, raising our dead and speaking words of comfort to our mourners!

We, too, attend Him in state today, and the acclamations of little children are not lacking, for from our Sunday school there have come songs of converted youngsters who sing gladly, as did the children of Jerusalem in days of yore, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!"

I want, dear Friends, this morning, to stir up in all of us the spirit of holy joy because our King is in our midst! I wish that we may welcome Him and rejoice in Him, and that while He is working His mighty deeds of salvation throughout this congregation so graciously, He may not lack such music as our feeble lips can afford Him. I shall, therefore, invite your attention to these four verses by way of example, that we may take a pattern for our praise from this inspired description.

We shall observe four things—First, delightful praise. Secondly, appropriate song, Thirdly, intrusive objections, and fourthly, an unanswerable argument.

I. First, we shall observe here DELIGHTFUL PRAISE. In the thirty-seventh verse every word is significant and deserves the careful notice of all who would learn aright the lesson of how to magnify the Savior. To begin with, the praise rendered to Christ was *speedy* praise. The happy choristers did not wait till He had *entered* the city, but "when He was come near, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, they began to rejoice." It is well to have a quick eye to perceive occasions for gratitude.

Blind Unbelief and blear-eyed Thanklessness allow the favors of God to be forgotten in ingratitude, and, without praises, die. They walk in the noonday of Mercy and see no light to sing by. But a believing, cheerful, grateful spirit detects at once the rising of the Sun of Mercy and begins to sing, even at the break of day! Christian, if you would sing of the mercy you have already, you would soon have more! If twilight made you glad, you should soon have the bliss of noon! I am certain that the Church in these days has lost much by not being thankful for little. We have had many Prayer Meetings, but few, very few, Praise Meetings—as if the Church could cry loud enough when her own ends were to be answered—but was dumb as to music for her Lord.

Her King acts to her very much as He did with the man with the pound. That man put not out the pound to interest and therefore it was taken

away. We have not thanked Him for little mercies, and therefore even these have been removed, and Churches have become barren and deserted by the Spirit of God. Let us lift up the voice of praise to our Master because He has blessed us these twelve years. We have had a continual stream of revival! The cries of sinners have sounded in our ears—every day we have seen souls converted—I was about to say almost every hour of the week, and that by the space of these twelve years, and of late, we have had a double portion!

Benjamin's mess has been set near our place at the table! We have been made to feast on royal dainties and have been filled with bread even to the full. Shall we not then praise God? Ah, let us not require twice telling of it, but let our souls begin to praise Him, even now, that He comes near unto Jerusalem!

It strikes us at once, also, that this was *unanimous* praise. Observe, not only the multitude, but the *whole* multitude of the disciples rejoiced and praised Him! Not one silent tongue among the disciples—not one who withheld his song. And yet, I suppose, those disciples had their trials as we have ours. There might have been a sick wife at home, or a child withering with disease. They were doubtless poor—we know they were—and poverty is never without its pinches. They were men of like passions with ourselves. They had to struggle with inbred sin, and with temptation, and yet there seems to have been no one who on those grounds excluded himself from the choir of singers on that happy day!

Oh, my Soul, whatever you have about you which might bow you down, be glad when you remember that Jesus Christ is glorified in the midst of His Church! Why, my Brother, is that harp of yours hanging on the willows? Have you nothing to sing about? Has He done nothing for you? Why, if you have no personal reason for blessing God, then lend *us* your heart and voice to help us, for we have more praise-work on hand than we can get through alone—we have more to praise Him for than we are able to discharge without extra aid! Our work of praise is too great for us, come and help us! Sing on our behalf, if you cannot on your own, and then, perhaps, you will catch the flame and find something, after all, for which you, too, must bless Him.

I know there are some of you who do not feel as if you could praise God this morning. Let us ask the Master to put your harp in tune. Oh be not silent! Be not silent! Bless Him! If you cannot bless Him for temporals, bless Him for spirituals! And if you have not of late experimentally enjoyed many of these, then bless Him for what He is. Bless Him for that dear face covered with the bloody sweat—for those pierced hands, for that opened side will you not praise Him? Why, surely, if He had not died for me I must still love Him, to think of His goodness in dying for others! His kindness, the generosity of His noble heart in dying for His enemies might well provoke the most unbelieving to a song.

I am, therefore, not content unless all of you will contribute your note. I would have every bird throw in its note, though some cannot imitate the lark or nightingale! Yes, I would have every tree of the forest clap its hands, and even the hyssop on the wall wave in adoration! Come, Beloved, cheer up! Let dull care and dark fear be gone! Up with harps and

down with doubts! It must be praise from “the whole multitude.” The praise must be unanimous—not one chord out of order to spoil the tune.

Next, it was multitudinous. “The whole multitude.” There is something most inspiring and exhilarating in the noise of a multitude singing God’s praises. Sometimes, when we have been in good tune, and have sung “Praise God from whom all blessings flow,” our music has rolled upward like thunder to yon dome and has reverberated peal on peal! These have been the happiest moments some of us have ever known—when every tongue was praise, and every heart was joy! Oh, let us renew those happy times! Let us anticipate the season when the dwellers in the East and in the West, in the North and in the South, of every age and of every clime shall assemble on the celestial hilltops and swell the everlasting song extolling Jesus Lord of all!

Jesus loves the praise of many. He loves to hear the voices of all the blood-washed—

**“Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one.”**

We are not so many as that, but we are counted by thousands so let us praise His name—the whole multitude! Still it is worthy of observation that while the praise was multitudinous, it was quite select. It was the whole multitude “of the disciples.” The Pharisees did not praise Him—they were murmuring. All true praise must come from true hearts. If you do not learn of Christ you can not render to Him acceptable song. These disciples, of course, were of different sorts. Some of them had but just enlisted in the army—just learned to sit at His feet. Some had worked miracles in His name, and, having been called to the Apostolic office, had preached the Word to others—but they were all disciples.

I trust that in this congregation there is a vast majority of disciples—well, then, all of you, you who have lately come into His school, you who have long been in it—you who have become fathers in Israel and are teaching others, the whole multitude of disciples, I hope, will praise God! I could wish—God grant the wish—I could wish that those who are not disciples might soon become so. “Take My yoke upon you,” He said, “and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.”

A disciple is a *learner*. You may not know much, but you need not know anything in coming to Christ! Christ begins with ignorance and bestows wisdom. If you do but know that you know nothing, you know enough to become a disciple of Christ Jesus! There is no matriculation necessary in order to enter into Christ’s college. He takes the fools and makes them know the wonders of His dying love. Oh that you may become a disciple! “Write my name down, Sir,” you say to the writer with the ink-horn by his side, and be you from now on a humble follower of the Lamb. Now, though I would not have those who are not disciples close their mouths whenever others sing, yet I do think there are some hymns in which they would behave more honestly if they did not join—for there are some expressions which hardly ought to come from unconverted lips. Better far would it be if they would pray, “Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.”

You may have a very sweet voice, my Friend, and may sing with admirable taste and in exquisite harmony any of the parts, but God does not

accept the praise where the *heart* is absent. The best tune in the book is one called Hearts. The whole multitude of the disciples whom Jesus loves are the proper persons to extol the Redeemer's name. May you, dear Hearer, be among that company!

Then, in the next place, you will observe that the praise they rendered was *joyful* praise. "The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice." I hope the doctrine that Christians ought to be gloomy will soon be driven out of the universe! There are no people in the world who have such a *right* to be happy, nor have such *cause* to be joyful as the saints of the living God! All Christian duties should be done joyfully—and especially the work of praising the Lord.

I have been in congregations where the tune was dolorous to the very last degree—where the time was so dreadfully slow that one wondered whether they would ever be able to sing through the 119th Psalm—whether, to use Watts's expression, eternity would not be too short for them to get through it! And altogether the spirit of the people has seemed to be so damp, so heavy, so dead that we might have supposed that they were met to prepare their minds for hanging rather than for blessing the ever-gracious God!

Why, Brethren, true praise sets the heart ringing its bells and hanging out its streamers! Never hang your flag at half-mast when you praise God! No! Run up every color, let every banner wave in the breeze and let all the powers and passions of your spirit exult and rejoice in God your Savior! They rejoiced. We are really most horribly afraid of being too happy. Some Christians think cheerfulness a very dangerous folly, if not a ruinous vice. That joyous Hundredth Psalm has been altered in all the English versions—

***"All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice,
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell,
Come you before Him and rejoice."***

"Him serve with fear," says the English version. But the Scotch version has less thistle and far more rose in it. Listen to it, and catch its holy happiness—

***"Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell;
Come you before Him and rejoice."***

How do God's creatures serve Him out of doors? The birds do not sit on a Sunday with folded wings, dolefully silent on the boughs of the trees! They sing as sweetly as may be even though the raindrops fall! As for the new-born lambs in the field—they skip to His praise though the season is damp and cold. Heaven and earth are lit up with gladness, and why not the hearts and houses of the saints? "Him serve with mirth." Well said the Psalmist—"before Him exceedingly rejoice." It was *joyful* praise.

The next point we must mention is that it was *demonstrative* praise. They praised Him with their voices and with a loud voice. Propriety very greatly objects to the praise which is rendered by Primitive Methodists at times. Their shouts and hallelujahs are thought by some delicate minds to be very shocking. I would not, however, join in the censure, lest I should be numbered among the Pharisees who said, "Master, rebuke Your disci-

ples.” I wish more people were as earnest and even as vehement as the Methodists used to be.

In our Lord’s day we see that the people expressed the joy which they felt—I am not sure that they expressed it in the most harmonious manner—but at any rate they expressed it in a hearty, lusty shout. They altogether praised with a loud voice. It is said of Mr. Rowland Hill that on one occasion someone sat on the pulpit stairs who sang in his ears with such a sharp shrill voice that he could endure it no longer, and said to the good woman, “I wish you would be quiet.” She answered, “It comes from my heart,” “Oh,” said he, pray forgive me—sing away! Sing as loudly as you will.”

And truly, dear Friends, though one might wish there were more melody in it, yet if your music comes from the heart we cannot object to the loudness, or we might be found objecting to that which the Savior could not and would not blame. Must we not be loud? Do you wonder that we speak out? Have not His mercies a loud tongue? Do not His kindnesses deserve to be proclaimed aloud? Were not the cries upon the Cross so loud that the very rocks were rent thereby—and shall our music be a whisper?

No, as Watts declares, we would—

**“Loud as His thunders shout His praise,
And sound it lofty as His Throne.”**

If not with loud voices actually in sound, yet we would make the praise of God loud by our actions, which speak louder than any words! We would extol Him by great deeds of kindness, and love, and self-denial, and zeal so that our actions may assist our words. “The whole multitude praised Him with a loud voice.” Let me ask every Christian here to do something in the praise of God—to speak in some way for his Master. I would say, speak today—if you cannot with your voice—speak by act and deed, but join in the hearty shout of all the saints of God while you praise and bless the name of our ever gracious Lord.

The praise rendered, though very demonstrative, was very *reasonable*—the reason is given—“for all the mighty works that they had seen.” My dear Friends, we have seen many mighty works which Christ has done. I do not know what these disciples had seen. Certain it is that after Christ entered into Jerusalem He was generous with His miracles. The blind were healed, the deaf had their ears opened—many of those possessed with devils were delivered—and incurable diseases gave way at His word. I think we have the like reason in a *spiritual* sense. What has God worked? It has been marvelous—as our elders would tell you if they could recount what God has done—the many who have come forward during the last fortnight to tell what God has done for their souls.

The Holy Spirit has met with some whom up to now no ministry had reached. Some have been convicted of sin who were wrapped up in self-righteous rags. Others have been comforted whose desponding hearts drew near unto despair. I am sure those Brethren who sat to see enquirers must have been astonished when they found some hundreds coming to talk about the things that make for their peace! It was blessed work, I doubt not, for them. They, therefore, would lead the strain.

But you have all in your measure seen something of it. During the meetings we have held we have enjoyed an overpowering sense of the Divine Presence. Without excitement there has been a holy bowing of spirit, and yet a blessed lifting up of hope, and joy, and holy fervor! The Master has cast sweet smiles upon His Church! He has come near to His beloved. He has given her the tokens of His affection and made her to rejoice with joy unspeakable! Any joy which we have towards Christ, then, will be reasonable enough, for we have seen His mighty works.

With another remark I shall close this first head—the reason for their joy was a *personal* one. There is no praise to God so sweet as that which flows from the man who has tasted that the Lord is gracious. Some of you have been converted during the last two or three months. Oh, you must bless Him! You must take the front rank now and bless His name for the mighty work which you have seen in yourself! The things which once were dear to you, you now abhor, and those things which seemed dry and empty are now sweet and full of savor. God has turned your darkness into light! He has brought you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and has set your feet upon a rock! Shall not your established goings yield Him a grateful song? You shall bless Him!

Others here present have had their own children saved. God has looked on one family and another, and taken one, and two, and three. He has been pleased to lay His hand upon the elders among us and bless their families. Oh sing unto His name! Sing praises for the mighty works which we have seen! This will be commonplace talk enough to those of you who have not seen it—but those who have will feel the tears starting to their eyes as they think of son and daughter of whom they can say, “Behold, he prays!”

Saints of God, I wish I could snatch a firebrand from the altar of praise that burns before the great Throne of God—I wish I could fire your hearts with it—but it is the Master’s work to do it. Oh, may He do it now! May every one of you feel as if you could cast your crown at His feet! As if you could sing like the cherubim and the seraphim, nor yield even the first place of gratitude to the brightest spirit before the Eternal Throne! This morning may it be truly said, “The whole multitude of the disciples rejoiced with a loud voice for all the mighty things which they had seen.”—

***“O come, loud anthems let us sing,
Loud thanks to our Almighty King.
For we our voices high should raise,
When our salvation’s Rock we praise.
Into His Presence let us haste,
To thank Him for His favors past!
To Him address, in joyful songs,
The praise that to His name belongs.”***

II. I shall now lead you on to the second point—their praise found vent for itself in AN APPROPRIATE SONG. “Blessed is the King that comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest!” It was an appropriate song, if you will remember that it had Christ for its subject! “My heart is writing of a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king.”

No song is so sweet from believing lips as that which tells of Him who loved us and who gave Himself for us. This particular song sings of Christ

in His Character of King—a right royal song, then—a melody fit for a coronation day. Crown Him! Crown Him Lord of all! That was the refrain. “Blessed be the King.” It sang of that King as commissioned by the Most High, “who comes in the name of the Lord.” Think of Christ as bearing Divine authority, as coming down to men in God our Father’s name—as speaking what He has heard in Heaven, fulfilling no self-espoused errand, but a mission upon which the Divine Father sent Him according to His purpose and decree—all this is matter for music!

Oh bless the Lord, you saints, as you remember that your Savior is the Lord’s Anointed—He has set Him on His Throne! Jehovah, who was pleased to bruise Him, has said, “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.” See the Godhead of your Savior! He whom you adore, the Son of Mary, is the Son of God! He who did ride upon a colt, the foal of an ass, did also ride upon a cherub and did fly—yes, He rode upon the wings of the wind!

They spread their garments in the way, and broke down branches. It was a humble triumph, but long before this the angels had strewn His path with adoring songs. Before Him went the lightning, coals of fire were in His track, and up from His Throne went forth hailstones and coals of fire! Blessed be the King! Oh praise Him this day! Praise the King, Divine and commissioned of His Father!

The burden of their song was, however, of Christ present in their midst. I do not think they would have rejoiced so loudly and sweetly if He had not been there. That was the source and center of their mirth—the King riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass—the King triumphant! They could not but be glad when He revealed Himself. Beloved, our King is here! We sang at the beginning of this visitation, “Arise, O King of Grace, arise, and enter to Your rest!” You remember our singing the verse—

**“O You that are the Mighty One,
Your sword gird on Your thigh.”**

And King Jesus has done so in state—He has ridden prosperously—and out of the ivory palaces His heart has been made glad! And the King’s daughter, all-glorious within, standing at His right hand, cannot but be glad, too! Loud to His praise wake every string of your heart and let your souls make the Lord Jesus the burden of their song!

This was an appropriate song, in the next place, because it had *God* for its object. They extolled God, God in Christ, when they thus lifted up their voices. They said, “Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest.” When we extol Christ, we desire to bless the infinite Majesty that gave Christ to us. Thanks be unto the Father for His unspeakable gift! O eternal God, we, Your creatures in this little world do unfeignedly bless You for Your great purpose and decree by which You did choose us to be illustrious exhibitions of Your majesty and love!

We bless You that You did give us Grace in Christ Your Son before the starry sky was spread abroad! We praise You, O God, and magnify Your name as we enquire, “What is man, that You are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you visit him?” How could You deign to stoop from all the Glory of Your infinity to be made Man, to suffer, to bleed, to die for us? “Give unto the Lord, O you mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His name.” Oh that I could

give place to some inspired bard, some seer of old, who, standing before you with mouth streaming with holy eloquence, should extol Him that lives, but once was slain, and bless the God who sent Him here below that He might redeem unto Himself a people who should show forth His praise!

I think this song to have been very appropriate for another reason, namely, because it had the *universe* for its scope. It was not praise within walls as ours this morning—the multitude sung in the open air with no walls but the horizon—with no roof but the arch of Heaven! Their song, though it was from Heaven, did not stay there, but enclosed the world within its range. It was, “Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest!” It is very singularly like that song of the angels, that Christmas carol of the spirits from on high when Christ was born—but it differs, for the angels’ song was, “Peace on earth,” and this at the gates of Jerusalem was, “Peace in Heaven.”

It is the nature of song to spread itself. From Heaven the sacred joy began when angels sang, and then the fire blazed down to earth in the words, “Peace on earth.” But now the song began on *earth*, and so it blazed *up* to Heaven with the words, “Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest!” Is it not a wonderful thing that a company of poor beings like we here below can really affect the highest heavens? Every throb of gratitude which heaves our hearts glows through Heaven! God can receive no actual increase of Glory from His creature for He has infinite Glory and majesty—but yet the creature manifests that Glory.

A grateful man here below, when his heart is all on fire with sacred love, warms Heaven itself! The multitude sung of peace in Heaven as though the angels were established in their peaceful seats by the Savior—as though the war which God had waged with sin was now over because the conquering King was come! Oh let us seek after music which shall be fitted for other spheres! I would begin the music here and so my soul should rise. Oh for some heavenly notes to bear my passions to the skies! It was appropriate to the occasion because the universe was its sphere.

And it seems also to have been most appropriate because it had gratitude for its spirit. They cried aloud, “Blessed”—Blessed is the King.” We cannot bless God and yet we do bless Him in the sense in which He blesses us. Our goodness cannot extend to Him, but we reflect the blessedness which streams from Him as light from the sun. Blessed be Jesus! My Brothers and Sisters, have you never wished to make Him happier? Have you not wished that you could extol Him? Let Him be exalted! Let Him sit on high! I have almost wished, even selfishly, that He were not so glorious as He is so that we might help to lift Him higher! Oh, if the crushing of my body, soul, and spirit would make Him one atom more glorious, I would not only consent to the sacrifice, but bless His name that He counted me worthy to do so!

All that we can do brings nothing to Him. Yet, Brethren, I would that He had His own. Oh that He rode over our great land in triumph! Would that King Jesus were as well known here now as He was once in Puritan times! Would that Scotland were as loyal to Him as in Covenanting periods! Would that Jesus had His majesty visible in the eyes of all men! We pray for this! We seek this! And among the chief joys our most chief joy is

to know that God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow!

We have thus said something about the appropriateness of the song. May you, each of you, light upon such hymns as will serve to set forth your own case and show forth the mercy of God in saving *you*. Do not be slack in praising Him in such notes as may be most suitable to your own condition.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly—for I am not going to give much time to these men—we have INTRUSIVE OBJECTIONS. “Master, rebuke Your disciples.” We know that voice—the old grunt of the Pharisee. What could he do otherwise? Such is the man and such must his communications be. While he can dare to boast, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are,” he is not likely to join in praises such as other men lift up to Heaven.

But why did these Pharisees object? I suppose it was first of all because they thought there would be no praise for themselves! If the multitude had been saying, “Oh these blessed Pharisees! These excellent Pharisees! What broad phylacteries! What admirable hems to their garments! How diligently and scrupulously they tithe their mint and their anise and their cummin! What a wonder that God should permit us, poor vile creatures, to look upon these super-excellent incarnations of virtue,” I will be bound to say there would not have been a man among them who would have said, “Master, rebuke Your disciples.” A proud heart never praises God for it hoards up praise for itself.

In the next place, they were jealous of the people. They did not feel so happy themselves and they could not bear that other people should be glad. They were like the elder brother who said, “Yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends.” Was that a reason why nobody else should be merry? A very ill reason, truly! Oh, if we cannot rejoice, ourselves, let us stand out of the way of other people! If we have no music in our own hearts, let us not wish to stop those who have!

But I think the main point was that they were jealous of Jesus. They did not like to have Christ crowned with majesty. Certainly this is the drift of the human heart. It does not wish to see Jesus Christ extolled. Preach up morality or dry doctrine, or ceremonies and many will be glad to hear your notes. But preach up Jesus Christ and some will say, “Master, rebuke your disciples!” It was not ill advice of an old preacher to a young beginner when he said, “Preach nothing down but sin, and preach nothing up but Christ.”

Brethren, let us praise nothing up but Christ! Have nothing to say about your Church. Say nothing about your denomination. Hold your tongue about the minister—but praise Christ—and I know the Pharisees will not like it! But that is an excellent reason to give them more of it, for that which Satan does not admire he ought to have more of. The preaching of Christ is the whip that flogs the devil. The preaching of Christ is the thunderbolt, the sound of which makes all Hell shake. Let us never be silent! We shall put to confusion all our foes if we do but extol Christ Jesus the Lord. “Master, rebuke Your disciples!”

Well, there is not much of this for Jesus Christ to rebuke in the Christian Church in the present day. There used to be—there used to be a little

of what the world calls fanaticism. A consecrated cobbler once set forth to preach the Gospel in Hindustan. There were men who would go preaching the Gospel among the heathen, counting not their lives dear unto them. The day was when the Church was so foolish as to fling away precious lives for Christ's Glory! Ah, she is more prudent nowadays. Alas! Alas for your prudence! She is so calm and so quiet—no Methodist's zeal, now! Even that denomination which did seem alive has become most proper and most cold.

And we are so charitable, too. We let the most abominable doctrines be preached and we put our finger on our lip, and say, "There's so many good people who think so." Nothing is to be rebuked nowadays, Brethren! One's soul is sick of this! Oh, for the old fire again! The Church will never prosper till it comes once more. Oh, for the old fanaticism, for that, indeed, was the Spirit of God making men's spirits in earnest! Oh, for the old doing and daring that risked everything and cared for nothing except to glorify Him who shed His blood upon the Cross! May we live to see such bright and holy days again! The world may murmur but Christ will not rebuke.

IV. We come now to the last point, which is this—AN UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT. He said, "If these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out." Brothers and Sisters, I think that is very much our case. If we were not to praise God, the very stones might cry out against us! We MUST praise the Lord! Woe unto us if we do not! It is impossible for us to hold our tongues! Saved from Hell and be silent? Secure of Heaven and be ungrateful? Bought with precious blood and hold our tongues? Filled with the Spirit and not speak? Restrain from fear of feeble man with the Spirit's course within our souls? God forbid!

In the name of the Most High let such a thought be given to the winds! What? Our children are saved—the offspring of our loins brought to Christ! What? See them springing up like willows by the water courses, and no awakening of song, no gladness, no delight! Oh, then we were worse than brutes and our hearts would have been steeled and become as adamant. We must praise God! What? The King in our midst, King Jesus smiling into our souls, feasting us at His table, making His word precious to us, and not praise Him! Why if Satan could know the delight of Christ's company he might begin to love—but we, we were worse than devils if we did not praise the name of Jesus! What? The King's arm made bare, His enemies subdued, His triumphant chariot rolling through our streets, and no song!

Oh Zion, if we forget to sing let our right hand forget her cunning if we count not the King's triumph above our chief joy. What? The King coming! His advent drawing near, the signs of blessing in the sky and air abound, and yet no song! Oh, we must bless Him! Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! But could the stones ever cry out? Yes, they could, and if they were to speak they would have much to talk of even as we have this day. If the stones were to speak they could tell of their Maker—and shall not we tell of Him who made us anew, and out of stones raised up children unto Abraham?

They could speak of ages long since gone—the old rocks could tell of chaos and order and the handiwork of God in various stages of creation’s drama—and cannot we talk of God’s decrees, of God’s great work in ancient times, and all that He did for His Church? If the stones were to speak they could tell of their breaker, how he took them from the quarry, and made them fit for the temple—and cannot we tell of our Creator and Maker, who broke our hearts with the hammer of His Word that He might build us into His temple?

If the stones were to speak they would tell of their builder who polished them and fashioned them after the similitude of a palace—and shall not we talk of our Architect and Builder who has put us in our place in the temple of the living God? Oh, if the stones could speak they might have a long, long story to tell by way of memorial, for many a time has a great stone been rolled as a memorial unto God—and we can tell of Ebenezers, stones of help, stones of remembrance! The broken stones of the Law cry out against us, but Christ Himself, who has rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher, speaks for us.

Stones might well cry out, but we will not let them! We will hush their noise with ours! We will break forth into sacred song and bless the majesty of the Most High all our days! Let this day and tomorrow be especially consecrated to holy joys and may the Lord, in infinite mercy, fill your souls right full of it—both in practical deeds of kindness and benevolence and works of praise! Blessed be His name who lives forever and ever!

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THE LAMENTATIONS OF JESUS

NO. 1570

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 28, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“When He had come near, He beheld the city and wept over it.”
Luke 19:41.***

ON three occasions we are told that Jesus wept. You know them well, but it may be worth while to refresh your memories. The first was when our Lord was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. He saw the sorrow of the sisters and He meditated upon the fruit of sin in the death and corruption of the body and He groaned in spirit and it is written that “Jesus wept.” Those who divided the chapters did well to make a separate verse of that simple sentence. It stands alone, the smallest and yet, in some respects, the greatest verse in the whole Bible! It shines as a diamond of the first water. It contains a world of healing balm condensed into a drop. Here we have much in little—a wealth of meaning in two words.

The second occasion we have before us and we will make it the theme of our discourse. At the sight of the beloved but rebellious city, Jesus wept. The third occasion is mentioned by the Apostle Paul in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews where he tells us what else we might not have known, that the Savior, “in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death and was heard in that He feared.” That passage relates to the Gethsemane agony in which a shower of bitter tears was mingled with the bloody sweat. The strength of His love strove with the anguish of His soul and, in the process, forced forth the sacred waters of His eyes. Thus our Savior wept in sympathy with domestic sorrow and sanctified the tears of the bereaved.

We, too, may weep when brethren and friends lie dead, for Jesus wept. There need not be rebellion in our mourning, for Jesus fully consented to the Divine will and yet He wept. We may weep at the graves of those we love and yet be guiltless of unbelief as to their resurrection, for Jesus knew that Lazarus would rise again and yet He wept. Our Lord, in weeping over Jerusalem, showed His sympathy with *national* troubles and His distress at the evils which awaited His countrymen. Men should not cease to be patriots when they become Believers—saints should bemoan the ills which come upon the guilty people among whom they are numbered and do so all the more because they are saints.

Our Lord's third weeping was induced by the great burden of human guilt which pressed upon Him. This shows us how we, too, should look upon the guilt of men and mourn over it before God. But in this special weeping Jesus is alone—there was a something in the tears of Gethsemane to which we cannot reach, for He who shed them was then beginning to suffer as our Substitute and in that case He must necessarily

tread the winepress alone and of the people there must be none with Him. Behold beneath the olive trees a solitary Weeper enduring a grief which, blessed be His name, is now impossible to us, seeing He has taken away the transgressions which called for it!

We will now turn to this second instance of our Savior's weeping and here we find, when we look at the original words, that it is not exactly expressed by the words used in our admirable English version. We there read, "He beheld the city and wept over it," but the Greek means a great deal more than tears and includes sobs and cries. Perhaps it may be best to read it, "He lamented over it." He suffered a deep *inward* anguish and He expressed it by signs of woe and by words which showed how bitter was His grief. Our subject will not be the lamentations of Jeremiah, but the lamentations of *Jesus*—the lamentations of Him who could more truly say than the weeping Prophet, "I am the Man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. My eyes run down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of My people. Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow which is done unto Me."

Jesus is here a King by general acclamation, but King of grief by personal lamentation. He is the Sovereign of sorrow, weeping while riding in triumph in the midst of His followers. Did He ever look more kingly than when He showed the tenderness of His heart towards His rebellious subjects? The city which had been the metropolis of the house of David never saw so truly a royal man before, for He is most fit to rule who is most ready to sympathize! We shall, this morning, as God shall help us, first, consider our Lord's inward grief. And then, secondly, His verbal lamentation. Oh for the power of the Spirit to bless the meditation to the melting of all our hearts! O Lord, speak to the rock and bid the waters flow, or, if it pleases You better, strike it with Your rod and make it gush with rivers—only in some way make us answer to the mourning of our Savior—

***"Did Christ over sinners weep
And shall our cheeks be dry?
Let floods of penitential grief
Burst forth from every eye."***

I. First, we are to contemplate OUR LORD'S INWARD GRIEF. We note concerning it that it was so intense that it could not be restrained by the occasion. The occasion was one entirely by itself—a brief gleam of sunlight in a cloudy day, a glimpse of summer amid a cruel winter. His disciples had brought the colt and had placed Him on it and He was riding to the city which was altogether moved at His coming. The multitudes were eager to do Him homage with waving branches and loud hosannas, while His disciples in the inner circle were exulting in songs of praise which almost emulated the angelic chorales of His birth night. "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward men," found its echo when the disciples said, "Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord: peace in Heaven and glory in the highest."

Yet amidst the hosannas of the multitude, while the palm branches were yet in many hands, the Savior stopped to weep! On the very spot where David had gone centuries before weeping, the Son of David stayed awhile to look upon the city and to pour out His lamentation! That must

have been deep grief which ran counter to all the demands of the season and violated, as it were, all the decorum of the occasion. It turned a festival into a mourning, a triumph into a lament. Ah, He knew the hollowness of all the praises which were ringing in His ears! He knew that they who shouted hosanna today would, before many suns had risen, cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" He knew that His joyous entrance into Jerusalem would be followed by a mournful procession out of it when they would take Him to the Cross that He might die.

He saw amid all the effervescence of the moment the small residue of sincerity that there was in it and He accepted it—but He lamented the abundance of mere outward excitement which would disappear like the froth of the sea—and so He stood and wept. It was a great sorrow, surely, which turned such a day of hopefulness into a season of anguish. It strikes me that all that day the Savior fasted and, if so, it is singular that He should have purposely kept for Himself a fast while others on His account held a festival! The reason why He did so, I think, is this—Mark says, "And now the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon."

Such hunger had not come upon Him if it had not been preceded by a fast the day before. See, then, your Lord surrounded, as it were, with billows of praise in the midst of a tumultuous sea of exultation, Himself standing as a lone rock, unmoved by all the excitement around Him. Deep was the grief which could not be concealed or controlled on such a day when the sincere congratulations of His disciples, the happy songs of children and the loud hosannas of the multitude everywhere welcomed Him.

The greatness of His grief may be seen, again, by the fact that it overshadowed other very natural feelings which might have been and, perhaps, were, excited by the occasion. Our Lord stood on the brow of the hill where He could see Jerusalem before Him in all its beauty. What thoughts it awakened in Him! His memory was stronger and quicker than ours, for His mental powers were unimpaired by sin and He could remember all the great and glorious things which had been spoken of Zion, the city of God. Yet, as He remembered them all, no joy came into His soul because of the victories of David or the pomp of Solomon—Temple and tower had lost all charm for Him—"the joy of the earth" brought no joy to Him. And at the sight of the venerable city and its holy and beautiful house He wept.

Modern travelers who have any soul in them are always moved by the sublimity of the spectacle from the Mount of Olives. Dean Stanley wrote, "Nothing at Rome, Memphis, Thebes, Constantinople, or Athens can approach it in beauty or interest." And yet this is the poor, mean Jerusalem of modern times—by no means to be compared with the Jerusalem of our Savior's day! Yet the Lord Jesus says nothing about this city, "Beautiful for situation," except to lament over it. If He counts the towers there and marks well her bulwarks, it is only to bemoan their total overthrow. All

the memories of the past did but swell the torrent of His anguish in the foresight of her doom!

Something of admiration *may* have entered the Savior's holy breast, for before Him stood His Father's house, of which He still thought so much that even though He knew it would be left desolate, yet He took pains to purge it once again of the buyers and sellers who polluted it. That Temple was built of white marble and much of it, the roof especially, covered with slabs of gold. It must have been one of the fairest objects that ever human eye rested upon as it glittered in the sun before Him. But what were those great and costly stones? What were those curious carvings to Him? His heart was saying within itself, "There shall not be one stone left upon another that shall not be thrown down."

His sadness at the foresight of the city's desolation mastered His natural feeling of admiration for its present glory. His sorrow found no alleviation either in the past or the present of the city's history—the dreadful *future* threw a pall over all. It mastered, too, the sympathy which He usually felt for those who were about Him. He would not stop His disciples from rejoicing, though the Pharisees asked Him, but He, Himself, took no share in the joy. Usually He was the most sensitive of men to all who were around Him, sorrowing with their sorrow and joying in their joy. But on this occasion they may wave their palms and cut down branches of trees and strew them in the way and the children may shout, Hosanna, but He who was the center of it all did not enter into the feeling of the hour—they celebrate—He weeps.

More striking, still, is the fact that His grief for others prevented all apprehension for Himself. As He beheld that city, knowing that within a week He would die outside its gates, He might naturally have begun to feel the shadow of His sufferings, but no trace of such emotion is discoverable. You and I, in such a case, with the certainty of a speedy and ignominious death before us, would have been heavy about it, but Jesus was not. In all that flood of tears there was not one for His own death! The tears were all for Jerusalem's doom, even as He said afterwards, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but for yourselves and for your children."

It is not "Woe is Me, the holy city will become an Aeldama, a field of blood by My slaughter," but, "Oh, if you had known, even you, in this, your day." He grieves for others, not for Himself! Yet it must have been a very intense emotion which thus swept away, as with a torrent, everything else so that He had neither joy for joy, nor sorrow for sorrow, but His whole strength of feeling was poured forth from one sluice and ran in one channel towards the devoted city which had rejected Him and was about to put Him to death! This great sorrow of His reveals to us the Nature of our Lord. How complex is the Person of Christ! He foresaw that the city would be destroyed and though He was Divine, He wept! He knew every single event and detail of the dreadful tragedy and used words about it of special historical accuracy which bring out His prophetic Character and yet the eyes so clear in seeing the future were almost blinded with tears!

He speaks of Himself as willing and able to have averted this doom by gathering the guilty ones under His wings and thus He intimates His

Godhead. While His Nature on the one side of it sees the certainty of the doom, the same Nature, from another side, laments the dread necessity! I will not say that His Godhead foresaw and His Manhood lamented, for so mysteriously is the Manhood joined to the Godhead that it makes but one Person and it were better to assert that the entire Nature of Christ lamented over Jerusalem. I have never been able to believe in an impassive God, though many theologians lay it down as an axiom that God *cannot* suffer. It seems to me that He can do or endure anything He wills to do or endure and I, for one, cannot see that there is any special glorifying of God in the notion that He is incapable in any direction whatever. We can only speak of Him after the manner of men and after that manner He speaks of Himself and, therefore, there is no wrong in so doing.

It brings the great Father nearer when we see Him lamenting the wanderings of His children and joying in their penitent return. What but sorrow can be meant by such expressions as these? “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me; My repentings are kindled together.” “Hear, O heavens and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” Are these the utterances of an unfeeling God? I believe it is the Christ, the *entire* Christ that both foretells the doom of Jerusalem and laments it.

Some have even been staggered at the statement that Jesus wept. Certain of the early Christians, I am sorry to say, even went the length of striking the passage out of the Gospel because they thought that weeping would dishonor their Lord. They ought to have had more reverence for the Inspired Word and a truer knowledge of their Master and never to have wished to obliterate a record which reflects the highest honor upon man’s Redeemer. Our Lord’s lament gives us an insight into the great tenderness of His Character—He is so tender that He not only weeps while weeping would be of no use—but He laments when lamentation must be fruitless! He reminds me of a judge who, having before been a friend by warning, persuading, pleading with the prisoner, at last has the unutterable pain of condemning him—he puts on the black cap and, with many a sigh and tear, pronounces sentence—feeling the dreadful nature of the occasion far more than the criminal at the bar.

He is overcome with emotion while he declares that the condemned must be taken to the place from where he came and there die a felon’s death. Oh the tender heart of Christ, that when it comes to pronouncing the inevitable sentence, “Your house is left unto you desolate,” yet He cannot utter the righteous words without lamentation! In this our Lord reveals the very heart of God! Did He not say, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father”? Here, then, you see the Father, Himself, even He who said of old, “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” The doom must be pronounced, for infinite Justice demands it, but Mercy laments what she was not permitted to prevent.

Tears fall amid the thunders and though the doom is sealed by obstinate impenitence, yet judgment is evidently strange work to the patient Judge. This anguish showed how dreadful was the sentence, for what could stir the Savior so if the doom of sinners is a small affair? If the doom of guilt is such a trifle as some dream, I understand not why these tears! The whole Nature of Christ is convulsed as He thinks, first of Jerusalem plowed as a field and her children slaughtered till their blood runs in rivers of gore and, next, as He beholds the doom of the ungodly who must be driven from His Presence and from the Glory of His power to be the awful witnesses of Divine Justice and of God's hatred of evil. Thus standing on the brow of Olivet, the weeping Son of Man reveals to us the heart of God—slow to anger, of great mercy, waiting to be gracious and tardy in executing His wrath.

For a practical lesson, we may remark that this weeping of the Savior should much encourage men to trust Him. Those who desire His salvation may approach Him without hesitation, for His tears prove His hearty desires for our good. When a man who is not given to sentimental tears, as some effeminate beings are, is seen to weep, we are convinced of his sincerity. When a strong man is passionately convulsed from head to foot and pours out lamentations, you feel that he is in downright earnest and if that earnestness is manifested on *your* behalf you can commit yourself to him. Oh, weeping Sinner, fear not to come to a weeping Savior! If you will not come to Jesus, it grieves Him! That you have not come long ago has wrung His heart! That you are still away from Him is His daily sorrow—come, then, to Him without delay!

Let His tears banish your fears, yes, He gives you better encouragement than tears, for He has shed for sinners not drops from His eyes, alone, but from His heart! He *died* that sinners who believe in Him might live! His whole body was covered with bloody sweat when He agonized for you—how can you doubt His readiness to receive you? The five scars that still remain upon His blessed Person, up there at the Father's right hand, all invite you to approach Him! These dumb mouths most eloquently entreat you to draw near and trust in Him whom God has set forth as the Propitiation for sin! How shall He that wept and bled and died for sinners repulse a sinner who comes to Him at His bidding? Oh, come, come, come, I pray you, even now, to the weeping sinner's Friend.

This, too, I think is an admonishment to Christian workers. Some of us, long ago, came to Jesus and we now occupy ourselves with endeavoring to bring others to Him. In this blessed work our Lord instructs us by His example. Brothers and Sisters, if we would have others come to Jesus we must be like Jesus in tenderness. We must be meek, lowly, gentle and sympathetic and we must be moved to deep emotion at the thought that any should perish. Never let us speak harshly of the doom of the wicked. Never let us speak flippantly, or without holy grief—the loss of Heaven and the endurance of Hell must always be themes for tears! That men should live without Christ is grief enough—but that they should DIE without Christ is an overwhelming horror which should grind our hearts to pow-

der before God and make us fall on our faces and cry, "O God, have mercy upon them and save them, for Your Grace and for Your love's sake."

The deepest tenderness, it may be, some of us have yet to learn. Perhaps we are passing through a school in which we shall be taught it and if we do but learn it we need not care how severe the instructive discipline may be. We ought not to look upon this city of London without tears, nor even upon a single sinner without sorrow. We must preach tenderly and teach tenderly if we would win souls. We are not to weep continually, for even Jesus did not do that, yet are we always to feel a tender love towards men so that we would be ready to die for them if we might but save them from the wrath to come and bring them into the haven of the Savior's rest!

Let me add that I think the lament of Jesus should instruct all those who would now come to Him as to the manner of their approach. While I appealed to you, just now, were there any who said, "I would gladly come to Jesus, but how shall I come?" The answer is—come with sorrow and with prayer, even as it is written, "they shall come with weeping and with supplications will I lead them." As Jesus meets you, so meet Him. He shows you in what fashion to return, in what array to draw near to your Redeemer, for He comes to you clothed in no robes but those of mourning, adorned with no jewels but the pearls of His tears. Come to Him in the garments of humiliation, mourning for your sin. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Penitential sorrow works life into men. Only come to Jesus and tell Him you have sinned and are ashamed and gladly would cease to do evil and learn to do well. Come in all your misery and degradation, in all your consciousness of your Hell-deservedness. Come in sorrow to the Man of Sorrows who is even now on the road to meet you! He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," and He will not forfeit His Word. God bless these feeble words concerning the inner emotions of my Lord and may the Holy Spirit again rest upon us while we further pursue the subject into another field.

II. We are now to consider OUR LORD'S VERBAL LAMENTATIONS. These are recorded in the following words—"Oh that you had known, even you, at least in this, your day, the things which belong unto your peace! But now they are hid from your eyes." First, notice He laments over the fault by which they perished—"Oh that you had known." Ignorance, willful ignorance, was their ruin. "Oh that you had known." They did not know what they might have known—what they ought to have known—they did not know their God. "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider."

They knew not God! They knew not God's only Son! They knew not Him who came in mercy to them with nothing but love upon His lips! Oh, but this is the pity, that the Light of God is come into the world and men will not have it, but love darkness rather than Light. Alas, I fear that some of my hearers live in the Light and will not see. There are none so deaf as those that will not hear and none so blind as those that will not see—and yet there are such in all Christian congregations—who do not know and will not know. God says, "Oh that you had hearkened to My Command-

ments, then had your peace been as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.” Our Lord lamented over the inhabitants of Jerusalem because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord—they would have none of His counsel—they despised His reproof.

Willful ignorance led to obstinate unbelief. They chose to die in the dark rather than accept the Light of the Son of God! The Lord laments the bliss which they had lost, the peace which could not be theirs, “Oh that you had known the things that belong unto your peace.” The name of that city was, as we know, Jerusalem, which, being interpreted, signifies a vision of peace. They that looked upon it saw before them a vision of peace. But, alas, Jerusalem had lost its “salem,” or peace, and become only a vision because she did not know and would not know her God! Oh men and women that know not God, you have lost peace! Even now you are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt!

“There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked.” Oh what joys you might have had! The delights of pardoned sin, the bliss of conscious safety, the joy of communion with God—the rapture of fellowship with Christ Jesus, the heavenly expectation of infinite Glory—all might have been yours! But you have put them away from you. The Lord says of you, as of Israel of old, “O that My people had hearkened unto Me and Israel had walked in My ways! I would soon have subdued their enemies and turned My hand upon their adversaries.” God would have revealed to you, by His Spirit, brighter things than eyes have seen and sweeter joys than ears have heard—for if you had been willing and obedient you would have eaten the fat of the land of His promises! You are losers! You are awful losers by not being reconciled to God and you will be worse losers yet, for that false peace which now stands in the place of true peace and beguiles and fascinates you will depart like the mirage of the desert and leave you on the arid sands of despair to seek rest and find it not!

Soon shall a terrible sound be in your ears of the approaching vengeance of God and there shall be for you no place of refuge. When the Lord thought of what they had lost, He cried, “Oh that you had known!” I feel ashamed to repeat His Words because I cannot repeat them in the tone He used. Oh, to hear Jesus say these words! I think it might melt a heart of stone! But no, I am mistaken, even that would not do it, for those who *did* hear Him were not melted nor reclaimed, but went on their way to their doom as they had done before! How hardened are the men who can trample on a Redeemer’s tears! What wonder that they find a Hell where not a drop of water can ever cool their parched tongues tormented in the flames! If men are resolved to be damned, it is evident that the tears of the best, the most perfect of men cannot stop them! Woe is me! This is deeper cause for tears than all else besides, that men should be so desperately set on mischief that nothing but Omnipotence will stop them from eternal suicide!

But our Lord also lamented over they who had lost peace. Observe that He says—“Oh that you had known, even you. You are Jerusalem, the favored city. It is little that Egypt did not know, that Tyre and Sidon did not know, but that you should not know!” Ah, Friends, if Jesus were here this

morning, He might weep over some of you and say—"Oh that you had known, even you." You were a lovely child! Even in your earliest days you were fond of everything good and gracious! You were taken to the place of worship and sat on your mother's knee, pleased to be there. Do you remember the minister's name that you used to lisp with delight, the texts you repeated and the hymns you sang? You grew up to be a lad right full of promise and all felt sure that you would be a Christian.

What exhortations your father, who is now in Heaven, gave you! And she that bore you and loved you till she passed away! How she prayed and pleaded for you! Some of you have been sitting here, or in some other place where Christ is preached, for a very long time and you have often been very near to the Kingdom and yet you are not in it. You have come right up to the edge of the border, but you have not crossed the line. You are not far from the Kingdom of God, but you lack one thing—the one essential point of *decision* for Christ—"Oh that you had known, even you!" You are always ready to help the cause of God with your purse, for you take an interest in every good work—you cannot bear blasphemy or infidelity—and yet you are not saved!

There are a thousand things that are hopeful about you, but there is one thing which dampens our hope, for you always procrastinate and know not how to use your present opportunity. Jesus bids you use "this your day," but you linger and delay. Today is God's accepted time! Postpone no longer the hour of decision! Alas that you should perish! Shall the child of such a mother be lost? Shall the son of such a father be driven down to Hell? I cannot bear it! God have mercy on you, sons and daughters of Christian parents! You that have been enriched with Christian privileges, why will you die? Young man, so promising but yet so undecided, it makes the Savior, Himself, weep that you, even you, should still refuse to know the things that make for your peace!

Our Lord wept because of the opportunity which they had neglected. He said, "At least in this, your day." It was such a favored day—they had been warned by holy men, but now they had the Son of God, Himself, to preach to them! It was a day of miracles of mercy, a day of the unveiling of Gospel Grace! And yet they would not have Christ though He had come so near to them and it was a day of merciful visitation such as other nations had not known. Perhaps today, also, may be a day of visitation for some of you. Shall we have to lament, "Oh that you had known, even you, at least in this, your day"—on this Lord's-Day, this day of power, this day of the Spirit? Oh, by His Grace, you now weep and I perceive you feel some tender touches of the Spirit's power! Do not resist Him and cause this day, also, to pass away unimproved!

"The harvest is passed, the summer is ended and you are not saved." And has the autumn closed and shall the winter come and go and shall these days in which the Spirit visits men all depart till God shall declare that it does not become the dignity of His Spirit to always strive with flesh and, therefore, He shall cease His operations and leave men to their own devices? Oh, souls, I pray you think of Christ weeping because revival days and Sundays are being wasted by you! Do not, in these best of days,

commit the worst of sins by still refusing to receive the Gospel of God! The Lord Jesus mourned, again, because He saw the blindness which had stolen over them. They had shut their eyes so fast that now they could not see—their ears which they had stopped had become dull and heavy—their hearts which they had hardened had waxen gross so that they could not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor feel in their hearts, nor be converted that He should heal them.

Why, the Truth of God was as plain as the sun in the heavens and yet they could not see it! And so is the Gospel at this hour to many of you and yet you perceive it not. There is nothing plainer than the plan of salvation by looking unto Jesus and yet many men have gone on so long resisting the sweetness and Light of the Spirit of God that they cannot, now, see the Lord Jesus who is as the sun in the heavens! The kindest friends have put the Gospel before them in a way that has enlightened others, but it has not affected them. They still say, "I cannot see it!" O you blind ones, take heed lest this has come upon you, "Behold, you despisers and wonder and perish." Christ groans because the timings which belonged to the peace of Jerusalem were hid from their eyes as a punishment for refusing to see.

Lastly, we know that the great floodgates of Christ's grief were pulled up because of the ruin which He foresaw. It is worth any man's while to read the story of the destruction of Jerusalem as it is told by Josephus—it is the most harrowing of all records written by human pen! It remains the tragedy of tragedies! There never was and there never will be anything comparable to it. The people died of famine and of pestilence and fell by thousands beneath the swords of their own countrymen. Women devoured the flesh of their own children and men raged against each other with the fury of beasts. All ills seemed to meet in that doomed city! It was filled within with horrors and surrounded without by terrors. There was no escape, neither would the frenzied people accept mercy.

The city itself was the banqueting hall of death. Josephus says, "All hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress and devour the people by whole houses and families. The upper rooms were full of women and infants that were dying by famine and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged. The children, also, and the young men wandered about the market places like shadows, all swelled with the famine and fell down dead wherever their misery seized them. For a time the dead were buried, but afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the wall into the valleys beneath. When Titus, on going his rounds along these valleys, saw them full of dead bodies and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan and, spreading out his hands to Heaven, called God to witness this was not his doing."

There is nothing in history to exceed this horror! But even this is nothing compared with the destruction of a *soul*. A man might look with complacency upon a dying body if he knew that within it was a soul that would live eternally in bliss and cause the body to rise again to equal joy.

But for a *soul to die* is a catastrophe so terrible that the heavens might be clothed with sackcloth for its funeral! There is a death which never ends! The separation of the soul from God—which is the most complete of all deaths! The separation of the soul from the body is but, as it were, a prelude and type of the far more dreadful death—the separation of the soul from God. Banished from hope, existing but not living and that forever! What a condition this must be!

I shall draw no picture. Words fail but, oh, my Hearers, shall it be that anyone among *you* shall always know the meaning of the Savior's words—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment"? Will it ever be *your* lot to hear Him say—you who hear me this day, I mean—"Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels"? If we could mark any here to whom this doom will happen, we might make a ring around them and bring them home tearing our garments and tearing our hair, for it would be a far greater grief than if we knew that they would die by the sword or by famine in a foreign land! All ills are trifles compared with the second death!

Bear with me just a moment while, in conclusion, I set forth our Savior's grief as it expressed itself in other words, for those other words may help us to fresh light. You remember the passage in the 23rd of Matthew which I read in your hearing, where the Lord said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you would not!"? Do you see His Grace and grief? These people killed the Prophets and yet the Lord of Prophets would have gathered them! His love had gone so far that even Prophet-killers He would have gathered! Is not this amazing that there should be Grace enough in Christ to gather adulterers, thieves, liars and to forgive and change them and yet they will not be gathered? That Jesus should be willing, even, to gather such base ones into a place of salvation and yet should be refused?

The pith of it lies in this—"How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you would not." See, here, the case stands thus—*I* would, but *you* would not. This is a grief to love. If it had been a fact that Christ would not, then I could not understand His tears, but when He says "I would, but you would not," then I see the deep reason of His anguish! The failure of will is in you that perish, not in Christ who cries, "I would, but you would not." Yes and He adds, "How often would I." Not once was He in a merciful mood and pitiful to sinners for that time, alone, but He cries, "How often would I have gathered."

Every Prophet that had come to them had indicated an opportunity for their being gathered and every time that Jesus preached there was a door set open for their salvation, but they would not be gathered and so He foretells their fate in these words—"Your house shall be left unto you desolate." Here is a painful sentence. Set the two words in contrast—"Gathered," that is what you *might* have been! "Desolate," that is what you *shall* be—and Jesus weeps because of it! "Gathered"—it is such a beauti-

ful picture! You see the little chicks fleeing from danger when they hear the cluck of the mother hen. They gather together and they come under her wings.

Did you ever hear that little, pretty cry they make when they are all together with their heads buried in the feathers? How warm and comfortable they are! This is where you might have been, gathered under the warm breast of the eternal God, feeling His love with the rest of the people—joying and rejoicing in a communion of complete security! But inasmuch as you would not be gathered, see what you will be—“desolate,” without a friend, without a helper. Then you will call to the saints, but they will not be able to help you. Say to them, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out”—but they must refuse you. Unto which of the holy ones will you turn? What angel will have pity upon you? Each cherub waves his fiery sword to keep you from the gate of Paradise. There is no help for you in God when once you die without Him! No help for you anywhere.

Desolate! Desolate! Desolate! Because you would not be gathered! Well does the tender Savior weep over men since they will perversely choose such a doom! I do not feel as if I should close in gloom. I must flash before you a brighter light, though it is but for the last minute. The day hastens on when Christ will come a second time and then He shall behold a new Jerusalem, a spiritual Jerusalem, built by Divine hands. The foundations thereof are of jewels and the gates thereof are of pearl. How He will rejoice over it! He shall rest in His love and He shall rejoice over it with singing! He will shed no tears, then, but He will see in the Jerusalem from above the travail of His soul and He shall be satisfied. When Zion shall be built up, the Lord shall appear in His Glory and the marriage of the Lamb will have come.

Meanwhile, if any one of you who are not yet saved will come to Jesus, He will rejoice over you, for He takes pleasure in the stones of Zion and favors the dust, there, and if you are as little as Zion’s *dust* and as mean as her rubbish, He will rejoice over you! It is written that, “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” Now, angels stand in the Presence of the Lord Jesus and there is joy in His heart over a single penitent! If only one sinner shall repent because of this sermon, my Lord will rejoice over Him! I, His servant, am, in my measure, intensely glad when a soul repents, but He shall have the chief joy, for His is the chief love!

Who will now come to Jesus? Would to God it might be the beloved son of a godly mother! Would to God it might be you, my long hesitating Hearer, for years a hearer but not a *doer* of the Word. May the Holy Spirit decide you at this very moment! Amen.

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

DEPARTED SAINTS YET LIVING

NO. 1863

SUGGESTED BY THE DECEASE OF THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY.

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 4, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord, ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.”
Luke 20:37, 38.***

DURING the past week, the Church of God and the world at large have sustained a very serious loss. In the taking home to Himself by our gracious lord, the Earl of Shaftesbury, we have, in my judgement, lost the best man of the age. I do not know whom I should place second, but I certainly should put him first—far beyond all other servants of God within my knowledge—for usefulness and influence. He was a man most true in his personal piety, as I know from having enjoyed his private friendship. He was a man most firm in his faith in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; a man intensely active in the cause of God and the Truth of God. Take him whichever way you please, he was admirable. He was faithful to God in all His house, fulfilling both the first and second commands of the Law in fervent love to God and hearty love to man. He occupied his high position with singleness of purpose and immovable steadfastness—where shall we find his equal? If it is not possible that he was absolutely perfect, it is equally impossible for me to mention a single fault, for I saw none. He exhibited Scriptural perfection, inasmuch as he was sincere, true and consecrated.

Those things which have been regarded as faults in him by the loose thinkers of this age are prime virtues in my esteem. They called him *narrow*—and in this they bear unconscious testimony to his loyalty to the Truth of God. I rejoiced greatly in his integrity, his fearlessness, his adherence to principle in a day when the Revelation of God is questioned, the Gospel explained away and *human thought* set up as the idol of the hour. He felt that there was a vital and eternal difference between the Truth of God and error and, consequently, he did not act or talk as if there was much to be said on either side and, therefore, no one could be quite sure. We shall not know for many a year how much we miss in missing him; how great an anchor he was to this drifting generation and

how great a stimulus he was to every movement for the benefit of the poor!

Both man and beast may unite in mourning him! He was the friend of every living thing. He lived for the oppressed; he lived for London; he lived for the nation and he lived, still more, for God! He has finished his course and though we do not lay him to sleep in the grave with the sorrow of those that have no hope, yet we cannot but mourn that a great man and a prince has fallen this day in Israel! Surely the righteous are taken away from the evil to come and we are left to struggle on under increasing difficulties.

It must always be so. The godly must die, even as others. Though our life is perfectly consecrated, yet it cannot forever be continued in this world. It is appointed unto men once, to die, and that appointment stands. We expect the present rule to last till He shall come who shall destroy the last enemy. We are not troubled with Sadducean doubts. To us, seeing that Christ rose from the dead, it is a matter of certainty that all His followers must rise, also. And seeing that Jesus always lived, it is equally a matter of certainty to us that all the saints are still living, for He has said, "Because I live, you shall live, also." Yet, if no infidelity is permitted to creep into our brain and disturb our belief, it may penetrate into our heart and cause us great sadness. We who believe in Jesus should rise into an atmosphere more clear and warm than that of the sepulcher, for the Lord Jesus has "abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light through the Gospel."

We are not now sitting in the shadow of death, for eternal light has sprung up! Children of God, it is in the highest degree proper that you should think of things as your Father thinks of them—and He says that "all live unto God." Let us correct our phraseology by that of Scripture, and speak of departed saints as Divine Inspiration speaks of them! Then shall we come back to the simple child's talk which Wordsworth so sweetly turned into rhyme—"Master, we are seven," and in our family we shall number brothers, sisters and friends, whose bodies lie in the churchyard and shall speak of those who have crossed the border and passed within the veil as still our own! Like Jesus, we shall say, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps." Like Paul, we shall speak of them as absent from the body but present with the Lord and regard them as part and parcel of the one family in Heaven and earth!

Our text was fashioned in a place which has the air of death, burial and resurrection about it. The voice came to Moses in the desert. This was a strange place for Moses—the living, active, well-instructed mind of Moses, mighty in all the wisdom of Egypt and full of noble thoughts concerning the living God—was buried in a desert. It is singular to see the foremost mind of the age in the remotest part of the desert hidden away among sheep! He who was a born king is, here, feeding a flock. It is death to Moses. Rest assured that Moses cannot be kept in this living tomb—he must rise to life and leadership. While there is a God and a Providence, Moses cannot continue in obscurity. There are certainties wrapped up in him which cannot fail. A man need not be a Prophet to stand at Horeb

and prognosticate that Moses will emerge from the desert and shake Egypt by his resurrection!

While Moses is in the desert, he is thinking about another case of death, burial and resurrection, namely, Israel in Egypt. The people of God, the favored nation of Jehovah with whom He had entered into Covenant, saying, "I will be their God and they shall be My people"—these were in Egypt, ground down by relentless oppression, begrimed with brick dust and black and blue with the blows of taskmasters. It has come to this, that they are compelled to cast their male children into the river and so to be the destroyers of their own race! The children of Israel have become a herd of slaves, yet they are God's elect people, God's favored family! It does not require a Prophet to declare that this death in Egypt cannot last—the elect nation must live and rise and go forth free to serve the Lord! No, Israel, you shall never perish! The voice must yet be heard—"Thus says the Lord, Let My people go, that they may serve Me!"

And so, while Moses in the desert is thinking of Israel in Egypt, he sees a bush, and that bush is all ablaze. An ordinary bush upon the heath needs only to be touched with a match and, in one moment, there is a puff of flame and then all is over—nothing is left but a trace of ashes. Yet here was an extraordinary thing—a bush that continued to burn and was not consumed! Here was life in the midst of death, continuance in the midst of destruction! This was an emblem of God abiding with a people and yet suffering them to live—or of the fires of affliction being rendered harmless to the children of God. He who then spoke to Moses was the God of Life, the God who could sustain in the midst of destruction! He was the God who could preserve even a bush from being devoured by the intense fury of flame! Said I not truly that the surroundings of Moses and the bush all favor a display of life in death and resurrection out of death?

Now we come to the central matter. Out of the midst of the bush there came a Voice, a mysterious and Divine Voice which said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." From this Voice our Divine Lord teaches us to gather this fact—that God's people live when they appear to have been long dead—for He who cannot be the God of the dead, or non-existent, still avows Himself to be the God of the long-buried Patriarchs! Our Lord proved from that utterance at the bush, the continued life of the Lord's chosen and also their resurrection—how did He do this?

I. We will not go straight to the answer, but we will beat about the bush a little, that the reasoning may the more gently enter our minds. I would say, first, that in these words we have A GLORIOUS RELATIONSHIP DECLARED. Moses called the Lord, "The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

The glorious Lord did, at the bush, as good as say, "*These three men have chosen Me to be their God.*" So they had—through the Grace of God they had deliberately chosen to part with their natural kindred in the country of the Chaldees and to journey to a land of which they knew nothing except that God had promised that they should afterwards receive it for an inheritance. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were three very different

characters, yet this was common to the three—that they believed God and took Him to be their God, alone. They nestled in the bosom of Jehovah while the rest of the world went after their idols. In all their troubles, they flew to Jehovah; for the supply of all their needs they resorted to Him, alone. They were men who had, through Divine Grace, deliberately attached themselves unto Jehovah, the Most High, throughout the whole of their lives.

It is a sublime sight to see a man trust in God as Abraham did—and obey the Lord fully as he did in the matter of Isaac, when he accounted God to be able to raise him up, even from the dead. Surely there must be everlasting life in a being who could thus confide in Jehovah! I call you to admire the fact that God called the Patriarchs into the noble position of following the Lord fully, of fixed and settled choice. Being men of like passions with ourselves, they nevertheless cast in their lot with the Lord and for His sake preferred the life of strangers and pilgrims on the earth to the comforts of settled residence in Ur of the Chaldees and to the sinful pleasures of Canaan. We, also, take this God to be our God, even the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. There is a nobility about the choosers of the true God which will surely secure them from annihilation.

Next, these three men had learned to *commune with God*. How wondrously had Abraham spoken with God! Full many a spot was consecrated as “the place where he stood before the Lord.” Isaac also walked in the fields at eventide and, doubtless, there entered into secret fellowship with God. The Lord also appeared unto him at night and led him to build an altar and call upon the name of Jehovah. The good old man, even in his blindness, found solace in communion with the Lord God Almighty. Jacob, also, was favored with heavenly visitations. We can never forget that mystic dream at Bethel, nor the wrestling at Jabbok, nor the many times when he turned to the God of his father Abraham and his father Isaac—and God spoke with him as a man speaks with his friend! It is a wonderful thing that the Lord should thus commune with men. He does not thus show Himself to the beasts which perish. He does not thus reveal Himself to the lifeless stones of the field. Those are strangely honored beings with whom God enters into close communion as He did with these three men! I argue from it that these beings cannot dissolve into a handful of dust and cease to be. Can those eyes cease to be which have seen the Lord? Can these souls perish which have conversed with the Eternal? We think not! And, just now, I ask you only to meditate upon the glories to which the Patriarchs were lifted up when they were permitted to be the Friends of God.

What was still more notable, the Lord *entered into Covenant with them*. He made a Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which He remembered, saying, “Surely, blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply you.” You know how the Lord swore to give unto the seed of Abraham a goodly heritage, a land that flowed with milk and honey. Now, it is a wonderful thing that God should enter into compact with man. Does He make an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, with mere insects of an hour? Especially, would He give His Son Jesus to

die to seal the everlasting Covenant by His heart's blood with mere shadows who are but for a little time and then cease to be? I am sure it is not so. If God makes men capable of entering into an everlasting Covenant with Himself, there lies within that fact the clear suggestion that He imparts to them an existence which is not for today and tomorrow, but for eternity! Still, I wish you mainly to regard the Glory into which manhood is lifted up when God enters into gracious Covenant with it.

Moreover, to go further, these men were not only in Covenant with God, but *they had lived in accordance with that Covenant*. I do not mean that they had lived perfectly in accord with it, but that the main strain of their lives was in conformity with their Covenant relationship to God. For the sake of that Covenant, Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees and dwelt no longer in the land of Haran, but became a sojourner with God in the land of Canaan. For the sake of this, he sent away his firstborn after the flesh, seeing it was said, "In Isaac shall your seed be called." "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." These faithful men had respect to the recompense of the reward and, therefore, they were not mindful of the country from where they came out, neither sought opportunity to return.

Jacob, the most faulty of the three, greatly as he erred in his conduct to his brother Esau, was evidently actuated by an intense faith in the Covenant birthright so that he ventured all things to obtain it. In his old age and death, he was anxious not to be confused with the Egyptians, or separated from the chosen household and, therefore, he said unto Joseph, "But I will lie with my fathers, and you shall carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place." This he made Joseph swear, for he must make sure of it. He was aiming at the promise, despite the errors that he committed in so doing. Now, does God enter into Covenant with men and help men to live in accordance with that Covenant and, after all, shall they miss the blessing? Shall it end in nothing? Hiding beneath the shadow of God's wings, shall they, after all, perish? It cannot be! They must live to whom God is God.

For this was the Covenant, that *they should have God to be their God* and that they should be God's people. O Brothers and Sisters, I do not know how to speak on such a blessing as this, though I live in the daily enjoyment of it! This God is our God. All that the Lord is and all that He can do, He has given over to us, to be used on our behalf—the fullness of His Grace and Truth, the infinity of His Love, the Omnipotence of His Power, the Infallibility of His Wisdom—all, all shall be used on our behalf! The Lord has given Himself over to His people to be their inheritance and, on the other hand, we, poor weak feeble creatures as we are, are taken to be the peculiar treasure of the living God! "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." "The Lord's portion is His people: Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." We are God's heritage, we are God's jewels, we are God's children, we are dear to Him as the apple of His eye! We are to Him as the signet upon His hand and the crown upon His head! He cannot have chosen for His portion a mass of corrup-

tion, or a handful of brown dust—yet that is what the body comes to in death. He cannot have chosen for His heritage that which will melt back into mother earth and be no more found—this cannot be!

The Covenant has within it the sure guarantee of eternal life. Oh what an honor it is that God should even say to you and to me—“I will be your God and you shall be My people. Beyond the angels, beyond Heaven, beyond all My other creatures, I reserve you unto Myself. I have loved you with an everlasting love. I will rest in My love to you. I will rejoice over you with singing.” In this the Lord has highly exalted His covenanted ones and raised them to great nearness to Himself—and thus to glory and honor. What has God worked? What is man that God is thus mindful of him, or the son of man that He thus visits him? Angels are nowhere as compared with men, yes, cherubim with all their burning bliss and consecrated ardor cannot match with men who are in Covenant with God! Blessed above all other beings are those who have Jehovah to be their God and who are, themselves, the Lord’s choice, care and delight! Each one of these points, if well thought out, will go to strengthen our belief that the saints must live, must live forever and are, at this moment, living unto God.

II. We now come to that matter more distinctly under our second head—here is ETERNAL LIFE IMPLIED, for “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

It is implied, first, in *the very fact of the Covenant of Grace*. As I have asked before—Does the eternal God covenant with creatures that shall live only to threescore years and 10 and then shall go out like a candle-snuff? How can He be a God to them? I understand how He can be a helper and a friend to men of brief existence, but I see not how He can be a God. Must they not partake in His eternity if it is truly said, “I will be your God”? How can the Lord be an eternal blessing to an ending being? He has power and He will give me sufficient strength; He has wisdom and He will give me as much of His wisdom as I am capable of receiving. Must He not, also, cause me to partake of His immortality? How is He a God to me if He suffers me to be blotted out of existence? When David said in dying, “Yet has He made with me an everlasting Covenant,” his comfort lay in his belief that he should live in the everlasting age to enjoy the fruit of that Covenant. How could there be an everlasting Covenant with a creature who would cease to exist?

But next, *this Covenant was made up of promises of a very peculiar order* for, in very deed, the Covenant that God made with Abraham was not altogether, or even mainly, concerning things temporal. It was not only the land of Canaan of which the Lord spoke to Abraham, but the Patriarchs declared plainly that they desired “a better, that is, an heavenly country” (Heb. 11:16). Even when they were in Canaan, they were still looking for a country—and the city promised to them was not Jerusalem for, according to Paul in the 11th of the Hebrews, they still were looking for “a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” They did not find, in their earthly lives, the complete fulfillment of the Covenant, for they received not the promises, but saw them afar off and were persuaded of them. The temporal blessings which God gave to them were not their ex-

pected portion—they took hold upon invisible realities and lived in expectation of them!

They were evidently actuated by faith in something *spiritual*, something *everlasting* and they believed that the Covenant which God had made with them concerned such things. I have not the time to go into this subject. You get it more fully explained to you in the Epistle to the Hebrews—but so it was, that the Covenant blessings were of an order and a class that could not be compassed within the space of this present mortal life—the outlook of Covenant promises was towards the boundless sea of eternity. Now, if the Lord made a Covenant with them concerning eternal blessings, these saints must live to enjoy those blessings. God did not promise endless blessings to the creatures of a day.

More especially, Beloved, it is to be remembered that *for the sake of these eternal things, the Patriarchs had given up transient enjoyments*. Abraham might have been a quiet prince in his own country, living in comfort, but, for the sake of the spiritual blessing, he left Chaldea and came to wander in the pastures of Canaan—in the midst of enemies—and to dwell in tents in the midst of discomforts. Isaac and Jacob were “heirs with him, also, of the same promises,” but they entered not into the pursuits of the people—they dwelt alone and were not numbered among the nations. Like Moses, to whom God spoke, they, “counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.”

They left kith and kin and all the advantages of settled civilized life to be rangers of the desert, exiles from their fatherland. They were the very types and models of those who have no abiding city here and, therefore, for certain, though they died in hope, not having received the promise, we cannot believe that God deceived them! Their God was no mocker of them and, therefore, they must live after death! They had lived in this poor life for something not seen as yet and, if there is no such thing and no future life, they had been duped and misled into a mistaken self-denial. If there is no life to come, the best philosophy is that which says, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Since these men put this life in pawn for the next, they were sadly mistaken if there is no such life. Do you not see the force of our Savior’s reasoning?—God, who has led His people to abandon the present for the future—must justify their choice.

Besides, *the Lord had staked His honor and His reputation upon these men’s lives*. “Do you want to know,” says He, “who I am? I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. If you want to know how I deal with My servants, go and look at the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” My Brothers and Sisters, as far as the earthly lives of the Patriarchs can be written in human records, they are certainly full of God’s loving kindness—but still, there is nothing so remarkably joyous and majestic about them from a natural point of view as to make the Lord’s dealings with them appear to be especially wonderful. Others who did not fear God have been as rich, powerful and honorable as they. Especially is the life of Jacob plowed and cross-plowed with affliction and trial! He spoke the truth when he summed up his life in the words, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.”

Does the Lord intend us to judge of His goodness to His servants from the written life of Jacob? Or from the career of *any one* of His servants? The judgement must include the ages of an endless blessedness! This life is but the brief preface to the volume of our history! It is but the rough border, the selvage of the rich cloth of our being! These rippling streams of life come not to an end, but flow into the endless, shoreless ocean of bliss! Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have long been enjoying happiness and shall enjoy it throughout eternity! God is not ashamed to be called their God if you judge of the whole of their being—He would not have spoken thus if the visible were all and there were no future to counterbalance the tribulations of this mortal life! God is not the God of the short-lived who are so speedily dead—He is the *living* God of an immortal race whose present is but a dark passage into a bright future which can never end!

Yet further, to bring out the meaning here, *God cannot be the God of the non-existent*. The supposition is too absurd! Our Savior does not argue about it, but He says so most peremptorily! God is not the God of the dead—that cannot be! If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are reduced to a handful of ashes, God cannot be, at this moment, their God. We cannot take a dead object to be our God, neither can Jehovah be a God to lifeless clay. God is not the God of putrefaction and annihilation! God is not the God of that which has ceased to be! We have but to put the idea into words to make it dissolve before the glance of reason. A living God is the God of living men—and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive!

This even goes far to show that the *bodies* of these saints shall yet live. God reckons His covenanted ones to be alive. He says, “The dead are raised.” He reckons them to be raised and, as He reckons nothing falsely, it is said by way of anticipation, “Your dead men shall live.” Inasmuch as a portion of these chosen ones is still in the earth, God, who reckons things that are not, as though they were, looks upon their bodies as possessing life because they are to possess life so soon. God is not only the God of Abraham’s soul, but of Abraham as a whole—his body, soul and spirit! God is the God of Abraham’s body—we are sure of that because the Covenant seal was set upon the flesh of Abraham. Where the doubt might be, there is the confirming seal, namely, in his mortal body. There was no seal set upon his soul, for the soul had life and could not see death—no, it was set upon his body which would die—to make sure that even *it* would live!

At this day we have Baptism and the Holy Supper to be seals as to the body. I have sometimes thought to myself that it were better if there were no water Baptism, seeing it has become the nest of so much superstition. And the Lord’s Supper, with all its blessed uses, has been so abused that one is apt to think that without outward ordinances there might be more *spiritual* religion—but the Lord intends that the materialism of man and of creation shall be lifted up—and that the body shall be raised incorruptible and, therefore, has He given seals which touch the outward and material. The water where the body is washed and the bread and wine whereby the body is nourished, are tokens that there comes to us not only spiritual and invisible blessings, but even such as shall redeem and purify our

mortal body! The grave cannot hold any portion of the covenanted ones! Eternal life is the portion of the whole man. God is the God of our entire manhood—spirit, soul and body—and all live unto Him in their entirety. The whole of the Covenant shall be fulfilled to the whole of those with whom that Covenant was made!

This is good reasoning to those who have gone beyond mere reason and have ascended into the realm of faith. May the Holy Spirit grant unto us to be among them!

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, beloved Friends, my text not only declares glorious relationship and implies eternal life, but it also unveils somewhat scantily, but still sufficiently, what the glorious life must be! Look, then, and see the GLORIOUS LIFE UNVEILED!

It is clear that they live *personally*. It is not said, “I am the God of the whole body of the saints in one mass.” But, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.” God will make His people to live *individually*. My mother, my father, my child—each will *personally* exist. God is the God of saints, as living distinct lives—Abraham is Abraham, Isaac is Isaac, Jacob is Jacob! The three Patriarchs were not all melted into one common Abraham, nor Isaac into one imaginary Isaac. Neither was anyone so altered as to cease to be himself. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are all literally living as actual men—and the same men as they used to be. Jacob is Jacob and not an echo of Abraham! Isaac is Isaac and not a rehearsal of Jacob. All the saints are existent in their personality, identity, distinction and idiosyncrasy.

What is more, the Patriarchs are *mentioned by their names* and so it is clear they are known—they are not three anonymous bodies—but Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Many inquire, “Shall we know our friends in Heaven?” Why should we not? The saints in Heaven are never spoken of in Scripture as moving about anonymously—their names are spoken of as written in the Book of Life. Why is this? The Apostles knew Moses and Elijah on the Mount, though they had never seen them before. I cannot forget old John Ryland’s answer to his wife—“John,” she said, “will you know me in Heaven?” “Betty,” he replied, “I have known you well, here, and I shall not be a bigger fool in Heaven than I am now—therefore I shall certainly know you there.” That seems to be clear enough! We read in the New Testament, “They shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven”—not sit down with three unknown individuals in iron masks, or three impersonalities who make a part of the great *pan*, nor three spirits who are as exactly alike as pins made in a factory—but Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That is clear enough in the text.

That glorious life, while it is a personal and a known life, is also *free from all sorrow*, misery and earthly grossness. They are neither married nor given in marriage; neither shall they die any more. But they are as the angels of God. It is a life of perfect blessedness, a life of hallowed worship, a life of undivided Glory! Oh, that we were in it! Oh that we may soon reach it! Let us think of the many who are enjoying it now and of those who have attained to it during the last few days. I am sure they are at home in every golden street and fully engaged in the adoration and wor-

ship of their Lord. Those saints who have been in Glory, now, these thousands of years cannot be more blessed than the latest arrivals. Within a very short space you and I shall be among the shining ones! Some of us may spend our next Sabbath with the angels! Let us rejoice and be glad at the bare thought of it. Some of us are not doomed to live here through another winter—we shall pass beyond these autumn fogs into the golden light of the eternal summer before another Christmas day has come! Oh the joy which ought to thrill our souls at the thought of such amazing bliss!

And now, taking the whole subject together, I want to say a few familiar things about the influence which all this ought to have upon us. Concerning those that have gone before us, we gather from this whole text that *they are not lost*. We know where they are. Neither have they lost anything, for they are what they were and more. Abraham has about him still everything that is Abrahamic. He is still Abraham. And Isaac has everything about him that properly belongs to Isaac. And Jacob has all about him that makes him God's Israel. These good men have lost nothing that really appertained to their individuality, nothing that made them precious in the sight of the Lord. They have infinitely *gained*—they have gloriously *developed*! They are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob now at their best—or rather they are waiting till the trumpet of the Resurrection shall sound—when their bodies also shall be united to their spirits—and then Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be *completely* Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, world without end!

We are, by no means, deprived of our dear ones by their death—they *are*—they are themselves and they are still ours. As Abraham is not lost to Isaac, nor to Jacob, nor to God, nor to himself, so are our beloved ones, by no means, lost to us. Do not let us think of them, then, as if they were lost. I know your sorrows make an excursion to the grave, to look for the deceased ones. You want to lift that coffin lid and to unwrap the shroud. Oh, do not, do not! He is not here; the real man has gone. He may be dead to you, for a while, but he lives unto God. Yes, the dead one lives! He lives unto God! Do but anticipate the passage of that little time, which is almost gone while I am speaking of it, and then your Savior's angels shall sound their golden trumpets and at the welcome noise, the grave shall open its portals and resign its captives. "Your brother shall rise again." Comfort one another with these words! Shaftesbury is as much Shaftesbury as ever and even more so! We have parted with the Earl, but the saint lives! He has gone past yonder veil into the next room and there he is, before the Lord of Hosts! He has gone out of this dim, dusky, cloudy chamber into the bright, pearly light that streams from the Throne of God and of the Lamb! We have nothing to sorrow about in reference to what he is or where he is. So, too, your valued parents and beloved children and choice friends—they are still yours!

Herein is great cause for thankfulness. Put aside your sackcloth and wear the garments of hope! Lay down the sackbut and take up the trumpet! Draw not the beloved bodies to the cemetery with dreary pomp and with black horses, but cover the coffin with sweet flowers and drape the

horses with emblems of hope! It is the better birthday of the saint, yes, his truer wedding day! Is it sad to have done with sadness? Is it sorrowful to part with sorrow? No, rather, when joy begins to our friends, where Glory dwells in Immanuel's land, we may in sympathy sing, as it were, a new song, and tune our harps to the melodies of the glorified!

I want you, also, to remember that *the departed have not become members of another race*—they have not been transferred into another family—they are still men, still women, still of our dear kindred. Their names are in the same family register on earth and in Heaven. Oh, no, no! Do not *dream* that they are separated and exiled! They have gone to the Home country—we are the exiles—they are Home! We are *en route* to the Fatherland—they are not so far from us as we think. Sin worked to divide them from us and us from them while we were here, together, but since sin is now taken away from them, one dividing element is gone! When it is also removed from us, we shall be nearer to each other than we could have been while we were both sinful! Do not let us think of them as gone far, for we are one in Christ.

And *they are not gone over to the other side in the battle*. Oh, do not speak of them as dead and lying on the battle-field! They live, they live in sympathy with our Divine conflict. They have marched through the enemy's country. They have fought their fight and taken possession of their inheritance. They are still on our side, though we miss them from the daily service. When you number up the hosts of God, you must not forget the godlike bands that have fought the good fight, kept the faith, and finished their course. They are in the armies of the Lord, though not at this moment resisting unto blood. The 144,000 sealed unto the Lord include in their ranks all who are with God, whether here or in Heaven—

***“One family we dwell in Him,
One Church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of Death.”***

Our sacramental host marches onward to the New Jerusalem. Certain of the legionaries have forded the dividing flood. I see them ascending the other side! The bank of the river is white with their rising companies. Lo! I hear the splash of the ranks before us as they steadily pass down into the chill stream! In deep silence we see them solemnly wading through the billows. The host is ever marching on, marching on. The much dreaded stream lies a little before us—it is but a silver streak. We have come to the bank. We shudder not at the prospect! We follow the blessed footsteps of our Lord and His redeemed. We are still all one army—we are not losing our men—they are simply ascending from the long campaign to take their endless rewards at the Lord's right hand!

What then? Why, then *we will take up their work*. If they have gone into the upper chamber to rest, we will make up their lack of service in this lower room! The work they did was so human that we will not allow a stitch to drop, but take it up where they left it and persevere in earnest. They are in Glory, but they were not glorified when they were *here*. The work they did was done by men of such infirmities as ours, so let us not fear to go on where they left off and perpetuate the work which they re-

joiced in! There lies the plow in the furrow and the oxen are standing still, for Shamgar, the champion, is gone. Will no one lay hold of the plow handles? Will nobody urge the oxen with the goad? Young men, are you idling? Here is work for you! Are you hiding yourselves? Come forward, I pray you, in the name of the great Husbandman, and let the fields be tilled and sown with the good seed! Who will fill the gap made by death? Who will be baptized for the dead? Who will bear the banner, now that a standard bearer has fallen? I hope some consecrated voice will answer, "Here am I; send me!"

Now, last of all, Brothers and Sisters, *we may expect the same assistance as they received who have gone before*. Jehovah says that He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. But He also says, "I am the God of your father." The father of Moses had the Lord to be his God! That God is the God of my father, blessed be His name! As I took the old man by his hand, yesterday, at the age of 76, I could not but rejoice in all the faithfulness of the Lord to him and to his house. He was the God of my father's father, also—I cannot forget how the venerable man laid his hands upon his grandchild and blessed him—and the blessing is with him still. Yes, and He is the God of my children and He shall be the God of my children's children, for He keeps Covenant to thousands of them that love Him! Therefore take courage, Brothers and Sisters! This God is *your* God! He is a God to you and you are a people to Him!

Act as His true servants. Live as those who are elect. If you are His choice, be choice characters! The chosen should be the best, should they not? The elect should be especially distinguished above all others by their conversation and their fervent zeal for Him that chose them. As you shall rise from among the dead because the Lord Jesus has redeemed you from among men, so stand up from among the dead and corrupt mass of this world—and be alive unto God—through Jesus Christ your Lord! What manner of people ought you to be who serve the living God? Since the living God has manifested Himself so wonderfully to you, ought you not to live unto Him to the utmost? God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Exodus 3:1-10; Luke 20:27-30.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—855, 852, 814.

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JOYFUL ANTICIPATION OF THE SECOND ADVENT NO. 2496

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 20, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 23, 1885.

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near. And He spoke to them a parable, Behold this fig tree and all the trees. When they are budding, you see and know, yourselves, that summer is now near. So likewise, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near.”
Luke 21:28-31.

I have already said that I conceive our Lord Jesus Christ to have regarded the destruction of Jerusalem as “the beginning of the end.” Although some 1800 years have rolled away since that terrible event, we, with Him, may make but small account of the interval and regard it all as one dispensation of passing away. That beautiful city was the very crown of the entire earth because God had dwelt there. It may be compared to the diamond in a ring, the jewel whose setting was the whole world—and when that jewel was destroyed and God did, as it were, grind it to powder—it was a warning that the ring, itself, would, by-and-by, be crushed and consumed, for “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” The destruction of Jerusalem was, so to speak, the rolling up of the curtain on the great drama of the world’s doom. It will not fall again until all the things that we now see shall have passed away and only the things that cannot be shaken—the things of God and of eternity, *which we cannot see*—shall remain.

Moreover, I think that from this chapter, if we are to understand it all—and it is confessedly very difficult to comprehend—we must regard the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple as being a kind of rehearsal of what is yet to be. God’s long-suffering was displayed with Israel for centuries. The rebellious tribes had ample space for repentance. They had even been carried away into captivity and, by the Lord’s gracious loving kindness, they had struggled back again. Yet, only changing the form of their apostasy, they continued to wander away from God. They were bent on backsliding from Jehovah even when their idols were all destroyed and the seed of Abraham had come to hate every sort of symbol and image! Yet, then, they began to set up other kinds of idols in the traditions of the fathers, and the inventions of the scribes. Thus they lost the spirit of Divine teaching in the mere letter of it and became

only formalists when they ceased to be idolaters, for, mind you, the truth, if it is dead, has no more virtue in it than falsehood has.

When the Spirit of God is gone out of that which, in itself, is right, it becomes often a cover wherein a thousand evils conceal themselves. So, at last, God's long-suffering had come to an end and, according to *current tradition*, there was a sound as of the moving of wings in the Holy Place at Jerusalem and it is reported that one priest, who stood to officiate at the altar, heard the solemn sentence, "Let Us go hence," for God was about to leave His Temple. That Temple had already torn its veil from top to bottom for very shame at what had been done to the Lord's Christ—and now the fabric, itself, must be consumed with fire, even in spite of the order of the Roman emperor. With all his power, he could not save it from ruin, and so completely was the city destroyed that Zion was plowed as a field and the very site of the Temple was, for many a day, a question in dispute.

Ah, my Friends, this was a picture—a faint picture—of what shall be the case when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again! Then, all external religion—if it is but external—shall perish in the fire and only the spiritual and the true shall live. "For, behold, the day comes that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble and the day that comes shall burn them up," as it was, with the Temple fabric! In the day that is coming, only that shall endure upon which fire can have no power. Only that shall stand which is God's own eternal Truth. So, then, I regard that destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple as the beginning of the end, and also as the rehearsal of what is yet to be.

The times before the destruction of Jerusalem were terrible to the last degree. If you have read Josephus, you cannot but feel your heart bleed for the poor Jews. They were utterly infatuated. They were so carried away with heroic madness that they fought against the Romans with a desperate valor after the city had been surrounded. Never upon this earth were there braver or more fanatical spirits than were those who were cooped up within those city walls. When they were weary with fighting the Romans, they turned their swords and their daggers against one another, being divided into sects and parties who hated each other with the utmost fury. Jerusalem was a cauldron, a boiling pot, seething full of all manner of evil, mischief and misery. The land was devoured before the Roman armies. Everybody seemed to be either driven from the country, or else to be left dead around the city walls. They crucified the Jews in such numbers that they left off doing it because they could find no more wood upon which to nail them! Those who were taken captive were sold for slaves till a penny was refused as their price—they literally sold them for a pair of shoes! The precious sons of God, as the Prophet said, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen pitchers, cracked and broken—and only worthy to be thrown on the dunghill.

But all the time—the most awful time, perhaps, that any nation ever endured—the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ were altogether unharmed! It is recorded that they fled to the little city of Pella, were quiet according to their Master's command and not a hair of their head perished. Indeed, it was to them a time of redemption, for the persecution

which the Jews had carried on *against them* had been exceedingly cruel, but now there was a pause. The Jews' miseries were so great that they had no care nor thought for the poor Christians! They, at least, were secure—they looked up and lifted up their heads, for their Master's prophecy was verified—and the full force of the curse fell upon those who had cried to Pilate, "His blood be on us and on our children."

Now, dear Friends, it will be just so at the last. I am not about to enter into any prophecies of what is yet to be, but here are the Master's own words—"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great Glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near."

That is my subject, dear Friends, and we will consider, first, *the terrible time in which this precept is to be carried out*. "Look up, and lift up your heads." Secondly, *the remarkable precept itself*. "Look up, and lift up your heads." And thirdly, *the encouraging parable* which is given in order to induce us to look up and lift up our heads. "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they are budding, you see and know, yourselves, that summer is now near. So likewise, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near."

I. First, then, here is A TERRIBLE TIME in which we are told to look up and lift up our heads.

It is evidently to be a time of *fearful national trouble*. And if such times should ever come in our days—if there should ever arrive times that are worthy to be compared with the destruction of Jerusalem—here is the Master's word to us, "When you shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end will not come immediately." Should great wars occur, as they certainly will, there is nothing in them to terrify the Christian! Should they even come to your own doors, it is not for Believers in Christ ever to be the victims of a scare. Whatever may happen, what is there for them to fear? The Savior gives them this precept for a time when it will be impossible for them to carry it out unless it is by faith in Him—"Look up, and lift up your heads." Whatever chastisements shall befall the nations, you shall be secure in following to the full, the principles of peace that your Master has enjoined upon you.

Further, this precept is given, not only in times of fearful national trouble, but also in times of *awful physical signs and wonders in the world*—"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." It may be a season of preternatural darkness, or the solar system may be disturbed so that the stars of Heaven, which have been fixed for centuries, shall fall like unripe fruit from the trees, or as the withered leaves of autumn are scattered by the stormy blast. You know that when there is some phenomenon such as no one has ever seen before, how frightened people are! But suppose there should be visible in the heavens manifestations such as have never been seen, yet even at such times the

children of God are to look up and lift up their heads! And if they should not merely be in the heavens, but if the earth, also, should shake and tremble—if that which is supposed to be most stable should become most fickle—yet even *then* we are to look up and lift up our heads.

And if the sea and the waves thereof should roar in a manner altogether unusual, so that landsmen should hear the noise afar off, or if, being out at sea, ourselves, the waves should run mountains high and the vessel should threaten to sink to the bottom, yet this is still the precept for the worst of times that are supposable—“When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads.” Even in such a trying time as that, take up the language of the 46th Psalm and say, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”

“Nature cannot rise to that height,” says one. No, I know it cannot—but Divine Grace can! “I cannot rise to it,” says one. Perhaps you cannot, but there is One who can raise you up to it, and it is He, Himself, who bids you to rise. “Then,” says Jesus, “when these things begin to come to pass, *then* look up, and lift up your heads.”

This terrible time which our Lord describes is, in addition, a time of *universal alarm*—“Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken.” You know that fear is contagious—when one person trembles, many begin to feel the same sort of tremor. And when all the people, wherever we shall go, at home or abroad, shall be in distress—when everywhere the hearts of men shall seem to die within them, or turn, as it were, to stone, so that they cannot act or move, like those who guarded the tomb of Christ, when they saw Him rise, were as dead men—if it should ever come to that and there should be a general panic, then you who have Christ for your Master, God for your Father, eternity for your heritage and Heaven for your home—even then you may “look up, and lift up your heads.”

You ask, perhaps, “How shall we do that?” You cannot do it without your Lord. With God, all things are possible. In Christ, you can do all things. Without Him you can do nothing. If you live away from your Lord and Master, in those days of terror that are yet to come, your hearts will quail for fear, and you will be like other men. If you run with them, you shall fear with them. If your strength is where *their* strength is, you shall be as weak as they are! But if you have learned to look up, why, even in those stormy times you shall keep to the habit of looking up! And if you have learned to lift your heads above the world, you shall keep to the habit of lifting up your heads! If your portion is in Heaven, it shall not be shaken when the earth rocks and reels to its very foundations. If your treasure is in Heaven, then your treasure shall not be lost.

If God is with you, you can stand between the very jaws of death, or in the center of Hell, itself, and feel no fear! With Christ by your side, you may be as calm amid the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds, as

your Lord, Himself, is in His Glory. He can work even this in you if you but cast yourself on Him and live wholly to Him.

Once more, the time when we are to be thus calm and quiet, and to look up, and lift up our heads, is to be at *the coming judgment*. My dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever I might say to you about the calamities that are yet to come upon the earth. Whatever description I might give of wars, earthquakes and storms—if I were to make each word as black as night and each sentence as sharp as a killing sword—yet could I not fully describe the final scene when the Lord, Himself, shall come in all the pomp and splendor of the last dread assize! No human tongue can tell, as no human heart can imagine the terrors of that tremendous day, especially the sight of the once-crucified King when He appears seated upon His Great White Throne, and when the summons shall ring out—

“Come to judgment!

Come to judgment, come away!”

when the grave shall not conceal the unnumbered dead, nor even the depths of the ocean suffice for a hiding place from Him that sits upon the Throne, for all shall be gathered before Him! Every eye shall see Him and they, also, that pierced Him. You will be there, my Friend! You will be there as certainly as you are here!

O you who are without Christ, all the fear and dread you have ever had in this life will be as *nothing* compared with the alarm and terror of that day! Your fears, when you have been laid low with fever, and have been near to death’s door, will be but as child’s play compared with what you will feel at that tremendous day which is soon to come! Yet Christ says to His people, concerning even that time of terror, “Look up, and lift up your heads.” There is nothing for you who have put your trust in Him, to ever fear! It is your Judge who is coming, but He comes to acquit you and to exhibit you to the assembled universe clad in His own righteousness which you already wear. He who is coming is your Lord, your Friend, your Bridegroom! He who has sworn to deliver you is coming to call your body from the grave and to raise you up to dwell together with Him forever. That day of Christ’s appearing shall be to you a morning of the ringing out of harps and a time of joyous shouts and blissful songs—

“There shall be weeping, there shall be weeping,

At the Judgment Seat of Christ,”

but not for you who are in Him! It shall be your joy day, your wedding day, the brightest day in all your history!—

“When these things begin to come to pass,

Then look up, and lift up your heads.”

I must leave this first point concerning the terrible time when this precept is to be carried out by reminding you that when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come, the heavens shall tell us—“There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.” The earth shall tell us, for upon the earth there shall be “distress of nations, with perplexity.” The sea shall tell us, for the sea and the waves thereof shall roar. Men shall tell us, for men’s hearts shall fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. And then, as all these voices shall proclaim His coming, our own eyes shall tell us, for they shall see “the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great Glory.” “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” And

in anticipation of that glorious day, each Believer can say with the Patriarch Job, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”

II. Now I come to THE REMARKABLE PRECEPT itself—“Then look up, and lift up your heads.”

My dear Brothers and Sisters, there are some Christian people who seem to think that it is almost wicked to look up, and lift up their heads. When they come before God, their cry is, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.” Well, but surely a true child of God gets above that condition! He is a sinner, it is true and, as far as he is a sinner, he is unhappy, but still, he has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit! He has been washed in the blood of the Lamb! He has been adopted into the family of God—surely there is some nobler note for him to reach than that doleful dirge! If, amid plague and pestilence, or amid earthquakes and storms and wars, we are to look up, and lift up our heads, that ought to be our daily attitude—

**“Why does your face, you humble souls,
Those mournful colors wear?
What doubts are these that waste your faith,
And nourish your despair?”**

Listen to your Lord’s gracious command—“Look up, and lift up your heads.” What does this precept mean? First, it implies *an absence of fear*. “Perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment.” He that fears is not made perfect in love. What cause has a Christian for fear? What is there that can harm the man whom God loves? Will He trample on His child, or allow anyone else to hurt him? No, for “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” The sun and moon and stars. The earth and the seas. Wars and pestilences all work together for good to God’s dear children. Let us therefore cast out all fear!

This precept, surely, also means *the removal of all grief*. While the Christian is here, there will always be more than enough to make him grieve as a man, but there will also always be Grace in Christ to wipe every tear away. We are born to grief, but then, we are also *born again*, so we must not give way to weeping more than is right. We must not be overburdened with sorrow, lest we become like a drunk man. It is as evil to be drunk out of the bitter cup of affliction as out of the sweet cup of sinful pleasure. Let us put away our sorrow, grief and misery, and say with the Prophet Habakkuk, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

“Look up, and lift up your heads.” This precept of our Lord seems to me to be very wonderful because it does not merely mean that there is to be in Believers no fear and no grief, but that *even in the worst times we are to show the signs of joy*. This expression implies to me signs and tokens of an outward kind—“Look up, and lift up your heads.” Our Lord seems to say to us, “Now fly your flags and ring your bells! Let your

hearts be exceedingly glad—so joyous that those who look at you cannot help seeing your happiness. “Look up, and lift up your heads.” Let there be no looking down because the earth is quaking and shaking, but let there be a looking *up* because you are going to rise from it! No looking down because the graves are opening—why should you look down? You will quit the grave, never more to die. “Lift up your heads.” The time for you to hang your heads, like bulrushes, is already over and will certainly be over when the Lord is coming and your redemption draws near! Therefore, “look up, and lift up your heads.”

It will be an amazing sight when Jesus comes again! It must have been an amazing sight when Jerusalem was destroyed, but the true Christian knew all that was going to happen. And all that *did* happen, terrible as it was, was only a confirmation of his faith and a fulfillment of his Lord’s prophecies. So shall it be when, at the Last Great Day, we walk among the sons of men calmly and serenely! They will marvel at us. They will say to us, “How is it that you are so joyous? We are all alarmed, our hearts are failing us for fear.” And we shall take up our wedding hymn, our marriage song, “The Lord is come! The Lord is come! Hallelujah!” The burning earth shall be the flaming torch to light up the wedding procession! The quivering of the heavens shall be, as it were, but as the dancing of the feet of angels in those glorious festivities! And the booming and crashing of the elements shall, somehow, only help to swell the outburst of praise to God, the Just and Terrible, who is to us our exceeding joy!

I cannot speak as I would upon this glorious theme, but I think I catch some of our Master’s meaning when He said, “Then look up, and lift up your heads.” Did He not mean that then, and always, Christians are to be filled with *an inward peace* and with a *holy expectancy* mixed with it? Whatever happens, all is well with the righteous! I know not what is to be, nor do I wish to know, but I do know that all is well and that all shall be well forever and ever. “Look up, and lift up your heads,” Beloved, for it is better than before. There is something brighter and more joyful coming than we have ever yet known! All our earthly bliss is but as the vestibule of our eternal delights. The Lord’s Kingdom is yet small and feeble, apparently, but it is to be world-wide and He, Himself, is to be manifested in His Glory! Therefore, let us look up, and lift up our heads. Look up for Him who is coming! Look up for Him who has already come! Lift up your eyes to the hills, from where your help comes “Look up, and lift up your heads.” It seems to me as if the text, itself, is quite enough to make you march to the strains of martial music straight away to victory! Come, let us be a band of men and women who fully trust our Lord and, who henceforth say farewell to doubt and trembling! “Look up, and lift up your heads.”

III. Our text finishes with A PARABLE TO ENCOURAGE US TO OBEY THE PRECEPT—“Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they are budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is near.”

First, notice the *signs* mentioned in this parable. Summer is the time of the bursting of buds, the unfolding of flowers, the forming and ripening of the fruit. There may come many a shower in the spring, but that will not hinder the arrival of summer—it will rather help summer to come! It may be cold and chill beneath the black cloud that hovers over

us for a while, but that will not hinder summer. “April showers bring forth May flowers.” All these things are the tokens of the summer’s coming. So, Brothers and Sisters, when you are in trouble, expect that you are going to have a blessing! When you are passing through a great trial, look out, for there is another sign that summer is coming! Do not fear to look up, and lift up your heads, for—

**“The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”**

“Look up, and lift up your heads.” I wish we could get into the habit of believing that every time of need, every time of pain, every time of depression is but the commencement of a season of blessing! “Though now, for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations,” remember that the Lord’s objective in this experience is “that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found to praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Therefore, as you look at the black buds on the tree of your life, say to yourself, “I wonder what bright flower is coming out there!” Look at the dark bulbs, without any beauty at all in them, which we put into the ground, yet the flowers which come out of them are charming and fragrant. So, when God plants some black bulbs in the garden of your soul, do not cry out because of their ugliness, but look for the flowers that shall, in due time, appear—and expect something beautiful from God’s sowing!

Yes, and if again the heavens should be darkened, the earth should shake, the sea should roar, kingdoms should be dissolved and pestilence should slay its myriads, yet still “look up, and lift up your heads.” Your Master bids you do so! He, the Crucified, who made a coronet of beauty out of the crown of thorns. He who is bedecked today with jewels which are the scars of His own suffering. He whose very Glory it is that He once died—He it is who would have you see, in all the trials of the present hour, tokens of the benediction that is yet to come! Therefore, “look up, and lift up your heads.”

Further, the signs mentioned in this parable tell of *certainty*. When the trees are in bloom, hastening to display their leaves, there may come a frost, there may come many cold days—there will certainly come rough winds and clouds—but the summer will come along in due time. Every day will bring it nearer. All the devils in Hell cannot keep the spring from going on to summer, it is not possible! The forces of nature are so ordained by God that the trees must come to their perfection at the crowning of the year and, in like manner, the signs that God gives to His people, though they may not always seem promising, are very sure.

Have you trusted in Christ? Then, to you He has given peace and joy! Are you still trusting Him and will you continue to hang only upon Him and to trust wholly in Him? Then, your righteousness shall break forth as brightness and your salvation as a lamp that burns! The Lord will light your candle. The night may be very long, but the morning must come when the Sun of Righteousness shall rise upon you with healing in His wings, and you shall “go out and grow up as the calves of the stall.”

As for the coming of our Divine Master and the triumph of everything that is right and true. As to the fulfillment of His Covenant and the perfecting of all His everlasting purposes. As for the salvation of His elect and redeemed ones, Heaven and earth may pass away, but His Word shall not pass away till every jot and tittle of it shall be fulfilled! God is *with* you, God is *in* you—who can stand against Him? Trust in the Lord, even in the mighty God of Jacob, and you shall never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end! Go your way, and say, “All is well, for it is in my Father’s hands; therefore will I look up, and lift up my head.”

And as for you who are *not* His people, begin to look out for a place to hide yourselves, for Christ is coming! O you earthworms, begin to look for the holes into which you will wish to creep to hide yourselves! I wish that you would so look out for a hiding place that you would find one in that Man who presents Himself as the best hiding place for every sinner who will trust Him. God bring you all to find refuge in Christ! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 21.**

Luke 1-6. *And He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw, also, a certain poor widow casting in her two mites. And He said, Of a truth I say to you, that this poor widow has cast in more than they all: for all these have, of their abundance, cast in to the offerings of God: but she of her penury has cast in all the living that she had. And as some spoke of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, As for these things which you behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* This was literally true of the Temple at Jerusalem and, today, there remains nothing of it. It is also true of all earthly buildings and of all earthly things. However firm they appear to be, as though they might outlast the centuries, themselves, yet the things which are seen are temporal and, like the baseless fabric of a vision, they shall all melt into thin air and pass away. “The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

7. *And they asked Him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?* Those questions are always being asked. They are being asked at this very day about Christ’s Second Coming. They shall have no answer, for Christ, Himself, assures us that as the Son of Man, He knew not the day nor the hour of His own coming. As the Son of God He knew all things, but as a Man like ourselves, He was willing to be a know-nothing upon that point.

8. *And He said, Take heed that you are not deceived: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: go you not therefore after them.* This passage refers, in the first place, to the siege of Jerusalem and in its second and yet fuller meaning, to the coming of the Lord. It looks to me that our Lord regarded the destruction of Jerusalem as “the beginning of the end,” the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And, as before the destruction of Jerusalem there were many false Christs, so will there be more of them the nearer the end of the world

shall be. This shall be to us one of the tokens of our Lord's speedy appearing, but we shall not be deceived thereby. "Take heed that you are not deceived: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: go you not therefore after them."

9. *But when you shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass; but the end will not come immediately.* Everywhere throughout the Scriptures there is this double message of our Lord—"Watch, for I may come at any moment. Expect Me to come, and to come soon; yet never be terrified as though the time were immediately at hand, for there are certain events which must occur before My Advent." How to reconcile these two thoughts, I do not know and I do not care to know. I would like to be found in that condition which consists in part of watching and in the other part of patiently waiting and working till Christ appears.

10, 11. *Then said He to them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great sights shall there be from Heaven.* Someone says, perhaps, "All this we have had, times without number, yet Christ has not come." Just so, for these signs are not sent to minister to our *curiosity*, but to keep us always on the watch. And whenever we mark these earthquakes, wars, famines and pestilences, then are we to think, "Behold, He comes," and watch the more earnestly! You know how it is often with the man who is very sick. It is reported that he cannot last long. You call many times, yet he is still living—do you, therefore, conclude that he will not die? No, but you more certainly expect that he will soon be gone. So is it with Christ's Second Advent. He bids us note the signs of His coming, and yet, when some of those signs appear, He does not come—all this is to keep us still on the alert watching for Him. Even in His own day, when He so spoke that His servants expected Him to come at once, yet He also added words from which they might fairly judge that He would *not* come directly.

12-16. *But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it shall turn out for you an occasion for testimony. Settle it, therefore, in your hearts, not to meditate before what you shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.* Nowadays, the fashion is always to meditate, and think, and excogitate a gospel for yourself. To be a *thinker*—that is the very crown of perfection to some minds—but it is not so according to our Master's mind! His servants are to speak not their own thoughts, but His thoughts! If they will keep to His Gospel, He will give them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. We are to be the *repeaters* of a message which is given to us, not the manufacturers of tidings! There is to be an exhibition of inventions very soon and it is quite right and proper that there should be, but I pray that none of us may ever be the inventors of a new Gospel, or of new doctrines, or of new systems of theology, but, on the contrary, let us settle it in our hearts that we will speak Christ's Word all our days! And if thereby we are brought

into trouble, we will depend upon Him to give us a mouth and wisdom which all our adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

16. *And you shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.* How true that has been many a time! For how long a period the saints were martyred! And the days of martyrdom are not yet over.

17, 18. *And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.* During all the terrible siege of Jerusalem, it is believed that not one Christian perished, for God took special care of the followers of His Son. They were the most hated of all men, yet nobody could touch them! None of them took up arms, for it was contrary to their religion as, indeed, if we are Christians, it is contrary to *our* religion to resist evil, but we are to bear and endure. The early Christians did so—and because of their very defenselessness, they were safe under the guardian care of the Lord their God!

19-24. *In your patience possess you your souls. And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is near. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains and let them which are in the midst of it depart; and let not them that are in the countries enter into it. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled.* And it is so even to this day. Here is another instance in which the Lord bade His people expect His coming and yet, at the same time, told them that He would not come so long as Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles. “Until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled” means the time when the Messiah shall gather in those Gentiles to Himself, for, when He shall appear, they shall look on Him whom they have despised, and turn to Him whom they have so long rejected.

26. *And there shall be signs in the sun*—As there were at the destruction of Jerusalem, and as there will be at the Second Coming of Christ. We have had a rehearsal of that coming in the destruction of the favored city, but the grand event, itself, who shall rightly speak of it?

25-27. *And in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's heart failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see.*—Whether they wish to see Him or not, “then shall they see”—

27-32. *The Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near. And He spoke to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they are budding, you see and know of yourselves that summer is now near. So you, also, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near. Verily I say to you, This generation shall not pass away, till all is fulfilled.* As I understand it, for the first time. And afterwards it shall be fulfilled

again. It is a prophecy that bears two meanings—an outer and an inner. It has been fulfilled once and it shall soon be fulfilled again.

33, 34. *Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.*—Please notice that “cares of this life” are put down with over-eating and over-drinking, for men can be intoxicated and surfeited with care, either the care of getting, or the care of keeping, or the care of spending, or the care of losing. Any of these cares may cause a surfeit and a drunkenness. Therefore, “take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.”—

34. *And so that day come upon you unawares.* All that you can see in this world, you are to regard as being doomed to destruction. That destruction commenced, so to speak, when Jerusalem fell beneath the Roman sword. Everything earthly is doomed. You are living, not in your eternal mansions, but you are living a makeshift life. You are passing through a wilderness, you are pilgrims, you are sojourners—this is not your rest. Do not get to love this world, or to be taken up with it. Do not strike your roots into it—you are not to dwell here and to always live here. You are walking among shadows—regard them as such. Hug them not to your bosom. Feed not your souls upon them, lest, when that Day comes, before whose coming all of them shall melt away, you shall be filled with amazement and shame.

35-37. *For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch, therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man. And in the daytime He was teaching in the Temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mountain that is called the Mount of Olives.* You know what He did there, for—

**“Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”**

Jesus always practiced what He preached. He said to His disciples, “Watch, therefore, and pray always,” so He, Himself, both watched and prayed.

38. *And all the people came early in the morning to Him in the Temple, to hear Him.* May we all be willing, not only to hear Him, but also to heed what He says! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—343, 347, 364.

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

THE PERPETUITY OF THE GOSPEL NO. 2636

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 20, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 28, 1882.

*"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away."
Luke 21:33.*

LAST Lord's-Day morning I preached upon the perpetuity of the Law of God, [Sermon #1660, Volume 28—*The Perpetuity of the Law of God*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] basing my remarks upon our Lord's words, "For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all is fulfilled." Tonight, I am not going to speak of the Law, but of the Gospel. And, by the term, "the Gospel," I mean the summary of all that our Lord Jesus Christ spoke when He was here below. Of that Gospel it may be said, as He, Himself, said of the Law, that not one jot or tittle of it shall pass away till all is fulfilled. The Gospel of Christ is not merely the Gospel of yesterday, but, like Christ Himself, it is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." It is not a Gospel simply for this age, or for some other age, a Gospel which shall, by-and-by, be worn out and cast aside. But when yon blue heavens shall be folded up, like a worn-out vestment, the Gospel shall still be as powerful as ever. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," says our Lord, "but My Words shall not pass away."

I. Without further preface, I remark, first, that THE WORDS OF JESUS MUST STAND, COME WHAT MAY. If you accept the testimony of Christ concerning His own Words—and you who are His followers will not question anything that He says—then this is certain, that the Words of Jesus must stand forever, come what may.

The major change of Heaven and earth passing away includes all lesser changes, but whatever alteration may come before the last great change, Christ's Words shall still stand. The world gets more civilized—so I am told, though, when I read the newspapers, I am not quite sure of it. The world gets more intelligent—so I am told, though, when I read the magazines—I mean, the first-class quarterlies—I am not certain that it is so, for, in that direction, the ignorance appears to me to become greater every day. I mean the ignorance among the learned and scientific men, who seem to me, in their discoveries, to wander continually further and further, not only from that which is revealed and Infallible, but also from that which is rational and truthful.

But still, the world does alter and, according to its own notion, it is getting wonderfully near perfection! Was there ever such a century as the

nineteenth? Was there ever such a period of time since the world began? What is there that we are not doing? Lighting ourselves by electricity, speaking by means of the lightning, traveling by steam—what an amazing people we are! Yes, yes, and we are going to do much greater things than these, no doubt. And many matters which are now reckoned as mere dreams will probably become accomplished facts in a few generations! But after these marvels have all come and gone, the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ will still abide—they will not pass away! Fashion follows fashion, systems succeed systems, everything beneath the moon is like the moon, it waxes and wanes and is always on the change! But come whatever change there may, even if the human race should reach that wonderful development which some prophesy for it, yet still, the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ shall not pass away. And when the greatest alteration of all shall take place and this present dispensation shall come to an end—and all material things shall be consumed with fire and be destroyed—yet, even then, there shall remain above the ashes of the world and all that is therein, the imperishable Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, for, as Peter says, “The Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”

Why is it that Christ’s Words will last in this way? I answer, first, *because they are Divine*. That which is Divine will endure. All God’s works will not last forever, but His Words will. He will never retract anything that He has said. Even Baalim had Light of God enough to declare. “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” God has never had, as our common saying puts it, to “eat His own words,” nor will He! And Christ has never had to retract anything that He has uttered. All His life, He had not even once to make an apology and say, “I spoke too fast, or too warmly, or somewhat inaccurately.” Everything that He said has stood and shall stand because the Divinity that is in it makes it everlasting!

Again, the Words of Christ must stand *because they are the Revelation of the innermost heart of God*. This great world, and the sun, and moon, and stars, reveal God—but not as fully and as clearly as the Son of God reveals Him. The Incarnate Word is the most grand manifestation of Deity and the Words of that Eternal Word are the Revelation of the purpose of God which He formed in His Infinite mind before He made the world. That which, in the secret counsels of eternity was planned—that which—

“Ere sin was born, or Satan fell,”

was devised in the heart of the Most High—is revealed to us, as far as it may be revealed, in the Words of the Lord Jesus Christ. God’s essential purposes cannot be altered—they must all be fulfilled. His eternal plan was formed in the foresight of all generations that shall exist, so it must stand unchanged and, inasmuch as those purposes and that plan are closely connected with the Words of Christ and, indeed, are made known to us by His Words, therefore the Words of Christ must stand forever.

Further, the Words of Christ must live even when Heaven and earth have passed away because they are pure Truth of God. Everything that is absolutely and purely true must be abiding and enduring. See how long

solid silver lasts. You may buy plated goods for use in your house, but, after a time, in the process of wearing you begin to see the baser metal underneath. But if you have real silver, hall-marked, it will last your lifetime. David truly said, "The Words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Their surface does not wear off and reveal the dross beneath, for there is none! All is pure throughout. Impurity breeds decay—error is corruption—every evil thing carries within it the seeds of its own death. But God's Truth has no corruption in it. It is the living and incorruptible Seed which, therefore, lives and abides forever. That which is perfectly pure will not ferment because it contains within itself no germs of decay. Nor shall it pass away, but it shall live forever. Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke nothing but pure, unalloyed Truth—the very Truth of God and, therefore, it shall stand fast forever.

And that Christ's Words shall live eternally, we do believe, again, *because no power can prevent it*. What power is there that can prevent Christ's Words from being triumphant? Do you hear the roar from the pit of Hell as that question is asked? The devil and his legions of fallen spirits say that they will prevent the triumph of the Words of Christ and, whereas He has declared that His Kingdom shall come, they conspire to prevent its coming. But Christ has already broken the head of the dragon, He has trampled the old serpent beneath His feet and His Omnipotence is greater than Satan's potency. The devil may be mighty, but Christ is Almighty, and Hell shall suffer dire defeat at the hand of the Crucified Savior! As for the wicked men upon this earth, they often league themselves together and take counsel "against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." You know how futile are all their efforts, for the Psalmist says, "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak to them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."

There is no power that can effectually resist the Words of Christ. "Where the word of a king is, there is power," but where the Word of God is, there is Infinite power! What He says must be done. Before He said, "Let there be light," there was not a spark amid all earth's gloom that could help to make the day! There was nothing lying here that could have created the light and yet the darkness fled before that fiat of God! And so, today, if there is nothing on earth to help the fulfillment of Christ's Word, He has said to this poor dark world, "Let there be light," and that light, which He has kindled, is growing brighter and brighter—and shall increase unto the perfect day. O devils in Hell, can you blot out that light? Impossible! Christ's Word must stand!

And yet once more, Christ's Word must stand *because His honor is involved in its permanence*. If He had to alter anything He said, it would be manifest that He had made mistakes which He must rectify. I often get books in which there is a slip of paper containing *errata* fastened at the beginning. They are said to be printers' blunders, but I should not won-

der if they are also the mistakes of the writer. But there they are and I have to take a pencil and make these corrections in the volume. There are no *errata* in the Words of Christ, nor can there be any corrections in anything that He has said. David's declaration applies to all the Words of Jesus. "The Law of the Lord is perfect." Christ's Words are all they should be, no less and no more, and cursed shall that man be who shall add to or take from them! There cannot be any alteration in them, for that would be to dishonor Christ's wisdom. Alteration, indeed! That would make it appear that Christ trifled while He was here, or that He said what He must necessarily unsay and that He was, after all, but an experimenter as to truth, getting as near it as He could and afterwards correcting His mistakes, like a physician who does not understand a disease and who gives a medicine which drives his patient too far one way, and then gives him another drug which brings him back again, but never completely cures him! Christ never has to act in that fashion. He knew what He meant and He said what He meant—and that which He said, and that which He meant shall stand even when, like withered figs that drop from the tree the stars shall fall from their places, the sun shall be turned into blood and the moon shall become black as a sackcloth of hair! It must be so and, therefore, all you who believe in Jesus, believe firmly in this double declaration that He has made, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away."

II. Now, secondly, THIS DECLARATION APPLIES TO ALL CHRIST'S WORDS—not merely to some of them, but to all, for it is left with an intentional indefiniteness which makes it refer to all that He said—"My Words shall not pass away."

This declaration applies, then, to *the Doctrinal teaching of Christ*. Whatever Doctrine Christ taught, either Himself, personally, or by His Apostles guided by the Spirit of God, is definite, distinct, immovable Truth of God. There are many ministers, nowadays, who think that they must shift their doctrinal landmarks and there are others who have no landmarks at all. They believe something, or everything, or nothing—it is difficult to tell which—and their common cry is, "We must be charitable!" I have known many people who were willing to be charitable with other people's money, and I have known others who are charitable with Doctrines that are not theirs to give away, for they are Christ's Doctrines—but these supposed custodians of them care so little for them that they offer to give them away in any quantity! But a faithful steward of Christ's Gospel will not do so. He who loves Christ and wishes to honor Him, keeps Christ's Words, and treasures them up!

I have heard of this body of divinity and that, but the body of divinity that I believe in is the body of Jesus Christ! And the true divinity, the real theology, is that wondrous Logos, the Incarnate Word of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! If we will take Jesus, and Him, only, to be our Leader, there are a great many ways that we shall never go—and there are a great many things which are done by different sects of professing Christians which we shall not do, as we cannot see that Christ ever did anything of the sort! And if He did not, neither will we. That is a

good rule for all Christians which I saw in one of our Orphanage school-rooms—"What would Jesus do?" There cannot be a better guide than that for Believers, for our text is true with regard to Doctrine, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away." I am often said to be a very old-fashioned, narrow-minded sort of person and I have not the slightest objection to the accusation. I certainly am not new-fashioned and do not intend to be, for "the old is better" and, in theology, there is nothing new that is true, and nothing true that is new! The Truth of God is as old as the everlasting hills and to that I desire to keep even to the end, and I trust that you, also, will be of the same mind.

Next, we have the Words of Jesus, not only about Doctrine, but *He has given us plain practical commands*. The Master taught a wonderful system of ethics and to that system we are to cling with the same tenacity that should characterize our hold on the Doctrines that Christ taught. Brothers and Sisters, let us never get away from such a Divine teaching as this—"I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Let us not only love one another, but let us seek to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to such as are of the household of faith. Be it our daily delight to cast out all malice and unkindness from our hearts, that the Law of Love may be fulfilled in us, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." You may depend upon it that there will never be any improvement upon the teaching of Christ! There have been some persons who have tried to improve upon it, but they have made a signal failure of all their attempts. His ethical teaching—His teaching of morals—has impressed even some of those who have not accepted His Doctrines, or even believed in His Divinity! They have been astonished at the purity, the holiness, the love which Jesus Christ inculcated in the Laws which He laid down for the guidance of His disciples.

But I must press on and remind you that the *promises of Christ shall stand forever*. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His promises shall not pass away. Is not that a blessed Truth of God? He said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come along with you, then, poor laboring and heavy laden Souls, for He will give you rest! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but He will give you rest if you come to Him. And He has said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Come along with you, then! Obey both His commands—first, believe, and then be baptized, for, though Heaven and earth shall pass away—you shall be saved! There are many things which may be but actions. Like the phantom visions of a night, they may dissolve, but you shall be saved, that is a sure thing, that is certain beyond all question! The Lord Jesus has promised such great things to His people that I could keep you here all night if I were to try to repeat those gracious Words of promise which streamed out of His lips! Here is one of the sweetest of them—"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and he that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." If you come to Him, He will not in any wise cast you out! He must, He will receive you! Heaven

and earth may pass away, and they shall pass away in due time, but never shall a soul that comes to Jesus be rejected by Him! Oh, that many of you would avail yourselves of that promise this very hour!

Dear aged Friend, you are getting very feeble and you have passed through a great many changes, but that promise has not been altered all the while! Do you recollect when your mother told you about Christ when you were a curly-headed boy? “Ah,” you say, “it is too late, now!” No, my dear Friend, no! Heaven and earth have not passed away yet, and that promise has not passed away—you may still come to Christ, so come and welcome, for it is still written, “He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” Trust His promise even now! Bow your head in the pew and silently seek the Ever-Blessed One and He will be found of you, for His Word is as sure to you as it was to me—as sure to you as it has been to tens of thousands who, in different times, have tried it and found that promise true!

But remember, also, that as every Word of promise from Christ shall stand, so shall *every Word of prophecy*. There is a whole Book of Revelation which I do not understand, but which I fully believe. I am very glad to find something in the Bible which I cannot comprehend, but which I may believe, for I do not call that faith which limits its belief to what it can understand. If you have any little children, you delight to see the way in which they trust you when they cannot make out what you are doing, though they are sure that you are doing right. I want you, dear Friends, to have just that kind of faith in the Book of Revelation—it is all true, although you cannot interpret all its mysteries. And it will all come true—every word of it—in God’s good time! The Lord shall come, the Lord shall reign, the Lord shall judge, the Lord shall justify and glorify His people—and the Lord shall bid the ungodly depart from Him under the curse. I pray that we may all be helped to believe every Word of it.

When I read the Bible, I like to read it in the spirit of the little boy whose mother told him something, but his schoolmates laughed at him for believing it. They asked him how he knew that it was true and he said that his mother told him so, and his mother never told a lie. They tried to prove that it could not be so, but he said, “Look here, my mother said so, and it is so if it isn’t so.” And if I find anything in the Word of God—and somebody with wonderful wisdom tells me that it cannot be so, he is quite sure of it—I laugh his “cannots” into oblivion and reply—“It is so if it isn’t so! Your supposed proof is nothing to me! If God has said it, and all the tongues that ever wagged should deny it, I would still say, ‘Let God be true and every man a liar.’” Hold then, dear Friends, to the Words of Christ even though you do not always understand them.

I must also remind you that *every Word of threats that Jesus Christ has spoken is true*. Oh, that we could have seen His face and heard the very tones of His voice! There must have been an inexpressible sweetness and an ineffable tenderness about the speech of Jesus Christ. All those who heard Him speak knew that He loved them. And the publicans and sinners, the poor pariahs, the off-casts, those who were scorned by eve-

rybody else, drew near to hear Him because they felt that there was sympathy towards them in that great heart of His. Yet, did you ever notice—you must have noticed it, that never man spoke such terrible words of threatening to the ungodly as this Man spoke? It was Jesus who spoke of the worm that never dies and of the fire that never shall be quenched! It was Jesus who spoke of destroying both body and soul in Hell! It was He who said many of the most terrible things about future punishment that were ever uttered, such as that parable of the rich man who “died and was buried; and in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.”

When you hear men trying to soften down the threats of the Scriptures, do not believe that love to souls suggests such a course of action—it often is the proof of true love that it can speak harsh things! If a man comes and tells you very pleasant things about yourself, beware of him—he is not your friend! But the man who can warn you, who can point out your fault and your folly—who can run the risk of losing your esteem by indicating your danger—that is the one who has a sincere affection for you! And a wise man will choose such a friend as that. Whatever anyone may think or say, there is not a terrible Word that ever fell from the Savior’s lips which will not stand! Though you do not like it, you cannot alter it—it will not be selected by your likes or dislikes. “He that believes not shall be damned.” You call that a hard saying? Regardless, it is true, or Christ would not have said it. It must have cost Him much inward anguish to utter such a sentence as that! It must have been a sort of mental crucifixion to Him to speak as He did about the terrors of the world to come. And you can be you sure that they are not less awful than He described, not less horrible than He depicted them! So, whatever any may say by way of toning down His threats, reject their lies, for Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Words of Christ shall not pass away.

III. Thirdly, and lastly, I want to show you that THIS TRUTH HAS A BEARING UPON US ALL.

First, I am sure that *it has a relation to the preacher*. My text innately concerns me and all who are called to be ministers of the Gospel. Dear Brothers, we have to preach the same Gospel that our Lord Jesus Christ preached, and no other. I am thankful that I do not know any other Gospel. Long ago I came to Paul’s resolve and, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” I stick to that, and that is what all of us must do if we would please our Master! There is no progression in the Truth of God, itself. We progress in our knowledge of what Christ said, and in our understanding of it, but the Truths that He uttered remain just the same as they were in His days. You know that when your little children go down to the seaside, they build tiny castles and houses, and make gardens in the sand—but they are all washed away when the tide rolls over them. I should not like to

preach a theology of the kind that is being constantly washed away, leaving me to start afresh with some more sand.

The Eddystone Lighthouse has stood gloriously, and the reason why another has to be built is because the rock has given way under it—the lighthouse, itself, is all right. We thank God that when we build upon what Christ says, we build on a Rock that will not give way under us! And if we are as steadfast as the old lighthouse, and not a stone of us will stir, we shall be perfectly justified by the equal steadfastness of that Truth of God upon which we build! There is no stirring that rock which is formed of what Christ said. The earth may not only quake, but melt. And the unpillared vault of Heaven that has stood so firm these many ages—even it shall come down with a crash! But no Word of Jesus Christ shall ever be dissolved or pass away! We must stick to the old Gospel, then. It sufficed for our fathers and our grandfathers, and it will suffice for our grandchildren if the world stands so long as to see them also grow up to preach it!

This text also *has a bearing upon Church members*, especially upon you very timid souls who, now and then, get afraid that everything good is coming to an end. I meet with some dear old souls, of both sexes, who are very nervous about what is coming to pass. They are afraid that dreadful times are coming. Yes, no doubt they are, but there is a sinful timidity which does dishonor to the power and Truth of God. There have always been, in all ages, some Latimers and Luthers who had no fear for God's Truth. People complained that they were very dogmatic but they did not care what was said about them—they were probably just as happy whatever the world said!

Luther had one very special friend among the German princes and someone asked the Reformer, "Suppose that he should withdraw his protection from you, where would you hide?" "Beneath the broad shield of Heaven," he answered. And Luther spoke wisely. He would not feel that he was dependent upon any man, but upon God alone. I wish, my poor trembling Friend, that you had something of his holy courage. Do not get into that doubting state of mind again! Heaven and earth shall pass away, so wait till you see them all going! And when they do go, just sit still and sing—

***"Then should the earth's old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our steady souls should fear no more,
Than solid rocks when billows roar."***

But, next, our text *has a bearing on all Believers*. Dear Friends, if Christ's Words shall never pass away, let us believe them to be true to ourselves. Are any of you persecuted? Do not give way for a single moment! Stand to your colors! Never be ashamed to acknowledge your Lord. Remember how He said, "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forget the Lord your Maker, who has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and has feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy?" Hold you to Christ, whose Words shall never pass away.

Are you very sick and weak, or are you getting very poor? Well, your health and your property, too, will pass away, but Christ's Words will never pass away. Are you dying? Christ's Words will never die or pass away—die with them in your heart! When I went, last week, to see one of the members of this Church who is very ill, I had a little of my own teaching given back to me. This dear Brother said to me, "Do you remember saying to us, years ago, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in You,' is a third-class carriage, but it is in the Gospel train, and it will take you to Heaven"? And you added, "Why do you not go in the first-class carriage—I will trust, and not be afraid?" I commend that first-class carriage to all of you! "I will trust, and not be afraid." Let faith expel fear and so travel to Heaven first-class! You well may do so, for there is no cause to be afraid.

If any of the Words of Christ could pass away with this wind, and that wind, and the other wind, oh, dear, what a card-house we would live in! But if they all stand firmly forever—as they do—then why and, therefore, should we indulge the slightest fear? One reason why some of you do not rest in Christ as you should is because you do not get right down flat on to His Words and trust wholly to them. You know what the slave said when his master asked him why he was so confident about salvation. He answered, "Massa, you try to stand, but Sam fall flat down on de promise, and when he is flat down on de promise, he can't fall any lower." Just so! Then fall flat on the promise and if you lie there, clinging and resting there, alone, then Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not the Words on which you are trusting!

Now, last of all, *this is a word to sinners*. What a message my text has for those of you who do not love Christ, those of you who are undecided! Christ's Words shall not pass away—what then? This is the only Gospel that you will ever hear—the last train is about to start. If you do not go by that, there is no other that will carry you to Heaven, "for there is no other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The Gospel will never change its character. Are any of you waiting till it does, like the countryman who said he would cross the river when all the water had run by? There will never be any easier way to Heaven than there is at this moment! I verily believe that some people, by delay, make the road to Heaven harder for themselves than it would otherwise be. If they are ultimately saved, it is more difficult for them to trust to Christ when they have been long delaying. Even mercy seems, sometimes, to act like Benjamin Franklin did when a man came into his shop to buy a book, but wasted the bookseller's time by his foolish delay. The man asked, "What is the price of this book, Sir?" "Four shillings," said Franklin. "It is rather high," said the man, "I will not take it." He waited about ten minutes and then he asked, "What now, really, will you take for that book?" "Five shillings," said Franklin. "No," said the customer, "you asked only four shillings just now." Franklin replied, "Sir, you have taken up ten minutes of my time attending to you, so that makes the price of the book one shilling more. It is five shillings, now, but if you do not buy it quickly, it will be more." There was some com-

mon sense in that mode of dealing! And you will truly find, in spiritual matters, that there is nothing gained by delay. But there is increased sin, increased hardness of heart and even an increased difficulty in yielding the soul to Christ!

The best time for any of you to come to Jesus is just now! You can never have a fairer opportunity than that which lies before you at the present moment. I am sure of it, because God's wisdom always picks the best opportunity—and what does God's wisdom say? "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." And yet again, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." If Christ's Words are to stand, there will be no other Gospel ever presented to you. If Christ's Words are to stand, why should you delay? Sometimes, when I have been returning from preaching away from here, I have seen people outside the theater as I have gone by, quite a crowd of them, and I have asked a friend why they were waiting. "Oh," he has answered, "they are expecting to get in at half price." Well, now, you cannot expect anything of that kind in the matter of salvation, for the original charge is "without money and without price," and it never can be any lower than it is now! Then why not come at once?

I came to Jesus Christ when I was 15 years of age and I wish I had come to Him 15 years before if it had been possible. Oh, that I should ever have lived a single minute without the sweet knowledge of salvation by Jesus Christ! It is not a thing to be put off! God grant that you may no longer put it off! You have done too much of that already, so make haste and come to Christ this very moment!

Let me earnestly entreat you not to be looking out for some larger possible hope that may reach you after death. That is a terrible delusion! I pray you, risk not your soul upon it! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Christ's Words shall not pass away and, as I have already reminded you, He has said, "He that believes not shall be damned." And so he will be and there is nothing but that awful doom for him. You have your choice. If you trust in Christ, you shall have eternal glory. If you will not have Christ as your Savior, you shall have everlasting punishment. There is no other hope for you. I pray God to lead you to come to Christ at once. Oh, that you would not hesitate, since He invites you! Oh, that you would not tarry, since that were to insult Him! May His blessed Spirit now compel you to come in, that the house of His mercy may be filled! All you have to do is to trust Him! You have not to be doers until *first* you have trusted to what *He has done*. Then *He* will make you doers! Come empty! Come sinful! Come hard-hearted! Come just as you are! Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but, just as you find yourself, rest on Jesus! Fall flat on His promise! Depend upon the merit of His blood and the power of His ever-living plea! God help you, now, to do this, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 20, 21.**

The 20th Psalm is a prayer for the King—not only for David or Solomon, but for “great David’s greater Son”—the true King of the Church. As if the Church saw Jesus going forth to His work, she offers up a prayer for Him.

Psalm 20:1. *The LORD hear you in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend you.* And so it came to pass, in that dread night in Gethsemane, Jesus “was heard in that He feared.” The God of wrestling Jacob heard the cries of His dear Son and defended Him, or supported Him, as it is in the marginal reading.

2. *Send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion.* And you know how there came, from yonder heavenly Jerusalem, an angel strengthening Him. The celestial messenger stood at His side amid the gloom of the olive garden and brought Him comfort and succor from God’s right hand—

**“His earnest prayers, His deepening groans
Were heard before angelic thrones.
Amazement wrapped the sky!
‘Go, strengthen Christ!’ the Father said!
The astonished seraph bowed his head
And left the realms on high.”**

3. *Remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah.* And so He did. There was never such acceptance given to any burnt sacrifice as was given to our Divine Lord when He offered up Himself!

4. *Grant you according to your own heart, and fulfill all your counsel.* Is it not written, “Prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised”? Here, then, is a suitable prayer for you to present on behalf of the Lord Jesus—that God would grant Him according to His own heart and fulfill all His counsel!

5. *We will rejoice in your salvation.* Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us make this verse true! And even if we have anything to sigh over, let us lay it aside while we now devote ourselves to the happy work of rejoicing in the glorious salvation of our Lord and King!

5-9. *And in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfill all your petitions. Now know I that the LORD saves His anointed; He will hear him from His holy Heaven, with the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen and stand upright. Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call.* What a blessing it is that our King hears us when we call upon Him! He is full of sympathy with all His people, for, in the time of His sojourn on earth, He often knew what it was to plead with His Father. And as God heard Him, then, so does He, Himself, hear us. All glory be to His blessed name! The 21st Psalm views the King as having ended his battle and achieved his victory.

Psalm 21:1, 2. *The king shall joy in Your strength, O LORD; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! You have given him his heart’s desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah.* God gave to Jesus the strength needed to accomplish the work which He came to do

and He is daily giving Him to see of the travail of His soul that He may be satisfied.

3. *For you meet him with the blessings of goodness.* They go before Him like scouts or forerunners! Wherever Jesus comes, the blessings of goodness fly before Him to the sons of men.

3. *You set a crown of pure gold on his head.* Let us crown Him afresh, tonight, with our poor garlands of praise, while God sets a crown of pure gold upon His head!

4. *He asked life of You, and You gave it to him, even length of days forever and ever.* And because He lives, we shall also live! The Father has given Him to have life in Himself and hence He communicates that life to us who believe in Him.

5. *His glory is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have You laid upon him.* Heaped it on Him. There is no one so worthy of honor as our Lord Jesus is! None are so majestic as the Man of Sorrows who once bowed His head to death on His people's behalf.

6. *For You have made him most blessed forever: You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your Countenance.* The Father rewards Him for all His service—"You have made Him most blessed forever." We cannot imagine how great is the joy of Christ as His Father smiles upon Him—"You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your Countenance."

7, 8. *For the king trusts in the LORD, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved. Your hand shall find out all Your enemies.* Oh, what a wonderful prophecy that is! Christ's hand shall find out all His enemies. If they hide themselves, He shall discover them. If they cover themselves with chain armor, yet still His hand will find out their vulnerable parts and touch their very souls until they melt with fear! "Your hand shall find out all Your enemies." Are there any of these enemies of Christ here, tonight? If so, not only will His eyes find them out, but His hands will find them out, too.

8-13. *Your right hand shall find out those that hate You. You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shall You destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against You: they imagined a mischievous device which they are not able to perform. Therefore shall You make them turn their back, when You shall make ready Your arrows upon Your strings against the face of them. Be you exalted, LORD, in Your own strength: so will we sing and praise Your power.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—166, 346, 527.

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

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

CHRIST AND HIS TABLE COMPANIONS

NO. 3107

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 1908.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And when the hour was come, He sat down,
and the twelve Apostles with Him.”*
Luke 22:14.

THE outward ordinances of the Christian religion are but two—and those two are exceedingly simple—yet neither of them has escaped human alteration. And, alas, much mischief has been worked and much of precious teaching has been sacrificed by these miserable perversions! For instance, the ordinance of Baptism, as it was administered by the Apostles, represented the burial of the Believer with Christ and his rising with his Lord into newness of life. Men had to exchange immersion for sprinkling and the intelligent Believer for an unconscious child—and so the ordinance is slain! The other sacred institution, the Lord’s Supper, like Believers’ Baptism, is simplicity itself. It consists of broken bread and wine poured out—these items being eaten and drunk at a festival—a delightful picture of the sufferings of Christ for us and of the fellowship which the saints have with one another and with Him. But this ordinance, also, has been tampered with by men. By some, the wine has been taken away altogether, or reserved only for a priestly caste. And the simple bread has been changed into a consecrated host. As for the table, the very emblem of fellowship in all nations—for what expresses fellowship better than surrounding a table and eating and drinking together? This, indeed, must be put away and an “altar” must be erected! And the bread and wine which were to help us to remember the Lord Jesus are changed into an “unbloody sacrifice,” and so the whole thing becomes an unscriptural celebration instead of a holy institution for fellowship!

Let us be warned by these mistakes of others never either to add to or take from the Word of God so much as a single jot or tittle! Keep upon the foundation of the Scriptures and you stand safely, and have an answer for those who question you. Yes, and an answer which you may render at the bar of God! But once allow your own whim, or fancy, or taste, or your notion of what is proper and right to rule you, instead of the Word of God, and you have entered upon a dangerous course! And unless the Grace of God prevents, boundless mischief may ensue. The Bible is our standard authority—none may turn from it. The wise man says in Ecclesiastes, “I counsel you to keep the King’s commandment.” We would repeat his advice and add to it the sage precept of the mother of our Lord, at Cana, when she said, “Whatever He says unto you, do it.”

We shall now ask you in contemplation to gaze upon the first celebration of the Lord's Supper. You perceive at once that there was no "altar" in that large upper room. There was a *table*. A table with bread and wine upon it, but no altar! And Jesus did not kneel—there is no sign of that—He sat down. I doubt not, after the Oriental mode of sitting, that is to say, by a partial reclining, He sat down with His Apostles. Now, He who ordained this Supper knew how it ought to be observed. And as the first celebration of it was the model for all others, we may be assured that the right way of coming to this Communion is to assemble around a *table*—and to sit or recline while we eat and drink together of bread and wine in remembrance of our Lord!

While we see the Savior sitting down with His 12 Apostles, let us enquire, first, *what did this make them?* Then, secondly, *what did this imply?* And, thirdly, *what further may we legitimately infer from this?*

I. First, then, we see the Great Master, the Lord, the King in Zion, sitting down at the table to eat and drink with His 12 Apostles—WHAT DID THIS MAKE THEM?

Note what they were at first. By His first calling of them they became His *followers*, for He said unto them, "Follow Me." That is to say, they were convinced by sundry marks and signs, that He was the Messiah and they, therefore, became His followers. Followers may be at a great distance from their leader and enjoy little or no communion with him, for the leader may be too great to be approached by the common members of his band. In the case of these disciples, their following was unusually close, for their Master was very condescending. But still, their communion was not always of the most intimate kind at first and, therefore, it was not at the first that He called them to such a festival as this Supper. They began with following and this is where we must begin. If we cannot enter as yet into closer association with our Lord, we may at least know His voice by His Spirit and follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd. The most important way of following Him is to trust Him and then diligently to imitate His example. This is a good beginning and it will end well—for those who walk with Him today shall rest with Him hereafter—those who tread in His footsteps shall sit with Him on His Throne!

Being His followers, they came next to be His *disciples*. A man may have been a follower for a while and yet may not have reached discipleship. A follower may follow blindly and hear a great deal which he does not understand, but when he becomes a disciple, his master instructs him and leads him into truth. To explain, to expound, to solve difficulties, to clear away doubts and to make truth intelligible is the office of a teacher among his disciples. Now, it was a very blessed thing for the followers to become disciples, but still, disciples are not necessarily so intimate with their Master as to sit and eat with Him. Socrates and Plato knew many in the Academy whom they did not invite to their homes. My Brothers and Sisters, if Jesus had but called us to be His disciples and no more, we would have had cause for great thankfulness. If we had been allowed to sit at His feet and had never

shared in such an entertainment as that before us, we ought to have been profoundly grateful. But now that He has favored us with a yet higher place, let us never be unfaithful to our discipleship! Let us daily learn of Jesus! Let us search the Bible to see what it was that He taught us and then, by the aid of His Holy Spirit, let us scrupulously obey! Yet there is a something beyond.

Being the Lord's disciples, the chosen ones next rose to become His *servants* which is a step in advance, since the disciple may be but a child, but the servant has some strength, has received some measure of training and renders somewhat in return. Their Master gave them power to preach the Gospel and to execute commissions of Grace—and happy were they to be called to wait upon such a Master and aid in setting up His Kingdom! My dear Brothers and Sisters, are you all consciously Christ's servants? If so, though the service may at times seem heavy because your faith is weak, yet be very thankful that you are servants at all, for it is better to serve God than to reign over all the kingdoms of this world! It is better to be the lowest servant of Christ than to be the greatest of men and remain slaves to your own lusts, or be mere men-pleasers. His yoke is easy and His burden is light! The servant of such a Master should rejoice in his calling—yet there is something beyond even this.

Towards the close of His life, our Master revealed the yet nearer relation of His disciples and uttered words like these—"Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does, but I have called you *friends*, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." This is a great step in advance. The friend, however humble, enjoys much familiarity with his friend. The friend is told what the servant need not know. The friend enjoys a communion to which the mere servant, disciple, or follower has not attained. May we know this higher association, this dearer bond of relationship! May we not be content without the enjoyment of our Master's friendship! "He that has friends must show himself friendly," and if we would have Christ's friendship, we must befriend His cause, His Truth and His people! He is a Friend that loves at all times—if you would enjoy His friendship, take care to abide in Him!

Now note that on the night before His Passion, our Lord led His friends a step beyond ordinary friendship. The mere follower does not sit at table with his leader. The disciple does not claim to be a fellow commoner with his master. The servant is seldom entertained at the same table with his lord. The befriended one is not always invited to be a guest. But here the Lord Jesus made His chosen ones to be *His table companions*. He lifted them up to sit with Him at the same table, to eat of the same bread and drink of the same cup with Himself. From that position He has never degraded them—they were representative men and where the Lord placed them, He has permanently placed all His saints! All the Lord's believing people are sitting, by sacred privilege and calling, at the same table with Jesus, for "truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." He has come into our hearts and He sups with us and we

with Him! We are His table companions and shall eat bread with Him in the Kingdom of God!

II. So now we shall pass on, in the second place, to ask, WHAT DID THIS TABLE COMPANIONSHIP IMPLY?

It implied, first of all, *mutual fidelity*. This solemn eating and drinking together was a pledge of faithfulness to one another. It must have been so understood, or otherwise there would have been no force in the complaint, "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." Did not this mean that *because* Judas had eaten bread with his Lord, he was bound *not* to betray Him, and so to lift up his heel against Him? This was the seal of an implied covenant—having eaten together, they were under bond to be faithful to one another! Now, as many of you as are really the servants and friends of Christ may know that the Lord Jesus, in eating with you at His table, pledges Himself to be faithful to you. The Master never plays the Judas—the Judas is among the disciples. There is nothing traitorous in the Lord—He is not only able to keep that which we have committed to Him, but He is faithful and will do it. He will be faithful, not only as to the great and main matter, but also to every promise He has made! Know then, assuredly, that your Master would not have asked you to His table to eat bread with Him if He intended to desert you! He has received you as His honored guests and fed you upon His choicest food and thereby He does as good as say to you, "I will never leave you, come what may. And in all times of trial, depression and temptation, I will be at your right hand and you shall not be moved—and to the very last you shall prove My faithfulness and truth."

But, Beloved, you do not understand this Supper unless you are also reminded of the faithfulness that is due from you to your Lord, for the feast is common and the pledge mutual. In eating with Him, you pledge your faithfulness to the Crucified. Beloved, how have you kept your pledge during the past? You have eaten bread with Him and I trust that in your hearts you have never gone so far aside as to lift up your heel against Him—but have you always honored Him as you should? Have you acted as guests should have done? Can you remember His love to you and put your love to Him side by side with it—without being ashamed? From this time forth may the Holy Spirit work in our souls a jealous fidelity to the Well-Beloved which shall not permit our hearts to wander from Him, or suffer our zeal for His Glory to decline!

Again, remember that there is in this solemn eating and drinking together, a pledge of fidelity between the disciples, themselves, as well as between the disciples and their Lord. Judas would have been a traitor if he had betrayed Peter, or John, or James. So, when you come to the one table, my Brothers and Sisters, you must henceforth be true to one another. All bickering and jealousies must cease and a generous and affectionate spirit must rule in every bosom! If you hear any speak against those with whom you have communed, reckon that as you have eaten bread with them, you are bound to defend their reputations. If any railing accusation is raised against any Brother in Christ, reckon that his

character is as dear to you as your own! Let a sacred Freemasonry be maintained among us, if I may liken a far higher and more spiritual union to anything which belongs to common life. You are members, one of another—see that you fervently love each other with a pure heart. Drinking of the same cup, eating of the same bread, you set forth before the world a token which I trust is not meant to be a lie. As it truly shows Christ's faithfulness to you, so let it as really typify your faithfulness to Christ and to one another!

In the next place, eating and drinking together was a token of *mutual confidence*. They, in sitting there together, voluntarily avowed their confidence in each other. Those disciples trusted their Master. They knew He would not mislead or deceive them. They also trusted each other, for when they were told that one of them would betray their Lord, they did not suspect each other, but each one asked, "Lord, is it I?" They had much confidence in one another and the Lord Jesus, as we have seen, had placed great confidence in them by treating them as His friends. He had even trusted them with the great secret of His coming sufferings and death! They were a trustful company who sat at that Supper table. Now, Beloved, when you gather around this table, come in the spirit of implicit trustfulness in the Lord Jesus. If you are suffering, do not doubt His love, but believe that He works all things for your good. If you are vexed with cares, prove your confidence by leaving them entirely in your Redeemer's hands. It will not be a festival of fellowship to you if you come here with suspicions about your Master. No, show your confidence as you eat of the bread with Him. Let there also be a brotherly confidence in each other. Grievous would it be to see a spirit of suspicion and distrust among you. Suspicion is the death of fellowship! The moment one Christian imagines that another thinks badly of him, though there may not be the slightest truth in that thought, yet straightway the root of bitterness is planted! Let us believe in one another's sincerity, for we may rest assured that each of our Brothers and Sisters deserves to be trusted more than we do. Turn your suspicions within and if you must suspect, suspect your own heart! But when you meet with those who have communed with you at this table, say within yourself, "If such can deceive me and, alas, they may, then will I be content to be imposed upon rather than entertain perpetual mistrust of my fellow Christians."

A third meaning of the assembling around the table is this, *hearty fraternity*. Our Lord, in sitting down at the table with His disciples, showed Himself to be one with them, a Brother, indeed. We do not read that there was any order of priority by which their seats were arranged. Of course, if the Grand Chamberlain at Rome had arranged the table, he would have placed Peter at the right hand of Christ—and the other Apostles in graduated positions according to the dignity of their future bishoprics! But all that we know about their order is this—that John sat next to the Savior and leaned upon His bosom. And that Peter sat a good way off—we feel sure he was because it is said that he "beckoned" unto John. If he had sat next to him, he would have whispered to him—but he

beckoned to him—and so he must have been some way down the table, if, indeed, there was any “*down*” or “*up*” in the arrangement of the guests. We believe the fact was that they sat there on a sacred equality—the Lord Jesus, the Elder Brother among them—and all else arranged according to those words, “One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren.” Let us feel, then, in coming to the table again at this time, that we are linked in ties of sacred relationship with Jesus Christ who is exalted in Heaven, and that through Him our relationship with our fellow Christians is very near and intimate.

Oh, that Christian brotherhood were more real! The very word, “brother,” has come to be ridiculed as a piece of hypocrisy and well it may, for it is mostly used as a cant phrase and, in many cases means very little. But it ought to mean something. You have no right to come to that table unless you really feel that those who are washed in Jesus’ blood have a claim upon the love of your heart and the activity of your benevolence! What? Are you to live together forever in Heaven and will you show no affection for one another here below? It is your Master’s new command that you love one another—will you disregard it? He has given this as the badge of Christians—“By this shall all men know that you are My disciples”—*not if you wear a gold cross*, but—“if you have love, one to another.” That is the Christian’s badge of his being, in very truth, a disciple of Jesus Christ! Here, at this table, we find fraternity. Whoever eats of this sacred Supper declares himself to be one of a brotherhood in Christ, a brotherhood striving for the same cause, having sincere sympathy, being members of each other and all of them members of the body of Christ! God make this to be a fact throughout Christendom even now, and how will the world marvel as it cries, “See how these Christians love one another!”

But this table companionship means even more—it signifies *common enjoyment*. Jesus eats and they eat the same bread. He drinks and they drink of the same cup. There is no distinction in the food items. What does this mean? Does it not say to us that the joy of Christ is the joy of His people? Has He not said, “That My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”? The very joy that delights Christ is that which He prepares for His people! You, if you are a true Believer, have sympathy in Christ’s joy—you delight to see His Kingdom come, His Truth advanced, sinners saved, Grace glorified, holiness promoted, God exalted—and this also is His delight! But, my dear Brothers and Sisters and fellow professors, are you sure that your chief joy is the same as Christ’s? Are you certain that the mainstay of your life is the same as that which was His meat and His drink, namely, to do the will of the Heavenly Father? If not, I am afraid you have no business at this table! But if it is so and you come to the table, then I pray that you may share the joy of Christ. May you joy in Him as He joys in you and so may your fellowship be sweet!

Lastly on this point, the feast at the *one* table indicated *familiar affection*. It is the child’s place to sit at the table with its parents, for affection rules there. It is the place of honor to sit at the table. “Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table.” But the honor

is such as love and not fear suggests. Men at the table often reveal their minds more fully than elsewhere. If you want to understand a man, you do not go to see him at the Stock Exchange, or follow him into the market, for there he keeps himself to himself—you go to his table and there he reveals himself. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ sat at the table with His disciples. 'Twas a meal, 'twas a meal of a homely kind—intimate communion ruled the hour. I am afraid, Brothers and Sisters, we have sometimes come to this table and gone away again without having had communion with Christ—and then it has been an empty formality and nothing more. I thank God that coming to this table every Sabbath, as some of us do, and have done for many years, we have yet for the most part enjoyed the nearest communion with Christ here that we have ever known, and have a thousand times blessed His name for this ordinance!

Still, there is such a thing as only eating the bread and drinking the wine and losing all the sacred meaning thereof. Do pray the Lord to reveal Himself to you. Ask that it may not be a dead form to you, but that now, in very deed, you may give your heart to Christ while He shall show to you His hands and His side, and make known to you His agonies and death wherewith He redeemed you from the wrath to come! All this, and vastly more, is the teaching of the table at which Jesus sat with the twelve. I have often wondered why the Church of Rome does not buy up all those pictures by one of its most renowned painters, Leonardo da Vinci, in which our Lord is represented as sitting at the table with His disciples, for these are a contradiction of the Popish doctrine on this subject! As long as that picture remains on a wall and as long as copies of it are spread everywhere, the Church of Rome stands convicted of going against the teaching of the earlier church by setting up an “altar” when she, herself, confesses that before it was not considered to be an altar of sacrifice, but a table of fellowship at which the Lord did not kneel, nor stand as an officiating priest, but at which He and His disciples sat. We, at least, have no rebukes to fear from antiquity, for we follow and mean to follow the primitive method! Our Lord has given us commandment to do this until He comes—not to alter it, but just to “do this,” and nothing else, in the same manner, until He shall come again!

III. We will draw to a close by asking WHAT FURTHER MAY BE INFERRED FROM THIS SITTING OF CHRIST WITH HIS DISCIPLES AT THE TABLE?

I answer, first, *there may be inferred from it, the equality of all the saints.* There were here 12 Apostles. Their Apostleship, however, is not concerned in the matter. When the Lord's Supper was celebrated after all the Apostles had gone to Heaven, was there to be any alteration because the Apostles had gone? Not at all. Believers are to do this in remembrance of their Lord *until He shall come.* There was no command for a change when the first Apostles were all gone from the Church. No, it was still to be the same—bread and wine and the surrounding of the table until the Lord came. I gather, then, the equality of all saints. There is a difference in office, there was a difference in miraculous gift and there are great differences of growth in Grace, but still, in the household

of God, all saints, whether Apostles, pastors, teachers, deacons, elders, or private members—being all equal—eat at one table. There is but one bread, there is but one juice of the vine here!

It is only in the Church of God that those words, so politically wild, can ever be any more than a dream—“Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.” There you have them where Jesus is—not in a republic, but in the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ where all rule and dominion are vested in Him! And all of us willingly acknowledge Him as our glorious Head and all we are brethren! Never fall into the idea that older Believers were of a superior nature to ourselves. Do not talk of *Saint Paul*, *Saint Matthew* and *Saint Mark* unless you are prepared to speak of *Saint William* and *Saint Jane* sitting over yonder—for if they are in Christ, they are as truly saints as those first saints were! And I think there may be some who have even attained to a higher “sainthood” than many whom tradition has canonized! The heights of sainthood are, by Grace, open to us all and the Lord invites us to ascend! Do not think that what the Lord worked in the early saints cannot be worked in you. It is because you think so that you do not pray for it—and because you do not pray for it, you do not attain it! The Grace of God sustained the Apostles—that Grace is not less today than it was then! The Lord’s arm is not shortened! His power is not straitened. If we can but believe and be as earnest as those first saints were, we shall yet subdue kingdoms and the day shall come when the gods of Hinduism and the lies of Mohammed and of Rome shall as certainly be overthrown as were the ancient philosophies and the classic idolatries of Greece and Rome by the teaching of the first ministers of Christ! There is the same table for you and the same food is there in emblem—and Divine Grace can make you like those holy men, for you are bought with the same blood and quickened by the same Spirit! Only believe, for “all things are possible to him that believes.”

Another inference, only to be hinted at, is *that the needs of the Church in all ages will be the same and the supplies for the Church’s needs will never vary*. There will still be the table—and the table with the same items upon it—bread, still bread—nothing more than bread for food. Still wine, nothing less than wine for drink. The Church will always need the same food, the same Christ, the same Gospel. Out, you traitors who tell us that we are to shape our Gospel to suit this enlightened 19th Century! Out, you false-hearts who would have us tone down the everlasting Truth of God that shall outlive the sun, moon and stars to suit your boasted culture which is but varnished ignorance! That Truth of God which of old was mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, is still mighty, and we will maintain it to the death! The Church needs the Doctrines of Grace today as much as when Paul, or Augustine, or Calvin preached them! The Church needs justification by faith, the substitutionary Atonement, regeneration and Divine Sovereignty to be preached from her pulpits as much as in days of yore! And by God’s Grace she shall have them, too!

Lastly, there is in this Truth, that Christ has brought all His disciples into the position of table companions, a *prophecy that this shall be the portion of all His people forever*. In Heaven there cannot be less of privilege than on earth. It cannot be that in the celestial state, Believers will be degraded from what they have been below. What were they, then, below? Table companions. What shall they be in Heaven above? Table companions and blessed are they that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God! “Many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God.” And the Lord Jesus shall be at the head of the table! Now, what will His table of joy be? Set your imagination to work and think what will be His festival of soul when His reward shall be all before Him and His triumph all achieved! Have you imagined it? Can you conceive it? Whatever it is, you shall share in it—I repeat those words—whatever it is, the least Believer shall share in it! You, poor working woman, oh, what a change for you, to sit among the princes of Christ’s palace of Glory, near to your Lord, all your toil and needs forever ended! And you, sad child of suffering, scarcely able to come up to the assembly of God’s people—and going back, perhaps, to that bed of languishing—you shall have no pains there, but you shall be forever with the Lord! In the anticipation of the joy that shall be yours, forget your present troubles, rise superior to the difficulties of the hour and if you cannot rejoice in the present, yet rejoice in the future which shall so soon be your own!

We finish with this word of deep regret—regret that many here cannot understand what we have been talking about—and have no part in it. There are some of you who must not come to the table of Communion because you do not love Christ. You have not trusted Him. You have no part in Him. There is no salvation in what some people call “sacraments.” Believe me, they are but delusions to those who do not come to Christ with their heart! You must not come to the outward sign if you have not the thing signified. Here is the way of salvation—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” To believe in Him is to trust Him. To use an old word, it is *recumbency*—it is leaning on Him, resting on Him. Here I lean on this platform rail. I rest my whole weight on this support before me. Do so with Christ in a spiritual sense—lean on Him. You have a load of sin, lean on Him—sin and all! You are all unworthy, weak and, perhaps, miserable. Then cast on Him the weakness, the unworthiness, the misery and all! Take Him to be All-in-All to you—and when you have thus trusted Him, you will have become His follower! Go on by humility to be His disciple, by obedience to be His servant, by love to be His friend and by communion to be His table companion!

May the Holy Spirit so lead you, for Jesus sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 22:7-54.**

Verses 7-13. *Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and*

prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. And they said unto Him, Where will You that we prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters in. And you shall say unto the good man of the house, the Master says unto you, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover. The hour of Christ's humiliation was drawing near, but He was still "The Master." He had but to send His servants and His request was at once obeyed—just as He might have asked for more than 12 legions of angels and they would have been immediately placed at His disposal.

14-22. *And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. And He took the cup, and gave thanks and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of Him that betrays Me is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goes as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! What consternation those sentences must have caused in that little company! Christ and His 12 Apostles alone present, yet one of them was about to betray his Lord!*

23, 24. *And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. How strange that such a quarrel should be going on just then! Their Master was going out to betrayal and crucifixion for them, yet they were disputing about which of them "should be accounted the greatest."*

25-30 *And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve. For which is greater, he that sits at the table, or he that serves? Is not he that sits at the table? But I am among you as He that serves. You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table, in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. What folly and sin to quarrel about earthly precedence when such heavenly honors were awaiting them!*

31, 32. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren. Trial would be general to all the Apostles—"Satan has desired to have*

you—but the danger would be special to Peter on account of his tendency to presumptuous zeal. “I have prayed for *you*.’ Your danger will be that after having transgressed, your faith will fail, so I have especially prayed about that. Where your greatest danger lies, there have I planted My batteries of prayer ‘I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.’”

33. *And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death.* And I have no doubt that he thought he was ready to do all this! He spoke out of the fullness of his heart, but he did not know the weakness of his flesh. We are all too apt to promise great things and to fail in the fulfillment of them.

34-36. *And He said, I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that you shall thrice deny that you know Me. And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.* At first our Savior had great popularity among the people and, under the cover of this, His disciples were received with respect and kindness so that, though they went forth without purse or scrip, they lacked nothing. But now Christ warns them that there is to be a very different state of things. Jesus is about to die and people will not be ready to entertain them. They will need to have a purse and scrip of their own. They will constantly be in peril of their lives and they will now need the sword and the scrip. This is all that the Savior meant.

37. *For I say unto you, that this which is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end.* “They are drawing to their close. I am about to be put to death as a transgressor and you will be treated as though you were the off-scouring of all things and were not fit to live because you are My followers.”

38. *And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough.* A smile must have passed over the Savior’s face as He saw how they had misunderstood Him! He did not mean that they should literally carry swords, but that they should now have to go through an alien world and to meet with no friends or helpers. He evidently did not mean that they were to defend Him with the sword, for two such weapons would not have been “enough” against the Roman legionaries who were sent to seize Him! How apt they were to misconstrue and take literally that which He was accustomed to speak in figures, just as, to this day, some will have it that the bread on the Communion table is Christ’s body and the juice of the vine is His actual blood!

39, 40. *And He came out, and went, as He was known to do, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that you enter not into temptation.* “There is a peculiar temptation coming upon you. I have taught you to pray every day, ‘Lead us not into temptation,’ but tonight make very special use of that petition—‘Pray that you enter not into temptation.’”

41-44. *And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Was He heard? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, He was indeed heard! And especially in that part of His prayer, "nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done." And that was the most vital part of His prayer for, as much as He shrank from that bitter cup, still more did He shrink from any thought of going contrary to the will of His Father! That ought to be the heart of all our prayers—whatever we are asking for, chiefly and above all else this should be our cry—"nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."*

45, 46. *And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation. There must have been some very peculiar temptation about that night, that Christ's disciples should have needed to be again and again commanded to pray this prayer!*

47-50. *And while He yet spoke, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betray you the Son of Man with a kiss? When they who were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. No doubt he meant to cut his head in two, but the sword slipped and merely took away his right ear.*

51. *And Jesus answered and said, Suffer you thus far. And He touched his ear and healed him. There was no lasting mischief done, but, on the contrary, another instance given of the Divine Power of Christ. No other miracle of this kind is mentioned in Scripture—I mean the healing of a wound received by violence, the restoration of a member which had been cut off—and Luke is the only Evangelist who mentions it! It has been thought that because he was a physician and had a quick eye for acts of healing, that he mentions that Christ touched the ear of Malchus and healed him.*

52-54. *Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the Temple, and the elders, which were come to Him, Have you come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the Temple, you stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. Then they took Him and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.*

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

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

THE LORD'S SUPPER—A REMEMBRANCE OF JESUS NO. 2038

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 19, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“This do in remembrance of Me.”
Luke 22:19.*

“THIS do”—that is, take bread, give thanks, break it and eat it—take the cup, filled with the fruit of the vine, give thanks and drink you all of it. “This do.” Take care that you do just what Jesus did—no more and no less. This act was done at a table where they had been eating the Passover. This act was performed at a common meal and was not a sacrifice, nor a celebration, nor a function, nor anything more than a significant eating of bread and drinking of wine after a devout fashion. This do—as often as you break the bread and as often as you drink of the cup—remember the Lord Jesus.

It is this that we are to do and not something else which may be supposed to grow out of it. He does not say, “Do something else in remembrance of Me—something which you may choose to do, retaining this act as the backbone of it. But this do.” This which has just been done—this in all its simplicity, solemnity and intent.

Alas, how sadly have men forgotten this! The plain supper has not been a grand enough display. To break bread and to drink wine have not seemed to them to be sufficiently solemn, or sufficiently gorgeous and so they have added all kinds of rites and institutions. That which was only a table, they have made into an altar and that which was a supper and nothing more, they have changed into a celebration. They do not this but they do something else which they have devised and elaborated.

Imagine Paul or Peter attending mass and observing the various genuflections—the moving to and fro, the lifting up and the stooping down and all the various operations of the Roman priesthood—too many to describe! Paul would pluck Peter by the sleeve and say, “Our Master did nothing like this when He took bread and gave thanks and broke it.” Peter would reply, “Very different this from the guest-chamber at Jerusalem!” And Paul would add, “Yes, indeed, my Brother, very different this from the time when the first Believers met together and broke bread and drank of the cup in common, in remembrance of their Lord.”

Whatever other communities may do, be it ours, my Brethren, to stand fast by, “This do in remembrance of Me.” “This,” simply “this,” and nothing more and nothing less. Bread, not a wafer. Fruit of the vine, not the concoction of chemistry inflamed with fiery spirit. We use this fruit of the vine in a cup and that cup not reserved but partaken of by all. We have before us bread and that not worshipped, as at the elevation of the host—

but broken and eaten. The Lord and His disciples sat at a table and ate—it was a feast and not a sacrifice.

They reclined and did not kneel. So would we do, because He has said, “This do,” and not something else. Then, beloved Friends, we shall have to be very watchful upon another point, namely, that if we do this, we do it for the purpose for which He gave it—namely, in remembrance of Him. Jesus never said, “This do, that you may offer an unbloody sacrifice.” Where in Holy Scripture is there a syllable like it, either from our Lord's own lips or from those of the Apostles?

He never said, “Do this as the perpetual repetition of My death.” To my mind the very thought is blasphemy, for our Lord claims to have finished His work and having died unto sin once, death has no more dominion over Him. The Jewish sacrifices, by reason of their insufficiency, were often repeated—but “this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” They blaspheme the sacrifice of Christ who imagine that any man, call him priest or not, can continue, repeat, or complete that sacrifice for sin.

It is finished and our Lord has gone into His Glory. Sin is put away by His bearing it in His own body on the tree. This do you in remembrance of Christ but not as continuing His sacrifice, which is forever perfect. I would not, for my part, on any account adopt the posture of kneeling in receiving the Lord's Supper. If it does not actually imply worship of the bread and wine, it has a tendency to lead us away from remembrance of the Person Himself into an adoration of the elements.

The sacred supper was a feast, not a ceremony. The posture used at the feast was that of lying along—the easiest posture into which they could put themselves. That is not congruous with our western custom. But the analogous position is that of sitting as much at ease as possible, which posture I would encourage you to persist in. Let us keep the feast as a feast but by no means kneel as though we were performing an act of worship before an altar.

Adoration of the invisible God is always right and proper. But if a certain posture seems to take away from the very essence of the festival—and a festival it is—and if in addition it encourages superstition—then kneel not but sit and do this in remembrance of Christ. Do this and nothing else and do it in *remembrance* and for no other purpose. And if any other posture looks another way, abjure it and keep close to that for which you have a precedent. The Church of Rome prizes the great picture by Leonardo di Vinci and in it all the Apostles are seated at the table. Is this at all like the mass? The supper is to be eaten in remembrance and for nothing more. But that, as we shall have to show you, is no little thing. “This do in remembrance of Me.”

Seeing that this is a feast of remembrance, let us ask ourselves a question—Do we *know* the Lord? “This do in remembrance of Me.” If you know nothing of a person. If you have had no acquaintance with him, you cannot remember him. Like a two-edged sword, this simple statement of truth sweeps through this audience tonight and divides it in two. Whether or not I may come to the Lord's Table must depend upon whether I know the

Lord Jesus, or do not know Him. If I am a stranger to Him, I may not come, for I may only come to remember Him and I cannot come to remember Him if I do not know Him. So it is a profanation of this blessed institution for any man to draw near to the table who does not know Christ already.

O Sirs, this is no saving ordinance—it was never meant to be. Its intent relates only to those who are saved. To know Jesus Christ is eternal life. And as you may not come without that knowledge, it is clear that you may not come unless *you are saved*. If any of you dream that your participation in your last moments in what is called “the sacrament” will save you, you are under a deep delusion. You may as well trust to the incantations of a witch as to the performance of any ceremony whatever, by whomsoever, in order to convey salvation to you. Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

And that is not worked by the corporeal act of swallowing bread and wine. You must be born again. And that is not effected by material substances, however consecrated—it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Until you have believed in Jesus and so know Him and know His power within you and have come to personal dealings with Him—instead of getting a blessing from the ordinance—you would eat and drink condemnation to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body. You are not capable of discerning that body if you have no faith. Let every man examine himself as to his knowledge of our Lord and so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup. If you do not know Him you cannot remember Him and therefore hands off from the tokens of remembrance.

One word—one solemn word here, which I would speak with my whole soul. Remember—if you do not know Him—the day will come in which He will say to you, “*I never knew you.*” If there is no personal intimacy between you and Christ, He will disown you in the day when He comes in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him. It will be idle to say, “Lord, we have eaten and drunk in Your presence and You have taught in our streets.” If you do not know Him, He does not know you and there will be simply this reply to all your claim derived from external religion—“Depart from Me, you cursed, I never knew you.”

But, dearly Beloved, if you do know the Lord—and I trust that many here do, indeed, know Him—then it is certain that He has manifested Himself to you. Wondrous love! Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us? You have looked to Him. You have trusted in Him. You have lived upon Him. And all this because He has remembered you in your low estate. You remember Him with joy at this moment because of your past experience of Him. He is so dear to you that you must remember Him. You could not live without Him. He is all your salvation and all your desire. Well, then, it is for you to come to this festival and do this in remembrance of Him.

I. My first point shall be that THE MAIN OBJECT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IS EVIDENTLY THAT WE SHOULD REMEMBER CHRIST BY IT. Notice this particularly. It is not that you should call to mind a doctrine—though I would not have you ignorant or unmindful of any Truth of God

which the Spirit of God has revealed. Neither is it that you should be mindful of a precept, though, Beloved, I would have you be careful that in all things you do your Savior's will. But the essence of your business at His table is, "This do in remembrance of Me," that is, of Himself—of His own blessed Person.

Think not of Him as an abstraction! Dream not of Him as a mere idea! Do not merely contemplate Him as an historical Personage who was once before men and has now passed from off the canvas of history, as Confucius, Zoroaster, or the like. No. He ever lives and abides an actual, ever energetic force and power among men of every age. Jesus is of that Divine Nature which dwells perpetually in the present tense—the same yesterday, today and forever.

Beloved, as you live by Him, you must learn to live *in* Him and *with* Him, so as to *know* Him as a Friend with whom you are really familiar. The Christ of our dreams is but a dream. We need a real, living, personal Christ and it is Jesus Christ Himself that we have to remember tonight at this table.

And if we do this, we shall remember Him, first, with gratitude as our Savior. If I have anything of hope, I owe it all to You, incarnate God, Son of the Highest and Son of Mary, too. Your love, Your life, Your death, Your resurrection, Your power at the right hand of God—these must be the pillars of my hope, if hope I have at all—

***"All our immortal hopes are laid
In You, our Surety and our Head;
Your Cross, Your cradle and Your Throne,
Are big with glories yet unknown."***

He has saved us, Brethren, and loved us and blessed us with everlasting consolation within Himself. Oh, let us think of Him! The streams of which you drink are sweet. But think of the fountainhead. Your healing is a thing to sing of forever. Remember that you are healed by His stripes and think of those cruel scourges, those five wounds, that body covered with a bloody sweat, that dear, thorn-encircled brow, those eyes all dimmed with blood. Remember Jesus Himself, I pray you, and think neither of pardon, nor of justification, nor of sanctification apart from Him.

The streams of love I trace up to the fountain in the heart of Christ and remember Him tonight with deepest gratitude. Follow me, my Beloved, in this meditation—yes, go before me and get nearer to the heart of your Redeemer. You must remember Him, next, with profound reverence as your living example—your living and reigning Lord. Know you not that as many of you as have been washed in His blood are henceforth God's servants, even as He was? You are not to do your own will but His will who has redeemed you. His example is to you the embodiment of the Lord's will. Do we not sweetly sing—

***"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in Your Word;
But in Your life the Law appears
Drawn out in living characters"?***

It is yours, then, to remember the Lord Jesus that you may follow Him. In sickness, remember Him in His patience. When you are persecuted,

remember Him in His gentleness. In holy service, remember Him with His burning zeal. In your times of solitude, remember Him and His midnight prayers. And when you are in public and have to bear witness, remember Him and His lion-like declarations of the Gospel. Remember Him so that He becomes your pattern and you are the reproduction of Himself and so the best memorial of Him.

Thus enabled by the Holy Spirit to remember your Lord with gratitude as your Savior, with reverence as your Lord, you will remember Him with confidence as your strength. He has not left you in this world to serve Him at your own charges and to bear His Cross alone. Remember Him, for He remembers you so as to be ever with you. "Lo, I am with you always," says He, "even unto the end of the world." Will you let Him be near you unnoticed and unremembered? Never say, "I am lonely." You are not alone if you remember Jesus. O widow and fatherless one, say not, "I am comfortless." He has said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

Remember Him without ceasing. When you are strong, remember Him. For your strength comes from Him. When you are weak, remember him. For He can give you the help you need. Oh, that in all times and places Christ were All in All to us!—

***"Remember You! Your death, Your shame
Our hearts' sad load to bear!
O memory, leave no other name
But His recorded there!"***

I would have the image of my Lord printed on the palms of my hands, that I might do nothing without Him. And I would have it painted on my eyes, that I might see nothing except through Him. It were better still to have it stamped upon my heart, that my very life might not beat except to the music of His name.

Remember Him, too, Beloved, as your great representative before the Throne of God. O Believer, at this very moment Heaven is yours! Jesus, your Forerunner, has taken possession of eternal glory in your name. The Throne of God has in the midst of it the glorified Man, the everlasting Son of God, who is the Covenant Head and Redeemer of His people. Never forget Him but keep your eye fixed upon Him, even as He keeps His eye upon you. He lives! The great Redeemer lives! He lives to plead for you.

Do not get into the habit of the Romish Church, which exhibits its dead Christ everywhere, or its baby Christ in the virgin's arms. Jesus is neither of these at this time. "He is not here—He is risen." He lives! It is the living Christ that we believe in, the ascended Christ we are trusting in, the Christ to come that we are hoping for. There, where He pleads with all authority, is our grand hope, for "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

Remember Him, once again, as soon to come. Perhaps while yet these lips are feebly fashioning halting words concerning wondrous mysteries, the trumpet may ring out above all earthly sounds. Even on this Sabbath night we may be called to behold the cloud upon which the Son of Man has come! "Of that day and hour knows no man." And vain is the folly which is perpetually prophesying of that concerning which it knows noth-

ing. Yet this is certain—the Lord Jesus will come to judge and to reign. “Behold, the Bridegroom comes.”

He said long ago, “Behold, I come quickly.” He has been coming in haste ever since and He must be drawing very near. Now this is what we are always to remember—for His coming will be the manifestation of His people as well as of Himself—His coming will witness the reward of His saints as well as His own reward. Then shall He shine forth. And with Him, “the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

Alas, we too much forget Him in all these aspects! I fear that we more easily forget than remember. And yet the remembrance of One so dear should be natural to us. Did you suspect, when you were first converted, that you could ever forget Him? “Oh, no,” you said—

***“Let the babe forget its mother,
Let the bridegroom slight his bride;
True to You, I’ll love no other,
Clinging closely to Your side.”***

So we said but not so have we done. How often we act as if we had not the living Christ to run to! We fret as if Jesus were still lying in the sepulcher. We act as if we were going to live here forever and did not expect our Lord to come and take us away to be with Him. We act as if we had no Master but our own wanton will. We act despairingly as if we had no Shepherd to take care of us and no Savior who had redeemed us with His precious blood. Come, Brethren, this will never do. It is dishonorable to our Lord and disgraceful to ourselves. You see the reason why the supper should have been instituted—our treacherous memories require it.

Let us gather to it as to a most needful, though right royal feast. For we have need to be reminded of our own dear Lord, who sweetly says to us, “This do in remembrance of Me.”

II. And now I take a second point. I want to show you all that THE MODE WHICH OUR LORD HAS ORDAINED OF HELPING OUR MEMORIES IS IN ITSELF EXCEEDINGLY STRIKING. It could not be more so. If I stood opposite to an altar garnished with paper roses and other childish things, and if I were to try and perform before you all: some of these cute little functions which are considered sacred by the followers of Rome—I should need a long time to explain it all to you.

And when I had done my best, you would not be able to make heads or tails of it. I have stood and watched the Catholic priest at the altar with the earnest desire to see if there was anything to be learned and I could not learn anything. I could not make out what the ornamental person was at. I think I have read as much as most people about such things. But it does seem to me that if the behavior of the priest at the mass is a symbol, it is a very dark one—if it is intended to teach the people—they need to know a great deal before they can learn anything from it.

Surely to find anything in the mass, the devout must bring it with them, for there is nothing there. But if you look at yonder table, you will see before you simply bread and wine. And when you see us celebrate the ordinance tonight, you will notice that we do nothing but break the bread and eat it and pass round the cup and drink. All that is done is extremely

simple. And the Savior seemed to wish for that simplicity, because He was Himself a very simple, unaffected, plain Man.

All the pomp that He ever had was when He rode through Jerusalem. But it was on a colt, the foal of an ass. Even then all the pomp consisted in this—the people laid their garments in the road and strewed branches along the way in the excess of their joy. Golden ornaments and flowers and incense and acolytes are far removed from His plain and natural habits. Only fancy some of His disciples rising from the dead and stepping into—well—St. Paul's cathedral, which is called Protestant but is about as Popish as it very well can be.

Supposing they walked in there—James and John together—the two sons of Zebedee. Perhaps stopping before some of the pretty things, James would wonderingly ask, "John, where have we got?" And John would say, "We are in a chamber of imagery, a temple of idols. Our Lord Jesus would not be happy here." "Why," says James, "it is Paul's Church. Fetch him in." Surely when Paul came in and looked at all those images and decorations, he would say, "Here I see another Gospel, which is not another. But there are some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ."

That is putting it mildly. We are getting to have the idolatries of Rome set up in the Churches called national. And this is not done by those called outwardly and honestly, Romanists, but by those who are really so in their hearts, and yet wear the Protestant name. The Lord Jesus Christ was just a simple peasant at Galilee and the garment He wore was analogous to our common smock frock, a garment "without seam, woven from the top throughout." There was not a bit of stateliness or affectation about Him. And in all that He ordained you cannot find one single pompous ceremony.

His followers were baptized in water—where did He ordain salt and oil and spittle? Where did He bid them make the "sign of the cross" or set forth "sponsors"? His followers gathered for worship and sang hymns in His praise but where were their "thuribles" and their "crucifers"? Where were "the stations of the cross"? Where are all these things in the Scriptures? They are inventions of later and darker days, but Jesus knew nothing of them—neither did His Apostles and those who followed them know nothing of such rubbish.

It was all plain telling of the dear love of God to men and of how men should love one another and love Jesus as their Savior—and that was it. Our Lord instituted this simple supper as the memorial of a plain, simple, honest Savior who had no gaudy tricks or priest craft about Him but was simply a Man among men.

But, next, our Lord's Supper was intended to be very frequent. "This do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." He has laid down no rule as to when we shall break bread. But the custom was certainly to break it on the first day of the week and I think oftener, for it seems to me that they broke bread from house to house. It was not a ceremony that required a minister or a priest. When Believers were together they broke bread in memory of Christ—any two or three of them—and so they remembered Him.

It is most delightful, when traveling, to remember Christ in your own room, where two or three Brethren meet together. You have nothing to do but to break bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him. I know of nothing more sweet or more instructive than this Divine ordinance, which grows more impressive the oftener you attend to it. It ought to be frequent. Our Scotch friends were wrong—as wrong could be in having it so seldom—but they are mending. The frequency of it is to show how often we need to be reminded of our dear Lord—for we are prone to forget Him. We ought always to remember Him. And therefore an institution intended to keep up our memory should be frequently used.

Since He bids His disciples do it often, there is an instruction in it that we should constantly remember Him in our inmost souls. Inasmuch as He gave this for a memorial and for nothing else and gave it to all His disciples—bidding all His followers, until He should come—do this in remembrance of Him, it was to show that we all need to remember Him and all need help to do so. We are all forgetful—the best Christian, highest in Divine Grace still needs this memorial, for he is apt to forget. Backsliding Christians need it, if possible, still more, that their failing memories may be revived. Sinners will do well to look upon it, for it may be that the memorials of the Lord's death may cause them to remember their sins and turn to their Savior.

But to come a little closer to the table. I want you to notice that when our Lord bids us remember Himself—"This do in remembrance of Me"—he gives us an ordinance which brings before us His death. Now, this, though it looks a very trite saying, is a very important point. The bread is His flesh, the wine His blood. They represent those two things. But they are separated—the bread is not in the wine, nor the wine in the bread. The two in separate vessels represent a body with the blood separated from it and thus they are the token of *death*.

Very well, then. When the Lord says, "This do in remembrance of Me," He gives us a memorial of His death—which plainly teaches us that the chief point of remembrance in our Lord Jesus is His death. He Himself regarded His death as the very center, heart and soul of what He would fix on our memories. Therefore those who say that His example is everything, or His teaching is everything, do greatly err—for when we remember Him, the first thing to be remembered is, "He has redeemed us to God by His blood." "Redeemer" is the name to which our memories must most tenaciously cling. His blood, His redemption, His atonement, His substitutionary sacrifice are always to be kept to the front.

"We preach Christ crucified," and you believe in Christ crucified. The reason of our success under God in this House of Prayer is that we have always preached Christ as the atoning sacrifice—the sinner's Substitute. And whosoever shall preach this boldly, clearly and thoroughly, putting it as the crown of the Gospel system, shall find God will bless His preaching. As for you, if you would have comfort and joy and peace, cling to the Cross. Look steadily to the accepted sacrifice. Never get away from your Lord Jesus. And when you remember Him, let His passion be the main thought which rises before you.

Next, notice another thing—this festival reminds us of the Covenant of Grace. Our Lord Jesus Christ, while He bade us remember Himself, said of the cup, “This cup is the new *covenant* in My blood.” That is the word. Read “testament,” if you prefer it. But I feel sure you are nearer the sense when you read “the new *covenant* in My blood.” What, then? When I am to remember Jesus Himself, I am to take the cup which is the token of the Covenant. Ah, Beloved, you cannot know Christ thoroughly unless you understand the doctrine of the two Covenants and connect Him with the Covenant of Grace.

You must know that “Covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” For the cup is to remind you of it, by reminding you of Him. Christ is best seen when you see Him in His Covenant relationship. Do you all know about that Covenant? You know there was a Covenant made with Adam in which we were all included. But that Covenant failed. Father Adam broke it and we all lost the blessing which his obedience would have procured us. There is another Covenant made with the second Adam—Christ Jesus—and because He has kept the Covenant, all that are in that Covenant stand forever in Him.

“As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive” who are in Christ. The one Covenant ruined all that were in it—the second Covenant saves all that are in it. As we take that cup, we do own and accept joyfully our interest in that Covenant which was made with Christ, which is established on the sure foundation of His perfect obedience. Behold the blood of the EVERLASTING COVENANT! May the Lord Jesus be brought to your memory tonight as your Covenant Head and Surety. And as you drink of the cup, may you feel confidence and joy in Him who is your Surety!

May your soul sing, “Although my house be not so with God. Yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure. This is all my salvation and all my desire.” You see, then, the oceans of instruction which lie in one of the emblems. Lose none of it.

But there is yet one more thing. It is this. You are taught by this institution that the very best way in which you can remember Christ is by receiving Him. Oh, the sweetness of that Truth, if you will remember it when you come to this table! You are not asked to bring bread with you. It is here. You are not asked to bring a cup with you. It is here already provided. What have you to do? Nothing but to eat and to drink. You have to be *receivers* and nothing more.

Well, now, whenever you want to remember your Lord and Master, you need not say, “I must do something for Him.” No, no! Let *Him* do something for *you*. “Take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord”—

**“The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more.”**

Lord, I cannot love You as I would love You but I can accept Your love. Let Your love drop into my heart just now. Lord, I cannot serve You as I would but I adore You because You do become *my* Servant and wash *my* feet as

You did your disciples. Lord, I cannot bring You coals of fire out of my chilly heart. But here is my heart, come and cast the coals of fire of Your own Divine love into it!

O my Brethren, come and receive! Come and RECEIVE! I think this is a very sweet intimation to those of you who feel as if you had nothing to come with. You do not need to come with anything except your hunger and thirst. A man that is invited to a meal need not say, "Oh but I have no bread." You are asked to a royal feast and you need not bring bread with you. He that invites you to His table will provide you with all you want. And when you desire to remember Him, your surest and best plan is to enjoy the good things which He sets before you. I have thus shown how suitable the ordinance is to help our memories.

III. Now, lastly, THE OBJECT FOR WHICH WE ARE TO COME, NAMELY, TO REMEMBER CHRIST, IS ONE WHICH IS IN ITSELF MOST INVITING. Let me show you what I mean. There is one here who cries, "I have forgotten my Savior. I did love Him. I hope my love has not quite gone but I seem to be very cold. Alas, I have forgotten my Lord."

Where should you go to have that love revived and refreshed? Should you not come where you will be helped to remember Him? He says, "This do in remembrance of Me." You say that you have forgotten your Lord. Come and remember Him again. Do not stay away but come with all the more eagerness. Remember Him as you did at first—when you came laden with guilt and full of fears—and when you just cast yourself upon your Lord and found peace. Come and rest in Him again.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, you that are afraid that your first profession was a mistake—come and begin again at the table. We have got into midsummer and the plants put out the midsummer shoot—you know—I want you to put out new shoots also. What? Do you say that it is long since you thought of growing? It is time to think of it again. If the spring shoot seems to have grown old, now is the time for a midsummer shoot—for a new beginning. Begin with Christ all over again. Repent and do your first work. "This do in remembrance of Me." Does not that exactly suit you who fear that you have for a while forgotten Him?

"Oh but I feel so weak." Yes but when a little child is very weak, there is still one thing which it can surely do—it can remember its mother. Memory is often quickened by our need—it is well when our sense of weakness makes us remember where our great strength lies. Remember, then, the Lord who is your strength and your song—for He also has become your salvation. Now, you poor little weak ones, where are you tonight? How gladly would I help you. But what better help can you desire than that which your Lord sets before you in these dear memorials of His death!

I know that some of you have been cruelly pushed about of late. The strong ones have said sharp things to you. Your Lord invites you to a cheering exercise which shall help you to forget the poor behavior of the proud. Poor, timid, trembling, half-believing, half-doubting One, and yet truly the Lord's—come to the table, come to remember your loving Redeemer! It is painful to remember yourself but it will be sweet to remem-

ber Him. "Oh," you say, "I cannot forget Him." I am glad you cannot. Still, come here and indulge your memory tonight and say—

***"Gethsemane, can I forget,
Or there Your conflict see,
Your agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember You?
When to the Cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God, my Sacrifice,
I must remember You."***

There is one more thing I am going to say and I feel half ashamed to say it. Some professedly Christian people urge that they cannot come to the table because there are certain persons there who, in their judgment, should not be allowed to come. Is the Lord's Table to be a judgment seat, where we are to revise the verdict of the Church? "I cannot," said one to me, "join a Church, because I cannot find one that is perfect." No, I said and if you do not join a Church till you do find a perfect one, you must wait till you get to Heaven. And, besides, my dear Friend, if you ever find a perfect Church they will not take you in. For I am sure they would not be perfect any longer if they did. One sickly sheep would then have passed into the fold. So it is idle for you to be looking out for perfection.

"But there is a person at communion who acted inconsistently." That is highly probable. And he may be wearing your coat and looking out of your eyes. If you know of any case of open sin, let the elders of the Church be informed and it will be dealt with tenderly and firmly. In so large a Church as this there may be cases of evil living not known to the overseers of the flock. But we invite the co-operation of all in maintaining the purity of the entire body and we trust that we have it. But now, really, what have you to do with the faults of others when you are remembering Christ Jesus?

Surely this is the most unseasonable time for harsh judgments, or indeed for *any* judgments. I know many a Brother with whom I could not agree in certain points but I agree with him in remembering the Lord Jesus. I could not work with him in all things. But if he wants to remember Jesus, I am sure I will join him in that. It will do him good and it will do me good, to think of Jesus. That dear name is so sweet to me that I will remember Jesus with the poorest, meanest and most imperfect of mortals.

I am never happier than when I am in your midst, my beloved Brethren—and we all sit around the table, because I think of all the Lord has done for you and for me. Why, it is not worth while going to Heaven alone. A little lost child sits down on the doorstep of a West end mansion and cries because it is so lonely—is that to be our position in Heaven? Are we to take no friends there with us? Who wants to be solitary in the New Jerusalem? But oh, to come with all of you to the table and to look into the faces of all God's people and to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is in each one of them!

They are a poor lot, full of mistakes, full of errors, full of infirmities, just like their minister. But the Lord has loved them and bought them with His blood. A precious Christ He is—not only to have saved me but tens of thousands of His saints everywhere. For there are people of His in

all Churches, even in the Churches that are most full of error. He has redeemed, by His precious blood, His own elect in the midst of them all. Why, the sight of you helps me to recollect Jesus and to get a better idea of Him—both your Christ and my Christ! And not our Christ alone but the Christ of all the myriads redeemed by His blood.

Shall I then set myself up for a judge and say, “No, I will not remember my Lord because one of the Brethren does not behave properly”? What would you say to your child if he said, “Father, I shall not come to see you on your birthday. I shall not join with the rest of the family in the usual festival”? Why not? “Because my brother is not what he ought to be. And till he mends his ways, I shall not keep your birthday.” Your father would say, “My dear son, is that any reason why you should not remember *me*? Surely I am not to blame for what your brother does. Come to the feast and think of me.”

So do I say to you if you have any personal angers and differences—do not *smother* them but *end* them. Do not come to the table till you have got rid of them, for you have no right to come. But end all wrath at once. Get rid of every ugly feeling you have towards everybody in the world and love all Believers in Christ for Christ's sake. Then come to this table and you will find it will help you to remember your Master as you shall join with others who remember Him. I think I may say that you will not be likely to see anybody at the table worse than yourself. So come along and let not pride keep you back. May God's infinite mercy bless the Lord's Supper to the Lord's people!

And as for those that cannot come and remember Him because they do not know Him, may they, this night, go home and seek Him. And if they seek Him, He will reveal Himself to them. If you desire Christ, Christ desires you. If you have a spark of love to Him, He has a furnace full of love to you. And if you want to come to Him and trust Him to save you, come and welcome. The Lord bless you, for His name's sake! Amen.

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[THIS sermon is issued, not because Mr. Spurgeon has been unable to preach on the Sabbath but because he has gone into the country for the week and so was unable to prepare for the press the sermon of last Lord's Day. That sermon will appear, if the Lord wills, with that of the following Sabbath next week. There has been a request for a sermon upon the Lord's Supper and here it is.]

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SERVUS SERVORUM

NO. 2514

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 25, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1885.

*"I am among you as He that serves."
Luke 22:27.*

OBSERVE, dear Friends, that our Lord, in order to impress a great practical Truth of God upon His 12 Apostles, refers them to Himself. He very often does so, quoting His own doings as an example to His servants. Does not this fact give us a hint that there is someone greater than a man here, for no mere man, modest and true and right-minded, would continually make himself the object of imitation! We would not consider it right if we found Abraham, or Moses, or David constantly pointing to himself as an example. Such a course is very proper for certain persons in certain special cases as, for instance, Paul might occasionally allude to himself when he was addressing his own converts, but even then rarely doing it—and doing it with extreme diffidence. But our Lord acts thus very often and with the utmost possible naturalness! Neither did it ever suggest itself to anyone of His people that there was anything immodest in His doing so. Such an idea never occurred to us because we have always recognized in Him something which entitled Him to speak thus, something which rendered it quite right that He should so speak. He is Master and Lord! He is very God of very God! He is perfect! He is out of the lists of ordinary men, He rises like a lone Alp above us all and when He speaks as He does in the words before us, the very fact that He does speak without our feeling any objection thereto proves that there is a something altogether unique about His Character, and that something, I believe, is the existence of perfection, and the evidence of Deity combined with His Humanity.

At any rate, dear Brothers and Sisters, this is a matter of fact in our holy faith, that the best lesson for a Christian to learn is to be learned from Christ, Himself. I am afraid that in these days some are preaching in a lop-sided way. Years ago Christ was set forth almost exclusively as an example. "Concerning the Imitation of Christ" was the great matter of public discourse—and many books were written upon that important theme. But, inasmuch as in those days they forgot and undervalued the *Sacrifice* of Christ and did not preach Justification by faith in His precious blood, their preaching was but dim and inefficient and Christ was not largely imitated, after all, although men were bid to imitate Him. Now, we preach His sacrifice—in many of our places of worship the Atonement of Christ is very clearly proclaimed and the plan of salvation by virtue of His precious blood is very widely declared with more or less

of clearness, for which I thank God. But we must take care that we do not forget that Christ is our Example as well as our Atonement—and that, while by His death we live, the life which we live is to be conformed to the life of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. He did not merely come to save us from the guilt of sin, but He came to save us from the *power* of sin. He does not merely bring us pardon, but He brings us *holiness* and He comes to make us like Himself. This, indeed, is the end of His life and of His death—that we might grow into His image and become truly replicas—repetitions of Christ according to our degree, among the sons of men.

I want, therefore, to say to you who are Christ's people—As He has saved you, follow Him! If you are washed in His blood, be like He! If, indeed, He is your Master and Lord, obey Him! In all that you do, ask yourselves this question, "What would Christ have done under these circumstances?" And then act according to the answer which God's Word and your own conscience give you. "As He is, so are we, also, in this world." And if we fulfill our destiny to the glory of God and the honor of our Redeemer, we shall make men see in our own proper persons what Christ was when He was here—"holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." Christ always points us to Himself. If He bids us trust Him, He also bids us follow Him. If He bids us hope in Him, He also bids us obey Him and be like He is. And they who will not have His holiness shall not have His Atonement! If we do not care to be like He is, we cannot be saved by Him.

The particular evil at which our Lord aimed when He uttered the words of our text was the evil which is so common in the Church, even down to the present day, that is, each man seeking to be somebody. We are all born *great* the first time—it is only when we are born the second time, born from above—that we come to be little. When we were born the first time, we were so great that we were really nothing—but when we are born a second time, we are so little that we are everything in Christ! At first, self seeks to gain the mastery. It has a head that must wear the crown and feet that must be shod with silver slippers. Self will wear no sackcloth, it must be clad in silk at the very least. Self always exalts itself above all its fellows—it even pines after the Throne of God, for self has the ambition of Lucifer and will never be satisfied, however high it mounts. Now, our Savior wants, in His disciples, that self should be crushed, that all desire to be great should be quenched and that, instead of all of us wanting to be masters, we should see which of us can be servants! If we are as Christ was, we shall catch the spirit which made Him say, "I am among you as He that serves."

I. To that point I bend all my strength just now and, first, I want to speak a little upon our Lord's position among His own followers—"I am among you as He that serves."

The 12 Apostles came together to the Last Supper. There was usually a servant or slave in the room to wash the feet of the guests, but there does not appear to have been such a person on that occasion. Peter did not offer. Even John did not think of it. Thomas was probably considering who ought to do it and Philip, the arithmetician of the Apostles, was

calculating how much water it might take—but nobody offered to do it. Everybody's business, you know, is nobody's business, so nobody offered to wash anybody's feet. They had already taken their positions, reclining about the table when, without any suggestion from anybody else, the Master Himself rose from their midst, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself with it, poured water into a basin and went from one to another—and washed their feet. After He had done that, and was again reclining with them, He said to them, in effect, "I am among you as the slave, the domestic who does the most menial work. You see that I am." They could not contradict it, for He had actually and literally taken that position among them.

But, dear Friends, this act of our Lord's was no novelty! What He did *literally* that evening, He had been doing ever since they had formed a community! *He was always the servant of them all.* He was constantly looking out for their interests and laying Himself out to do them good. They did not come to Him to bring Him anything—they came to *receive* from Him. They did not come to teach Him, or even to comfort Him with their company. They all came for what they could *get* from Him and to learn the Truth of God from His lips, some of them hoping to be led by Him to a kingdom which they did but dimly understand, but they were all, as it were, sitting at a table all the time they were with Him, being fed with heavenly and spiritual food. And He was all the while their servant, washing their feet, bearing with their ill manners, sweetly correcting their mistakes and always patient, notwithstanding their slowness of learning. He could truly say, not only of that supper night, but of His whole life, "I am among you as He that serves."

When Christ thus spoke, He called Himself not merely a servant, one that serves, but specially *the* servant—the deacon, the attendant, is really the word. "I am among you as the waiter. You are the gentlemen who sit at the table and I am the servant who waits upon you." Our Lord meant to remind the Apostles by this act that He had always taken among them the very lowest place. He had never exercised any sort of domineering authority over them, He had never been exacting in His demands upon them. He had never sought His own comfort at their expense, but He was always meek and lowly in heart—always seeking their welfare rather than His own. There was not one of them but knew that this was true. He was less than the least among them, although He was greatest of them all! As the old writers used to say, He was *servus servorum*, the Servant of servants.

A servant, you know, is one who has to care for other people. When she gets up in the morning, it is not her work to look to her own comfort. The true servant in the house glides along quietly, watching to see what can be done for the comfort of all the inhabitants. Such a person forgets herself, or himself, in thinking of others. This is just what our Lord Jesus did—He never seems to have given Himself a thought, He was only thinking of the poor multitudes that gathered about Him and of the sick folk that He could heal and of the humble few that came into His more intimate acquaintance, and called Him Lord and Master. Wonderfully unself-

fish was He whose whole care was for others and who could truly say to His disciples, "I am among you as He that serves."

A true servant ignores his own will. He does not do what he would like to do—he does what his master tells him to do. He is engaged as a servant and he lives as a servant. And he obeys the will of him who has employed him. Was it not just so with our Lord in the whole course of His life? "I came not," He said, "to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." From His childhood, He must be about His Father's business and, until His last hour, when He could say to His Father, "It is finished," He never had two businesses in hand. His one sole concern was to take upon Himself the form of a servant, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Beloved, I cannot imagine a better picture of a servant than the full length portrait of Him who is truly Lord of All! "King of kings" is a title full of majesty, but "Servant of servants" is the name which our Lord preferred when He was here below!

A servant is one who bears patiently all manner of hardness. Many servants have had to endure a great deal of hardship and, sometimes, much misjudgment and harshness. But this blessed Servant of the Father bore cold, nakedness, hunger and even death in His servitude. And though He was despised and rejected by the very men whose good He sought. Though He was maltreated, maligned and slandered, yet He still never turned aside. even for self-defense. He held on in His holy and sacred course as Servant of all. I do not know how to put this Truth of God as I would like to, but I want you to recognize that He, who this day sits on the highest Throne in Glory amid a hierarchy of angels, adored of blood-redeemed spirits, was among us here below as the Servant of His own servants! Your Blessed Lord, whose face outshines the sun at noon-day, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who is this day Head over all things to His Church—your Lord, who shall shortly come with myriads of saints and angels to judge the world in righteousness, was, when He was here, nothing more than this—"He that serves." That was His position.

II. I have entrenched upon what I meant to make the second subject of discourse, namely, THE WONDER OF THIS POSITION, for it is among the greatest of all wonders that Jesus, the Lord of All, should have become the Servant of All!

Very briefly let me suggest to your minds that the marvel was all the greater as *He was Lord of All by nature and essence*. Our Lord Jesus was Divine. He was "God over all, blessed forever," "Son of the Highest," that Eternal Word, without whom was not anything made that was made. Yet to His disciples He says, "I am among you as He that serves." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of Grace and truth." Truly, it was a marvelous condescension on our Lord's part!

Remember, too, that *He was infinitely wise*. There was never another teacher like Christ, for He could answer every question and solve every difficulty. Those piercing eyes of His looked through every secret place and revealed the darkest mysteries of human life. Then, surely, they set

Him on high in the church of His day, they made Him professor, they paid Him every homage! But, did they? No. He said, "Though I am Rabboni, the Great Master, yet I am among you as He that serves." Is this how you treat your wise men, O you gracious ones? Do you set them to wash the disciples' feet?

Recollect, also, that *He was immaculately pure and incomparably good*. There was never such another Man among all the sons of men! There can never be another Character so charming as His. All perfections meet in Him to make up one perfection! All the sweets of the highest morality and spirituality are blended in Him to make one perfect and essential sweet! Yet He is among us as the *One that serves*. There was a certain preacher who cried out in his sermon, "O virtue, if you were once embodied, and should come down among mankind, all men would worship you!" But see, here is Virtue perfected and Incarnate—and down among us serving as a Servant! This is how man treats the Perfect One—and it is a great wonder.

Besides that, *the Lord was our superlative Benefactor*. He was here simply to bless us. Eyes, lips, hands, feet—all scattered benedictions. He was a sun in the midst of human darkness. His every thought was a beam of light and comfort for mankind. Yet He could say, "I am among you as He that serves." In order to be our Benefactor, He takes the very lowest place and men were content to keep Him there and let Him wash their feet. Oh, 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing, yet true!

It is amazing, too, that He should be a *servant among such poor creatures as they were*. I have heard of some who have been willing to wash the feet of saintly men, but these disciples were a band of poor sinners. I have heard of some who would have been willing to perform menial offices for great philosophers, or men of high dignity. But these disciples were mainly a company of Galilean fishermen who had lately left their boats and nets, or peasants fresh from the soil of their fields full of all the faults and infirmities natural to men of their class. Yet our blessed Lord said to them, "I am among you—you fishermen, you countrymen, you poverty-stricken men—I am among you as He that serves." O gracious Master, You were humble, indeed, and it did well become You! You seem, despite Your ineffable Glory, to be quite at home when You are acting as slave to Peter and James and John, taking their soiled feet into Your pure hands and washing them clean.

III. Now, in the third place, let us inquire what is the explanation of this wonder? Why did our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was among the twelve, take the place of Him that serves? Why did He, who was Lord of All, become Servant of All?

First, *because He was so truly great*. The little man is always jealous lest he should be treated as little. The little selfish being tries to wriggle himself into notice somehow or other. He needs to be observed and then he wants to do something for which he may have a vote of thanks—and he would like it to be proposed in very special terms. Do you expect *him* to wash any men's feet? Well, he might wash the feet of *gentlemen*, in a golden basin, with a crystal basin, rose water, and a damask napkin. Oh, yes, my lord would do it that way very prettily and think a great deal of

his condescension! But actually to take the feet of poor men into his hands and to wash them—to really do some such service to those who need it—he could not manage that! He is so little that he could not rise to such a dignified position. Brothers and Sisters, it was because our Lord was so superlatively great that He could do little things, that He could stoop and be lowly. It is in the nature of such a great heart as His to be willing to do any necessary thing for those whom it loves.

But the second answer to the question is this. Our Lord was among men as One that serves *because He had such immeasurable love*. Love is always happiest when it can do something for its object. It is no toil for love to labor for that which it loves—it would be slavery to it to be withheld from so delicious an exercise! Look at the mother with her child—even with all the many trials she has with it—it is so dear that she counts it a relaxation rather than a bondage to take care of her own beloved offspring! And have you never known a loving woman sit by the bedside of her sick husband? The nights have been long and dreary but she has not left him whose life was ebbing away. The candle has burnt low and the daylight has peeped in through the blinds, but there she is—still sitting—and unless she verily faints away through sheer exhaustion, you cannot get her from that sick room, for love holds her there and keeps those weary eyelids from dropping down and makes her feel it to be a sad joy, a grief but a pleasure to be near him whom she loves.

And our blessed Lord was so full of love to us that nothing seemed a stoop to Him. “For the joy that was set before Him,” the joy of blessing His people, “He endured the Cross, despising the shame.” “Will I wash their feet?” He seemed to say, “that is very little. I will wash them altogether in my heart’s blood. I will bear their sins in My own body on the tree and will be, indeed, among them as He that serves to the fullness of a sacred service such as never was exhibited before or since.” It was love, it was wondrous love, excessive love, that would not let Him stay in Heaven amid the splendors of His royalty, but made Him come to earth, amid the sorry surroundings of penury and grief, that He might save us!

IV. Now, lastly, I am coming to what I have been driving at all the while and that is, **THE IMITATION OF OUR LORD’S HUMILITY**. I suggest to you at once the power by which you shall learn to imitate your Lord. If you get His love in your hearts, you will always long and wish to take up a position like His and be among your fellow Christians as one that serves.

If we are to imitate Christ, it will involve, dear Friends, that we who are saved by Him should *joyfully undertake the very lowest service*. If there is a door to be kept, if there is a path to be swept, let us aspire to that dignity. If there is a class of men more degraded than another, let us wish to go to them. If there is a rank of women more fallen than another, let us pray and labor especially for them. If there are any members of the Church that are more neglected and despised than others, let us be most attentive to them. If there is somebody who really is quite a worry when we visit her, let us visit her. If there is a person who really is so exceedingly poor and, perhaps, so very dirty that it takes a good deal of self-denial to go and sit by her bedside when she is sick, let us go. If we are

to be like Christ, we shall all be eager for the lowest work, we shall all be seeking who can take the lowest place. If you want this pulpit, dear Friends, you can have it if you can fill the position better than I do. But then, perhaps, you might not! But there will not be much competition for the *lowest* place. If you become a candidate for that position, you will get it. There are not likely to be too many applicants for the post and, by degrees, one and another will edge out, so I recommend you, if you really want the place that Christ would have you take, that is, *the very lowest position in the Church of God*, to go in for it, for you will get it.

You have all heard of David Brainerd, the great missionary to the Red Indians. He was seen, one day, lying in his hut, teaching a little Red Indian child to say, “a, b, c.” Somebody said, “What? Is this David Brainerd teaching that little dunce his letters?” “Yes,” he said, “I have prayed God that, as long as I live, I might be useful. And now I am too weak to preach, I am too feeble to do anything else but just teach this little child the alphabet. And I shall keep on doing something for my Master till I die.” So, dear Friend, if you cannot teach the thousands, teach two or three! If you could not even venture on two or three, yet teach your own child, or look after somebody else’s child, some gutter child, some Arab of the street! Be as your Master would have you be, “as he that serves,” by seeking to fill the very lowest office in His Church.

Show the same spirit, also, in being *at all times lowly in your esteem of yourself*. You know the gentleman who is always being insulted, I know him very well, indeed—you could not wink an eye at him but you would insult him! He has a very thin skin—you must mind how you *think* when you are near him—he is always being treated in a disrespectful manner. Nobody ever seems to treat him as he ought to be treated in the place where he now is. If he were to get among people of greater sense and better education, he says that there he should be respected. I almost wish he would go—still, I must not say so, because, perhaps, we can mend him if we let him stay and all of us seek to do him good. But, Brothers and Sisters, do not any of you be of that character, but be among those sensible persons of whom a disrespectful thing could not be said because they would not treat it as disrespectful!

Some time ago a man said a very unkind and untrue thing of me, and I felt quite pleased because I thought that if he had known me better, he might have said something worse. But I was quite satisfied to take the bad thing as it was. I never told anybody about it and I do not intend to, for it really did not trouble me at all. As far as I remember, I slept as long that night as I had done before. There is no use in believing that you are such an important person that the wind must not blow on you, because the wind *will* blow on you! Do you not find it so? Well, suppose that we do not have any dignity. Suppose that we, each one, say, “I am among you as he that serves. Now, then, find as much fault as you please.” In wet weather, one of the most useful things in a house is the doormat—and a doormat never complains of persons wiping their boots on it—because it was put there for that very purpose. And if you are quite willing to let people wipe their dirty boots on you, you will come to feel, “What a capital man I am! How beautifully that man cleaned his boots on

me just now! He found great fault with me, but he was not finding fault with somebody else just then. It did not hurt me and it might have hurt somebody else, so I am doing good service in bearing what, after all, does not so much offend me now I have brought my mind to it." So, have a lowly estimate of yourself, for then you will be like Christ, who said, "I am among you as He that serves."

Furthermore, Brothers and Sisters, may I earnestly inculcate upon Christians that we should *always be seeking to do good to others*, for that is what Christ meant. He made His disciples recline at the table, but He waited on them. It was His high office to be the lowest among them! Now, Christian people, look out for opportunities of doing good to others. "I do not know," says one, "that I get much good out of the Church." But that is not the point! The question for you to ask is, "How much good have I done to the Church?" for, after all, our being here is not with a view of getting so much out of it, but putting so much into it. The Christian man's way of living is by giving, for he realizes that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

If you really want to serve somebody, there is a wide field open to you. You need not go to Africa to do it. You can stay in your own house and serve somebody there. It seems to me that a Christian should be trying from morning to night what he can do to bless other people for their good. It should be the mother's ambition to make the children happy and to train them for Christ. It should be the father's wish that all under his care in the house should enjoy being at home and should think that there never was such a home as he makes. It should be the girl's wish that brothers and sisters at home should be glad to think that Mary is there, for she is quite a light in the house. And the brother should make it his joy to do everything that can minister to the comfort of his mother and sisters. In fact, this is the point wherein Christians would carry Christianity on to a greater triumph—if they, each one, sought the good of others.

But some are so grumpy, so snappy, that they cannot do even a good thing without doing it badly! If they do you a favor, you feel that it is just the same as if they had offended you. Let it not be so with us, dear Friends! Let us seek to exhibit an amiable, gracious, loving spirit—not by pretending to have it—but by *really* loving others and desiring their present, their future and their eternal welfare. This is what Jesus did when He said, "I am among you as He that serves." Let us do the same as far as in us lies. In a word, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in being willing to bear and forbear even to the end. The true Christian is the man or woman who, when he is reviled, reviles not again—when he is falsely accused, scarcely thinks it worth his while to answer—who often foregoes his rights—and is willing to do so. He or she is one who is not for self, not even for justice to himself, but is willing to bear and suffer wrong rather than inflict wrong.

Someone, perhaps, says that I am teaching you hard lessons. Yes, but if you are the children of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the kind of lesson that you will love and try to practice! And as you become proficient in it, there will be a peculiar sweetness stealing into your spirit. I pray God

that we may have the mind of Christ, that we “may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.” If any treat you ill, love them all the more! If they make you angry, try to get over it as quickly as possible. “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Pay them off the next day by doing them some kindness which you would not have done if they had not treated you badly. Always try to speak as well of everybody as you can. When you hear anything against them, cut it in halves—and cut each half into two more halves—and then throw all away as if you had never heard it! Go through the world with the full conviction that there are some good people in it and that if there are not, it is time that *you* should be one and should help to increase the number by exhibiting a holy, humble, gentle, gracious spirit. If you have this mind in you, your Lord will be glorified and men will say, “Is this a Christian? Then let me be a Christian, too!”

God help you to do so, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 22:1-39.**

Verses 1, 2. *Now the feast of unleavened bread drew near, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill Him; for they feared the people.* Dastardly fear often drives men to the greatest crimes. He who is not brave enough to be master of his own spirit and to follow the dictates of his own conscience may do, before long, he little knows what. Because of the fear of the people, the chief priests and scribes were driven to compass the death of Christ by craft and to bring Him to His death by the cruel betrayal of Judas, one of His own Apostles.

3-6. *Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him unto them in the absence of the multitude.* Was it not a sad thing that the betrayer of Christ should be one of the twelve? Yet deeply trying as it must have been to the heart of Christ, there is something useful about even that horrible transaction! It says to all the professing Church of Christ, and it says to us who claim to be Christ’s followers, “Do not think yourselves safe because you are in the visible Church. Do not imagine that even holding the highest office in the Church can prevent you from committing the basest crime. No, for here is one of the twelve Apostles, yet he betrays his Master!”

Sometimes we have found this betrayal to be a source of comfort. I have myself desired, in receiving members into the Church, to be very careful, if possible, only to receive good men and true. Yet, though pastors and elders of the Church may exercise the strictest watch, some of the worst of men will manage to get in. When that is the case, we say to ourselves, “No new thing has happened to us, for such a sinner as this marred the Church from the very beginning.” Here is Judas, when Christ, Himself, is the Pastor, when the twelve Apostles make up the

main body of the Church. Here is Judas, one of the twelve, ready to betray his Master for the paltry bribe of 30 pieces of silver—the price of a slave. Yes, we might have been put out of heart in building up the Church of God if it had not been for this sad but true narrative concerning Judas and his betrayal of our Lord.

7, 8. *Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat.* Notice how carefully our Lord respected the ordinances of that dispensation so long as it lasted. The Passover was an essential rite of the Jewish faith and our Lord, therefore, duly observed it. Learn here, dear Brothers and Sisters, to esteem very highly the ordinances of God's House! Let Baptism and the Lord's Supper keep their proper places. You do them serious injury if you lift them out of their right places and try to make *saving* ordinances of them. But, in avoiding that evil, do not fall into the opposite error of neglecting them! What Christ has ordained, it is for His people to maintain with care until He comes again. And if He kept the Passover even when, in Himself, it was already on the point of being fulfilled, let us keep up the ordinances which He has enjoined upon us. If any of you have neglected either of them, let me remind you of His gracious words, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," and, "This do you, in remembrance of Me."

9-13. *And they said unto Him, Where do You want us to prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters in. And you shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master says unto you, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready. And they went, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover.* Observe in this passage an amazing blending of the human and the Divine! No mention is made of either as a matter of doctrine, but incidentally our Lord's Divinity and Humanity are most fully taught. Here is Christ so poor that He has not a room in which to celebrate the most necessary feast of His religion. He has made Himself of no reputation and He has no chamber which He can call His own. Yet see the Godhead in Him! He sends His messengers to a certain house and tells them to say to the good man of the house, "Where is the guest chamber?" It all turns out just as He said it would be and He is welcomed to this man's best room and to the furniture thereof. Jesus speaks here as did His Father when He said to Israel in the olden time, "Every beast of the forest is Mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills." All the guest chambers in Jerusalem were really at Christ's disposal—He had but to ask for them and there they were—all ready for Him! Here we see the majesty of His Deity but, inasmuch as He had no room that He could call His own, we also see the humility of His Manhood.

14-16. *And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.* This was to be His last meal with His disciples before He died. And He had looked for-

ward to it with great desire. It was a most solemn occasion and yet to Him a most desirable one. May something of the Master's desire overflow into your hearts, Beloved, whenever you are about to partake of the sacred feast which He instituted that night!

17-20. *And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you.* Do you see how this new memorial was blended with the Passover, how it melted into that social meal which formed part of the paschal celebration? There was a cup, then bread, and then the cup after supper, so there was a gracious melting of the one dispensation into the other. We see our Lord's wisdom in thus leading His children on from step to step, without a break, conducting them from one line of service to another and a still higher one.

21. *But, behold, the hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table.* This was a sad and solemn fact, yet it has often been so since that night. The nearer to Christ, the farther from Him—so has it sometimes happened since. He who was, in some respects, the highest in the College of the Apostles became the lowest in the ranks of the children of perdition.

2, 23. *And truly the Son of Man goes, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.* Let us also pass that question round among ourselves—

***“When any turn from Zion's way,
(Alas, what numbers do)!
Methinks I hear my Savior say,
'Will you forsake Me, too?'
Ah, Lord, with such a heart as mine,
Unless You hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last.
The help of men and angels joined
Could never reach my case
Nor can I hope relief to find
But in Your boundless Grace.
What anguish has that question stirred,
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord, relying on Your Word,
I humbly answer, No.”***

God grant us more Grace, that we may be held fast by the records of love!

24. *And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* Let me read you these two verses together. They strike me as being very remarkable. Here are two questions—“They began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing,” that is, betray their Lord. “And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.” What poor crea-

tures we are! How we are tossed with contrary winds! The new question comes up and yet the old question, which ought to have been smothered by it, still remains there! It is possible that Luke is here alluding to some dispute which the Apostles had previously had and now the Lord, remembering that even in the ashes of contention lived the fires of ambition, would quench the last sparks of the evil fire.

25. *And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.* The people are compelled to use sweet terms to express a very bitter bondage, so they call their tyrants, “benefactors.”

26, 27. *But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve. For which is greater, he that sits at meat, or he that serves?* The guest, or the waiter at the table?

27-31. *Is not he that sits at meat? But I am among you as He that serves. You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. As our Lord Jesus looked upon His eleven Apostles, He felt that their time of greatest trial was fast approaching. Beyond anything they had ever endured before, they were now to be put into the devil’s sieve and Satan would toss them to and fro, and seek, if possible, to destroy them!*

32. *But I have prayed for you, that your faith fails not.*—“I have made you, Simon, a special object of My prayer. All the brotherhood will be tried, but for you I have especially prayed, for you, who seem to be the strongest, are the weakest of them all, so I have prayed specially for you, that your faith fails not.”

32. *And when you are converted*—“When you are restored”—

32-39. *Strengthen your brethren. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that you shall thrice deny that you know Me. And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip, and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough. And He came out, and went, as He was accustomed, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him.*

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

THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST

NO. 3178

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1909,

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“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.”
Luke 3:21, 22.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”
Luke 6:12, 13.

“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.”
Luke 9:28, 29.

“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.”
Matthew 14:23-25.

“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me.”
John 11:41, 42.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.”
Luke 22:31, 32.

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.”
Luke 23:46.

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preach-

er, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spoke like this Man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to *preach*, but we are told that, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior's life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the *preparatory prayers of Christ*—the prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all times—and yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual service—we shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22—"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying," (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faith—about to take up the soldier's life under the great Captain of our salvation—about to start out as pilgrims to Zion's city—I say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is

about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, “the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.” There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore *audible testimony to Christ*. And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christ’s prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Father—and if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your life—you must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, “Behold, he prays,” before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.”

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, “in a bodily shape like a dove,” to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! “Draw near

to God, and He will draw near to you,” not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayer—more power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Savior’s preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication *on our part in similar circumstances*. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayer—and so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirit’s blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13—“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14—SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, “I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them.” He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of God—but being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutes—but His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest

in heart and holy in life—and that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap it—as long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Father’s ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Father’s authority and the Spirit’s power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the session—or an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one another—but when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with God’s blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Savior’s example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination—

***“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”***

When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satan’s long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 dis-

ciples did when they returned to Him with joy, “Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!”

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29—“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” You see that it was *as He prayed that He was transfigured*.

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayer—only there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabor’s top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grass—but when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pastures—and get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Life—but that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORD’S PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25—“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.” He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and

then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of God's blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, "He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a man's hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42—"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me." He did not cry, "Lazarus, come forth," so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until *first* He had prayed, "My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead," and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETER'S FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34—

PETER'S RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34—PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter *before he was tempted*. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mind—and He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may *not* fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

“But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purse-proud.” Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not be—and do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

“Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him.” Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel—we do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgments—and let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him right—go and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts' hearts—and that pens need sharpening every now and then—but even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than

before! Do so, dear Friends—do not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORD'S PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." [See Sermons #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His people's Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, "He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem" and, in due time, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of John's Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayer—an example well worthy of His people's imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physically—you will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourself—body, soul and spirit—into His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumption—pray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordan's swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Cross—and pray even as He did—"Not my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconverted—who have imagined that prayer is the way to Heaven—yet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that *a saved man does is to pray*—and the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write—

***“Prayer is the contrite sinner’s voice,
Returning from his ways
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, ‘Behold, he prays!’
Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air!
His watchword at the gates of death
He enters Heaven with prayer!”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:1-14.**

Verse 1. *And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43—WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] An old writer says that many of Christ’s parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by it—“that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” And this is the parable.

2. *Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man.* It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear God—where they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this land—God grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. *And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.* She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. *And he would not for a while.* He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.

4, 5. *But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.* She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kind—but the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon him—for he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God,

nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted it—and though he was but little troubled about it—he said, “that I may not be worried to death by this woman’s continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary.”

6, 7. *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?* [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6—PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He is no unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose His people from eternity! “Shall not God avenge His own elect?” Yes, that He will—only let them persevere in prayer and “cry day and night unto Him.”

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* [See Sermon #1963, Volume 33—THE SEARCH FOR FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find it—although if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. *And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* It seems as if these two things went together—as our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes down—the scales seem to work that way.

10. *Two men went up into the Temple to pray.* [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41—THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in *these days*—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. *The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.* It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocrite—and if what he said was true—there was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer—but what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Temple—“or even as this publican.” What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in God’s sight!

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off*—Just on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* [See Sermon #1949, Volume 33—A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That was *all* prayer—it was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, “a sinner.” He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publican’s prayer, it is, “God be propitious to me,” that is, “be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice.” And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayer—while the Pharisee’s boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. *I tell you, this man*—This publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee did—this man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, “this man”—

14. *Went down to his house justified rather than the other.* He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justification—he had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46—TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

14. *For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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

PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION

NO. 2035

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, July 22, 1888
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

“When you are converted, strengthen your Brethren.”
Luke 22:32.

PETER was to be sifted, so our Lord warned him. And Satan was to operate with the sieve. Satan had an intense desire to destroy Peter—indeed, he would like to destroy all the chosen of God—and therefore he desired to sift him as wheat, in the hope that he would be blown away with the husks and the chaff. To see a child of God perish would bring to the Evil One a malicious joy, for he would have wounded the heart of God. If ever the fallen spirit can be happy, he would derive happiness from defeating the Grace of God and robbing the Lord Jesus of those whom He bought with His blood.

“Satan has desired to have you”—it would be a satisfaction to him to have a Believer in his power. He was anxious to get Peter into his clutches, to give him as tremendous a shaking as he could manage. If Satan knows, as he no doubt does, concerning any one Believer that he cannot quite destroy him, then he is especially anxious to worry him. If he cannot devour the chosen, he would at least defile them—if he cannot ruin their souls, he would break their quiet. As the Revised Version puts it, Satan even asks God to have them that he may sift them as wheat. This is a curious statement, for it seems from it that the devil can pray. And that his petition may be granted him.

The margin has it, “Satan has obtained you by asking.” The Lord may grant the request of the devil, himself, and yet he would not prove thereby that he had any love towards him. The Lord’s wisdom may grant Satan’s desire and in the very act overthrow his evil power. Let us not, then, stake our faith in the Lord’s love upon His giving us the precise answer we desire, for what He gives to Satan He may see fit to deny to those whom He loves and He may do so because He loves them. It is a fact that the Evil One is permitted to test the precious metal of God’s treasury.

The story in the Book of Job is no fiction or piece of imagination. It is even so that Satan desires to have choice ones of God put into his power that he may test them—that he may torment them, that he may, if possible, destroy them. The Lord may permit this as He did in the case of Job and as He did in the case of the Apostles and especially in the case of Peter. He may grant the Tempter’s request and allow him to touch our bone and our flesh and see whether we will hold to our God in mortal agony.

We are not bound to know God’s reasons for what He does or permits. It is sometimes sinful to enquire into those reasons. What the Lord does is

right. Let that be enough for us who are His children. But we can see, sometimes, a reason why the saints should be sifted as wheat. For it appertains unto wheat to be sifted, because it is wheat. Sifting brings a desirable result with it—it is for the saints' good that they should be tried. Satan doubtless wishes that God may let the good seed fall to the ground and be destroyed. But He overrules it to separate the chaff from the wheat, and to make the wheat into clean grain, fit for storage in the King's granary.

Satan has often done us a good turn when he has meant to do us a bad one. After all, he is only a dishwasher in God's kitchen to clean His vessels. And some of them have received special scouring by means of his harsh temptations. God also may find a reason for allowing His saints to be tempted of Satan and that reason may have more relation to others than to themselves. They may have to be tested for other people's good. The testing of their faith is "more precious than that of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire," and part of its preciousness is its usefulness.

The child of God under temptation, behaving himself grandly, will become a standing example to those who are around him. "You have heard of the patience of Job." But you never would have heard of the patience of Job if Satan had not sifted him. This great treasury of instruction, the Book of Job, and all the Truth of God taught us by Job's example comes to us through God's having permitted Satan to put forth his hand and to press the Patriarch so sorely. We also may be afflicted—not so much for ourselves—as for others. And this may be remarkably the case in the instances of those of you whom God makes useful to a large circle of friends.

You live for others and therefore suffer for others. The whole of your lives will not be accounted for by yourselves but by your surroundings. As a minister I may have to be tempted because temptation is one of the best books in a minister's library. As a parent you may need affliction, because a father without a trial can give no counsel to a tempted child. Public workers may have to be tried in ways which, to a private Christian, are unnecessary. Let us accept remarkable discipline if thereby we are qualified for remarkable service. If by the roughness of our own road we are trained to conduct the Lord's sheep along their difficult pathway to the pastures on the hilltops of Glory, let us rejoice in every difficulty of the way. If Apostles and men like Peter had to be put into Satan's sieve while they were being trained for their lifework, we may not hope to escape.

Observe, dear Friends, what came before the sifting and went with the sifting. Note well that blessed "but." "But I have prayed for you." Not, "Your Brethren have prayed for you." Not, "You have prayed for yourself." But, "I have prayed for you." Jesus, that master in the art of prayer, that mighty Pleader who is our Advocate above, assures us that He has already prayed for us. "I have prayed for you," means—"before the temptation I have prayed for you. I foresaw all the danger in which you would be placed and concerning that danger I have exercised My function as High Priest and Intercessor."

“I have prayed for you.” What a Divine comfort is this to any who are passing through deep waters! You only go where Jesus has gone before you with His intercession. Jesus has made provision for all your future in a prayer already presented—“I have prayed for you.” You may be much comforted by the prayers of a minister, or of some Christian man who has power with God. But what are all such intercessions compared with the praying of your Lord? It were well to have Noah, Samuel and Moses praying for us—but far better to have Jesus say, “I have prayed for you.” Blessed be God, Satan may have his sieve but as long as Jesus wears His breastplate we shall not be destroyed by Satan’s tossing.

Notice that the principal object of the prayer of our Lord was, “that your faith fail not.” He knows where the vital point lies and there He holds the shield. As long as the Christian’s faith is safe, the Christian’s self is safe. I may compare faith to the head of the warrior. O Lord, you have covered my head in the day of battle, for You have prayed for me that my faith fail not. I may compare faith to the heart and the Lord holds His shield over the heart that we may not be injured where a wound would be fatal. “I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.”

Faith is the standard-bearer in every spiritual conflict. And if the standard-bearer fall, then it is an evil day—therefore our Lord prays that the standard-bearer may never fail to hold up His banner in the midst of the fray—“I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” If faith fails, everything fails—courage fails, patience fails, hope fails, love fails, joy fails. Faith is the root of Divine Grace. And if this is not in order, then the foliage of the soul, which shows itself in the form of other graces, will soon begin to wither. “I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.”

Learn a lesson from this, my Brethren—that you take care to commend your faith unto your God. Do not begin to doubt because you are tempted—that is to lay bare your breast. Do not doubt because you are attacked—that is to loosen your harness. Believe. “I had fainted,” said David, “unless I had believed.” It must be one thing or the other with us. Believing, or fainting—which shall it be? “Above all, taking the shield of faith.” Not only taking it so that it may cover all but making this the vital point of holy carefulness. Watch in all things, but especially guard your faith. If you are careful about one thing more than another, above all be careful of your faith. “I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.”

Our Savior’s pleading goes to the point and thus it teaches us where to direct our own desires and our own prayers. He asks for us far more wisely than we shall ever learn to ask for ourselves—let us copy His petitions. And therefore it follows because of Christ’s prayer that, though Peter may be very badly put to it, yet he shall be recovered, for Christ speaks of it as of an assured fact—“When you are converted.” As much as to say—When you come back to your old life and your old faith, then exercise yourself usefully for your Lord. He speaks of Peter’s restoration as if it were quite sure to be.

And is it not quite sure to be? If Jesus, the Beloved of the Father, prays for His people, shall He not win His suit with God? He will win it! He will

uplift Peter from among the siftings where Satan has thrown him. We are sure He will, for in prospect thereof, He sets him a loving and suitable task—"When you are converted, strengthen your Brethren." The establishment and confirmation of all the rest are to hinge upon the setting up in his place of poor thrice-denying Peter.

Now, beloved Friends, I may be addressing a number of persons who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Peter did but they have fallen into a bad state and need a new conversion. I am very sorry for you but I am by no means staggered at the sight of you, for you belong to a numerous class. When sitting to see enquirers I am constantly stumbling on backsliders, who come back very sincerely and very truly and feel right pleased to find a Christian home again. I meet with many who have been outside in the world—some of them for years—attending the House of God very irregularly and seldom or never enjoying the light of God's countenance.

They have wandered so that none can tell whether they are the Lord's or not, except the Lord Himself and He always knows them that are His. I bear happy witness that the Lord brings His own back again. Though the Lord's sheep stray, yet the Good Shepherd finds them. Though the Lord's children go into the far country—they each one in due time say, "I will arise and go to my Father." It is not every prodigal that returns but only the prodigal son. In due time, the son returns to the Father's house. It is not every bit of stuff that falls on the ground that is found again. But the woman's piece of money is sure to be discovered. She will not lose it—it is hers and she values it. She sweeps the house and makes any quantity of dust until she finds it. The Lord will find His own, even though Satan tries to prevent the gracious discovery.

It may be some of you have wandered into error. May you be brought back very speedily. And if you are, we are going to say to you tonight, "Strengthen your Brethren." Possibly there has been a general decay in Divine Grace within your soul. You have lost your joy, your peace, your love, your zeal. This is sad—may the Lord restore you in answer to the prayer of Him that redeemed you. And then, when you are converted, seek to recover your Brethren from the decay of their graces which has also injured them. You will not be converted in quite the same sense as you were at first but yet you will be turned again to your old life and hope and then you are to strengthen your Brethren by aiming at their restoration to their first love and earliest zeal.

Perhaps you have been neglectful. I find that many who were good Christian people in the country, always at the House of Prayer and walking near to God, will come up to this wicked London to live and the change is a serious injury to them. They get lost to Christian society and by degrees they become deteriorated by the ungodliness of this modern Sodom. Nobody in the street wherein they live ever goes to a place of worship and they do not know anybody at the Chapel, or at the Church. And so they give up going to public worship and fall into the ways and habits of the ungodly world. They are not happy. God's children never are happy when they leave their Father.

If you have ever eaten the white bread of Heaven, you will never rest content with the black ashes of earth. If the flavor of Christ's love has once been in your mouth, you are spoiled for a worldling. You will not make an expert sinner now, for your hand is out of it. Once converted, you must be a child of God, or nothing. You are ruined for this world. And if the world to come is not yours, where are you? The devil himself will not like you long—you are not of his sort. There is something about you that will not suit Satan any more than Jonah suited the whale. The whale was quite as glad to part with Jonah as Jonah was to be set free from the whale.

I see arrangements for your coming home again. The Lord devises means that His banished shall not perish—those tokens of disquiet, those starts in your sleep, those horrible forebodings, that inward hunger are all pulling at you to come home. You have been trying to feed upon the dust which is ordained to be the serpent's meat and if the Lord had not loved you, you would have done so. A deceived heart has turned you aside but in love to your soul the Lord has made you aware of it and your cry is, "I will go and return to my first husband. For then was it better with me than now."

These are tokens by which I am assured that the Lord will bring His own back. I rest confident that He will turn them and they shall be turned. And I am going to talk to backsliders about what they are to do when they do come back again. We are going to take it for granted that they will come back and to speak to them now about what it is their privilege to attempt under such gracious circumstances. "When you are converted, strengthen your Brethren." First, it is the restored man's duty. Secondly, he has a special qualification for it. And thirdly, it will be a great blessing to him to set about it.

I. First it is HIS DUTY. He has gone astray and he has been brought back—what better can he do than to strengthen his Brethren?

He will thus help to undo the evil which he has worked. Peter must have staggered his Brethren. Some of them must have been quite frightened at him. John soon looked after him but then they were not all Johns. Full of love, John soon hunted up Peter. But the others must have felt that he was a mere reed shaken by the wind. It must have staggered the faith of the weaker sort to see that Peter, who had been such a leader among them, was among the first to deny his Lord. Therefore, Peter, you must build what you have thrown down and bind up what you have torn!

Go and talk to these people again and tell them how foolish and weak you were. Warn them not to imitate your example. You must henceforth be more bold than anybody else that you may in some measure undo the mischief which you have done. Now, think of this, any of you who have been cold towards the Lord. You have wasted months and even years, in backsliding. Try to recover lost ground. It will be almost impossible for you to do it but do at least make a serious attempt. If anybody has been staggered by your backsliding, look after him and try to bring him back and strengthen him.

Ask his pardon and beg him to recover the strength of which you helped to rob him. This is the least that you can do. If almighty love has drawn you back again after sad wanderings, lay yourself out with all your heart to do good to those who may have been harmed by your sad turnings aside. Am I asking more of you than simple justice demands? Besides, how can you better express your gratitude to God than by seeking to strengthen your weak Brethren when you have been strengthened yourself?

After our first conversion, you and I were found seeking earnestly after sinners like ourselves. We had been newly brought out of the house of bondage and we longed to lead other slaves into the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. This, I say, we ought to do when first brought to Jesus' feet. But if, to our disgrace, we have turned aside and have backslidden—and if, to God's infinite glory, He has restored our souls, and made us strong again—then we ought to renew our zeal for the salvation of others and we ought to have a special eye to backsliders like ourselves. We should say, "Lord, I will show how much I thank You for restoring me, by endeavoring to find any that have been overtaken in a fault, that I may restore such in the spirit of meekness, remembering myself also, since I have been tempted and have not stood against the temptation."

Those of you whom the Good Shepherd has restored should have a quick eye for all the sickly ones of the flock and watch over these with a sympathetic care. You should say, "This is the field which I shall try to cultivate. Because in my spiritual sickness the Lord has been pleased to deal so graciously with me, I will, therefore, lay myself out to cherish others who are diseased in soul."

Do you not think, too, that this becomes our duty, because, doubtless, it is a part of the Divine design? Never let us make a mistake by imagining that God's Grace is given to a man simply with an eye to himself. Grace neither begins with man nor ends with him with an object confined to the man's own self. When God chose His ancient people Israel, it was not merely that Israel might enjoy the light but that Israel might preserve the light for the rest of the nations. When God saved you He did not save you for your own sake but for His own Name's sake, that He might through you show forth His mercy to others.

We are windows through which the light of heavenly knowledge is to shine upon multitudes of eyes. The light is not for the windows themselves but for those to whom it comes through the windows. Have you ever thought enough about this? When the Lord brings any of you back from your backsliding, it is decidedly with this view that you may be qualified to sympathize with others and wisely guide them back to the fold. All your history, if you read it aright, has a bearing upon your usefulness to your fellow men. If you have been permitted, in an hour of weakness to grow cold, or turn aside—and if the Lord, in unspeakable compassion, has restored you to His ways—surely this must be His motive—that you may afterwards strengthen your Brethren.

By the way, the very wording of the text seems to suggest the duty—we are to strengthen our “Brethren.” We must do so in order that we may manifest brotherly love and thus prove our sonship towards God. Oh, what a blessed thing it is when we come back to God and feel that we are still in the family! That was the point which we debated with ourselves—we feared that we were not the Lord’s. Whatever some may say about that hymn—

***“It is a point I long to know,
Often it causes anxious thought.”***

I do not give much for the man who has not sometimes had to sing it in the minor key. It is a pity that he ever should have to sing it. He will not if he walks before the Lord with care and watchfulness. But when he has been a naughty child, when his life has not been what it should be, if he does not doubt himself we must take leave to doubt for him. How can he help asking—

***“Do I love the Lord or not?
Am I His or am I not?”***

I am inclined to say with a good experimental writer—

***“He that never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may too late.”***

It is not an ill thing to try yourselves and see whether your faith is gold or dross. To have a question about your position in the heavenly family is a very painful thing and should not be endured one moment if it is in our power to solve the doubt. But if the Lord has brought you back as His child, you now know that you belong to the family and it will be suggested at once to you to do something for the Brethren. Naturally, you will look around to see whether there is any child of God to whom you can show favor for his Father’s sake. You have injured all by your backsliding. And hence it is your duty, when restored to the family, to benefit them all by special consecration and double earnestness.

Let it be your delight, as well as your duty, to strengthen your Brethren. Prove that you are a Brother by acting a Brother’s part. And claim your privilege as a child and exercise it as a child should—by helping another child that is in need. I think that the text within itself contains this argument.

Let us see to it, dear Friends, if we have been restored, that we try to look after our weak Brethren, that we may show forth a zeal for the honor and glory of our Lord. When we went astray we dishonored Christ. If any of these others go astray they will do the same. Therefore let us be watchful that if we can, we may prevent their being as foolish as we have been. Let us learn tenderness from our own experience and feel a deep concern for our Brethren. If one member of this Church sins we all suffer—in our reputation, at any rate. And, especially, the best known among us have to bear a great deal because of the inconsistency of this person and of that.

Do you want us to be wounded through you? My Beloved friends, I do not think that one of you would wish to cast reproach upon your minister. Alas, Christ Himself suffers. His worst wounds are those which He re-

ceives in the house of His friends. Peter, if you ever denied your Master, mind you look well to others who are growing presumptuous as you were before your great sin. If you meet anyone who is beginning to say, "I will go with you to prison and to death," give him a gentle jog and say, "Mind you, Brother, you are going near a nasty hole into which I once fell. I pray you take warning from me."

If you speak experimentally, you will have no cause to boast but you will find in your own sin a reason why you should tenderly guard your Brethren lest they should cause like dishonor to that dear Name which is more precious, I hope, to you than life itself. "When you are converted, strengthen your Brethren." It is your duty.

II. Now secondly, HE HAS A QUALIFICATION FOR IT. This Peter is the man who, when he is brought back again, can strengthen his Brethren. He can strengthen them by telling them of the bitterness of denying his Master. He went out and wept bitterly. It is one thing to weep. It is another thing to weep bitterly. There are sweet tears, as well as salt tears. But oh, what weeping a sin costs a child of God!

I recollect a minister speaking very unguardedly—he said that the child of God lost nothing by sin except his comfort. And I thought, "Oh dear me! And is that nothing? Is that nothing?" It is such a loss of comfort that, if that were all, it would be the most awful thing in the world. The more God loves you and the more you love God, the more expensive will you find it to sin. An ordinary sinner sins cheaply—the child of God sins very dearly. If you are the King's favorite, you must mind your manners, for He will not take from you what He will take from an enemy.

The Lord your God is a jealous God, because He is a loving God. He has such love for His own chosen that if they turn aside, His jealousy burns like coals of juniper. May God keep us from ever provoking His sacred jealousy by wandering at any time into any kind of sin. Now Peter, because he could tell of the bitterness of backsliding, was the man to go and speak to anyone who was about to backslide and say, "Do not do so, my Brother. For it will cost you dearly." Again, Peter was the man to tell another of the weakness of the flesh, for he could say to him, "Do not trust yourself. Do not talk about never going aside. Remember how I talked about it? I used to be very lofty in my talk and in my feelings but I had to be brought down.

"I felt so sure that I loved my Lord and Master, that I put great confidence in myself and could not think that I should ever wander from Him. But see, see how I fell? I denied Him thrice before the time called cock-crowing." Thus, you see, Peter was wonderfully qualified by having known the bitterness of sin and by feeling the weakness of his own flesh, to go and strengthen others in these important points. But he was also qualified to bear his personal witness to the power of his Lord's prayer. He could never forget that Jesus had said to him, "I have prayed for you."

Peter could say to any Brother who had grown cold or presumptuous, "the Lord Jesus prayed for me and it was because of His prayer that I was preserved from going farther, so that I was led back and delivered from

the sieve of the Evil One.” Do you not think that this would strengthen any trembling one when Peter mentioned it? It is wonderful how men and women are helped by those who have had a similar experience to themselves. Theory is all very well but to speak experimentally has a singular power about it. How one can comfort the bereaved if one has been bereaved himself!

But how little can the young and inexperienced provide consolation to those who are greatly tried, even though they are anxious to do so! And so, Brethren, if the Lord has blessed you and remembered you in His great mercy and you know the power of the prayer of the great Intercessor, you can strengthen your Brethren by reminding them of the perseverance of the Savior’s love.

And could not Peter speak about the love of Jesus to poor wanderers? The Lord turned and looked upon Peter and that look broke Peter’s heart and afterwards the Lord spoke to Peter by the sea and said to him, “Feed My sheep and feed My lambs.” O Beloved, Peter would always remember that, and he would speak of it to any whom he found in a sad and weary condition. He would say, “My Lord was very good to me and was willing to receive me back. No, He did not wait until I came back but He came after me. He sent after me, saying, Go tell My disciples and Peter. And when He saw that I was penitent, He never rebuked me, except in such a gentle way that I was rather comforted than rebuked by what He said.”

Oh, you that have wandered and Christ has restored you, comfort the wanderers when you see their tears! When you hear any word of doubt, or anything like despair from them, tell them that there is no truth in the suggestion of Satan that Christ is unwilling to forgive. Beseech them not to slander that dear heart of love which is infinitely more ready to melt towards the penitent than the penitent’s heart is to melt towards it. You know it. You know that you can speak not only what you have read in the Bible but what you have felt in your own heart. You are qualified, therefore, to strengthen your Brethren.

And could not Peter fully describe the joy of restoration? “Oh,” he would say, “do not wander. There is no good in it. Do not go away from Jesus. There is no profit to be found there. Come back to Him—there is such peace, such rest with Him. Never, never go away again.” Peter ever afterwards in his Epistles—and we are sure that it must have been the same in his spoken ministry—would testify to the love and goodness of Christ and urge the saints to steadfastness in the faith. I would appeal to any child of God here whether he ever gained anything by going away from Christ. No, Brothers and Sisters, the old Proverb says that honesty is the best policy, but I will turn it to a higher use and say, “Holiness is the best policy.”

Communion with Christ is the happiest life. If you gained all the world and did not lose your soul but only lost the light of Christ’s countenance for a few days, you would have made a poor bargain. There is Heaven in every glance of His eye. There is infinite joy in every word of His mouth when He speaks comfortably to His servants. Go not away from Him. Be like Milton’s angel, who lived in the sun. Abide in Christ and let His Words

abide in you. Closer, closer, closer—this is the way to spiritual wealth. To follow afar off and live at a distance from Christ, even if it does not make your soul perish, yet it will wither up your joys and make you feel an unhappy man, an unhappy woman. Therefore, all those who have tried it should bear their witness and put their experience into the scale as they thus strengthen their Brethren.

III. And now, lastly, the restored Believer should strengthen his Brethren, because IT WILL BE SUCH A BENEFIT TO HIMSELF. He will derive great personal benefit from endeavoring to cherish and assist the weak ones in the family of God.

Brother, do this continually and heartily, for thus you will be made to see your own weakness. You will see it in those whom you succor. As you see how they doubt, or grow cold, or become lukewarm, you will say to yourself, “These are men of like passions with myself. I see which way I shall drift unless the Grace of God sustains me.” It will lead you to throw out another anchor and get a fresh hold as you see how they yield to the tide. One man is wonderfully like another man, only that other men are better than we are. And when we are trying to strengthen them, we are not to look upon ourselves as superior beings but rather as inferior beings and say, “He fell yesterday, I may fall today. And if I do not fall today, I may tomorrow.”

All the weaknesses and follies you see in others, believe that they are in yourself and that will tend to humble you. I think that a true minister is often excited to better work by what he sees of weakness in his people, because he says to himself, “Am I feeding this flock well?” Perhaps he thinks to himself, “If I had properly tended them they would not have shown all these weaknesses.” And then he will begin to blame his own ministry and look to his own heart and that is a good thing for us all. We very seldom, I think, blame ourselves too, much and it is a benefit to us to see our own failings in others.

But what a comfort it must have been to Peter to have such a charge committed to him! How sure he must have felt that Jesus had forgiven him, and restored him to His confidence, when the Lord, having asked him, “Do you love Me?” said to him, “Feed My sheep and feed My lambs.” Peter is all right again, or else Christ would not trust lambs to him. Peter must be all right, or else Jesus would not put the sheep under his care. It is a grand proof of our being fully restored to the Divine heart when the Lord entrusts us with work to do for His own dear children.

If you and I are made the means of strengthening our Brethren, what a comfort it will be to our hearts! I know that it is not the highest form of comfort, for Jesus would say of it, “Rejoice not in this but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven.” But still, to a loving child of God, it is no mean consolation to find that God is using him. I know, for my own part, that when I go to see our friends who are ill and near to die, it is a supreme consolation to see how calm they always are, without any exception. Yes, and how joyful they generally are—how triumphant in the departing hour!

Then I say to myself, “Yes, my Master has owned my ministry.” The seals of fresh conversions are very precious but the surest seals are these dying saints who have been nurtured in the Gospel that we have preached. They prove the truth of it, for if they do not flinch when they stand looking into eternity but even rejoice in the prospect of meeting their Lord. Then what we preach is true and our Master has not left us without witnesses. So you see that it is a great benefit to a man to strengthen his Brethren, because it becomes a comfort to his own soul.

And, Brethren, whenever any of you lay yourselves out to strengthen weak Christians, as I pray you may, you will get benefit from what you do in the holy effort. Suppose you pray with them. Well, then, you will pray a little more than if you only prayed for yourself. And anything that adds to your prayerfulness is a clear gain. I wish that you had the habit of making everybody pray with you that comes to your house, saying to them, “Now we have done our little business, let us have a word or two of prayer.”

Some, even of God’s people, would look at you as if you were very strange! It will do them good to look at you and learn from you the blessed habit. With regard to those who are strangers to Divine things there will often occur opportunities in which you have put them under an obligation, or they have come to you in trouble to ask advice and then you may boldly say, “Do not let us part till we have prayed.” We used to have an old member of this Church who used to pray in very extraordinary places. Two women were fighting and he knelt down between them to pray and they gave over fighting directly.

Before a door when there has been a noise in the house he has begun to pray. He was better than a policeman for his prayer awed the most obstinate. They could not understand it—they thought it a strange thing and they did not care to put themselves into direct opposition to the man of God. There is a wonderful power in prayer to bless ourselves, besides the blessings that it will bring upon others. Pray with the weak ones and you will not be a weak one yourself.

Well, then, your example—if you use your example to strengthen the weak—if you carefully say to yourself, “No, I shall not do that because, though I may do it, I may do injury to some weak one.” If you hesitate, if you draw back from your own rights, and say, “No, no, no. I am thinking of the weak ones”—you will get good from that self-denial. If the poor, trembling, wandering backslider is much upon your mind, you will often be very tender how you act. You will look to see where your foot is going down next time, for fear of treading upon somebody or other. And in that way you will be winning for yourself the great gain of a holy carefulness of walk and conversation—no small gain to you.

And again—suppose that in trying to strengthen these weak ones, you begin to quote Scripture to them—quote a promise to them—this will bless you. Some of you do not know which promise to quote. You do not even know where to find it in the Word. But if you are in the habit of studying Scripture with a view to strengthening the weak, you will understand it in the best way, for you will get it in a practical form and shape. You will

have the Bible at your fingertips. Moreover, one of these days the text that you looked out for old Mary will suit yourself.

How often have we paid Paul with that which we meant to give to Peter! We have ourselves fed on the milk we prepared for the babes. Sometimes what we have laid up for another comes in handy for ourselves. We strangely find that we ourselves have been fed while we were feeding others, according to that promise, "He that waters shall be watered also himself."

Now, I have said all this to you that have wandered and come back and I want to say it right home to you. May the Holy Spirit speak to your inmost souls. You know who you are and how far all this applies to you. The Lord bless you.

But, dear Friends, if you have not wandered, if the Lord has kept you these twenty years close to Him and given you the light of His countenance all that time, then I think that you and I and any of us of that sort, ought to strengthen our Brethren still *more*. Oh, what we owe to Sovereign Grace! To be kept from wandering—what a blessing is that! Let us feel that instead of having a small debt to pay, we have a greater debt to acknowledge. Let us wake up to strengthen our Brethren. I ask this of you, members of the Church, because, in so large a Church as this, unless there is a kind of universal mutual pastorate, what can we do? You that are converted, I beseech you to strengthen your Brethren.

And then, once more—if all this ought to be done to those who are in the family, what ought we not to do for those outside—for those that have no Christ and no Savior? If you are converted yourself, seek the salvation of your children, of your own brothers and sisters and of all your household. Try to bring in your neighbors to hear the Word. Get them, if you can, under the sound of the Gospel. Why should we not fill up on Thursday night till the uppermost gallery is full? There are some friends up there tonight, and I am glad to see them. May God bless them.

I hope that the day will come when every seat will be occupied there, so that when we are preaching the Gospel we may scatter it broadcast and find a field upwards as well as downwards where the seed may fall. Oh for a blessing! May we meet in Heaven to praise the Lord our God. Amen.

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CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER NO. 2620

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 30, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 22, 1882.

*"But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."
Luke 22:32.*

SATAN has a deadly hatred towards all good men and they may rest assured that somewhere or other, he will meet them on their way to the Celestial City. John Bunyan, in his immortal allegory, placed him in one particular spot and described him as Apollyon straddling the road and swearing by his infernal den that the pilgrim should go no further, but that then and there he would spill poor Christian's soul. But the encounter with Apollyon does not happen in the same place to all pilgrims. I have known some of them assailed by him most fiercely at the outset of their march to Zion. Their first days as Christians have been truly terrible to them by reason of the Satanic attacks they have had to endure, but, afterwards, when the devil has left them, angels have ministered to them and they have had years of peace and joy. You remember that in the case of our Savior, no sooner was He baptized than He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. In like manner, there are those whose fiercest trials from the adversary come at the beginning of their public ministry. Others meet with their greatest conflicts in middle life when, perhaps, they are too apt to think themselves secure against the assaults of Satan and to fancy that their experience and their knowledge will suffice to preserve them against his wiles. I know some, like Martin Luther, in whose voyage of life, the middle passage has been full of storm and tempest, and they have scarcely known what it was to have a moment's rest during all that period. Then there have been others, the first part of whose career has been singularly calm. Their life has been like a sea of glass—scarcely a ripple has been upon the waters—and yet, towards the end, the enemy has made up for it, and he has attacked them most ferociously right up to the last! I have known many instances of eminent saints who have had to die, sword in hand, and enter Heaven—I was about to say, with the marks of their stern conflict fresh upon them. At any rate, they have been crowned on the battlefield and have fallen asleep at the close of a tremendous fight.

With the most of us who are really going to Heaven—I will not say that it is a rule without any exception—but with the most of us, at some time or another, we shall know the extreme value of this prayer, "Lead us not into temptation of any kind, but deliver us from the Evil One, who,

beyond all others, is especially to be dreaded." There is little to be got out of him, even if we conquer him. He usually leaves some mark of his prowess upon us which we may carry to our graves. It were better to leap over hedge and ditch and to go a thousand miles further on our pilgrim road than ever to have a conflict with him, except for those great purposes of which I shall presently speak for a moment. The fight with Apollyon is a terrible ordeal—an ordeal, however, which a brave Christian will never think of shirking! No, he rather will rejoice that he has an enemy worthy of his steel, that true Damascus blade with which he is armed. And, in the name of God, he will determine, though he wrestles not with flesh and blood, that he will contend against principalities and powers and with the very leader of them all—that there may be all the more Glory to the great King who makes the weakest of His followers to be so strong that they put the old dragon, himself, to flight!

So, dear Friends, rest assured that Satan hates every good man and woman, and that, some time or other, he is pretty sure to show that hatred in a very cruel and deadly attack upon them.

Further, because of his hatred, Satan earnestly desires to put Believers into his sieve that he may sift them as wheat—not that he wants to get the chaff away from them—but simply that he may agitate them. You see the corn in the sieve, how it goes up and down, to and fro. There is not a single grain of it that is allowed to have a moment's rest—it is all in commotion and confusion—and the man who is sifting it takes care to sift first one way and next, another way, and then all sorts of ways. Now, that is just what Satan does with those whom he hates, when he gets the opportunity. He sifts them in all manner of ways and puts their whole being into agitation and turmoil. When he gets a hold of us, it is a shaking and sifting, indeed! He takes care that anything like rest or breathing space shall be denied us.

Satan desires thus to sift the saints in his sieve and, at times, God grants his desire. If you look at the Revised Version, in the margin you learn the true idea of Satan having asked, or rather *obtained by asking*, the power to sift Peter as wheat. God sometimes gives Satan the permission to sift as wheat those who are undoubtedly His people—and then Satan tosses them to and fro, indeed. That record in the Book of Job, of Satan appearing before God, is repeated in this story of Peter, for the devil had obtained from God liberty to try and test poor boasting Peter. If Christ had not obtained of God, in answer to His intercession, the promise of the preservation of Peter, then had it gone ill, indeed, with the self-confident Apostle! God grants to Satan permission to try His people in this way because He knows how He will overrule it to His own Glory and their good. There are certain Graces which are never produced in Christians, to a high degree, except by severe temptation. "I noticed," said one, "in what a chastened spirit a certain minister preached when he had been the subject of most painful temptation." There is a peculiar tenderness without which one is not qualified to shepherd Christ's sheep, or to feed His lambs—a tenderness without which one cannot strengthen his brethren, as Peter was afterwards to do, a tenderness which does not

usually come—at any rate, to such a man as Peter, except by his being put into the sieve and tossed up and down by Satanic temptation!

Let that stand as the preface of my sermon, for I shall not have so much to say upon that as upon another point.

First, observe, in our text, the grand point of Satan's attack. We can see that from the place where Jesus puts the strongest line of defense—"I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." The point of Satan's chief attack on a Believer, then, is his *faith*. Observe, secondly, the peculiar danger of faith—"That your faith fail not." That is the danger—not merely lest it should be slackened and weakened, but lest it should *fail*. And then observe, thirdly, *the Believer's grand defense*—"I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

I. Notice carefully, in the first place, THE GRAND POINT OF SATAN'S ATTACK.

When he assails a child of God, his main assault is upon his faith, and I suppose that the reason is, first, *because faith is the vital point in the Christian*. We are engrafted into Christ by faith and faith is the point of contact between the believing soul and the living Christ. If, therefore, Satan could manage to cut through the graft there, then he would defeat the Savior's work most completely. Faith is the very heart of true godliness, for, "the just shall live by faith." Take faith away and you have torn the heart out of the gracious man. Hence, Satan, as far as he can, aims his fiery darts at a Believer's faith. If he can only destroy faith, then he has destroyed the very life of the Christian! "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Therefore, if the devil could but get our faith away from us, we should cease to be pleasing to God and should cease to be "accepted in the Beloved." Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, look well to your faith! It is the very head and heart of your being as before God. The Lord grant that it may never fail you!

I suppose that Satan also attacks faith *because it is the chief of all our Divine Graces*. Love, under some aspects, is the choicest, but to lead the van in conflict, faith must come first. And there are some things which are ascribed solely and entirely to faith that are never ascribed to love. If any man were to speak of our being justified by love, it would grate upon the ears of the godly! If any were to talk of our being justified by repentance, those of us who know our Bible would be up in arms against such a perversion of the Truth of God! But they may speak as long as they like of our "being justified by faith," for that is a quotation from the Scriptures. In the matter of justification, faith stands alone. It lays hold on Christ's Sacrifice and His righteousness and, thereby, the soul is justified. Faith, if I may say so, is the leader of the Graces in the day of battle and hence Satan says to his demoniacal archers, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel—shoot at faith, kill it if possible." If faith is slain, where is love, where is hope, where is repentance, where is patience? If, faith is conquered, then it is as when a standard-bearer faints. The victory is virtually won by the arch-enemy if he is able to conquer faith, for faith is the noble chieftain among the Graces of a saint!

I suppose, again, that Satan makes a dead set upon the faith of the Christian *because it is the nourishing Grace*. All the other Graces within us derive strength from our faith. If faith is at a low ebb, love is sure to burn very feebly. If faith should begin to fail, then would hope grow dim. Where is courage? It is a poor puny thing when faith is weak. Take any Grace you please, and you shall see that its nourishing depends upon the healthy condition of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! To take faith away, therefore, would be to take the fountain away from the stream—it would be to withdraw the sun from its rays if light. If you destroy the source, of course that which comes out of it ceases. Therefore, Beloved, take the utmost possible care of your faith, for I may truly say of it that out of it are the issues of life to all your Graces. Faith is that virtuous woman who clothes the whole household in scarlet and feeds them all with luscious and strengthening food. But if faith is gone, the household soon becomes naked, poor, blind and miserable. Everything in a Christian fails when faith ceases to nourish it!

Next to this, Satan attacks faith *because it is the great preserving Grace*. The Apostle says, "Above all"—that is, "over all," "covering all"—"taking the shield of faith with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Sometimes, the Eastern soldiers had shields so large that they were like doors, and they covered the man from head to foot. Others of them, who used smaller shields, nevertheless handled them so deftly and moved them so rapidly that it was tantamount to the shield covering the entire person. An arrow is aimed at the forehead, up goes the shield and the sharp point rings on the metal! A javelin is hurled at the heart, but the shield turns it aside. The fierce foe aims a poisonous dart at the leg, but the shield intercepts it. Virtually, the shield is all-surrounding—and so it is with your faith. As one has well said, "It is armor upon armor, for the helmet protects the head, but the shield protects both helmet and head. The breastplate guards the breast, but the buckler or shield defends the breastplate as well as the breast." Faith is a Divine Grace to protect the other Graces—there is nothing like it and, therefore, I do not wonder that Satan attacks faith when he sees its prominent position and its important influence in the entire town of Mansoul.

I cannot help saying, also, that I wonder not that Satan attacks faith *because it is the effective or efficient Grace*. You know what a wonderful chapter that 11th Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is—it is a triumphal arch erected in honor of what? Of faith! According to that Chapter, faith did everything—it quenched the fire, stopped the mouths of lions, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, received the dead who were raised and so on. Faith is the soul's right hand. Faith works by love, but, still, it is faith that works, and you can do nothing acceptably before God unless you do it by that right hand of faith. Hence, Satan cannot stand faith—he hates that most of all. Pharaoh tried to have all the male children thrown into the river because they were the fighting force of Israel. He did not mind having the women to grow up to bear burdens—it was the men whom he feared. And, in like manner, the devil says, "I must

stamp out faith, for that is the secret of strength." He will not trouble himself so much about your other Graces—he will probably attack them when he can, but, first of all he says—"Down with faith! That is the man-child that must be destroyed!" And he aims his sharpest and deadliest darts at it.

I believe, also, that faith is attacked by Satan, most of all, *because it is most obnoxious to him*. He cannot endure faith. How do I know that? Why, because God loves it! And if God loves faith and if Christ crowns faith, I am sure that Satan hates it. What are we told concerning the work of Jesus being hindered by unbelief? "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Now, I will turn that text around and say of Satan, that he cannot do many mighty works against some men because of their faith! Oh, how he sneaks off when he discovers a right royal faith in a man! He knows when he has met his master and he says, "Why should I waste my arrows upon a shield carried by such a man as that? He believes in God, he believes in Christ, he believes in the Holy Spirit—he is more than a match for me." To those that are under his leadership, he cries, "To your tents!" He bids them flee away and escape, for he knows that there can be no victory for them when they come into collision with true God-given faith! He cannot bear to look at it. It blinds him—the lustrous splendor of that great shield of faith which shines as though a man did hang the sun upon his arm and bear it before him into the fray—blinds even the mighty Prince of Darkness! Satan does but glance at it and straightway he takes to flight, for he cannot stand it. He knows it is the thing which most of all helps to overthrow his kingdom and destroy his power! Therefore, Believer, cling to your faith! Be like the young Spartan warrior who would either bring his shield home with him or be brought home dead upon his shield. "Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Whatever else you have not, "have faith in God." Believe in the Christ of God. Rest your soul's entire confidence upon the faithful promise and the faithful Promiser and, if you do so, Satan's attacks upon you will all be in vain!

That is my first point—observe the grand point of Satanic attack.

II. Now, secondly, observe THE PECULIAR DANGER OF FAITH. "That your faith fail not."

Did Peter's faith fail? Yes, and no. It failed in a measure, but it did not altogether fail. It failed in a measure, for he was human, but it did not altogether fail, for, at the back of it, there was the superhuman power which comes through the pleading of Christ. Poor Peter! He denied his Master, yet his faith did not utterly fail and, I will show you why it did not. If you and I, Beloved, are ever permitted to dishonor God and to deny our Lord, as Peter did, yet may God in mercy keep us from the utter and entire failure of our faith as He kept Peter!

Notice, first, there was still some faith in Peter, even when he had denied his Master, for when the Lord turned and looked at him, *he went out and wept bitterly*. If there had still not been the true faith in Peter, the Master might have looked upon him long before a tear would have coursed down his cheeks. The Lord not only looked on Judas, but He

gave him a sop with Him out of the dish. And He even let the traitor put his lips on Him and kiss Him. But all that had no weight with Judas. The reason why Christ's look had such an effect on Peter was because there was still some faith in Peter. You may blow as long as you like at the cold coals, but you will get no fire. But I have, sometimes, seen a servant kneel down when there has been just a little flame left in the coal in a corner of the grate, and she has blown it tenderly and gently so as to revive it. "It is not quite out," she says and, at last, there has been a good fire once again! May God grant that we may never come to that sad condition, but, if we do, may He, of His Grace, grant that there may still be that blessed little faith left, that weak and feeble faith which, through the breathing upon it of the Spirit of God, shall yet be fanned into a flame!

We are sure that there was this faith still in Peter *or else what would he have done?* What did Judas do? Judas did two things. First, he went to a priest, or to priests, and confessed to them. And then he went out and hanged himself—the two things were strangely connected. Peter did neither, yet, if he had not had faith, he might have done both. To publicly deny his Master three times and to support his denial with oaths and curses, even when that Master was close by and in His greatest need, must have put Peter into most imminent peril. And if there had not been, within his heart, faith that his Master could yet pardon and restore him, he might, in his despair, have done precisely what the traitor Judas did. Or, if he had not gone to that extremity of guilt, he would have hidden himself away from the rest of the Apostles. But, instead of doing so, we soon find him, again, with John—I do not wonder that he was with John. They were old companions, but, in addition to that, the Beloved John had so often leaned his head on the Master's bosom that he had caught the sweet infection of his Savior's tenderness and, therefore, he was just the one with whom Peter would wish to associate.

I think that if I had ever denied my Lord as Peter did, in that public way, I would have run away and hidden myself from all my former companions. But Peter did not, you see. He seemed to say to himself, "The Master, with His dear tender heart, can still forgive me and receive me." So he clings to the disciples and especially to John. Yes, and notice that on the day of our Lord's Resurrection, Peter was the first disciple to enter the sepulcher, for, though "the other disciple did outrun Peter" and reach the grave first, "yet he went not in" until Peter led the way. "The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon," is a remarkable passage. Paul, writing concerning Christ's Resurrection, says that, "He was seen of Cephas," that is, Peter. There was some special manifestation of our blessed Master to Simon Peter who was waiting for it, and privileged to witness it—and this showed that his faith was kept from failing through the Savior's prayers.

Now, Beloved, I say no more about Peter, but I speak to you about your own faith. Are you greatly troubled? Then I pray that your faith may not fail. It is shaken. It is severely tried, but God grant that it may not fail! Something whispers within your heart, "Give up all religion, it is not true." To that lie, answer, "Get you behind me, Satan, for the religion of

Jesus Christ is eternally, assuredly, Infallibly true." Cling to it, for it is your life! Or, perhaps, the fiend whispers, "It is true enough to others, but it is not meant for you, you are not one of the Lord's people." Well, if you cannot come to Christ as a saint, come to Him as a sinner! If you dare not come as a child to sit at His Table, come as a dog to eat the crumbs that fall under it! Only come and never give up your faith!

If the arch-fiend whispers, again, "You have been a deceiver! Your profession is all a mistake, or a lie!" Say to him, "Well, if it is so, there is still forgiveness in Christ for all who come unto God by Him." Perhaps you are coming to the Savior for the first time—you mean to cast yourself upon the blood and merit of Jesus even if you have never done so before. I pray for you, dear coming one! O gracious Savior, do not let Satan crush out the faith of even the weakest of Your people! Blessed Intercessor, plead for that poor trembler in whom faith is almost dying out! Great High Priest, intercede for him, that his faith may not utterly fail him and that he may still cling to You!

What is to become of us if we have not faith in Jesus? I know that there are some who seem to get on well without it. So may the dogs. So may the wild beasts. They get on well enough without the children's garments or the children's bread—but you and I cannot. The moment I am unbelieving, I am unhappy. It is not a vain thing for me to believe in Christ—it is my life, it is my strength, it is my joy! I am a lost man and it were better for me that I had never been born unless I have the privilege of believing! Give up faith? Remember what Satan said concerning Job, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life"? And our life is wrapped up in our faith in Christ! We cannot give it up and we will not give it up! Come on, fiends of Hell, or mockers of earth—we will not give it up, we will hold it fast, for it is part of the very warp and woof of our being! We believe in God and in His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And it is our great concern that our faith should be well guarded and protected, for we know the peculiar danger to which it is exposed when it is assailed by Satan.

III. Now I will close my discourse by speaking, for only a very few minutes, upon THE BELIEVER'S GREAT PRESERVATIVE AND DEFENSE.

What is the great protection of our faith? Our Savior's intercession! Prayer is always good, it is always a blessed thing, but notice that great letter-word in the text, "**I** have prayed for you." It is the intercession of *Christ* that preserves our faith—and there are three things about it which make it precious beyond all price—it is prevalent, prevenient and pertinent. First, it is *prevalent*, for, if Jesus pleads, He must prevail. It is *prevenient*, for, *before* the temptation comes to Peter, He says, "I have prayed for you. Satan has but obtained, by his asking, the permission to tempt you, but I have already prayed for you."

And, then, it was *pertinent*, that is, to the point. Christ had prayed the best prayer possible—"that your faith fail not." Peter would not have known that this was to be the chief point of attack by Satan. He might have thought that Satan would attack his love. The Lord seems to hint at His thought about that by saying to him, afterwards, "Simon, son of Jo-

nas, do you love Me?" But the Savior knew that the hottest part of the battle would rage around Fort Faith and, therefore, He prayed that the fortress might be well garrisoned and never be captured by the enemy. And it was not!

Whenever I begin to talk to you about the intercession of Christ, I feel inclined to sit down and let you think, and look up, and listen till you hear that Voice, matchless in its music, pleading, pleading, pleading, with the Father! It were much better for you to realize it than for me to describe it. It was a blessed thing to hear one's mother pray—by accident, as we say—to pass the door that was ajar and to hear Mother pleading for her boy or her girl. It is a very touching thing to hear your child praying for her father, or your wife breathing out her warm desires for her Beloved. I do not know anything more charming than to hear, now and then, a stray prayer that was never meant to be heard on earth, but only in Heaven. I like such eaves-droppings. Oh, but listen! It is Jesus who is praying! He shows His wounds and pleads the merit of His great Sacrifice and, wonder of wonders, He pleads for *me*, and for *you*! Happy man, happy woman, to have our faith preserved by such a mighty preservative as this—the intercession of Christ!

I want you to especially notice that *this intercession is the pleading of One who, in the text, seems to directly oppose Himself to the great adversary.* "Satan has asked for you by asking that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you by asking," (so I will venture to paraphrase it) "that your faith fail not." There stands Satan. You cannot see him and you need not want to, but that grim monster who has made kings and princes tremble, and has plucked angels from their spheres of light, and hurled bright spirits down from Heaven to Hell, stands there to assail you! And you may well be afraid, for God, Himself, permits him to sift you! Ah, but there also stands the Ever-Blessed One, before whom an angel, fallen or unfallen, is but a tiny spark compared with the sun! There He stands, girt about the chest with the golden girdle of His faithfulness, robed in the fair white linen of His matchless righteousness. Upon His head is a crown of glory that far outshines all constellations of stars and suns! And He opposes His Divine pleading to the demoniacal asking of the fallen one. Are you still afraid? It seems to me unspeakably blessed to see it written here, "Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat," and then to see over the top of it these words, "but I have prayed for you." Oh, blessed, "but"! How it seems to cast the fallen angel back into the bottomless Pit and to bind him with chains, and set a seal upon his prison—"But I have prayed for you." Tempt on, then, O Satan! Tempt at your worst, for there is no fear when this glorious shield of gold, the intercession of the Savior, covers the entire person of the poor attacked one! "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

And then my last word is this—it is an intercession which is absolutely certain of success. In fact, He who offers it anticipates its success and discounts it by giving this precept to His servant—"and when you are converted." Sure pledge, then, that he *will be* converted, that he will be turned back, however far he wanders! When you are restored, "streng-

then your brethren." Then, for certain, he will be restored, or else the Savior would not have given him a precept which could only be available if a certain, unlikely contingency should occur! O you who are a true child of God, you may be drenched, but you shall never be drowned! O warrior of the Cross, your shield may be covered with fiery darts, thick as the saplings of a young forest—but no dart shall ever reach your heart! You may be wounded in head and hand and foot. You may be a mass of scars, but your life is given you! To Christ are you given and you shall come out even from between the jaws of death—and you shall overcome Satan by Christ's power! Only trust Christ! Only trust Him! Cling to your faith, Beloved. Cling to your faith! I would like to get a hold of that young man who has lately been listening to skeptical teachers, and to whisper in his ear, "Cling to your faith, young man, for, in losing that, you will lose all."

And to you who, alas, have fallen into sin after having made a profession of religion, let me say that, however far you have gone astray, still believe that Jesus is able to forgive you! Come back to Him and seek His pardon now! And you, my hoary-headed Brothers and Sisters, whose hair is whitening for Heaven, are you sorely beset by all sorts of temptations? Well, give me your hand, for I, too, know what this warfare means. Let us believe in God, my Brothers and Sisters—let us believe in God! Though He should break us down worse than ever. Though He should set us up as a target and let the devil shoot all the arrows from his quiver at us, let us still believe in God and come to this point to which my soul has come full often, and to which Job came of old, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Whatever He does to me—if He shall never smile upon me again—I will still believe Him, I can do no other." I dare not doubt Him! I must confide in Him! Where is there any ground for confidence if it is not in the God that cannot lie, and in the Christ of the Everlasting Covenant whom He has set forth to be the propitiation for human sin, and in the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to us?

May the blessed Trinity save and keep us all, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 22:7-34; 54-62.**

Verses 7-20. *Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. And they said unto Him, Where will You that we prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters. And you shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master says unto you, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover. And when*

the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them. With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the wine, until the Kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament—(Or, Covenant).

20, 21. *In My blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table.* What a shadow this revelation must have cast over that solemn feast, over the Savior's heart and over the minds of all His attached disciples! We can scarcely imagine what pangs tore His loving spirit. He could have used the language of David with even deeper emphasis, and said, "It was not an enemy that reproached Me. Then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated Me that did magnify himself against Me. Then I would have hid Myself from him. But it was you, a man My equal, My guide and My acquaintance." "The hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table." O Beloved, I pray that you and I may never betray our Master! If ever we should so fail as to deny Him, may the Lord stop us where Peter fell and never suffer us to betray Him as Judas did!

22. *And truly the Son of Man goes, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!* The decree of God does not lessen the responsibility of man for his action. Even though it is predetermined of God, the man does it of his own free will—and on him falls the full guilt of it.

23, 24. *And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* Be astonished, dear Friends, as you read, in such a connection as this, "There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." What? While yet the anxious question as to which of them was the traitor was being passed round, "Lord, is it I?" Is it so closely followed by another question, "Which of us shall be highest in the Kingdom?" Oh, the awful intrusiveness of pride and ambition! How it will come in and defile the very Holy of Holies! May God prevent our falling victims to it! The last question for a Christian to ever ask is, "How may I win honor among men?" The one question for a Believer should be, "How can I glorify my Master?" Very often, that can best be done by taking the very lowest place in his Church.

25, 26. *And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serves.* Let every respect be given to the elder and let such as God honors be honored among us—but let no man honor himself, or seek honor for himself! After

all, in Christ's Kingdom, the way to ascend is to descend! Did not the Master act thus? He descended that He might ascend and fill all things! And so must His disciples! Less, and less, and less, and less must we become—and so we shall really be, in His sight—more, and more, and more, and more!

27. *For who is greater, he that sits at meat, or he that serves? Is it not he that sits at meat? But I am among you as He that serves.* For He had just then taken a towel and girded Himself, and washed their feet—so becoming *Servus servorum*, the Servant of Servants, though He was, in very truth, the King of Kings!

28. *You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations.* There is a reward to the righteous, though they serve not for reward, for the Lord says—

29, 30. *And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Ah, but see what follows! No sooner, in this Chapter, does the thought seem to rise than it is dashed down again! The brightness always has a shadow cast across it,

31, 32. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.* We are thinking about thrones and about which of us shall have the loftiest throne—but see how the Master is thinking about the necessary while we are doting upon the superfluous! He thinks of our needs while we are dreaming of something great. What a blessing it is that we have our Savior praying for us when we, ourselves, may be fancying that we need not pray! Our hands are ready for the scepter and we are anxious to sit down on the throne—when the Lord knows that our proper place is at the footstool, pleading for mercy!

33. *And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death.* That is bravely spoken, Peter—and yet it is very foolishly said, too! He spoke out of his very heart and he meant what he said, but Peter did not know what a poor weak body Peter really was! His Master understood him far better.

34. *And He said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day, before that you shall thrice deny that you know Me.* And so it came to pass. Let us read a part of the sad story, beginning at the 54th verse.

54. *Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the High Priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.* I do not think that Peter was to be blamed for that. I do not see how he could very well have followed any nearer, for he was already a marked man. That cutting off of the ear of Malchus had made him especially prominent among the Apostles, even if he had not been well known before! He got into the crowd and came after his Master at such a distance as seemed safe for him.

55. *And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.* I do think that he was to be blamed for *that* action, for it brought him into dangerous company. Better be cold, than go and warm your hands in ungodly society!

56. *But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him. As the flame came flashing up every now and then, she looked at him, and Peter was troubled by her gaze—she, “earnestly looked upon him.”*

56-59. *And said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, You are also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour, later, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth, this fellow also was with Him; for he is a Galilean. For he got to talking to this evil company and his speech had betrayed him!*

60. *And Peter said, Man, I know not what you say.* Another Evangelist tells us that he began to curse and to swear, as if that was the surest proof that he could possibly give that he did not know Jesus—for, when you hear a man swear, you know at once that he is no Christian—you may conclude that safely enough! So Peter thought that to prove that he was no follower of Christ, he would use such evil language as the ungodly speak.

60, 61. *And immediately, while he yet spoke, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.* God has all things in His hands. He has servants everywhere and the rooster shall crow, by the secret movement of His Providence, just when God wills! And there is, perhaps, as much of Divine ordination about the crowing of a rooster as about the ascending of an emperor to his throne! Things are only little and great according to their bearings and God reckoned not the crowing bird to be a small thing since it was to bring a wanderer back to his Savior, for, just as the rooster crowed, “the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.” That was a different look from the one which the girl had given him, but that look broke his heart.

62. *And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the rooster crows, you shall deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.* How many there are who sin with Peter, but who never weep with Peter! Oh, if we have ever transgressed in such a way as he did, let us never cease to weep! Above all, let us begin at once to lament it and rest not till the Master looks again, and says by that look, “I have blotted out all your transgressions; return unto Me.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—327, 330, 328, 846.

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

THE WEAKENED CHRIST STRENGTHENED NO. 2769

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 9, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 5, 1881.

*“And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him.”
Luke 22:43.*

I SUPPOSE that this incident happened immediately after our Lord's first prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. His pleading became so fervent, so intense, that it forced from Him a bloody sweat. He was, evidently, in a great agony of fear as He prayed and wrestled even unto blood. We are told, by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that He “was heard in that He feared.” It is probable that this angel came in answer to that prayer. This was the Father's reply to the cry of His fainting Son who was enduring an infinity of sorrow because of His people's sin and who must, therefore, be Divinely upheld as to His Manhood, lest He should be utterly crushed beneath the terrible weight that was pressing upon His holy soul.

Scarcely had our Savior prayed before the answer to His petition came. It reminds us of Daniel's supplication and of the angelic messenger who was caused to fly so swiftly that as soon as the prayer had left the Prophet's lips, Gabriel stood there with the reply to it! So, Brothers and Sisters, whenever your times of trial come, always take yourselves to your knees. Whatever shape your trouble may take—if, to you, it should even seem to be a faint representation of your Lord's agony in Gethsemane—put yourselves into the same posture as that in which He sustained the great shock that came upon Him. Kneel down and cry to your Father who is in Heaven, who is able to save you from death, who will prevent the trial from utterly destroying you, who will give you strength that you may be able to endure it and will bring you through it to the praise of the glory of His Grace.

That is the first lesson for us to learn from our Lord's experience in Gethsemane—the blessing of prayer. He has bidden us pray, but He has done more than that, for He has set us the example of prayer and, if example is, as we are sure it is, far more powerful than precept, let us not fail to imitate our Savior in the exercise of potent, prevalent, repeated supplication whenever our spirits are cast down and we are in sore distress of soul. Possibly you have sometimes said, “I feel so sorrowful that I cannot pray.” No, Brother, that is the very time when you *must* pray. As the spices, when bruised, give forth all the more fragrance because of the bruising, so let the sorrow of your spirit cause it to send forth the more

fervent prayer to the God who is both able and willing to deliver you! You must express your sorrow in one way or another, so let it not be expressed in murmuring, but in supplication! It is a vile temptation, on the part of Satan, to keep you away from the Mercy Seat when you have most need to go there—but do not yield to that temptation! Pray till you can pray and if you find that you are not filled with the Spirit of supplication, use whatever measure of the sacred bedewing you have—and so, by-and-by, you shall have the baptism of the Spirit and prayer shall become to you a happier and more joyful exercise than it is at present. Our Savior said to His disciples, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death,” yet then, above all times, He was in an agony of prayer and, in proportion to the intensity of His sorrow was the intensity of His supplication.

In our text, there are two things to note. First, *our Lord’s weakness*. And, secondly, *our Lord’s strengthening*.

I. First, then, let us meditate for a little while upon OUR LORD’S WEAKNESS.

That He was exceedingly weak is clear from the fact that an angel came from Heaven to strengthen Him, for the holy angels never do anything that is superfluous. They are the servants of an eminently practical God who never does that which it is unnecessary for Him to do. If Jesus had not needed strengthening, an angel would not have come from Heaven to strengthen Him. But how strange it sounds, to our ears, that the Lord of Life and Glory should be so weak that He should need to be strengthened by one of His own creatures! How extraordinary it seems that He who is “very God of very God,” should, nevertheless, when He appeared on earth as Immanuel, God With Us, so completely take upon Himself our nature that He should become so weak as to need to be sustained by angelic agency! This struck some of the older saints as being derogatory to His Divine dignity, so some manuscripts of the New Testament omit this passage—it is supposed that the verse was struck out by some who claimed to be orthodox, lest, perhaps, the Arians should lay hold upon it and use it to bolster up their heresies. I cannot be sure who struck it out, but I am not altogether surprised that they should have done so. They had no right to do anything of the kind, for whatever is revealed in the Scriptures must be true, but they seemed to shudder at the thought that the Son of God should ever have been so weakened as to need the support of an angelic messenger to strengthen Him.

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, *this incident proves the reality of our Savior’s Manhood*. Here you can perceive how fully He shares the weakness of our humanity—not in spiritual weakness, so as to become guilty of any sin—but in mental weakness, so as to be capable of great depression of spirit. And in physical weakness, so as to be exhausted to the last degree by His terrible bloody sweat. What is extreme weakness? It is something different from pain, for sharp pain evidences at least some measure of strength, but perhaps some of you know what it is to feel as if you were scarcely alive—you were so weak that you could hardly realize that you were actually living! The blood flowed, if it flowed at all, but very slowly in the canals of your veins—everything seemed stagnant within you. You

were very faint, you almost wished that you could become unconscious, for the consciousness you had was extremely painful. You were so weak and sick that you seemed almost ready to die. Our Master's words, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," prove that the shadow of impending dissolution hung darkly over His spirit, soul and body, so that He could truly quote the 22nd Psalm and say, "You have brought Me into the dust of death." I think, Beloved, that you ought to be glad it was so with your Lord, for now you can see how completely He is made like His brethren in their mental depression and physical weakness, as well as in other respects.

It will help you to get an idea of the true Manhood of Christ if you remember *that this was not the only time when He was weak*. He, the Son of Man, was once a Babe and, therefore, all the tender ministries that have to be exercised because of the helplessness of infancy were also necessary in His case. Wrapped in swaddling bands and lying in a manger, that little Child was, all the while, the mighty God, though He condescended to keep His Omnipotence in abeyance in order that He might redeem His people from their sins. Doubt not His true Humanity and learn from it how tenderly He is able to sympathize with all the ills of childhood and, all the griefs of boyhood which are not so few or so small as some people imagine!

Besides being thus an Infant and gradually growing in stature just as other children do, our Lord Jesus was often very weary. How the angels must have wondered as they saw Him, who sways the scepter of universal sovereignty and marshals all the starry hosts according to His will, as He, "being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well" at Sychar, waiting for the woman whose soul He had gone to win and, wiping the sweat from His brow and resting Himself after having traveled over the burning acres of the land! The Prophet Isaiah truly said that "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary." That is the *Divine* side of His glorious Nature. "Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well." That was the *Human* side of His Nature. We read that "He did eat nothing" during the forty days' temptation in the wilderness and, "He afterwards hungered." Have any of you ever known what it has been to suffer the bitterness of hunger? Then remember that our Lord Jesus Christ also endured that pang. He, whom we rightly worship and adore as "God Blessed Forever," as the Son of Man, the Mediator between God and men, hungered! And He also thirsted, for He said to the woman at the well, "Give Me to drink."

In addition to this, our Savior was often so weary that He slept, which is another proof of His true Humanity. He was so tired, once, that He slept even when the boat was tossing to and fro in a storm and was ready to sink. On one occasion we read that the disciples "took Him even as He was in the boat," which seems to me to imply even more than it says, namely, that He was so worn out that He was scarcely able to get into the boat, but, "they took Him even as He was," and there He fell asleep. We know, moreover, that "Jesus wept"—not merely once, or twice, but many times. And we also know what completes the proof of His Humanity—

that He died. It was a strange phenomenon that He, to whom the Father has given, “to have life in Himself,” should have been called to pass through the gloomy shades of death, that He might in all points be made like unto His brethren and so be able to fully sympathize with us! O you weak ones, look how weak your Lord became that He might make you strong! We might read that familiar passage, “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich,” in a slightly different way—“though He was strong, yet for your sakes He became weak, that you, through His weakness might be strong.” Therefore, Beloved, “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

What was *the reason for the special weakness of our Savior when in the Garden of Gethsemane*? I cannot now go fully into that matter, but I want you to notice what it was that tried Him so severely there. I suppose, first, it was contact with sin. Our Savior had always seen the effects of sin upon others, but it had never come home to Him so closely as it did when He entered that garden, for there, more than ever before, the iniquity of His people was made to meet upon Him—and that contact aroused in Him a holy horror! You and I are not perfectly pure, so we are not as horrified at sin as we ought to be, yet sometimes we can say, with the Psalmist, “Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Your Law.” But for our gracious Savior—listen to the Inspired Words, they are none of mine—to be “numbered with the transgressors,” must have been an awful thing to His pure and holy soul! He seemed to shrink back from such a position and it was necessary that He should be strengthened in order that He might be able to endure the contact with that terrible mass of iniquity!

But He had, in addition, to *bear the burden of that sin*. It was not sufficient for Him to come into contact with it—but it is written, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” And as He began to fully realize all that was involved in His position as the great Sin-Bearer, His spirit seemed to droop and He became exceedingly weak. Ah, Sir, if you have to bear the burden of your own sin when you appear before the Judgment Seat of God, it will sink you to the lowest Hell! But what must Christ’s agony have been when He was bearing the sin of all His people? As the mighty mass of their guilt came rolling upon Him, His Father saw that the Human soul and the Human body both needed to be upheld, otherwise they would have been utterly crushed before the atoning work had been accomplished.

Contact with sin and the bearing of sin’s penalty were reason enough to produce the Savior’s excessive weakness in Gethsemane, but, in addition, He was conscious of the approach of death. I have heard some people say that we ought not to shrink from death, but I believe that in proportion as a man is a good man, death will be distasteful to him. You and I have become, to a large extent, familiarized with the thought of death. We know that we must die—unless the Lord should come soon—for all who have gone before us have done so—the seeds of death are sown in us and, like some fell disease, they are beginning to work within our nature. It is natural that we should expect to die, for we know that

we are mortal. If anybody were to tell us that we should be annihilated—any reasonable and sensible man would be horrified at the idea—for that is not natural to the soul of man. Well, now, death was as unnatural to Christ as annihilation would be to us! It had never come to be a part of His Nature. His holy soul had none of the seeds of death in it and His untainted body—which had never known any kind of disease or corruption, but was as pure as when, first of all, “that holy thing” was created by the Spirit of God—that also shrank back from death! There were not in it any of the things which make death natural and, therefore, because of the very purity of His Nature, He recoiled at the approach of death and needed to be especially strengthened in order to meet “the last enemy.”

Probably, however, it was the sense of utter desertion that was preying upon His mind and so produced that extremity of weakness. All His disciples had failed Him and presently would forsake Him. Judas had lifted up his heel against Him and there was not one of all His professed followers who would faithfully cleave to Him. Kings, princes, scribes and rulers were all united against Him—and of the people, there were none with Him. Worst of all, by the necessity of His expiatory Sacrifice and His Substitution for His people, His Father, Himself, withdrew the Light of His Countenance from Him and, even in the garden, He was beginning to feel that agony of soul which, on the Cross, wrung from Him that doleful cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And that sense of utter loneliness and desertion, added to all that He had endured, made Him so exceedingly weak that it was necessary that He should be specially strengthened for the ordeal through which He had still to pass.

II. Now, in the second place, let us meditate for a little while upon OUR LORD’S STRENGTHENING. “There appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him.”

It is night and there He kneels, under the olives, offering up, as Paul says, “prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death.” While wrestling there, He is brought into such a state of agony that He sweats great drops of blood and, suddenly, there flashes before Him, like a meteor from the midnight sky, a bright spirit that had come straight from the Throne of God to minister to Him in His hour of need.

Think of *the condescension on Christ’s part to allow an angel to come and strengthen Him*. He is the Lord of angels as well as of men. At His bidding, they fly more swiftly than the lightning flash to do His will. Yet, in His extremity of weakness, He was succored by one of them! It was a wondrous stoop for the infinitely-great and ever-blessed Christ of God to consent that a spirit of His own creation should appear unto Him and strengthen Him.

But while I admire the condescension which permitted one angel to come, I equally admire *the self-restraint which allowed only one to come*, for, if He had so pleased, He might have appealed to His Father and He would at once have sent to Him “more than twelve legions of angels.” No, He did not make such a request. He rejoiced to have one to strengthen Him, but He would not have any more. Oh, what matchless beauties are combined in our blessed Savior! You may look on this side of the shield

and you will perceive that it is of pure gold. Then you may look on the other side of it, but you will not discover that it is brass, as in the fable, for it is gold all through! Our Lord Jesus is “altogether lovely.” What He does, or what He refrains from doing equally deserves the praises of His people.

How could the angel strengthen Christ? That is a very natural enquiry, but it is quite possible that when we have answered that question as well as we can, we shall not have given a full and satisfactory reply to it. Yet I can conceive that, in some mysterious manner, an angel from Heaven *may have actually infused fresh vigor into the physical constitution of Christ*. I cannot positively affirm that it was so, but it seems to me a very likely thing. We know that God can suddenly communicate new strength to fainting spirits and, certainly, if He willed it, He could thus lift up the drooping head of His Son and make Him feel strong and resolute again.

Perhaps it was so, but, in any case, it must have strengthened the Savior to *feel that He was in pure company*. It is a great joy to a man who is battling for the right against a crowd who love the wrong, to find a comrade by his side who loves the Truth of God as he loves it. To a pure mind, obliged to listen to the ribald jests of the licentious, I know of nothing that is more strengthening than to get a whisper in the ear from one who says, “I, too, love that which is chaste and pure, and hate the filthy conversation of the wicked.” So, perhaps, the mere fact of that shining angel standing by the Savior’s side, or reverently bowing before Him, may in itself have strengthened Him.

Next to that, was *the tender sympathy which this angelic ministration proved*. I can imagine that all the holy angels leant over the battlements of Heaven to watch the Savior’s wondrous life. And now that they see Him in the garden and perceive, by His whole appearance, and His desperate agony, that death is drawing to Him, they are so astonished that they crave permission that at least one of their number shall go down to see if He cannot carry succor to Him from His Father’s house above. I can imagine the angels saying, “Did we not sing of Him at Bethlehem when He was born? Did not some of us minister to Him when He was in the desert and among wild beasts, hungry after His long fast and terrible temptation? Has He not been seen of angels all the while He has been on earth! Oh, let some one of us go to His relief!” And I can readily suppose that God said to Gabriel, “Your name means, The Strength of God—go and strengthen your Lord in Gethsemane,” “And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven strengthening Him.” And I think that He was strengthened, at least in part, by observing the sympathy of all the heavenly host with Him in His season of secret sorrow. He might seem to be alone as Man, but as Lord and King, He had on His side an innumerable company of angels who waited to do His will—and here was one of them, come to assure Him that He was not alone, after all.

Next, no doubt, our Savior was comforted by *the angel’s willing service*. You know, dear Brothers and Sisters, how a little act of kindness will cheer us when we are very low in spirit. If we are despised and rejected of men. If we are deserted and defamed by those who ought to have dealt differently with us, even a tender look from a child will help to

remove our depression! In times of loneliness it is something even to have a dog with you, to lick your hand and show you such kindness as is possible from him. And our blessed Master, who always appreciated and still appreciates the least service rendered to Him—for not a cup of cold water, given to a disciple in Christ's name, shall lose its reward—was cheered by the devotion and homage of the ministering spirit that came from Heaven to strengthen Him! I wonder if the angel worshipped Him—I think that He could do no less and it must have been something to worship the blood-red Son of God. Oh, that any of us could have paid Him such homage as that! The time for such special ministry as that is now over, yet my faith seems to bring Him back here, at this moment, just as if we were in Gethsemane. I adore You, blessed eternal God—never more Godlike than when You did prove Your perfect Manhood by sweating great drops of blood in the awful weakness of Your depression in the Garden of Sorrow!

Perhaps, too, the angel's presence comforted and strengthened the Savior *as being a sort of foretaste of His final victory*. What was this angel but the pioneer of all the heavenly host that would come to meet Him when the fight was over? He was one who, in full confidence of His Lord's victory, had flown before the rest to pay homage to the conquering Son of God, who would tread the old dragon beneath His feet! You remember how, when Jesus was born, first there came one angel who began to speak of Him to the shepherds, "and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The first angel had, as it were, stolen a march upon his brethren, and got there before them, but, no sooner was the wondrous news proclaimed through Heaven's streets, than every angel resolved to overtake him before his message was completed! So, here again is one that had come as an outrider to remind His Lord of His ultimate victory—and there were many more afterwards to come with the same glad tidings—but, to the Savior's heart, that angel's coming was a token that He would lead captivity captive and that myriads of other bright spirits would crowd around Him and cry, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors; that the King of Glory, fresh from His blood-red shame, may enter into His heavenly and eternal inheritance!"

Yet once more, is *it not very likely that this angel brought the Savior a message from Heaven?* The angels are generally God's messengers, so they have something to communicate from Him and, perhaps, this angel, bending over the Savior's prostrate form, whispered in His ear, "Be of good cheer. You must pass through all this agony, but You will thereby save an innumerable multitude of the sons and daughters of men who will love and worship You and Your Father forever and forever. He is with You even at this moment. Though He must hide His face from You because of the requirements of justice that the Atonement may be complete, His heart is with You and He loves You always." Oh, how our Lord Jesus must have been cheered if some such words as these were whispered into His ears!

Now, in closing, let us try to learn the lessons of this incident. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, you and I may have to pass through great griefs—certainly ours will never be so great as those of our Divine Master—but we may have to follow through the same waters. Well, at such times, as I have already said, let us resort to prayer and *let us be content to receive comfort from the humblest instrumentality*. “That is too simple an observation,” you say. It is a very simple one, but it is one that some people have need to remember. You remember how Naaman the Syrian was healed through the remark of a little captive girl and, sometimes, great saints have been cheered by the words of very little people. You remember how Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, wanted “a child’s hymn”? It was just like he—great, glorious, simple-minded child-man that he was. He said what you and I must sometimes have felt that we needed—a child’s hymn—a child’s joyful song to cheer us up in our hour of depression and sorrow!

There are some people who seem as if they would not be converted unless they can see some eminent minister. Even that will not suit some of them—they need a special revelation from Heaven. They will not take a text from the Bible—though I cannot conceive of anything better than that—but they think that if they could dream something, or if they could hear words spoken in the cool of the evening by some strange voice in the sky, then they might be converted. Well, Brothers and Sisters, if you will not eat the apples that grow on trees, you must not expect angels to come and bring them to you! We have a more sure word of testimony in the Bible than we can have anywhere else. If you will not be converted by that Word, it is a great pity—it is much more than a pity, it is a great sin! If your Lord and Master condescended to receive consolation from an angel whom He had Himself created, you ought to be willing to gather comfort from the feeblest speech of the poorest person—from the least of the people of God when they try to cheer you.

I have known an old professor say of a young minister, “It is no use for me to hear him, for he has not had the experience that I have had, so how can he instruct or help me?” O Sirs, I have known many old saints get more comfort out of godly boys than they did from those of their own age! God knows how, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, to perfect praise and I have never heard that He has done that out of the mouths of old men! Why is that? Because they know too much! But the children do not know anything and, therefore, out of their mouths the praise of God is perfect. So let us never despise God’s messengers, however humble they may be.

The next lesson is while you should be thankful for the least comforter, yet, *in your times of deepest need, you may expect the greatest comforters to come to you*. Let me remind you that an angel appeared to Joseph when Herod was seeking Christ’s life. Then, later, angels appeared to Christ when the devil had been tempting Him. And now, at Gethsemane, when there was a peculiar manifestation of diabolical malice, for it was the hour of the powers of darkness—then, when the devil was loose and doing his utmost against Christ—an angel came from Heaven to strengthen Him. So, when you are in your heaviest trials, you shall have

your greatest strength. Perhaps you will have little to do with angels till you get into deep trouble and then shall the promise be fulfilled, "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." They are always ready to be your keepers, but, in the matter of spiritual strengthening, these holy spirits may have little to do with some of you until you stand foot to foot with Apollyon and have to fight stern battles with the Evil One himself. It is worthwhile to go through rough places to have angels to bear you up! It is worthwhile to go to Gethsemane if there we may have angels from Heaven to strengthen us! So, be of good comfort, Brothers and Sisters, whatever lies before you. The darker your experience is, the brighter will be that which comes out of it. The disciples feared as they entered the cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration, but when they had passed right into it, they saw Jesus, Moses, and Elijah in Glory! O you who are the true followers of Christ, fear not the clouds that lower darkly over you, for you shall see the brightness behind them and the Christ in them! And your spirits shall be blessed.

But if you are not believing in Christ, I am indeed grieved for you, for you shall have the sorrow without the solace—the cup of bitterness without the angel—the agony, and that forever, without the messenger from Heaven to console you! Oh, that you would all believe in Jesus! God help you so to do for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 22:14-46.**

Verses 14-16. *And when the hour was come, He sat down and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.* And it is fulfilled, for Christ Himself is the Lamb of our Passover. His blood has been shed and sprinkled. His people have been brought up out of their Egyptian bondage and, by faith, they feed upon Him and are glad. How sweetly the Passover melted away into the Lord's Supper and how graciously did our Savior thus teach us that, as a rule, He does not make violent changes in the development of His people's spiritual life, but He leads them on gradually from one stage to another! There may be, sometimes, very sudden elevations, but, as a general rule, we go from strength to strength, a step at a time, and the Truth of God is revealed to us little by little.

17, 18. *So He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come.* This was the Passover cup—the cup with which they concluded the paschal supper. At such times they also usually began to chant a Psalm in happy unison. Just at that point, Christ interjected the first part of the celebration of the new ordinance—the Lord's Supper, into which the paschal supper was to melt.

19. *So He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.* It was clearly impossible that He could have meant that bread to be literally His body, because His body was there at the table! Therefore, the misunderstanding, or misrepresentation of the Church of Rome is altogether without excuse. Our Savior plainly intended to say, “This bread represents My body; it is an emblem, a symbol, of My body.” If this had been spoken concerning the bread after Christ had been dead and gone, and not before, there might have been some warrant for the teaching of the Papists, but there cannot be any such warrant, as He used the words while He was sitting there with His Apostles. Let us be careful not to lose the true meaning of Christ’s words while we combat the false interpretation that has been given to them.

20. *Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you.* He could not have meant that, literally, that cup was the New Covenant—I never heard of anybody who thought He did. Why, then, take one part of the ordinance literally, if not the other? But our Lord did mean that the contents of that cup represented the blood which seals and ratifies the Eternal Covenant on which our hopes are built.

21. *But, behold, the hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table.* Lamentable circumstance—sad index of what often still occurs! The worst traitors to Christ are not outside, but inside the visible Church. There they have the best opportunity for doing mischief. There they can give the unkindest cut of all. God grant that none of us may be among that miserable number!

22. *And truly the Son of Man goes as it was determined, but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!* The fact that it was determined in the eternal decrees of God, that Christ should die, did not at all diminish the responsibility of all who had a share in bringing about that death. Learn, Beloved, to believe firmly in Divine Predestination without doubting human responsibility. Even though you may not be able to show how these two things agree, do not be anxious about that matter! Be satisfied to believe what you cannot understand. Both these things are true and they are, both of them, in this verse.

23, 24. *And they began to enquire among themselves which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* What a strange thing that it should have been so! Is there any such strife among us here? If so, how utterly unworthy are we to be the disciples of such a Master as our Lord Jesus Christ!

25, 26. *And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serves.* You know, Brothers, that it always will be so. If a man tries to be great in the Church, somehow or other his Brothers generally think very little of him! But he who is willing to serve—whose one ambition it is to lay himself out for the Glory of his Master, and for the general good—that man

usually has a great deal more honor than he would have expected to receive. The way to be great in the Church is to be serviceable to all around us, to be meek and lowly, to be willing to wait upon others. We have good reason for being the servants of our Brothers and Sisters when we remember the humble position that our Lord Himself assumed.

27. *For which is greater, he that sits at the table, or he that serves? Is it not he that sits the table? But I am among you as He that serves.* He served in the very humblest capacity, for did He not even wash the disciples' feet? And if He, who was the greatest of all, thus condescended to perform the lowliest service, who among us shall be so lifted up as to suppose that no common work is good enough for him? Brethren, we must be humble, or else we shall be humbled! And let me remark that the latter experience is by no means a pleasant one, while the former experience is most sweet and gracious. God give us the Grace to be humble!

28-30. *You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Yes, there are thrones and a Kingdom for those who are faithful to the King of kings! But there is something else to think of beside that kind of glory, for notice our Savior's next words.

31. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.* And between us and the Kingdom there will be struggles and dangers—and watchfulness and wrestling prayer will be required of us. And here is our only hope of escape from the perils of the way, as it was with poor Peter—

32-34. *But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your Brothers. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before you shall thrice deny that you know Me.* Though Peter did not really know himself, Christ knew him. That is one of our comforts—that the Lord Jesus Christ foresees all future ill and so provides against it. He looks down into our nature and deals with us as we need to be dealt with. It is well for us that we are in His hands.

35-40. *And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough. And He came out, and went, as He was known, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that you enter not into temptation. Or, "into trial." We do not often enough present that petition, "Lead us not into temptation." We are not able to bear temptation if it goes beyond a certain point—and it is a greater mercy to*

escape temptation than it is to pass through it and to overcome it. I mean, of course, only in some respects. We may ask to be delivered from the Evil One if we must be tempted by him, but our first prayer should be that we may not enter into temptation.

41, 42. *And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done.* We can read these words in a calm, quiet tone, but they were uttered by our Lord with an intensity of agony which we can scarcely call up before our mind's eyes. So terrible was that agony that our Savior became utterly weak and faint through the intensity of His pleading.

43, 44. *And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly.* More and more intense was that brief prayer as His supplication was continued.

44. *And His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* Luke was a physician, you know, so he was the most likely one to record this phenomenon. It has happened—so we have been told—to some other persons in intense fright or agony, that their sweat has been tinged with blood. But we never remember reading or hearing of anyone but our Lord of whom it could be said, “His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

45. *And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow.* Great sorrow may have quite opposite effects upon different men. You have, perhaps, sometimes noticed that intoxication produces upon some men exactly the opposite effect to that which it produces upon others—some become irritable and noisy, while others become taciturn and quiet. It is also quite a matter of fact that great sorrow has various effects upon different minds. In the Savior's case, it aroused Him to an awful agony of earnestness in prayer. In the disciples case, it sent them to sleep.

46. *And said unto them, Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.* The great trial for them, as well as for their Lord, was close at hand. It was late at night and they were drowsy and sleepy, yet no time is amiss for supplication. Prayer is never out of season and never unnecessary. We never know when temptation is near, so let us pray without ceasing to Him who is able to preserve us from temptation, or to deliver us out of it.

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

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

THE AGONY IN GETHSEMANE

NO. 1199

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING. OCTOBER 18, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”
Luke 22:44.***

OUR Lord, after having eaten the Passover and celebrated the supper with His disciples, went with them to the Mount of Olives and entered the Garden of Gethsemane. What induced Him to select that place to be the scene of His terrible agony? Why there, in preference to anywhere else would He be arrested by His enemies? May we not conceive that as in a garden Adam's self-indulgence ruined us, so in another garden the agonies of the second Adam should restore us? Gethsemane supplies the medicine for the ills which followed upon the forbidden fruit of Eden. No flowers which bloomed upon the banks of the four-fold river were ever so precious to our race as the bitter herbs which grew hard by the black and sullen stream of Kidron.

May not our Lord also have thought of David, when on that memorable occasion he fled out of the city from his rebellions son, and it is written, “The king also, himself, passed over the brook Kidron,” and he and his people went up barefoot and bareheaded, weeping as they went? Behold, the greater David leaves the Temple to become desolate and forsakes the city which had rejected His admonitions! And with a sorrowful heart He crosses the foul brook to find in solitude a solace for His woes. Our Lord Jesus, moreover, meant us to see that our sin changed everything about Him into sorrow—it turned His riches into poverty, His peace into travail, His glory into shame—and so the place of His peaceful retirement, where, in hallowed devotion He had been nearest Heaven in communion with God, our sin transformed into the focus of His sorrow, the center of His woe. Where He had enjoyed most, there He must be called to suffer most.

Our Lord may, also, have chosen the Garden because, needing every remembrance that could sustain Him in the conflict, He felt refreshed by the memory of former hours there which had passed away so quietly. He had prayed there and gained strength and comfort. Those gnarled and twisted olives knew Him well—there was scarcely a blade of grass in the Garden which He had not knelt upon. He had consecrated the spot to fellowship with God! What wonder, then, that He preferred this favored soil? Just as a man would choose, in sickness, to lie in his own bed, so Jesus chose to endure His agony in His own place of prayer where the recollections of former communings with His Father would come vividly before Him.

But, probably, the chief reason for His resort to Gethsemane was that it was His *well-known* haunt. John tells us, “Judas also knew the place.” Our Lord did not wish to conceal Himself. He did not need to be hunted

down like a thief, or searched out by spies. He went boldly to the place where His enemies knew that He was accustomed to pray, for He was willing to be taken to suffering and to death. They did not drag Him off to Pilate's Hall against His will, but He went with them voluntarily. When the hour was come for Him to be betrayed—there He was, in a place where the traitor could readily find Him. And when Judas would betray Him with a kiss, His cheek was ready to receive the traitorous salutation. The blessed Savior delighted to do the will of the Lord though it involved obedience unto death!

We have thus come to the gate of the Garden of Gethsemane, let us now enter—but first, let us take off our shoes, as Moses did, when he saw the bush which burned with fire and was not consumed. Surely we may say with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place!" I tremble at the task which lies before me, for how shall my feeble speech describe those agonies for which strong crying and tears were scarcely an adequate expression? I desire, with you, to survey the sufferings of our Redeemer, but oh, may the Spirit of God prevent our mind from thinking anything amiss, or our tongue from speaking even one word which would be derogatory to Him either in His immaculate Manhood or His glorious Godhead!

It is not easy, when you are speaking of one who is both God and Man, to observe the exact line of correct speech. It is easy to describe the Divine side in such a manner as to trench upon the human, or to depict the human at the cost of the Divine. Make me not an offender for a word if I should err! A man had need, himself, to be Inspired, or to confine himself to the very Words of Inspiration to fitly speak, at all times, upon the great "mystery of godliness"—God manifest in the flesh—and especially when he has to dwell most upon God so manifest in suffering flesh that the weakest traits in manhood become the most conspicuous.

O Lord, open my lips that my tongue may utter right words! Meditating upon the agonizing scene in Gethsemane we are compelled to observe that our Savior endured, there, a grief unknown to any previous period of His life. Therefore we will commence our discourse by raising the question, **WHAT WAS THE CAUSE OF THE PECULIAR GRIEF OF GETHSEMANE?** Our Lord was the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief" throughout His whole life and yet, though it may sound paradoxical, I scarcely think there existed on the face of the earth a happier man than Jesus of Nazareth! The griefs which He endured were counterbalanced by the peace of purity, the calm of fellowship with God and the joy of benevolence. This last, every good man knows to be very sweet—and all the sweeter in proportion to the pain which is voluntarily endured for the carrying out of its kind designs. It is always joy to do good, cost what it may.

Moreover, Jesus dwelt at perfect peace with God at all times. We know that He did so, for He regarded that peace as a choice legacy which He could bequeath to His disciples. Before He died, He said to them, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." He was meek and lowly of heart, and therefore His soul had rest. He was one of the meek who inherit the earth. He was one of the peacemakers who are and must be blessed. I think I am not mistaken when I say that our Lord was far from

being an unhappy Man. But in Gethsemane all seems changed, His peace is gone, His calm is turned to tempest.

After supper our Lord had sung a hymn, but there was no singing in Gethsemane. Down the steep bank which led from Jerusalem to the Kidron He talked very cheerfully, saying, "I am the Vine and you are the branches," and that wondrous prayer which He prayed with His disciples after that discourse is full of majesty—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am"—is a very different prayer from that inside Gethsemane's walls, where He cries, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Notice that all His life you scarcely find Him uttering an expression of grief. But here He says, not only by His sighs and by His bloody sweat, but in so many words, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death."

In the Garden the Sufferer could not conceal His grief and does not appear to have wished to do so. Thrice he ran backward and forward to His disciples—He let them see His sorrow and appealed to them for sympathy. His exclamations were very piteous and His sighs and groans were, I doubt not, very terrible to hear. Chiefly did that sorrow reveal itself in bloody sweat, which is a very unusual phenomenon, although I suppose we must believe those writers who record instances somewhat similar. The old physician, Galen, gives an instance in which, through extremity of horror, an individual poured forth a discolored sweat, so nearly crimson as, at any rate, to appear to have been blood. Other cases are given by medical authorities.

We do not, however, on any previous occasion observe anything like this in our Lord's life. It was only in the last grim struggle among the olive trees that our Champion resisted unto blood, agonizing against sin. What ailed You, O Lord, that You should be so sorely troubled just then? We are clear that His deep sorrow and distress were not occasioned by any bodily pain. Our Savior had doubtless been familiar with weakness and pain, for He took our sicknesses, but He never, in any previous instance, complained of physical suffering. Neither at the time when He entered Gethsemane had He been grieved by any bereavement. We know why it is written, "Jesus wept"—it was because His friend Lazarus was dead—but here there was no funeral, nor sick bed, nor particular cause of grief in that direction.

Nor was it the revived remembrance of any past reproaches which had lain dormant in His mind. Long before this "reproach had broken His heart," He had known to the full the vexations of contumely and scorn. They had called Him a "drunken man and a winebibber." They had charged Him with casting out devils by the Prince of the devils—they could not say more and yet He had bravely faced it all—it could not be possible that He was now sorrowful unto death for such a cause. There must have been a something sharper than pain, more cutting than reproach, more terrible than bereavement, which now, at this time, grappled with the Savior and made Him "exceedingly sorrowful, and very heavy."

Do you suppose it was the fear of coming scorn, or the dread of crucifixion? Was it terror at the thought of death? Is not such a supposition impossible? Every man dreads death and as Man, Jesus could not but

shrink from it. When we were originally made, we were created for immortality and, therefore, to die is strange and uncongenial work to us. The instincts of self-preservation cause us to start back from it, but surely in our Lord's case that natural cause could not have produced such specially painful results. It does not make even such poor cowards as we are sweat great drops of blood! Why, then, should it work such terror in Him?

It is dishonoring to our Lord to imagine Him less brave than His own disciples, yet we have seen some of the most feeble of His saints triumphant in the prospect of departing. Read the stories of the martyrs and you will frequently find them exultant in the near approach of the most cruel sufferings. The joy of the Lord has given such strength to them that no cowardly thought has alarmed them for a single moment—they have gone to the stake, or to the block with songs of victory upon their lips! Our Master must not be thought of as inferior to His boldest servants! It cannot be that He should tremble where they were brave. Oh, no! The noblest spirit among yon band of martyrs is the Leader, Himself, who in suffering and heroism surpassed them all! None could so defy the pangs of death as the Lord Jesus, who, for the joy which was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame!

I cannot conceive that the pangs of Gethsemane were occasioned by any extraordinary attack from Satan. It is possible that Satan was there and that his presence may have darkened the shade—but he was not the most prominent cause of that hour of darkness. This much is quite clear, that our Lord, at the commencement of His ministry, engaged in a very severe duel with the Prince of Darkness, and yet we do not read concerning that temptation in the wilderness a single syllable as to His soul's being exceedingly sorrowful. Neither do we find that He "was sore amazed and was very heavy." Nor is there a solitary hint at anything approaching to bloody sweat. When the Lord of Angels condescended to stand foot to foot with the Prince of the power of the air, He had no such dread of him as to utter strong cries and tears and fall prostrate on the ground with threefold appeals to the Great Father.

Comparatively speaking, to put His foot on the old serpent was an easy task for Christ and did but cost Him a bruised heel. But this Gethsemane agony wounded His very soul even unto death. What is it then, do you think, that so peculiarly marks Gethsemane and the griefs thereof? We believe that, then, the Father put Him to grief for us. It was *then* that our Lord had to take a certain cup *from the Father's hand*. Not from the Jews, not from the traitor, Judas. Not from the sleeping disciples, nor from the devil came the trial, then—it was a cup filled by One whom He knew to be His Father, but Who, nevertheless, He understood to have appointed Him a very bitter potion, a cup not to be drunk by His body and to spend its gall upon His flesh, but a cup which specially amazed His soul and troubled His inmost heart.

He shrunk from it and, therefore, you can be sure that it was a draught more dreadful than physical pain, since from *that* He did not shrink. It was a potion more dreadful than reproach—from *that* He had not turned aside. It was more dreadful than Satanic temptation—*that* He had overcome! It was a something inconceivably terrible and amazingly full of

dread—which came from the Father’s hand. This removes all doubt as to what it was, for we read, “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin.” “The Lord has made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all.” He has made Him to be sin for us though He knew no sin.

This, then, is that which caused the Savior such extraordinary depression. He was now about to “taste death for every man.” He was about to bear the curse which was due to sinners because He stood in the sinner’s place and must suffer in the sinner’s stead. Here is the secret of those agonies which it is not possible for me to set forth before you! It is so true that—

**“Tis to God, and God alone,
That His griefs are fully known.”**

Yet would I exhort you to consider these griefs, that you may love the Sufferer. He now realized, perhaps for the first time, that He was to be a Sin-Bearer. As God He was perfectly holy and incapable of sin. And as Man He was without original taint—He was spotlessly pure—yet He had to bear sin, to be led forth as the Scapegoat bearing the iniquity of Israel upon His head. He had to be taken and made a Sin Offering—and as a loathsome thing, (for nothing was more loathsome than the sin offering)—to be taken outside the camp and utterly consumed with the fire of Divine wrath!

Do you wonder that His infinite purity started back from that? Would He have been what He was if it had not been a very solemn thing for Him to stand before God in the position of a sinner? Yes, and as Luther would have said it, to be looked upon by God as if He were all the sinners in the world, and as if He had committed all the sin that ever had been committed by His people—for it was all laid on Him and on Him must the vengeance due for it all be poured. He must be the center of all the vengeance and bear away upon Himself what ought to have fallen upon the guilty sons of men. To stand in such a position, when once it was realized, must have been very terrible to the Redeemer’s holy soul.

Then, also, the Savior’s mind was intently fixed upon the dreadful nature of sin. Sin had always been abhorrent to Him, but now His thoughts were engrossed with it. He saw its worse than deadly nature, its heinous character and horrible aim. Probably at this time, beyond any former period, He had, as Man, a view of the wide range and all-pervading evil of sin and a sense of the blackness of its darkness—and the desperateness of its guilt as being a direct attack upon the Truth of God. Yes, and upon the very *being* of God! He saw, in His own Person, to what lengths sinners would go. He saw how they would sell their Lord, like Judas, and seek to destroy Him as did the Jews. The cruel and ungenerous treatment He had Himself received displayed man’s hate of God, and, as He saw it, horror took hold upon Him and His soul was heavy to think that He must bear such an evil and be numbered with such transgressors—to be wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities. But not the wounding nor the bruising distressed Him so much as the *sin* itself. That utterly overwhelmed His soul.

Then, too, no doubt, the penalty of sin began to be realized by Him in the Garden—first the sin which had put Him in the position of a suffering Substitute. Then the penalty which must be borne because He was in that

position. I dread, to the last degree, that kind of theology which is so common, nowadays, which seeks to depreciate and diminish our estimate of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters, that was no trifling suffering which made recompense to the Justice of God for the sins of men! I am never afraid of exaggeration when I speak of what my Lord endured. All Hell was distilled into that cup of which our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, was made to drink! It was not *eternal* suffering, but since He was Divine He could, in a short time, offer unto God a vindication of His Justice which sinners in Hell could not have offered had they been left to suffer in their own persons *forever*.

The woe that broke over the Savior's spirit—the great and fathomless ocean of inexpressible anguish which dashed over the Savior's soul when He died—is so inconceivable that I must not venture far lest I be accused of a vain attempt to express the unutterable! But this I will say—the very spray from that great tempestuous deep—as it fell on Christ, baptized Him in a bloody sweat! He had not yet come to the raging billows of the penalty itself, but even standing on the shore, as He heard the awful surf breaking at His feet, His soul was sorely amazed and very heavy. It was the shadow of the coming tempest. It was the prelude of the dread desertion which He had to endure when *He* stood where *we* ought to have stood and paid to His Father's justice the debt which was due from us! It was this which laid Him low. To be treated as a sinner, to be smitten as a sinner, though in Him was no sin—this it was which caused Him the agony of which our text speaks.

Having thus spoken of the cause of His peculiar grief, I think we shall be able to support our view of the matter while we lead you to consider **WHAT WAS THE CHARACTER OF THE GRIEF ITSELF?** I shall trouble you, as little as possible, with the Greek words used by the Evangelists. I have studied each of them, to try and find out the shades of their meaning, but it will suffice if I give you the results of my careful investigation. What was the *grief* itself? How was it described? This great sorrow assailed our Lord some four days before He suffered. If you turn to John 12:27, you find that remarkable utterance, "Now is My soul troubled." We never knew Him say that before! This was a foretaste of the great depression of spirit which was so soon to lay Him prostrate in Gethsemane.

"Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this cause came I unto this hour." After that we read of Him in Matthew 26:37, that, "He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed." The depression had come over Him again. It was not pain. It was not a palpitation of the heart, or an aching of the brow. It was worse than these. Trouble of spirit is worse than pain of body—pain may bring trouble and be the incidental cause of sorrow—but if the mind is perfectly at peace, how well a man can bear pain! And when the soul is exhilarated and lifted up with inward joy, bodily pain is almost forgotten, the soul conquering the body. On the other hand the soul's sorrow will create bodily pain, the lower nature sympathizing with the higher.

Our Lord's main suffering lay in His soul—His soul-suffering was the soul of His suffering. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Pain of spirit is the worst of pain. Sorrow of heart is the climax of griefs. Let those who

have ever known sinking spirits, despondency and mental gloom, attest the truth of what I say! This sorrow of heart appears to have led to a very deep depression of our Lord's spirit. In Matthew 26:37, you find it recorded that He was "*deeply distressed*," and that expression is full of meaning—of more meaning, indeed, than it would be easy to explain. The word, in the original, is a very difficult one to translate. It may signify the abstraction of the mind and its complete occupation, by sorrow, to the exclusion of every thought which might have alleviated the distress.

One burning thought consumed His whole soul and burned up all that might have yielded comfort. For a while His mind refused to dwell upon the result of His death, the consequent joy which was set before Him. His position as a Sin Bearer and the desertion by His Father which was necessary, engrossed His contemplation and hurried His soul away from all else. Some have seen in the word a measure of distraction—and though I will not go far in that direction—yet it does seem as if our Savior's mind underwent perturbations and convulsions widely different from His usual calm, collected spirit. He was tossed to and fro as upon a mighty sea of trouble, which was worked to a tempest, and carried Him away in its fury. "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." As the Psalmist said, innumerable evils compassed Him about so that His heart failed Him. His heart was melted with sheer dismay. He was "*deeply distressed*."

Some consider the word to signify at its root, "separated from the people," as if He had become unlike other men, even as one whose mind is staggered by a sudden blow or pressed with some astounding calamity, is no more as ordinary men are. Mere onlookers would have thought our Lord to be a man distraught, burdened beyond the possibility of men, and borne down by a sorrow unparalleled among men. The learned Thomas Goodwin says, "The word denotes a failing, deficiency and sinking of spirit such as happens to men in sickness and wounding." Epaphroditus' sickness, whereby he was brought near to death, is called by the same word, so that we see that Christ's soul was sick and faint—was not His sweat produced by exhaustion? The cold, clammy sweat of dying men comes through faintness of body. But the bloody sweat of Jesus came from an utter faintness and prostration of soul. He was in an awful soul-swoon and suffered an inward death whose accompaniment was not watery tears from the eyes, but a weeping of blood from the entire man.

Many of you, however, know in your measure what it is to be deeply distressed without my multiplying words. And if you do not know, by personal experience, all explanations I could give would be in vain. When deep despondency comes on. When you forget everything that would sustain you and your spirit sinks down, down, down—then can you sympathize with our Lord. Others think you foolish, call you nervous and bid you rally yourself, but they know not your case. If they understood it, they would not mock you with such admonitions. Our Lord was "*deeply distressed*," very sinking, very despondent, overwhelmed with grief.

Mark tells us, next, in his 14th chapter and 33rd verse that our Lord was "*sore amazed*." The Greek word does not merely import that He was astonished and surprised, but that His amazement went to an extremity of horror, such as men fall into when their hair stands on end and their flesh

trembles. As the delivery of the Law made Moses exceedingly fear and quake, and as David said, “My flesh trembles because of Your judgments,” so our Lord was stricken with horror at the sight of the sin which was laid upon Him and the vengeance which was due on account of it. The Savior was first “distressed,” then depressed, “heavy,” and lastly, sore amazed and filled with amazement—for even He, as a Man, could scarcely have known what it was that He had undertaken to bear.

He had looked at it calmly and quietly and felt that whatever it was He would bear it for our sake. But when it actually came to the bearing of sin He was utterly astonished and taken aback at the dreadful position of standing in the sinner’s place before God—of having His holy Father look upon Him as the sinner’s Representative, and of being forsaken by that Father with whom He had lived on terms of amity and delight from old eternity. It staggered His holy, tender, loving Nature—and He was “sore amazed” and was “very heavy.” We are further taught that there surrounded, encompassed and overwhelmed Him an ocean of sorrow, for the 38th verse of the 26th of Matthew contains the word *perilupos*, which signifies an encompassing around with sorrows.

In all ordinary miseries there is, generally, some loophole of escape, some breathing place for hope. We can generally remind our friends in trouble that their case might be worse. But in our Lord’s griefs, worse could not be imagined, for He could say with David, “The pains of Hell get hold upon Me.” All God’s waves and billows went over Him. Above Him, beneath and around Him, outside Him, and within—all—all was anguish and neither was there one alleviation or source of consolation. His disciples could not help Him—they were all, but one, sleeping—and he who was awake was on the road to betray Him. His spirit cried out in the Presence of the Almighty God beneath the crushing burden and unbearable load of His miseries! No griefs could have gone further than Christ’s and He, Himself, said, “My soul is *exceedingly* sorrowful,” or surrounded with sorrow “even unto death.”

He did not die in the Garden, but He suffered as much as if He had died. He endured death intensively, though not extensively. It did not extend to the making His body a corpse, but it went as far in pain as if it had been so. His pangs and anguish went up to the mortal agony and only paused on the verge of death. Luke, to crown all, tells us in our text, that our Lord was *in an agony*. The expression, “agony,” signifies a conflict, a contest, a wrestling. With whom was the agony? With whom did He wrestle? I believe it was with Himself. The contest here intended was not with His God—no—“not as I will but as You will,” does not look like wrestling with God. It was not a contest with Satan, for, as we have already seen, He would not have been so sorely amazed had that been the conflict. It was a terrible combat within Himself, an agony within His own soul.

Remember that He could have escaped from all this grief with one resolve of His will and, naturally, the Manhood in Him said, “Do not bear it!” And the purity of His heart said, “Oh, do not bear it, do not stand in the place of the sinner.” The delicate sensitiveness of His mysterious Nature shrunk altogether from any form of connection with sin—yet infinite Love said, “Bear it, stoop beneath the load.” And so there was agony between

the attributes of His Nature—a battle on an awful scale in the arena of His soul. The purity which cannot bear to come into contact with sin must have been very mighty in Christ—while the love which would not let His people perish was very mighty, too. It was a struggle on a titanic scale, as if a Hercules had met another Hercules—two tremendous forces strove and fought and agonized within the bleeding heart of Jesus.

Nothing causes a man more torture than to be dragged here and there with contending emotions. As civil war is the worst and most cruel kind of war, so a war within a man's soul, when two great passions in him struggle for the mastery, and both noble passions, too, causes a trouble and distress which none but he that feels it can understand. I marvel not that our Lord's sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, when such an inward pressure made Him like a cluster trod in the winepress! I hope I have not presumptuously looked into the Ark, or gazed within the veiled Holy of Holies. God forbid that curiosity or pride should urge me to intrude where the Lord has set a barrier. I have brought you as far as I can and must again drop the curtain with the words I used just now—

***“Tis to God, and God alone,
That His griefs are fully known.”***

Our third question shall be, WHAT WAS OUR LORD'S SOLACE IN ALL THIS? He sought help in human companionship and it was very natural that He should do so. God has created in our human nature a craving for sympathy. We do not err when we expect our Brethren to watch with us in our hour of trial. But our Lord did not find that men were able to assist Him—however willing their spirit might be, their flesh was weak. What, then, did He do? He resorted to prayer and especially prayer to God under the Character of Father. I have learned by experience that we never know the sweetness of the Fatherhood of God so much as when we are in very bitter anguish. I can understand why the Savior said, “Abba, Father”—it was anguish that brought Him down as a chastened child to appeal plaintively to a Father's love.

In the bitterness of my soul I have cried, “If, indeed, You are my Father, by the heart of Your Fatherhood have pity on Your child.” And here Jesus pleads with His Father as we have done. And He finds comfort in that pleading. *Prayer* was the channel of the Redeemer's comfort—earnest, intense, reverent, repeated prayer—and after each time of prayer He seems to have grown quiet and to have gone to His disciples with a measure of restored peace of mind. The sight of their sleeping helped to bring back His griefs and, therefore, He returned to pray again. And each time He was comforted, so that when He had prayed for the third time, He was prepared to meet Judas and the soldiers and to go with silent patience to judgment and to death. His great comfort was prayer and submission to the Divine will, for when He had laid His own will down at His Father's feet, the feebleness of His flesh spoke no more complainingly—but in sweet silence, like a sheep dumb before her shearers—He contained His soul in patience and rest.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, if any of you shall have your Gethsemane and your heavy griefs, imitate your Master by resorting to prayer, by crying to your Father and by learning submission to His will. I shall conclude

by drawing two or three inferences from the whole subject. May the Holy Spirit instruct us.

The first is this—Learn, dear Brothers and Sisters, *the real Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Do not think of Him merely as God, though He is assuredly Divine, but feel Him to be near of kin to you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh. How thoroughly can He sympathize with you! He has been burdened with all your burdens and grieved with all your griefs. Are the waters very deep through which you are passing? They are not deep compared with the torrents with which He was buffeted! Never a pang penetrates your spirit to which your Covenant Head was a stranger. Jesus can sympathize with you in all your sorrows, for He has suffered far more than you have ever suffered! He is able, therefore, to succor you in your temptations. Lay hold on Jesus as your familiar Friend, your Brother born for adversity, and you will have obtained a consolation which will bear you through the uttermost deeps.

Next, *see here the intolerable evil of sin*. You are a sinner, which Jesus never was—yet even to stand in the sinner's place was so dreadful to Him that He was sorrowful even unto death, What will sin one day be to you if you should be found guilty at the last? Oh, could we understand the horror of sin, there is not one among us that would be satisfied to remain in sin for a single moment! I believe there would go up from this House of Prayer this morning a weeping and a wailing such as might be heard in the very streets, if men and women here who are living in sin could really know what sin is, and what the wrath of God is that rests upon them—and what the judgments of God will be that will shortly surround them and destroy them!

Oh Soul, sin must be an awful thing if it so crushed our Lord! If the very imputation of it fetched bloody sweat from the pure and holy Savior, what must sin, itself, be? Avoid it, pass not by it, turn away from the very appearance of it, walk humbly and carefully with your God that sin may not harm you, for it is an exceeding plague, an infinite pest!

Learn next, but oh, how few minutes have I in which to speak of such a lesson, *the matchless love of Jesus*, that for your sakes and mine He would not merely suffer in *body*, but consented even to bear the horror of being accounted a sinner! Coming under the wrath of God because of our sins—though it cost Him suffering unto death and sore amazement—yet rather than that we should perish, the Lord stood as our Surety! Can we not cheerfully endure persecution for His sake? Can we not labor earnestly for Him? Are we so ungenerous that His cause shall suffer lack while we have the means of helping it? Are we so base that His work shall flag while we have strength to carry it on? I charge you by Gethsemane, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have a part and lot in the passion of your Savior, love Him much who loved you so immeasurably! Spend and be spent for Him!

Again, looking at Jesus in the Garden, we learn the *excellence and completeness of the Atonement*. How black I am, how filthy, how loathsome in the sight of God—I feel myself only fit to be cast into the lowest Hell and I wonder that God has not long ago cast me there! But I go into Gethsemane, I peer under those gnarled olive trees and I see my Savior!

Yes, I see Him wallowing on the ground in anguish and hear such groans come from Him as never came from human lips before! I look upon the earth and see it red with His blood, while His face is smeared with gory sweat. And I say to myself, "My God, my Savior, what ails You?"

I hear Him reply, "I am suffering for your sins." And then I take comfort, for while I gladly would have spared my Lord such an anguish, now that the anguish is over I can understand how Jehovah can spare me, because He smote His Son in my place! Now I have hope of justification, for I bring before the justice of God and my own conscience the remembrance of my bleeding Savior, and I say, "Can You twice demand payment, first at the hand of Your agonizing Son and then, again, at mine? Sinner as I am, I stand before the burning Throne of the severity of God and am not afraid of it! Can You scorch me, O consuming Fire, when You have not only scorched but utterly *consumed* my Substitute?"

No, by faith my soul sees Justice satisfied, the Law honored, the moral government of God established and yet my once guilty soul absolved and set free! The fire of avenging Justice has spent itself and the Law has exhausted its most rigorous demands upon the Person of Him who was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him! Oh the sweetness of the comfort which flows from the atoning blood! Obtain that comfort, my Brethren, and never leave it! Cling to your Lord's bleeding heart and drink in abundant consolation!

Last of all, *what must be the terror of the punishment which will fall upon those men who reject the atoning blood* and who will have to stand before God in their own proper persons to suffer for their sins? I will tell you, Sirs, with pain in my heart as I tell you, what will happen to those of you who reject my Lord! Jesus Christ, my Lord and Master, is a sign and prophecy to you of what will happen to *you*. Not in a garden, but on that bed of yours where you have so often been refreshed—you will be surprised and overtaken—and the pains of death will get hold upon you. With an exceedingly sorrow and remorse for your misspent life and for a rejected Savior you will be made very miserable. Then will your darling sin, your favorite lust, like another Judas, betray you with a kiss! While yet your soul lingers on your lips you will be seized and taken off by a body of evil ones and carried away to the bar of God, just as Jesus was taken to the judgment seat of Caiaphas.

There shall be a speedy, personal, and somewhat private judgment by which you shall be committed to prison where, in darkness, weeping and wailing, you shall spend the night before the great assize of the Judgment Morning. Then shall the day break and the resurrection morning come, and as our Lord then appeared before Pilate, so will you appear before the highest tribunal, not that of Pilate, but the dread judgment seat of the Son of God whom you have despised and rejected! Then will witnesses come against you, not false witnesses, but true—and you will stand speechless, even as Jesus said not a word before His accusers. Then will Conscience and Despair buffet you! You will become such a monument of misery, such a spectacle of contempt as to be fitly noted by another *Ecce Homo*, and men shall look at you and say, "Behold the man and the suffering

which has come upon him, because he despised his God and found pleasure in sin.”

Then you shall be condemned. “Depart, you cursed,” shall be your sentence, even as, “Let Him be crucified” was the doom of Jesus. You shall be taken away by the officers of Justice to your doom. Then, like the sinner’s Substitute, you will cry, “I thirst,” but not a drop of water shall be given you! You shall taste nothing but the gall of bitterness. You shall be executed publicly with your crimes written over your head that all may read and understand that you are justly condemned. And then will you be mocked as Jesus was, especially if you have been a professor of religion and a false one! All that pass by will say, “He saved others, he preached to others, but himself he cannot save.” God Himself will mock you! No, think not that I dream! Has He not said it—“I, also, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes”? Cry unto your gods that you once trusted in! Get comfort out of the lusts you once delighted in, O you that are cast away forever! To your shame and to the confusion of your nakedness, you shall, that have despised the Savior, be made a spectacle of the justice of God *forever*.

It is right it should be so. Justice rightly demands it. Sin made the Savior suffer an agony—shall it not make you suffer? Moreover, in addition to your sin, you have rejected the Savior. You have said, “He shall not be *my* trust and confidence.” Voluntarily, presumptuously and against your own conscience you have refused eternal life! And if you die rejecting mercy what can come of it but that first, your sin, and secondly, your unbelief shall condemn you to misery without limit or end? Let Gethsemane warn you! Let its groans, tears and bloody sweat admonish you! Repent of sin and believe in Jesus! May His Spirit enable you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Mark 14:32-42, and Psalm 40.**

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GETHSEMANE

NO. 493

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 8, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”
Luke 22:44.*

FEW had fellowship with the sorrows of Gethsemane. The majority of the disciples were not there. They were not sufficiently advanced in Divine Grace to be admitted to behold the mysteries of “the agony.” Occupied with the Passover feast at their own houses, they represent the many who live upon the letter, but are mere babes and sucklings as to the spirit of the Gospel. The walls of Gethsemane fitly typify that weakness in Grace which effectually shuts in the deeper marvels of communion from the gaze of ordinary Believers. To twelve, no, to eleven, only was the privilege given to enter Gethsemane, and see this great sight.

Out of the eleven, eight were left at some distance. They had fellowship, but not of that intimate sort to which the men greatly beloved are admitted. Only three highly favored ones, who had been with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and had witnessed the life-giving miracle in the house of Jairus—only these three could approach the veil of His mysterious sorrow—within that veil even these must not intrude. A stone’s throw distance must be left between. He must tread the winepress alone, and of the people there must be none with Him.

Peter and the two sons of Zebedee represent the few eminent, experienced, Grace-taught saints who may be written down as “Fathers.” These having done business on great waters, can in some degree, measure the huge Atlantic waves of their Redeemer’s passion. Having been much alone with Him, they can read His heart far better than those who merely see Him amid the crowd. To some selected spirits it is given, for the good of others, and to strengthen them for some future, special and tremendous conflict—to enter the inner circle—and hear the pleadings of the suffering High Priest. They have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and are made conformable unto His death.

Yet, I say, even these, the elect out of the elect—these choice and peculiar favorites among the kings courtiers—even these cannot penetrate the secret places of the Savior’s woe, so as to comprehend all His agonies. “Your unknown sufferings,” is the remarkable expression of the Greek liturgy—for there is an inner chamber in His grief, shut out from human knowledge and fellowship. Was it not here that Christ was more than ever an, “unspeakable gift” to us? Is not Watts right when he sings—

*“And all the unknown joys He gives,
Were bought with agonies unknown”?*

Since it would not be possible for any Believer, however experienced, to know for himself all that our Lord endured in the place of the olive press, when He was crushed beneath the upper and the nether millstone of mental suffering and hellish malice, it is clearly far beyond the preacher's capacity to set it forth to you. Jesus Himself must give you access to the wonders of Gethsemane—as for me, I can but invite you to enter the garden, bidding you take your shoes off, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground. I am neither Peter, nor James, nor John, but one who would wish, like they, to drink of the Master's cup and be baptized with His Baptism.

I have up to now advanced only so far as yonder band of eight, but there I have listened to the deep groanings of the Man of Sorrows. Some of you, my venerable Friends, may have learned far more than I. But you will not refuse to hear again the roaring of the many waters which strive to quench the love of the Great Husband of our souls. Several matters will require our brief consideration. Come Holy Spirit, breathe light into our thoughts, life into our words.

I. Come here and behold the SAVIOR'S UNUTTERABLE WOE. The emotions of that dolorous night are expressed by several words in Scripture. John describes Him as saying four days before His passion, "Now is My soul troubled." As He marked the gathering clouds He hardly knew where to turn Himself, and cried out, "What shall I say?" Matthew writes of Him, "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy." Upon the word *ademonein* translated "very heavy," Goodwin remarks that there was a distraction in the Savior's agony since the root of the word signifies, "separated from the people—men in distraction, being separated from mankind."

What a thought, my Brothers and Sisters, that our blessed Lord should be driven to the very verge of distraction by the intensity of His anguish. Matthew represents the Savior Himself as saying, "My soul is *exceedingly sorrowful*, even unto death." Here the word *perilupos* means encompassed, encircled, overwhelmed with grief. "He was plunged head and ears in sorrow, and had no breathing hole," is the strong expression of Goodwin. Sin leaves no cranny for comfort to enter, and therefore the Sin Bearer must be entirely immersed in woe. Clark records that He began to be *sorely amazed* and to be very heavy in this case *thambeisthai*, with the prefix *ek*, shows extremity of amazement like that of Moses when he did exceedingly fear and quake.

O blessed Savior, how can we bear to think of You as a Man astonished and alarmed! Yet was it even so when the terrors of God set themselves in array against You. Luke uses the strong language of my text—"being in an agony." These expressions, each of them worthy to be the theme of a discourse, are quite sufficient to show that the grief of the Savior was of the most extraordinary character—well justifying the prophetic exclamation, "Behold, and see if there are any sorrows like unto My sorrow which was done unto Me." He stands before us peerless in misery. None are molested by the powers of evil as He was—as if the

powers of Hell had given commandment to their legions, "Fight neither with small nor great, but only with the King, Himself."

Should we profess to understand all the sources of our Lord's agony, wisdom would rebuke us with the question, "Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depths?" We cannot do more than look at the revealed causes of grief. It partly arose from the horror of His soul *when fully comprehending the meaning of sin*. Brethren, when you were first convicted of sin, and saw it as a thing exceedingly sinful, though your perception of its sinfulness was but faint compared with its real heinousness, yet horror took hold upon you.

Do you remember those sleepless nights? Like the Psalmist, you said, "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Some of us can remember when our souls chose strangling rather than life—when if the shadows of death could have covered us from the wrath of God, we would have been too glad to sleep in the grave that we might not make our bed in Hell. Our blessed Lord saw sin in its natural blackness. He had a most distinct perception of its treasonable assault upon His God, its murderous hatred to Himself and its destructive influence upon mankind. Well might horror take hold upon Him, for a sight of sin must be far more hideous than a sight of Hell, which is but its offspring.

Another deep fountain of grief was found in the fact that Christ now *assumed more fully His official position with regard to sin*. He was now *made sin*. Hear the word! He, who knew no sin, was *made sin* for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him! In that night the words of Isaiah were fulfilled—"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Now He stood as the Sin Bearer, the Substitute accepted by Divine justice to bear—that *we* might never bear—the whole of Divine wrath.

At that hour Heaven looked on Him as standing in the sinner's place, and treated as sinful man had richly deserved to be treated. Oh, dear Friends, when the immaculate Lamb of God found Himself in the place of the guilty, when He could not repudiate that place because He had voluntarily accepted it in order to save His chosen, what must His soul have felt? How must His perfect Nature have been shocked at such close association with iniquity!

We believe that at this time, *our Lord had a very clear view of all the shame and suffering of His crucifixion*. The agony was but one of the first drops of the tremendous shower which discharged itself upon His head. He foresaw the speedy coming of the traitor, Judas—the seizure by the officers, the mock trials before the Sanhedrim—and Pilate, and Herod. He foresaw the scourging and buffeting, the crown of thorns, the shame, the spitting. All these rose up before His mind and, as it is a general law of our nature that the foresight of trial is more grievous than the trial itself, we can conceive how it was that He who answered not a word when in the midst of the conflict, could not restrain Himself from strong crying and tears in the prospect of it.

Beloved Friends, if you can imagine before your mind's eye the terrible incidents of His death—the hounding through the streets of Jerusalem, the nailing to the Cross, the fever, the thirst and, above all, the forsaking of His God—you cannot marvel that He began to be very heavy and was sore amazed.

But possibly a yet more fruitful tree of bitterness was this—*that now His Father began to withdraw His Presence from Him*. The shadow of that great eclipse began to fall upon His spirit when He knelt in that cold midnight amidst the olives of Gethsemane. The sensible comforts which had cheered His spirit were taken away. That blessed application of promises which Christ Jesus needed as a man was removed. All that we understand by the term, “consolations of God,” were hidden from His eyes. He was left single-handed in His weakness to contend for the deliverance of man. The Lord stood by as if He were an indifferent spectator, or rather, as if He were an adversary—He wounded Him—“with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one.”

But in our judgment the fiercest heat of the Savior's suffering in the garden lay in *the temptations of Satan*. That hour above any time in His life, even beyond the forty days' conflict in the wilderness, was *the time of His temptation*. “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” Now could he emphatically say, “The prince of this world comes.” This was His last hand-to-hand fight with all the hosts of Hell, and here must He sweat great drops of blood before the victory can be achieved.

We have glanced at the fountains of the great deep which were broken up when the floods of grief deluged the Redeemer's soul. Brethren, this one lesson before we pass from the contemplation. “We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find Grace to help in time of need.” Let us reflect that no suffering can be unknown to Him.

We do but run with footmen—He had to contend with horsemen. We do but wade up to our ankles in shallow streams of sorrow—He had to buffet with the swellings of Jordan. He will never fail to succor His people when tempted. Even as it was said of old, “In all their affliction He was afflicted. And the Angel of His Presence saved them.”

II. We turn next to contemplate THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD. At the outset of His career, the serpent began to nibble at the heel of the promised Deliverer. And now as the time approached when the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, that old dragon made a desperate attempt upon his great Destroyer. It is not possible for us to lift the veil where Revelation has permitted it to fall, but we can form some faint idea of the suggestions with which Satan tempted our Lord.

Let us, however, remark by way of caution, before we attempt to paint this picture, that whatever Satan may have suggested to our Lord, His perfect Nature did not in any degree whatever submit to it so as to sin. The temptations were, doubtless, of the very foulest character, but they left no speck or flaw upon Him, who remained still the fairest among ten

thousand. The prince of this world came, but he had nothing in Christ. He struck the sparks, but they did not fall, as in our case, upon dry tinder. They fell as into the sea and were quenched at once. He hurled the fiery arrows, but they could not even scar the flesh of Christ. They smote upon the buckler of His perfectly righteous Nature and they fell off with their points broken, to the discomfiture of the adversary.

But what do you think were these temptations? It strikes me, from some hints given, that they were somewhat as follows—there was, first, a *temptation to leave the work unfinished*. We may gather this from the prayer—“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” “Son of God,” Satan said, “is it so? Are You really called to bear the sin of man? Has God said, ‘I have laid help upon One that is mighty,’ and are You He, the chosen of God, to bear all this load? Look at Your weakness! You sweat, even now, great drops of blood! Surely You are not He whom the Father has ordained to be mighty to save—or if You are—what will You win by it?”

“What will it avail You? You have glory enough already. See what miscreants they are for whom You are to offer up Yourself a Sacrifice? Your best friends are asleep about You when most You need their comfort. Your treasurer, Judas, is hastening to betray You for the price of a common slave. The world for which You sacrifice Yourself will cast out Your name as evil and Your Church, for which You do pay the ransom price, what is it worth? A company of mortals! Your Divinity could create the like any moment it pleases You! Why do You need, then, to pour out Your soul unto death?”

Such arguments would Satan use. The hellish craft of one who had then been thousands of years tempting men, would know how to invent all manner of mischief. He would pour the hottest coals of Hell upon the Savior. It was in struggling with this temptation, among others, that, being in an agony, our Savior prayed more earnestly.

Scripture implies that our Lord was assailed by *the fear that His strength would not be sufficient*. “He was heard in that He feared.” How, then, was He heard? An angel was sent unto Him strengthening Him. His fear, then, was probably produced by a sense of weakness. I imagine that the foul Fiend would whisper in His ear—“You! You endure to be smitten of God and abhorred of men! Reproach has broken Your heart already—how will You bear to be publicly put to shame and driven without the city as an unclean thing? How will You bear to see Your weeping kinsfolk, and Your broken-hearted mother standing at the foot of Your Cross? Your tender and sensitive spirit will quail under it.

“As for Your Body, it is already emaciated. Your long fasts have brought You very low. You will become a prey to death long before Your work is done. You will surely fail. God has forsaken You. Now will they persecute and take You. They will give up Your soul to the lion, and Your darling to the power of the dog.” Then would he picture all the sufferings of crucifixion and say, “Can Your heart endure, or can Your hands be strong in the day when the Lord shall deal with You?” The temptation of Satan was not directed against the Godhead, but the *Manhood* of Christ, and therefore the fiend would probably dwell upon the feebleness of man.

“Did You not say Yourself, ‘I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the despised of the people? How will You bear it when the wrath-clouds of God gather about You? The tempest will surely shipwreck all Your hopes. It cannot be! You cannot drink of this cup, nor be baptized with this Baptism.’” In this manner, we think, was our Master tried. But see, He yields not to it. Being in an agony, which word means in a wrestling ring, He struggles with the tempter like Jacob with the angel. “No,” says He, “I will not be subdued by taunts of My weakness. I am strong in the strength of My Godhead, I will overcome you yet.” Yet was the temptation so awful, that, in order to master it, His mental depression caused Him to, “sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

Possibly, also, the temptation may have arisen from a suggestion *that He was utterly forsaken*. I do not know—there may be sterner trials than this, but surely this is *one* of the worst, to be utterly forsaken. “See,” said Satan, as he hissed it out between his teeth—“see, You have a friend nowhere! Look up to Heaven, Your Father has shut up the heart of His compassion against You. Not an angel in Your Father’s courts will stretch out his hand to help You. Look yonder, not one of those spirits, who honored Your birth, will interfere to protect Your life. All Heaven is false to You. You are left alone. And as for earth, do not all men thirst for Your blood?”

“Will not the Jew be gratified to see Your flesh torn with nails? And will not the Roman gloat himself when You, the King of the Jews, are fastened to the Cross? You have no friend among the nations. The high and mighty scoff at You, and the poor thrust out their tongues in derision. You had no where to lay Your head when You were in Your best estate. You have no place, now, where shelter will be given You. See the companions with whom You have taken sweet counsel, what are they worth? Son of Mary, see there Your brother James, see there Your beloved disciple John, and your bold Apostle Peter?—They sleep, they sleep!

“And yonder eight, how the cowards sleep when You are in Your sufferings! And where are the four hundred others? They have forgotten You. They will be at their farms and their merchandize by morning. Lo! You have no friend left in Heaven or earth. All Hell is against You. I have stirred up my infernal den. I have sent my missives throughout all regions summoning every prince of darkness to set upon You this night, and we will spare no arrows! We will use all our infernal might to overwhelm You. And what will You do, You solitary One?”

It may be this was the temptation. I think it was, because the appearance of an angel unto Him, strengthening Him, removed that fear. “He was heard in that He feared.” He was no more alone, but Heaven was with Him. It may be that this is the reason of His coming three times to His disciples—as Hart puts it—

**“Backwards and forwards thrice He ran
As if He sought some help from man.”**

He would see for Himself whether it was really true that all men had forsaken Him. He found them all asleep, but perhaps He gained some faint

comfort from the thought that they were sleeping, not from treachery, but from sorrow, the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak.

We think Satan also assaulted our Lord with a bitter taunt, indeed. You know in what guise the tempter can dress it, and how bitterly sarcastic he can make the insinuation—“*Ah, You will not be able to achieve the redemption of Your people. Your grand benevolence will prove a mockery, and Your beloved ones will perish. You shall not prevail to save them from my grasp. Your scattered sheep shall surely be my prey. Son of David, I am a match for You! You cannot deliver out of my hand. Many of Your chosen have entered Heaven on the strength of Your atonement, but I will drag them from there and quench the stars of glory!*”

“I will thin the courts of Heaven of the choristers of God, for You will not fulfill Your Suretyship. You cannot do it. You are not able to bring up all this great people—they will perish yet. See, are not the sheep scattered now that the Shepherd is smitten? They will all forget You. You will never see of the travail of Your soul. Your desired end will never be reached. You will be forever the man that began to build but was not able to finish.” Perhaps this is more truly the reason why Christ went three times to look at His disciples.

You have seen a mother. She is very faint, weary with a heavy sickness, but she labors under a sore dread that her child will die. She has started from her couch, upon which disease had thrown her, to snatch a moment's rest. She gazes anxiously upon her child. She marks the faintest sign of recovery. But she is so sick herself she cannot remain more than an instant from her own bed. She cannot sleep, she tosses painfully, for her thoughts wander. She rises to gaze again—“How are you, my Child, how are you? Are those palpitations of your heart less violent? Is your pulse more gentle?” But, alas, she is faint, and she must go to her bed again, yet she can get no rest. She will return again and again to watch the loved one.

So, methinks, Christ looked upon Peter and James and John, as much as to say, “No, they are not all lost yet. There are three left,” and, looking upon them as the type of all the Church, He seemed to say—“No, no. I will overcome. I will get the mastery. I will struggle even unto blood. I will pay the ransom price, and deliver My Darlings from their foe.”

Now these, methinks, were His temptations. If you can form a fuller idea of what they were than this, then right happy shall I be. With this one lesson I leave the point—“*Pray that you enter not into temptation.*” This is Christ's own expression—His own deduction from His trial. You have all read, dear Friends, John Bunyan's picture of Christian fighting with Apollyon. That master painter has sketched it to the very life. He says, though, “this sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent. I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword. Then indeed, he did smile and look upward! But it was the most dreadful sight I ever saw.”

That is the meaning of that prayer, “Lead us not into temptation.” Oh you that go recklessly where you are tempted, you that pray for afflic-

tions—and I have known some silly enough to do that! You that put yourselves where you tempt the devil to tempt you, take heed from the Master's own example. He sweat great drops of blood when He was tempted. Oh, pray God to spare you such trial! Pray this morning, and every day, "Lead me not into temptation."

III. Behold, dear Brothers and Sisters, THE BLOODY SWEAT. We read, that, "He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood." For this reason, a few writers have supposed that the sweat was not actually blood, but had the appearance of it. That interpretation, however, has been rejected by most commentators, from Augustine downward, and it is generally held that the words, "as it were," do not only set forth *likeness* to blood, but signify that it was actually and literally blood. We find the same idiom used in the text—"We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."

Now, clearly, this does not mean that Christ was *like* the only-begotten of the Father, since He *is* really so. So that generally this expression of Holy Scripture sets forth, not a mere likeness to a thing, but the very thing itself. We believe, then, that Christ did really sweat blood. This phenomenon, though somewhat unusual, has been witnessed in other persons. There are several cases on record, some in the old medicine books of Galen, and others of more recent date, of persons who after long weakness, under fear of death, have sweat blood.

But this case is altogether one by itself for several reasons. If you will notice, He not only sweat blood, but it was in great drops. The blood coagulated and formed large masses. I cannot better express what is meant than by the word, "clots"—big, heavy drops. This has not been seen in many cases. Some slight effusions of blood have been known in cases of persons who were previously enfeebled, but great drops, never. When it is said, "falling to the ground"—it shows their copiousness, so that they not only stood upon the surface and were sucked up by His garments till He became like the red heifer which was slaughtered on that very spot, but the drops fell to the ground.

Here He stands unrivalled. He was a man in good health, only about thirty years of age, and was laboring under no fear of death, but the mental pressure arising from His struggle with temptation. And the straining of all His strength, in order to baffle the temptation of Satan, so forced His frame to an unnatural excitement, that His pores sent forth great drops of blood which fell to the ground. This proves how tremendous must have been the weight of sin when it was able so to crush the Savior that He distilled drops of blood!

This proves too, my Brothers and Sisters, the mighty power of His love. It is a very pretty observation of old Isaac Ambrose that the gum which exudes from the tree without cutting is always the best. This precious camphire tree yielded most sweet spices when it was wounded under the knotty whips, and when it was pierced by the nails on the Cross. But see, it gives forth its best spice when there is no whip, no nail, no wound. This sets forth the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings, since, without a lance, the blood flowed freely.

No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife—it flows spontaneously. No need for the rulers to cry, “Spring up, O well.” Of itself it flows in crimson torrents. Dearly beloved Friends, if men suffer some frightful pain of mind—I am not acquainted with the medical matter—apparently the blood rushes to the heart. The cheeks are pale, a fainting fit comes on. The blood has gone inward, as if to nourish the inner man while passing through its trial. But look at our Savior in His agony—He is so utterly oblivious of Self, that instead of His agony driving His blood to the heart to nourish Himself, it drives it outward to bedew the earth. The agony of Christ, inasmuch as it pours Him out upon the ground, pictures the fullness of the offering which He made for men.

Do you not perceive, my Brothers and Sisters, how intense must have been the wrestling through which He passed and will you not hear His voice *to you?*—“You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” It has been the lot of some of us to have sore temptations—else we did not know how to teach others—so sore that in wrestling against them, the cold, clammy sweat has stood upon our brow. The place will never be forgotten by me—a lonely spot—where, musing upon my God, an awful rush of blasphemy went over my soul, till I would have preferred death to the trial.

I fell on my knees then and there, for the agony was awful, while my hand was at my mouth to keep the blasphemies from being spoken. Once let Satan be permitted really to try you with a temptation to blasphemy, and you will never forget it, though you live till your hairs are blanched. Or let him attack you with some lust, and though you hate and loathe the very thought of it, and would lose your right arm sooner than indulge in it, yet it will come and hunt and persecute and torment you. Wrestle against it even unto sweat, my Brothers and Sisters, yes, even unto blood.

None of you should say, “I could not help it, I was tempted.” Resist till you sweat blood rather than sin. Do not say, “I was so pressed with it. And it so suited my natural temperament, that I could not help falling into it.” Look at the great Apostle and High Priest of your profession, and sweat even to blood rather than yield to the great tempter of your souls. Pray that you enter not into temptation, so that when you enter into it you may with confidence say, “Lord, I did not seek this, therefore help me through with it, for Your name’s sake.”

IV. I want you, in the fourth place, to notice THE SAVIOR’S PRAYER. Dear Friends, when we are tempted and desire to overcome, the best weapon is prayer. When you cannot use the sword, and the shield, take to yourself the famous weapon of All-Prayer. So did your Savior. Let us notice His prayer. *It was a lonely* prayer. He withdrew even from His three best friends about a stone’s throw. Believer, especially in temptation, be much in solitary prayer. As private prayer is the key to open Heaven, so is it the key to shut the gates of Hell. As it is a shield to prevent, so is it the sword with which to fight against temptation.

Family prayer, social prayer, prayer in the Church will not suffice. These are very precious, but the best beaten spice will smoke in your

censer in your private devotions, where no ear hears but God. Betake yourselves to solitude, if you would overcome. Mark, too, it was *humble prayer*. Luke says He knelt, but another Evangelist says He fell on His face. What? Does the King fall on His face? Where, then, must be *your* place, you humble servant of the great Master? Does the Prince fall flat to the ground? Where, then, will you lie? What dust and ashes shall cover your head? What sackcloth shall gird your loins? Humility gives us good foothold in prayer. There is no hope of any real prevalence with God, who casts down the proud, unless we abase ourselves that He may exalt us in due time.

Further, it was *filial* prayer. Matthew describes Him as saying, “O My Father.” Mark puts it, “Abba, Father.” You will find this always a stronghold in the day of trial to plead your adoption. Hence that prayer, in which it is written, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” begins with, “Our Father which are in Heaven.” Plead as a *child*. You have no rights as a *subject*. You have forfeited them by your treason, but nothing can forfeit a child’s right to a father’s protection. Be not, then, ashamed to say, “My Father, hear my cry.” Again, observe that it was *persevering prayer*. He prayed three times, using the same words. Be not content until you prevail. Be as the importunate widow, whose continued coming earned what her first supplication could not win. Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Further, see how it glowed to a red-hot heat—*it was earnest prayer*. “He prayed more earnestly.” What groans were those which were uttered by Christ! What tears, which welled up from the deep fountains of His Nature! Make earnest supplication if you would prevail against the adversary. And last, *it was the prayer of resignation*. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Yield and God yields. Let it be as God wills, and God will will it that it shall be for your best. Be perfectly content to leave the result of your prayer in His hands, who knows *when* to give, and *how* to give, and *what* to give, and what to withhold. So pleading earnestly, importunately, yet mingling with it humility and resignation, you shall prevail.

Dear Friends, we must conclude—turn to the last point with this as a practical lesson—“*Rise and pray*.” When the disciples were lying down, they slept. Sitting was the posture that was congenial to sleep. Rise! Shake yourselves! Stand up in the name of God! Rise and pray. And if you are tempted, be more in prayer than ever you were in your life— instant, passionate, importunate with God that He would deliver you in the day of your conflict.

V. As time has failed us we close with the last point, which is, THE SAVIOR’S PREVALENCE.

The cloud has passed away. Christ has knelt and the prayer is over. “But,” says one, “did Christ prevail in prayer?” Beloved, could we have any hope that He would prevail in Heaven if He had not prevailed on earth? Should we not have had a suspicion that if His strong crying and tears had not been heard *then*, He would fail *now*? His prayers did speed,

and therefore He is a good Intercessor for us. "How was He heard?" The answer shall be given very briefly, indeed.

He was heard, I think, in three respects. The first gracious answer that was given Him was, *that His mind was suddenly rendered calm*. What a difference there is between, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful"—His hurrying too and fro, His repetition of the prayer three times, the singular agitation that was upon Him—what a contrast between all these, and His going forth to meet the traitor with, "Betray you the Son of Man with a kiss?" Like a troubled sea before, and now as calm as when He, Himself said, "Peace, be still," and the waves were quiet.

You cannot know a more profound peace than that which reigned in the Savior when before Pilate He answered Him not a word. He is calm to the last, as calm as though it were His day of triumph rather than His day of trouble. Now I think this was vouchsafed to Him in answer to His prayer. He had sufferings perhaps more intense, but His mind was now quieted so as to meet them with greater deliberation.

Like some men, who when they first hear the firing of the shots in a battle are all trepidation, but as the fight grows hotter, and they are in greater danger, they are cool and collected. They are wounded, they are bleeding, they are dying—yet are they quiet as a summer's eve. The first young flush of trouble is gone, and they can meet the foe with peace—so the Father heard the Savior's cry, and breathed such a profound peace into His soul, that it was like a river, and His righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Next, we believe that He was answered *by God strengthening Him through an angel*. How that was done we do not know. Probably it was by what the angel *said*, and equally likely is it that it was by what he *did*. The angel may have whispered the promises—pictured before His mind's eye the glory of His success—sketched His resurrection, portrayed the scene when His angels would bring His chariots from on High to bear Him to His Throne. The angel may have revived before Him the recollection of the time of His advent, the prospect when He should reign from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. And so have made him strong.

Or, perhaps, by some unknown method God sent such power to our Christ, who had been like Samson with his locks shorn, that He suddenly received all the might and majestic energy that were needed for the terrific struggle. Then He walked out of the garden no more a worm, and no man, but made strong with an invisible might that made Him a match for all the armies that were round about Him. A troop had overcome Him, like Gad of old, but He overcame at last. Now He can dash through a troop! Now He can leap over a wall. God has sent, by His angel, force from on high, and made the Man Christ strong for battle and for victory.

And I think we may conclude with saying that God heard Him in granting Him now, not simply strength, *but a real victory over Satan*. I do not know whether what Adam Clarke supposes is correct, that in the garden Christ did pay more of the price than He did even on the Cross. But I *am* quite convinced that they are very foolish who get to such re-

finement that they think the Atonement was made on the Cross and nowhere else at all. We believe that it was made in the garden as well as on the Cross. And it strikes me that in the garden one part of Christ's work was finished, wholly finished, and that was His conflict with Satan.

I conceive that Christ had now rather to bear the absence of His Father's Presence, and the reviling of the people, and the sons of men, than the temptations of the devil. I do think that these were over when He rose from His knees in prayer, when He lifted Himself from the ground where He marked His visage in the clay in drops of blood. The temptation of Satan was then over, and He might have said, concerning that part of the work—"It is finished, broken is the dragon's head—I have overcome him."

Perhaps in those few hours that Christ spent in the garden, the whole energy of the agents of iniquity was concentrated and dissipated. Perhaps in that one conflict, all that craft could invent, all that malice could devise, all that infernal practice could suggest, was tried on Christ—the devil having his chain loosened for that purpose, having Christ given up to him, as Job was, that he might touch Him in His bones and in His flesh. Yes, touch Him in His heart, and His soul—and vex Him in His spirit. It may be that every devil in Hell, and every Fiend of the pit was summoned, each to vent his own spite and to pour their united energy and malice upon the head of Christ.

And there He stood and He could have said, as He stood up to meet the next adversary—a devil in the form of man—Judas—"I come this day from Bozrah, with garments dyed red from Edom. I have trampled on My enemies and overcome them once and for all. Now I go to bear man's sin, and my Father's wrath, and to finish the work which He has given Me to do." If this is so, Christ was then heard, in that He feared—He feared the temptation of Satan—and He was delivered from it. He feared His own weakness, and He was strengthened. He feared His own trepidation of mind, and He was made calm.

What shall we say, then, in conclusion, but this lesson. Does it not say, "Whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall have"? Then if your temptations reach the most tremendous height and force, still lay hold of God in prayer, and you shall prevail. Convicted Sinner! That is a comfort for you. Troubled Saint! That is a joy for you. To one and all of us is this lesson of this morning—"Pray that you enter not into temptation." If in temptation let us ask that Christ may pray for us that our faith fail not. And when we have passed through the trouble, let us try to strengthen our Brothers and Sisters, even as Christ has, by His Grace, strengthened us this day. Amen.

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THE BETRAYAL

NO. 494

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 15, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And while He yet spoke, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betray you the Son of Man with a kiss?”
Luke 22:47, 48.*

WHEN Satan had been entirely worsted in his conflict with Christ in the garden, the man-devil Judas came upon the scene. As the Parthian in his flight turns round to shoot the fatal arrow, so the archenemy aimed another shaft at the Redeemer by employing the traitor into whom he had entered. Judas became the devil's deputy, and a most trusty and serviceable tool he was. The Evil One had taken entire possession of the apostate's heart and, like the swine possessed of devils, he ran violently downwards towards destruction.

Well had infernal malice selected the Savior's trusted friend to be His treacherous betrayer, for thus he stabbed at the very center of His broken and bleeding heart. But, Beloved, as in all things, God is wiser than Satan, and the Lord of Goodness outwitted the Prince of Evil. In this dastardly betrayal of Christ, prophecy was fulfilled, and Christ was the more surely declared to be the promised Messiah. Was not Joseph a type? And, lo, like that envied youth, Jesus was sold by His own brothers and sisters.

Was He not to be another Samson, by whose strength the gates of Hell should be torn from their posts? Lo, as Samson, He is bound by His countrymen and delivered to the adversary. Know you not that He was the antitype of David? And was not David deserted by Ahithophel, his own familiar friend and counselor? Brothers and Sisters, do not the words of the Psalmist receive a literal fulfillment in our Master's betrayal? What prophecy can be more exactly true than the language of the forty-first and fifty-fifth Psalms?

In the first we read, “Yes, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.” And in the fifty-fifth the Psalmist is yet more clear. “For it was not an enemy that reproached me. Then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me. Then I would have hid myself from him: but it was you, a man my equal, my guide and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together and walked unto the House of God in company.

“He has put forth his hands against such as are at peace with him: he has broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were

they drawn swords.” Even an obscure passage in one of the lesser Prophets must have a literal fulfillment, and for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a base slave, must the Savior be betrayed by His choice friend. Ah, you foul Fiend, you shall find at the last, that your wisdom is but intensified folly!

As for the deep plots and plans of your craft, the Lord shall laugh them to scorn. After all, you are but the unconscious drudge of Him whom you abhor in all the black work you do so greedily, you are no better than a mean scullion in the royal kitchen of the King of kings.

Without further preface, let us advance to the subject of our Lord’s betrayal. First, concentrate your thoughts upon Jesus, *the Betrayed One*. And when you have lingered awhile there, solemnly gaze into the villainous countenance of *Judas, the betrayer*—he may prove a beacon to warn us against the sin which genders apostasy.

I. LET US TARRY AWHILE, AND SEE OUR LORD UNGRATEFULLY AND DASTARDLY BETRAYED.

It is appointed that He must die, but how shall He fall into the hands of His adversaries? Shall they capture Him in conflict? It must not be, lest He appear an unwilling victim. Shall He flee before His foes until He can hide no longer? It is not meet that a sacrifice should be hunted to death. Shall He offer Himself to the foe? That were to excuse His murderers, or be a party to their crime. Shall He be taken accidentally or unawares? That would withdraw from His cup the necessary bitterness which made it wormwood mingled with gall.

No—He must be betrayed by His friend, that He may bear the utmost depths of suffering, and that in every separate circumstance there may be a well of grief. One reason for the appointment of the betrayal lay in the fact *that it was ordained that man’s sin should reach its culminating point in His death*. God, the great Owner of the vineyard, had sent many servants, and the farmers had stoned one, and cast out another. Last of all, He said, “I will send My Son. Surely they will reverence My Son.”

When they slew the heir to win the inheritance, their rebellion had reached its height. The murder of our blessed Lord was the extreme of human guilt—it developed the deadly hatred against God which lurks in the heart of man. When man became a deicide, sin had reached its fullness. And in the black deed of the man by whom the Lord was betrayed, that fullness was all displayed. If it had not been for a Judas, we had not known how black, how foul our human nature may become. I scorn the men who try to apologize for the treachery of this devil in human form, this son of perdition, this foul apostate.

I should think myself a villain if I tried to screen him, and I shudder for the men who dare extenuate his crimes. My Brothers and Sisters, we should feel a deep detestation of this master of infamy. He has gone to his own place, and the anathema of David, part of which was quoted by Peter, has come upon him, “When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few. And let another take his office.”

Surely, as the devil was allowed unusually to torment the bodies of men, even so was he let loose to get possession of Judas as he has seldom gained possession of any other man—that we might see how foul, how desperately evil is the human heart. Beyond a doubt, however, the main reason for this was *that Christ might offer a perfect atonement for sin*. We may usually read the sin in the punishment. Man betrayed his God. Man had the custody of the royal garden, and should have kept its green avenues sacred for communion with his God.

But he betrayed the trust. The sentinel was false. He admitted evil into his own heart, and so into the Paradise of God. He was false to the good name of the Creator, tolerating the insinuation which he should have repelled with scorn. Therefore must Jesus find man a traitor to Him. There must be the counterpart of the sin in the suffering which He endured. You and I have often betrayed Christ. We have, when tempted, chosen the evil and forsaken the good. We have taken the bribes of Hell, and have not followed closely with Jesus.

It seemed most fitting, then, that He who bore the chastisement of sin should be reminded of its ingratitude and treachery by the things which He suffered. Besides, Brothers and Sisters, that *cup must be bitter to the last degree which is to be the equivalent for the wrath of God*. There must be nothing consolatory in it. Pains must be taken to pour into it all that even Divine wisdom can invent of awful and unheard of woe, and this one point—“He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me,” was absolutely necessary to intensify the bitterness.

Moreover, we feel persuaded that by thus suffering at the hand of a traitor, *the Lord became a faithful High Priest*, able to sympathize with us when we fall under the like affliction. Since slander and ingratitude are common calamities, we can come to Jesus with full assurance of faith. He knows these sore temptations, for He has felt them in their very worst degree. We may cast every care and every sorrow upon Him, for He cares for us, having suffered with us. Thus, in our Lord’s betrayal, Scripture was fulfilled, sin was developed, atonement was completed, and the great all-suffering High Priest became able to sympathize with us in every point.

Now let us *look at the treason itself*. You perceive how black it was. Judas was *Christ’s servant*. What if I call him His confidential servant? He was a partaker in Apostolic ministry and in the honor of miraculous gifts. He had been most kindly and indulgently treated. He was a sharer in all the goods of his Master—in fact he fared far better than his Lord—for the Man of Sorrows always took the lion’s share of all the pains of poverty and the reproach of slander. He had food and raiment given him out of the common stock and the Master seems to have indulged him very greatly.

The old tradition is, that next to the Apostle Peter, he was the one with whom the Savior most commonly associated. We think there must be a mistake there, for surely John was the Savior’s greatest friend. But Judas, as a servant, had been treated with the utmost confidence. You know, Brothers and Sisters, how sore is that blow which comes from a servant in whom we have put unlimited trust. But Judas was more than this—*he was a friend, a trusted friend*.

That little bag into which generous women cast their small contributions had been put into his hands, and very wisely, too, for he had the financial vein. His main virtue was economy, a very needful quality in a treasurer. As exercising a prudent foresight for the little company, and watching the expenses carefully, he was, as far as men could judge, the right man in the right place. He had been thoroughly trusted. I read not that there was any annual audit of his accounts. I do not discover that the Master took him to task as to the expenditure of his privy purse.

Everything was given to him, and he gave, at the Master's direction, to the poor, but no account was asked. This is vile, indeed, to be chosen to such a position, to be installed purse-bearer to the King of kings, chancellor of God's exchequer, and then to turn aside and sell the Savior! This is treason in its uttermost degree! Remember that the world looked upon Judas *as colleague* and partner with our Lord. To a great extent, the name of Judas was associated with that of Christ. When Peter, James, or John had done anything amiss, reproachful tongues threw it all on their Master.

The twelve were part and parcel of Jesus of Nazareth. One old commentator says of Judas—"He was Christ's alter ego"—to the people at large there was an identification of each Apostle with the Leader of the band. And oh, when such associations have been established, and then there is treachery, it is as though our arm should commit treason against our head, or as if our foot should desert the body. This was a stab, indeed! Perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, our Lord saw in the person of Judas *a representative man*, the portraiture of the many thousands who in after ages imitated his crime.

Did Jesus see in Iscariot all the Judases who betray truth, virtue and the Cross? Did He perceive the multitudes of whom we may say that they were, spiritually, in the loins of Judas? Hymenaeus, Alexander, Hermodenes, Philetus, Demas, and others of that tribe, were all before Him as He saw the man—His equal, His acquaintance—bartering Him away for thirty pieces of silver.

Dear Friends, the position of Judas must have tended greatly to aggravate his treason. Even the heathens have taught us that ingratitude is the worst of vices. When Caesar was stabbed by his friend Brutus, the world's poet writes—

***"This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitor's arms,
Quite vanquished him. Then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statue—
Great Caesar fell."***

Many ancient stories, both Greek and Roman, we might quote to show the abhorrence which the heathens entertain towards ingratitude and treachery. Certain, also, of their own poets, such, for instance, as Sophocles, have poured out burning words upon deceitful friends. But we have no time to prove what you will all admit, that nothing can be more cruel, nothing more full of anguish, than to be sold to destruction by one's

bosom friend. The closer the enemy comes, the deeper will be the stab he gives. If we admit him to our heart, and give him our close intimacy, then can he wound us in the most vital part.

Let us notice, dear Friends, while we look at the breaking heart of our agonizing Savior, *the manner in which He met this affliction*. He had been much in prayer—prayer had overcome His dreadful agitation—He was very *calm*. And we need to be very calm when we are forsaken by a friend. Observe His gentleness. The first words He spoke to Judas, when the traitor had polluted His cheek with a kiss, was this—“FRIEND”! FRIEND!! Note that! Not, “You hateful miscreant,” but “Friend, why are you come?” not, “Wretch, why do you dare to stain My cheek with your foul and lying lips?” No, “Friend, why are you come?”

Ah, if there had been anything good left in Judas, this would have brought it out. If he had not been an unmitigated, incorrigible, thrice-dyed traitor, his avarice must have lost its power at that instant and he would have cried—“My Master! I came to betray You, but that generous word has won my soul. Here, if You must be bound, I will be bound with You. I make a full confession of my infamy!” Our Lord added these words—there is reproof in them, but notice how kind they are, still, how much too good for such a despicable coward—“Judas, betray you the Son of Man with a kiss?”

I can conceive that the tears gushed from His eyes, and that His voice faltered, when He thus addressed His own familiar friend and acquaintance—“Betray you,” My Judas, My treasurer, “betray you *the Son of Man*,” your suffering, sorrowing Friend, whom you have seen naked and poor, and without a place whereon to lay His head? Betray you *the Son of Man*—and do you prostitute the fondest of all endearing signs—a kiss—that which should be a symbol of loyalty to the King, shall it be the badge of your treachery—that which was reserved for affection as her best symbol—do you make it the instrument of My destruction? Betray you the Son of Man with a kiss?”

Oh, if he had not been given up to hardness of heart, if the Holy Spirit had not utterly left him, surely this son of perdition would have fallen prostrate, yet again, and weeping out his very soul, would have cried—“No, I cannot betray You, You suffering Son of Man! Forgive, forgive me! Spare Yourself, escape from this bloodthirsty crew and pardon Your treacherous disciple!” But no, no word of compunction, while the silver is at stake! Afterwards came the sorrow that works death, which drove him, like Ahithophel, his prototype, to court the gallows to escape remorse.

This, also, must have aggravated the woe of our beloved Lord, when He saw the final impenitence of the traitor, and read the tearful doom of that man of whom He had once said, it would be better for him that he had never been born.

Beloved, I would have you fix your eyes on your Lord in your quiet meditations as being thus despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And gird up the loins of your minds, counting it no strange thing if this fiery trial should come upon you. But be determined that though your Lord should be betrayed by His most

eminent disciples, yet, through His Divine Grace you will cling to Him in shame, and in suffering, and will follow Him, if needs be, even unto death.

God give us Grace to see the vision of His nailed hands and feet! And remembering that all this came from the treachery of a friend, let us be very jealous of ourselves, lest we crucify the Lord afresh—and put Him to an open shame by betraying Him in our conduct, or in our words, or in our thoughts.

II. Grant me your attention while we make an estimate of the man by whom the Son of man was betrayed—JUDAS THE BETRAYER. I would call your attention, dear Friends, *to his position and public character*. Judas was *a preacher*—no, he was a foremost preacher. “He obtained part of this ministry,” said the Apostle Peter. He was not simply one of the seventy. He had been selected by the Lord, Himself, as one of the Twelve, an honorable member of the college of the Apostles.

Doubtless he had preached the Gospel so that many had been gladdened by his voice and miraculous powers had been vouchsafed to him—so that at his word the sick had been healed, deaf ears had been opened, and the blind had been made to see. There is no doubt that he who could not keep the devil out of himself, had cast devils out of others. Yet how are you fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! He that was as a Prophet in the midst of the people, and spoke with the tongue of the learned, whose word and wonders proved that he had been *with Jesus*, and had learned of Him—he betrays his Master.

Understand, my Brothers and Sisters, that no gifts can guarantee Divine Grace, and that no position of honor or usefulness in the Church will necessarily prove our being true to our Lord and Master. Doubtless there are bishops in Hell, and crowds of those who once occupied the pulpit are now condemned forever to bewail their hypocrisy. You that are Church officers, do not conclude that because you enjoy the confidence of the Church, that therefore, of an absolute certainty, the Grace of God is in you. Perhaps it is the most dangerous of all positions for a man to become well known and much respected by the religious world, and yet to be rotten at the core.

To be where others can observe our faults is a healthy thing, though painful. But to live with beloved friends who would not believe it possible for us to do wrong, and who, if they saw us err, would make excuses for us—this is to be where it is next to impossible for us ever to be aroused if our hearts are not right with God. To have a fair reputation and a false heart is to stand upon the brink of Hell.

Judas *took a very high degree officially*. He had the distinguished honor of being entrusted with the Master’s financial concerns, and this, after all, was no small degree to which to attain. The Lord, who knows how to use all sorts of gifts, perceived what gift the man had. He knew that Peter’s unthinking impetuosity would soon empty the bag, and leave the company in great straits. And if He had entrusted it to John, his loving spirit might have been cajoled into unwise benevolence towards beggars of unctuous tongue.

John might even have spent the little moneys in buying alabaster boxes whose precious ointments should anoint the Master's head. He gave the bag to Judas, and it was discreetly, prudently and properly used. There is no doubt he was the most judicious person, and fitted to occupy the post.

But oh, dear Friends, if the Master shall choose any of us who are ministers or Church officers, and give us a very distinguished position. If our place in the ranks shall be that of commanding officers, so that even our Brother ministers look up with esteem, and our fellow elders or deacons regard us as being fathers in Israel—oh, if we turn, if we prove false—how damnable shall be our end at the last! What a blow shall we give to the heart of the Church, and what derision will be made in Hell!

You will observe that the character of Judas *was openly an admirable one*. I find not that he committed himself in any way. Not the slightest speck defiled his moral character so far as others could perceive. He was no boaster, like Peter. He was free enough from the rashness which cries, "Though all men should forsake You, yet will I not." He asks no place on the right hand of the Throne—his ambition is of another sort. He does not ask idle questions. The Judas who asks questions is, "not Iscariot." Thomas and Philip are often prying into deep matters, but not Judas.

He receives the Truth of God as it is taught him, and when others are offended, and walk no more with Jesus, he faithfully adheres to Him, having golden reasons for so doing. He does not indulge in the lusts of the flesh or in the pride of life. None of the disciples suspected him of hypocrisy. They said at the table, "Lord, is it I?" They never said, "Lord, is it Judas?" It was true he had been filching for months, but then he did it by small amounts, and covered his defalcations so well by financial manipulations that he ran no risk of detection from the honest, unsuspecting fishermen with whom he associated.

Like some merchants and traders we have heard of—invaluable gentlemen as chairmen of speculating companies and general managers of swindling banks—he could abstract a decent percentage and yet make the accounts exactly tally. The gentlemen who have learned of Judas manage to cook the accounts most admirably for the shareholders, so as to get a rich roast for their own table, over which they, no doubt, entreat the Divine blessing. Judas was, in his known life, a most admirable person. He would have been an alderman before long, there is no doubt, and being very pious and richly gifted, his advent at Churches or Chapels would have created intense satisfaction.

"What a discreet and influential person," say the deacons. "Yes," replies the minister, "what an acquisition to our councils. If we could elect him to office, he would be of eminent service to the Church." I believe that the Father chose him as Apostle on purpose that we might not be at all surprised if we find such a man a minister in the pulpit, or a colleague of the minister, working as an officer in Christ's Church. These are solemn things, my Brothers and Sisters. Let us take them to heart, and if any of us wear a good character among men and stand high in office, let this question come home close to us—"Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?" Perhaps he

who shall last ask the question is just the man who ought to have asked it first.

But, secondly, I call your attention *to his real nature and sin*. Judas was a man with a conscience. He could not afford to do without it. He was no Sadducee who could fling religion overboard. He had strong religious tendencies. He was no debauched person. He never spent a two-pence in vice on his life, not that he loved vice less, but that he loved the two-pence more. Occasionally he was generous, but then it was with other people's money. Well did he watch his lovely charge, the bag. He had a conscience, I say, and a ferocious conscience it was, when it once broke the chain, for it was his conscience which made him hang himself.

But then it was a conscience that did not sit regularly on the throne—it reigned by fits and starts. Conscience was not the leading element. Avarice predominated over conscience. He would get money, if honestly—he liked that best. But if he could not get it conscientiously, then anyhow in the world. He was but a small trader—his gains were no great things, or else he would not have sold Christ for so small a sum as that—ten pounds at the outside, of our money, at its present value—some three or four pounds, as it were, in those days. It was a poor price to take for the Master. But then, a little money was a great thing to him.

He had been poor. He had joined Christ with the idea that he would soon be proclaimed King of the Jews, and that then he should become a nobleman and be rich. Finding Christ a long while in coming to his kingdom, he had taken little by little, enough to lay by in store. And now, fearing that he was to be disappointed in all his dreams, and never having had any care for Christ, but only for himself, he gets out of what he thinks to have been a gross mistake in the best way he can, and makes money by his treason against his Lord.

Brethren, I do solemnly believe that of all hypocrites, these are the persons of whom there is the least hope—whose god is their money. You may reclaim a drunkard—thank God—we have seen many instances of that. And even a fallen Christian, who has given way to vice, may loathe his lust and return from it. But I fear that the cases in which a man who is cankered with covetousness has ever been saved are so few that they might be written on your fingernail. This is a sin which the world does not rebuke. The most faithful minister can scarce smite its forehead.

God knows what thunders I have launched out against men who are all for this world and yet pretend to be Christ's followers. They always say, "It is not for me." What I should call stark naked covetousness, they call prudence, discretion, economy, and so on. And actions which I would scorn to spit upon, they will do, and think their hands quite clean after they have done them. And they still sit as God's people sit, and hear as God's people hear, and think that after they have sold Christ for paltry gain, they will go to Heaven.

O Souls, Souls, Souls, beware, beware, beware, most of all of greed! It is not money, nor the lack of money, but *the love* of money which is the root of all evil. It is not getting it—it is not even *keeping* it—it is *loving* it. It is making it your God. It is looking at that as the main chance, and not

considering the cause of Christ, nor the Truth of Christ, nor the holy life of Christ—but being ready to sacrifice everything for gains' sake. Oh, such men make giants in sin. They shall be set up forever as butts for infernal laughter. Their damnation shall be sure and just.

The third point is, *the warning which Judas received and the way in which he persevered*. Just think—the night before he sold his Master—what do you think the Master did? Why, He washed his feet! And yet he sold Him! Such condescension! Such love! Such familiarity! He took a towel and girded Himself and washed Judas's feet! And yet those very feet brought Judas as a guide to them that took Jesus! And you remember what He said when He had washed his feet—"Now you are clean, but not all." And He turned a tearful eye on Judas.

What a warning for him! What could be more explicit? Then, when the Supper came and they began to eat and drink together, the Lord said—"One of you shall betray Me." That was plain enough. And a little farther on He said explicitly—"He that dips with Me in the dish, the same is he." What opportunities for repentance! He cannot say he had not a faithful Preacher. What could have been more personal? If he does not repent now, what is to be done?

Moreover, Judas saw that which was enough to make a heart of adamant bleed—he saw Christ with agony on His face, for it was just after Christ had said, "Now is my soul troubled," that Judas left the feast, and went out to sell his Master. That face, so full of grief, ought to have turned him, *must* have turned him, if he had not been given up and left alone—to deliver over his soul unto his own devices. What language could have been more thundering than the words of Jesus Christ, when He said, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had not been born"?

He had said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Now, if while these thunders rolled over his head, and the lightning flashes pointed at his person, if, then, this man was not aroused, what a Hell of infernal pertinacity and guilt must have been within his soul! Oh, but if any of you, if any of you shall sell Christ for the sake of keeping the shop open on Sunday. If you shall sell Christ for the extra wages you may earn for falsehood. Oh, if you shall sell Christ for the sake of the hundred pounds that you may lay hold of by a villainous contract—if you do that, you do not perish unwarned!

I come into this pulpit to please no man among you. God knows if I knew more of your follies you should have them pointed out yet more plainly! If I knew more of the tricks of business, I would not flinch to speak of them! But, O Sirs, I do entreat you by the blood of Judas, who hanged himself at last, turn—if such there are—turn from this evil, if by chance your sin may be blotted out!

Let us for one minute *notice the act itself*. He sought out his own temptation. He did not wait for the devil to come to him—he went after the devil. He went to the chief priests, and said, "What will you give me?" One of the old Puritan Divines says, "This is not the way people generally trade—they tell their own price." Judas says, "What will you give me? Any-

thing you like.” The Lord of Life and Glory sold at the buyer’s own price. “What will you give me?” And another very prettily puts it, “What *could* they give him? What did the man want? He did not want food and raiment. He fared as well as his Master and the other disciples. He had enough. He had all that his needs could crave, and yet he said, ‘What will you give me? What will you give me? What will you give me?’ ”

Alas, some people’s religion is grounded on that one question—“What will you give me?” Yes, they would go to Church if there are any charities given away there—but if there were more to be had by not going—they would do that. “What will you give me?” Some of these people are not even so wise as Judas. Ah, there is a man over yonder who would sell the Lord for a crown, much more for ten pounds, as Judas did! Why, there are some who will sell Christ for the smallest piece of silver in our currency. They are tempted to deny their Lord, tempted to act in an unhallowed way, though the gains are so paltry that a year’s worth of them would not come to much.

No subject could be more dreadful than this, if we really would but look at it carefully. This temptation happens to each of us. Do not deny it. We all like to gain. It is but natural that we should. The propensity to acquire is in every mind, and under lawful restrictions it is not an improper propensity. But when it comes into conflict with our allegiance to our Master, and in a world like this it often will, we must overcome it, or perish! There will arise occasions with some of you many times in a week in which it is “God—or gain.” “Christ, or the thirty pieces of silver.”

Therefore I am the more urgent in pressing this on you. Do not, though the world should bid its highest, though it should heap its comforts one upon another, and add fame, and honor, and respect—do not, I pray you, forsake your Master. There have been such cases—cases of persons who used to come here, but they found they did not get on—because Sunday was the best day’s trade in the week. They had some good feelings, some good impressions once, but they have lost them now. We have known others who have said, “Well, you see, I did once think I loved the Lord, but my business went so badly when I came up to the House of God, that I left it—I renounced my profession.”

Ah, Judas! Ah, Judas! Ah, Judas! Let me call you by your name, for such you are! This is the sin of the apostate all over again! God help you to repent of it and go, not to any priest, but to Christ, and make confession, if by chance you may be saved. You perceive that in the act of selling Christ, Judas was faithful to his master. “*Faithful* to his master?” you say. Yes, his master was the *devil*, and having made an agreement with him, he carried it out honestly. Some people are always very honest with the devil. If they say they will do a wrong thing, they say they ought to do it because *they said* they would. As if any oath could be binding on a man if it is an oath to do wrong!

“I will never go into that house again,” some have said and they have said afterwards, “Well, I wish I had not said it.” Was it a wrong thing? What is your oath then? It was an oath given to the devil. What was that foolish promise, but a promise to Satan—and will you be faithful to him?

Ah, would God that you were faithful to Christ! Would that any of us were as true to Christ as Satan's servants are to their master!

Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss. That is how most apostates do it—it is always with a kiss. Did you ever read an infidel book in your life which did not begin with profound respect for truth? I never have. Even modern ones, when bishops write them, always begin like that. They betray the Son of Man with a kiss. Did you ever read a book of bitter controversy which did not begin with such a sickly lot of humility, such sugar, such butter, such syrup, such everything sweet and soft, that you said, "Ah, there is sure to be something bad here, for when people begin so softly and sweetly, so humbly and so smoothly, depend upon it—they have rank hatred in their hearts." The most devout-looking people are often the most hypocritical in the world.

We conclude with the repentance of Judas. He *did* repent. He did repent, but it was the repentance that works *death*. He did make a confession, but there was no respect to the deed itself—only to its consequences. He was very sorry that Christ was condemned. Some latent love that he had once had to a kind Master, came up when he saw that He was condemned. He did not think, perhaps, it would come to that. He may have had a hope that He would escape out of their hands. And then he would keep his thirty pieces of silver and perhaps sell Him over again.

Perhaps he thought that Jesus would rid Himself from their hands by some miraculous display of power, or would proclaim the kingdom. And so He, Himself, would only be hastening on that very blessed consummation. Friends, the man who repents of *consequences* does NOT repent. The ruffian repents of the gallows, but not of the murder—and that is no repentance at all. Human law, of course, must measure sin by consequences, but God's law does not. There is a point man on a railway who neglects his duty. There is a collision on the line and people are killed. Well, it is manslaughter of this man through his carelessness.

But that point man, perhaps, many times before had neglected his duty, and no accident came of it. Then he walked home and said, "Well, I have done no wrong." Now the wrong, mark you, is never to be measured by the *accident*, but by the *thing* itself. If you have committed an offense, and you have escaped undetected, it is just as vile in God's eyes. If you have done wrong, and Providence has prevented the natural result of the wrong, the honor of that is with God—you are as guilty as if your sin had been carried out to its fullest consequences, and the whole world set ablaze. Never measure sin by consequences, but repent of them as they are in themselves.

Though being sorry for consequences, since these are unalterable, this man was led to remorse. He sought a tree, adjusted the rope, and hanged himself. But in his haste he hanged himself so badly that the rope broke, he fell over a precipice, and there we read his insides gushed out. He lay a mangled mass at the bottom of the cliff, the horror of everyone who passed. Now you that make a gain of godliness—if there are such here—you may not come to a suicide's end, but take the lesson home.

Mr. Keach, my venerable predecessor, gives at the end of one of his volumes of sermons, the death of a Mr. John Child. John Child had been a Dissenting minister and for the sake of gain, to get a living, he joined the Episcopalians against his conscience. He sprinkled infants, and practiced all the other paraphernalia of the Church against his conscience. At last, at last, he was arrested with such terrors for having done what he had, that he renounced his living. He finally took to a sick bed, and his dying oaths, blasphemies, and curses were something so dreadful, that his case was the wonder of that age.

Mr. Keach wrote a full account of it, and many went to try what they could do to comfort the man, but he would say, "Get out of here! Get out of here! It is of no use! I have sold Christ." You remember, also, the wonderful death of Francis Spira. In all literature, there is nothing so awful as the death of Spira. The man had known the Truth of God—he stood well among reformers. He was an honored, and to a certain extent, apparently a faithful man. But he went back to the Church of Rome! He apostatized. And then when conscience was aroused he did not fly to Christ, but he looked at the *consequences* instead of at the sin. And so, feeling that the consequences could not be altered, he forget that the sin might be pardoned, and perished in extreme agonies.

May it never be the unhappy lot of any of us to lay in such a deathbed, but the Lord have mercy upon us now, and make us search our hearts. Those of you who say, "We do not want that sermon," are probably the persons who need it most. He who shall say, "Well, we have no Judas among us," is probably a Judas himself. Oh, search yourselves! Turn out every cranny—look in every corner of your soul to see whether your religion is for Christ's sake and for Truth's sake, and for God's sake—or whether it is a profession which you take up because it is a respectable thing. Make sure it is not a profession which you keep up because it keeps you up. The Lord search us and try us and bring us to know our ways.

And now, in conclusion—there is a Savior, and that Savior is willing to receive us now. If I am not a saint, I am a sinner. Would it not be best for all of us to go again to the Fountain and wash and be clean? Let each of us go anew and say, "Master, You know what I am. I know not myself. But, if I am wrong, make me right. If I am right, keep me so. My trust is in You. Keep me now, for Your own sake, Jesus." Amen.

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PETER'S RESTORATION

NO. 2034

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 22, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crowed. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crowed, you shall deny Me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.”
Luke 22:60-62.*

PETER had fallen terribly. He had denied his Master, denied Him repeatedly, denied Him with oaths, denied Him in His Presence, while His Master was being smitten and falsely charged. He denied Him, though he was an Apostle. Denied him, though he had declared that should all men forsake Him, yet he never would. It was a sad, sad sin. Remember what led up to it. It was, first, Peter's presumption and self-confidence. He reckoned that he could never stumble and for that very reason he speedily fell. A haughty spirit goes before a fall. Oh, that we might look to the roots of bitter flowers and destroy them!

If presumption is flourishing in the soil of our hearts today we shall soon see the evil fruit which will come of it. Reliance upon our firmness of character, depth of experience, clearness of insight, or maturity in grace will, in the end, land us in disgraceful failure. We must either deny ourselves, or we shall deny our Lord. If we cleave to self-confidence, we shall not cleave to Him.

Immediately, Peter's denial was owing to cowardice. The brave Peter in the presence of a maid was ashamed. He could not bear to be pointed out as a follower of the Galilean. He did not know what might follow upon it—but he saw his Lord without a friend and felt that it was a lost cause and he did not care to avow it. Only to think that Peter, under temporary discouragement, should play the coward! Yet cowardice treads upon the heels of boasting—he that thinks he can fight the world will be the first man to run away.

His sin also arose from his want of watchfulness. His Master had said to him, “What, could you not watch with Me one hour?” And no doubt there was more meaning in the words than appeared on the surface. The Lord several times said to him, “Pray, that you enter not into temptation.” The words were repeated with deep impressiveness, for they were greatly needed. But Peter had not watched—he had been warming his hands. He did not pray—he felt too strong in himself to be driven to special prayer. Therefore, when the gusts of temptation came, they found Peter's boat unprepared for the storm and they drove it upon a rock.

When Peter first denied his Master a cock crowed. Peter must have heard that crowing or he would not have communicated the fact to the Evangelists who recorded it. But though he heard it, he was an example

of those who have ears but hear not. One would have thought that the warning would have touched his conscience. But it did not. And when the cock crowed a second time, after he had committed three denials, it might not have awakened him from his dreadful sleep if a higher instrumentality had not been used, namely, a *look* from the Lord Jesus.

God keep us free from this spirit of slumber, for it is to the last degree dangerous! Peter was under the direful influence of Satan, for it was a night wherein the powers of darkness were specially active. "This is your hour," said Jesus, "and the power of darkness." That same influence which assailed the Savior unsuccessfully—for, said He, "the prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me"—assailed Peter with sad result. For the Evil One had something in Peter and he soon found it out. The sparks from Satan's flint and steel fell upon our Lord as upon water. But Peter's heart was like a tinder-box. And when the sparks fell, they found fuel there. Oh, that we may be kept from the assaults of Satan!

"Lead us not into temptation" is a necessary prayer. But the next petition is specially noteworthy—"but deliver us from the Evil One." A man never gets anything out of the devil, even if he conquers him. You will find in combat with him that even if you win the victory, you come off with gashes and wounds of which you will carry the scars to your grave. "All the while," says Mr. Bunyan, while Christian was fighting with Apollyon, "I did note that he did not so much as give one smile." Oh no, there is nothing to smile about when the arch-enemy is upon us. He is such a master of the cruel art of soul-wounding, that every stroke tells.

He knows our weak places in the present. He brings to remembrance our errors in the past and he paints in blackest colors the miseries of the future and so seeks to destroy our faith. All his darts are fiery ones. It takes all a man's strength and a great deal more to ward off his cunning and cruel cuts. The worst of it is that as in Peter's case, he casts a spell over men so that they do not fight at all but yield themselves an easy prey. Our Savior said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Peter was as much under the power of Satan as corn is in the hand of the man who winnows it. He went up and down in that sieve like a helpless thing and so passed from simple falsehood to plain denials of his Master with oaths and curses.

I desire in this discourse to speak chiefly of Peter's restoration. Peter was down. But he was soon up again. One writer says the story should rather be called Peter's restoration than Peter's fall. His fall was soon over—he was like a little child learning to walk, scarcely down before his mother has him up again. It was not a continuance in a sin, like that of David, who remained for months without repentance. But it was the quick speech of a man carried away by sudden temptation and it was followed by a speedy repentance. Upon his restoration we are going to meditate.

It was brought about by two outward means. I like to think of the singular combination—the crowing of the cock and a look from the Lord. When I come to preach to you it almost makes me smile to think that God

should save a soul through me. I may find a fit image of myself in the poor rooster. Mine is poor crowing. But as the Master's look went with the bird's crowing, so, I trust, it will go with my feeble preaching. The next time you also go out to try and win a soul for Jesus, say to yourself, "I cannot do it—I cannot melt a hard, rebellious heart. But yet the Lord may use me. And if there comes a happy conjunction of my feeble words with my Lord's potent *look*, then the heart will dissolve in streams of repentance."

Crow away, poor bird—if Jesus looks while you are crowing, you will not crow in vain—but Peter's heart will break. The two things are joined together and let no man put them asunder—commonplace instrumentality and the Divine Worker. Christ has all the glory and all the more glory because He works by humble means. I trust that there will be, this morning, a conjunction of the weakness of the preacher with the strength of the Holy Spirit so that stony hearts may be broken and God glorified.

This morning, first, let us look at the Lord who looked. And secondly let us look into the look which the Lord looked. And then, thirdly, let us look at Peter, upon whom the Lord looked. We will be all the while looking—may our Lord look upon us. May His Holy Spirit work with His Holy Word!

I. First, LET US LOOK AT THE LORD, WHO LOOKED UPON PETER. Can you picture Him up there in the hall, up yonder steps, before the high priest and the council? Peter is down below in the area of the house warming his hands at the fire. Can you see the Lord Jesus turning round and fixing His eyes intently upon His erring disciple? What do you see in that look?

I see in that look, first, that which makes me exclaim—What thoughtful love! Jesus is bound, He is accused, He has just been smitten on the face—but His thought is of wandering Peter. You want all your wits about you when you are before cruel judges and are called upon to answer false charges. You are the more tried when there is no man to stand by you, or bear witness on your behalf—it is natural, at such an hour—that all your thoughts should be engaged with your own cares and sorrows. It would have been no reproach had the thoughts of our Lord been concentrated on His personal sufferings. And all the less so because these were for the sake of others.

But our blessed Master is thinking of Peter and His heart is going out towards His unworthy disciple. That same influence which made His heart drive out its store of blood through every pore of His body in the bloody sweat now acted upon His soul and drove His thoughts outward towards that member of His mystical body which was most in danger. Peter was thought of when the Redeemer was standing to be mocked and reviled. Blessed be His dear name, Jesus always has an eye for His people, whether He is in His shame or in His Glory.

Jesus always has an eye for those for whom He shed His blood. Though now He reigns in Glory, He still looks steadily upon His own—His delight is in them and His care is over them. There was not a particle of selfishness about our Savior. "He saved others; Himself He could not

save." He looked to others but He never looked to Himself. I see, then, in our Lord's looking upon Peter, a wondrously thoughtful love.

I exclaim, next, What a boundless condescension! If our Lord's eyes had wandered that day upon "that other disciple" that was known to the high priest, or if He had even looked upon some of the servants of the house, we should not have been so astonished. But when Jesus turns, it is to look upon Peter, the man from whom we should naturally have turned away our faces, after his wretched conduct. He had acted most shamefully and cruelly and yet the Master's eyes sought him out in boundless pity! If there is a man here who feels himself to be near akin to the devil, I pray the Lord to look first at him.

If you feel as if you have sinned yourself out of the pale of humanity by having cast off all good things and by having denied the Lord that bought you, yet still consider the amazing mercy of the Lord. If you are one of His, His pitying eyes will find you out. For even now it follows you as it did Hagar, when she cried, "God see me." But oh, the compassion of that look! When first I understood that the Lord looked on me with love in the midst of my sin, it did seem so wonderful! He whom the heavens adore, before whose sight the whole universe is stretched out as on a map, yet passes by all the glories of Heaven that He may fix His tender gaze upon a wandering sheep and may in great mercy bring it back again to the fold. For the Lord of Glory to look upon a disciple who denies Him is boundless condescension!

But then, again, what tender wisdom do I see here! "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." He knew best what to do—He did not speak to him but looked upon him. He had spoken to Peter before and that voice had called him to be a fisher of men. He had given Peter His hand before and saved him from a watery grave when he was beginning to sink. But this time He gives him neither His voice nor His hand but that which was equally effectual and intensely suitable—He lent him His eyes—"The Lord looked upon Peter."

How wisely does Christ always choose the way of expressing His affection and working our good! If He had spoken to Peter, the mob would have assailed him, or at least the ribald crowd would have remarked upon the sorrow of the Master and the treachery of the disciple—our gracious Lord will never needlessly expose the faults of His chosen. Possibly no words could have expressed all that was thrown into that look of compassion. Why, Brethren, a volume as big as a Bible is contained within that look of Jesus.

I defy all the tongues and all the pens in the world to tell us all that our Divine Lord meant by that look. Our Savior employed the most prudent, the most comprehensive, the most useful method of speaking to the heart of His erring follower. He looked volumes into him. His glance was a Divine hieroglyphic full of unutterable meanings which it conveyed in a more clear and vivid way than words could have done.

As I think of that look again, I am compelled to cry out—What Divine power is here! Why, dear Friends, this look worked wonders. I sometimes preach with all my soul to Peter and, alas—he likes my sermon and for-

gets it. I have known Peter read a good book full of most powerful pleading and when he has read it through, he has shut it up and gone to sleep. I remember my Peter when he lost his wife and one would have thought it would have touched him and it did—with some natural feeling. Yet he did not return to the Lord, whom he had forsaken but continued in his backsliding.

See, then, how our Lord can do with a *look* what *we* cannot do with a *sermon*! What the most powerful writer cannot do with hundreds of pages and what affliction cannot do with even its heaviest stroke. The Lord looked and Peter wept bitterly. I cannot help thinking with Isaac Williams that there is a majestic simplicity in the expressions here used—"The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter went out and wept bitterly." The passage reminds us of that first of Genesis—"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

As the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians and troubled the Egyptians, so did He now look into Peter's heart and his thoughts troubled him. Oh, the power of the Lord Christ! If there was this power about Him when He was bound before His accusers, what is His power now that He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them? In that look there was Divinity. The Son of God looked upon Peter—the text does not use the name Jesus but it expressly says, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." That Divine look did the deed.

Let me beg you to note what sacred teaching is here. The teaching is of practical value and should be at once carried out by the followers of Jesus. You, dear Friend, are a Christian man or a Christian woman. You have been kept by Divine Grace from anything like disgraceful sin. Thank God it is so. I dare say if you look within you will find much to be ashamed of. But yet you have been kept from presumptuous and open sins. Alas, one who was once a friend of yours has disgraced himself—he was a little while ago a member of the Church but he has shamefully turned aside. You cannot excuse his sin—on the contrary, you are forced to feel great indignation against his folly, his untruthfulness, his wickedness.

He has caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme and has done awful mischief to the cause of righteousness. Now I know what will be suggested to you. You will be inclined to cut his acquaintance, to disown him altogether and scarcely to look at him if you meet him in the street. This is the manner of men—but not the manner of Jesus. I charge you, act not in so un-Christlike a manner. The Lord turned and looked on Peter—will not His servants look on him? You are not perfect like your Lord. You are only a poor sinful creature like your fallen Brother. What? Are you too proud to look at the fallen one? Will you not give him a helping hand? Will you not try to bring him back?

The worst thing you can do with a backslider is to let him keep on sliding back. Your duty should be your pleasure and your duty is to "restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, remembering yourself also, lest you also be tempted." O Brothers and Sisters, it is a very little thing that has

kept some of us from turning aside unto folly. One grain more and the scale would have turned in favor of a great fall. Our steps have well-near slipped. When we are proud of our sure standing, the Lord may well be angry with us for our vanity and He may justly say, "How can I endure this pride? I have taken great care of this man and watched over him to keep him out of sin and now he takes the credit of it all and plays the great man and fancies that he will be defiled if he associates with My poor wandering children."

Which, do you think, is worse in God's sight—the sudden fall into sin, or the long-continued pride? Which boasts itself in the presence of the Lord and looks contemptuously upon erring ones? It is not my office to become a measurer of sins. But I would earnestly enforce this plain duty—since our own Lord and Master looked on backsliding Peter, let us seek out our wandering Brethren.

One more lesson—observe what heavenly comfort is here—"The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Yes, Jesus looks upon sinners, still. The doctrine of God's omniscience is far oftener set forth in a hard way than in a cheering way. Have you ever heard a sermon from, "You God see me," of which the essence was—therefore tremble and be afraid? That is hardly fair to the text. For when Hagar cried, "You God see me," it was because the Lord had interposed to help her when she had fled from her mistress. It was *comfort* to her that there she also had looked after Him that had looked upon her.

There is a dark side to "You God see me." But it is not half so dark as it would be if God did not see us. It is true, O Sinner, that God has seen your sin and all the aggravations of it. But it is also true that as He sees your ruin, your misery, your sadness, He has compassion on you. He sees your sin that He may remove it and make you clean in His sight. As the Lord looked upon Peter, so He looks upon you. He has not turned His back on you. He has not averted the gaze of His pity. He sees to the bottom of your heart and reads all your thoughts. You have not to go about to find God—He is looking upon you. "He is not far from everyone of us." He is within eyesight. You are to look to Him. And if you do, your eyes will meet His eyes, for already He looks upon you.

I think we have gathered much from this brief look at the Lord who looked upon Peter. I doubt not that had we more time and more insight, we should see greater things than these.

II. Now let us go on to the second point and see whether we cannot gather still more instruction. LET US LOOK INTO THE LOOK WHICH THE LORD GAVE TO PETER. Help us again, most gracious Spirit!

That look was, first of all, a marvelous refreshment to Peter's memory. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." What a sight it must have been for Peter! Our dear Master's face was that night all red from the bloody sweat. He must have appeared emaciated in body. His eyes weary with want of sleep and His whole countenance the vision of grief. If ever a picture of the Man of Sorrows could have been drawn, it should have been taken at that moment when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.

By torchlight and the flickering flame of the fire in the court of the hall of Caiaphas, Peter saw a vision which would never fade from his mind. He saw the Man whom he loved as he had never seen Him before. This was He who called him, when he was fishing, to become a fisher of men. This was He who bade him spread the net and caused him to take an incredible quantity of fishes, insomuch that the boat began to sink and he cried out, "Depart from me. For I am a sinful man, O Lord."

This was He who had made him walk on the water and at other times had rebuked the winds and raised the dead. This was He with whom Peter had been upon the Mount of Transfiguration! Truly there was a wonderful change from the glistening whiteness of the Mount to the ghastliness of that sad hour! Though the lines of that reverend face were stained with blood, yet Peter could tell that it was the same Lord with whom he had enjoyed three years of intimate companionship and tender unveiling. All this must, in a moment, have flashed upon poor Peter's mind. And I do not wonder that in the remembrance of it all he went out and wept bitterly.

He did love His Lord. His denial was not of the heart but of the tongue. And, therefore, as all the grounds of his faith came before his mind anew, his heart was broken into a thousand pieces with grief that he should have been false to such a Friend. Yes, that look awoke a thousand slumbering memories and all these called upon the sincere heart of Peter to repent of its ungenerous weakness.

Next, that turning of the Master was a special reminder of His warning words. Jesus did not say it in words but He did more than say it by His look. "Ah, Peter! Did not I tell you it would be so? You said, 'Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended.' Did I not tell you that before cock-crowing you would deny Me thrice?" No rebuke was uttered. And yet the tender eye of the Lord had revealed to Peter his own extreme folly and his Master's superior wisdom. Now he saw his own character and perceived his Lord's discernment.

It was a prophecy and like all other prophecies, it was understood after it was fulfilled. We read that, "Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He said unto him, Before the cock crowed, you shall deny Me thrice." It is clear, then, that our Lord's look was a special reminder of His former words—it stirred up Peter's mind by way of remembrance and made him see how foolish he had been and how inexcusable was his fault.

Surely it was, also, a moving appeal to Peter's heart. I bid you notice just now, in the reading of the chapter, that this story of Peter is singularly interwoven into the narrative of our Savior's passion—it is so interwoven because it constitutes an essential part of that passion. We must not regard it as an accidental incident. It was part and parcel of that grief which He had to bear when He stood in our place. It was written of old, "Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." And this scattering of the sheep, of which Peter was a notable instance, was one of the bitter ingredients of our Redeemer's mental anguish.

"Lover and friend have You put far from Me," is His complaint in the Psalm. When the Savior showed Himself to Peter with all those lines of

grief upon His face, He seemed to say to him, "Can you deny Me now? I am bound for you and do you deny Me? I stand here to be adjudged to death for you and do you deny Me? Now is the hour of My agony and do you deny Me?" The Lord could not have looked at Peter without creating strong emotions in the breast of the weak disciple who now found himself in so sad a plight. That look touched very tender cords. There was no need for a single word of appeal—that look sufficed to stir the deepest part of Peter's nature.

What do you think that look chiefly said? My thought about it, as I turned it over, was this—when the Lord looked upon Peter, though He did refresh his memory and make an appeal to his conscience, yet there was still more evident a glorious manifestation of love. If I may be permitted humbly and reverently to read what was written on my Master's face, I think it was this—"And yet I love you, Peter, I love you still! You have denied Me but I look upon you still as Mine. I cannot give you up. I have loved you with an everlasting love and notwithstanding all your ill-conduct towards Me, I am looking for you and expecting to receive you. I have not turned My back on you.

"Behold, I look towards you with tender regard, foreseeing that you will yet serve Me and prove the truth of your devotion to Me. Despair not, O Peter, for I will receive you again and you shall glorify Me." Judging what would break my heart the quickest if I had thus denied my Master, it seems to me that I should be most affected by His saying to me, "And yet, despite your sin, I love you still." Love is the great heartbreaker. *Immutable* love is that Divine hammer which breaks the rock in pieces. Though a man should have sinned himself into great hardness of heart, yet almighty love can soften him. Who can resist the charms of Divine Grace unchangeable?

Sharper than a sword is a look of love—more fierce than coals of juniper are the flames of love. One said, the other day, speaking of a person who has gone awfully astray after having been a preacher of the Word, "If I did not believe in the doctrine of unchanging love I do not think I dare pray for him. But since I believe that God will bring him back again, I pray with humble confidence that he will be restored." That which is an encouragement to prayer for others will be a help towards our return if we have gone astray. I love to believe that my Lord will bring His wanderers back.

O you who are anxious to return to Him, let this cheer you—"Yet does He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him." This doctrine wins men back. There are wicked men who turn it into an argument for continuing in sin. But their damnation is just. True men will see, in the measureless and unchanging love of Christ, a reason which will put wings to their feet when they hasten back to Him from whom they have gone astray.

Again—this look penetrated Peter's inmost heart. It is not every look that we receive that goes very deep. I look with eyes of deep affection at men from this pulpit and I perceive that they know my meaning. But they soon shake it off. But our Savior has an eye to which the joints and mar-

row are visible. He looks into the secret chambers of the soul. For His look is a sunbeam and bears its own light with it, lighting up the dark places of our nature by its own radiance. Peter could not help feeling, for he was pricked in the heart by the arrow of Christ's glance.

How many persons are affected by religion only in the head! It does not affect their heart and life. I am grieved when I hear of some of you who are regular hearers and take pleasure in my preaching and yet, after many years, you are not a bit better. You have had spasms of improvement but they have ended in nothing. You go back to the mire after you have been washed. You are a hearer of the Gospel and yet a drunkard. Your voice is heard in a Psalm but it may also be heard in an oath. It is a shocking thing. But I have done my best. I can preach to your ears but I cannot look into your hearts. Oh, that my Lord would give such a glance at you this morning as should impart light into you and cause you to see yourself and to see Him and then the tears would fill your eyes!

One fact must not escape our notice—our Lord's look at Peter was a revival of all Peter's looking unto Jesus. The Lord's look upon Peter took effect because Peter was looking to the Lord. Do you catch it? If the Lord had turned and looked on Peter and Peter's back had been turned on the Lord, that look would not have reached Peter, nor affected him. The eyes met to produce the desired result. Notwithstanding all Peter's wanderings, he was anxious about his Lord and therefore looked to see what was done with Him. Even while he warmed his hands at the fire, he kept looking into the inner hall. His eyes were constantly looking in the direction of the Lord Jesus.

While he wandered about among the maids and male servants, talking to them, fool that he was—yet still he would perpetually steal a glance that way to see how it fared with the Man he loved. He had not given up the habit of looking to his Lord. If he had not still, in a measure, looked to his Master, how would the look of Jesus have been observed by him? His eyes must look through your eyes to get to your heart. The remainders of faith are the sparks among the ashes of piety and the Lord blows on these to raise a fire. If there is a poor soul here that, despite his backsliding, can yet feel, "I am trusting in Jesus and if I perish, I will perish there," there is hope for that soul.

If you have given up the outward forms of religion it is a grievous fault—but if you still inwardly look to the Crucified, there is something in you to work upon. There is an eye which can receive the look of Jesus. It is through the eyes that look to Jesus, that Jesus looks and lets fresh light and hope into the soul. Oh that you who have this lingering faith in the Lord may now receive a look from Him which shall work in you a bitter, salutary, saving repentance—without which you can never be restored!

This look was altogether between the Lord and Peter. Nobody knew that the Lord looked on Peter, except Peter and his Lord. That Divine Grace which saves a soul is not a noisy thing—neither is it visible to any but the receiver. This morning, if the Grace of God comes to anyone of you in power, it will be unperceived by those who sit on either side of you

in the pew—they will hear the same words but of the Divine operation which accompanies them they will know nothing—the eyes of the Lord will not speak to them as it is speaking to the awakened one. Do you know anything of the secret love-look of the Lord Jesus?

The whole process may not have occupied more than a second of time. “The Lord turned and looked on Peter.” It took less time to do than it takes to tell. Yet in that instant an endless work was done. How soon can Jesus change the heart! “He spoke and it was done”—I venture to alter that verse and say, “He *looked* and it was done.” Lord, look on sinful Peter now! Work a miracle with your eyes! Even here, let some sinner look to You because You have looked on him.

III. Now I must go to my third point—LET US LOOK AT PETER AFTER THE LORD HAD LOOKED AT HIM. What is Peter doing? When the Lord looked on Peter the first thing Peter did was to feel awakened. Peter's mind had been sleeping. The charcoal fire had not done him much good, the fumes of it are evil. The dust of Satan's sieve had got into his eyes. He was confused with very sorrow for his dear Master, whom he truly loved. Peter was hardly Peter that night. I think I had better say, Peter was too much Peter, and his mind had more of Peter's stone in it, than of Christ's flesh.

He had forgotten that he was an Apostle. He had forgotten that which he had declared when the Lord said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you.” Again, I remind you how significantly it is written, “The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.” For it hints that Peter now saw his Lord's Deity through the veil of His humiliation and anguish. He had forgotten his Lord's Deity and thus he had, in thought, denied his Lord. He was off the lines and was in a sleepy state. He was what Paul calls “bewitched,” and under the influence of a spiritual soporific, administered by Satan. The Lord's look brought him to his better self and aroused all the spiritual life which had been dormant in him—“Peter remembered”—and by this remembrance he was restored.

The next effect was, it took away all Peter's foolhardiness. Peter had made his way into the high priest's hall but now he made his way out of it. He had not felt in any danger, though in the worst of company. What did he care for the girl that kept the door? Surely he was too much of a man to mind her remarks. What did he care for the men that were round the fire? They were rough fellows but he had been a fisherman and quite able to cope with the priest's bailiffs. But now the brag is gone out of him. No sooner had Jesus looked upon him than Peter declined all further risks. Now he shows the better part of valor and with great discretion quits the dangerous society of the high priest's palace.

Revival of Divine Grace in the heart is the death of presumption. The man who runs risks with his soul is not in a right state of mind. Perhaps the Savior's glance conveyed a hint to Peter that he had no business where he was. It may have seemed to say to him, “You had better be gone from these surroundings.” At any rate, that was the effect it produced. That palace in which the Lord fared so badly could not be a fit place for a

disciple. To be warming himself at the fire was quite inconsistent for Peter while Jesus was being mocked by His enemies. A sight of the Lord Jesus makes many things seem incongruous which else might appear right enough. All Peter's daring vanished. He turned his back on maids and men and went out into the darkness of the night.

We do not hear of his coming near the Cross—in fact, we hear no more of him till the resurrection morning—for Peter was sensible enough to feel that he could not trust himself any more. He placed himself in the background till his Lord summoned him to the front. I wish that some religious professors whose lives have been questionable had grace enough to do the same. When I see a man who has sinned grievously pushing himself speedily to the front, I cannot believe that he has a due sense of the evil he has worked, or of his own unfitness to be in the place of peril.

Above all, shun the place where you have fallen. Do not linger in it for a moment. Go out, even though you leave the comfortable fire behind you. Better be in the cold than stay where your soul is in danger. Till Peter had received from the Lord's own mouth abundant assurance of his restoration to his office by the threefold charge to feed the sheep and lambs, we do not find him again in the forefront.

That look of Christ severed Peter from the crowd. He was no longer among the fellows around the fire. He had not another word to say to them—he quit their company in haste. It is well for Believers to feel that they are not of the world! They should flee out of Sodom. The Lord has severed us from the multitude by His Divine choice and the separation should be our choice.

Oh, that the arrows of the great Lord would this morning pierce some soul even as a huntsman wounds a stag! Oh, that the wounded soul, like Peter, would seek solitude! The stag seeks the thicket to bleed and die alone. But the Lord will come in secret to the wounded heart and draw out the arrow. Alone is the place for a penitent. Out in the darkness is far better for you than around the fire where coarse jokes are bandied while Christ is mocked. There must be confession and weeping alone. If Christ has looked upon you, you must get away from the men of the world and indeed from all others. The solitude of your chamber will suit you best.

That look of Christ also opened the sluices of Peter's heart—he went out and wept bitterly. There was gall in the tears he wept, for they were the washings of his bitter sorrow. Dear Friends, if we have sinned with Peter, God grant us grace to weep with Peter. Many will think of Peter's wandering who forget Peter's weeping. Sin, even though it is forgiven, is a bitter thing. Even though Christ may look away your despair, He will not look away your penitence. "He went out and wept bitterly." Oh, how he chided himself! "How could I have acted so!" How he smote his breast, and sighed, "How can I ever look up? Yet is He very precious. That look forgave me. But I can never forgive myself."

He remembered it all his life and could never hear a cock crow without feeling the water in his eyes. Yet I want you to notice that that look of Christ gave him relief. It is a good thing to be able to weep. Those who cannot weep are the people that suffer most. A pent-up sorrow is a terri-

ble sorrow. The Lord touched a secret spring and made Peter's grief flow out in floods. And that must have greatly eased him. I have frequently heard people say, "I had a good cry, and after that, I was able to bear it." People die of bursting hearts when no tears relieve them. I thank God for Peter, that he could weep bitterly, for thus the Holy Spirit came to him with comfort.

O Master, look on some poor dry heart here—some poor heart that cannot feel its sinfulness but would if it could—and give it feeling! Look on the heart which cannot repent, that is crying, "I would, but cannot feel contrition." Lord, You did make the rock yield water at the smiting of the rod—use Your poor stick of a servant this morning to smite the rocky heart and let the waters of repentance flow out.

And now, to conclude, it made Peter as long as he lived, ashamed to be ashamed. Peter was never ashamed after this. Who was it that stood up at Pentecost and preached? Was it not Peter? Was he not always foremost in testifying to his Lord and Master? I trust that if any of us have been falling back and especially if we have wandered into sin, we may get such a restoration from the Lord, Himself, that we may become better Christians ever afterwards. I do not want you to break a bone, I pray God you never may. But if you ever do, may the heavenly Surgeon so set it that it may become thicker and stronger than before.

Courage was the bone in Peter which snapped. But when it was set, it became the strongest bone in his nature and never broke again. When the Lord sets the bones of His people they never break again—He does His work effectually. The man who has erred by anger becomes meek and gentle. The man who has erred by drink quits the deadly cup and loathes it. The man who has sinned by shame becomes the bravest of the company.

O Lord Jesus, I have tried to preach YOU this morning, but I cannot look with Your eyes. You must look on erring ones Yourself. Look, Savior! Look, Sinner! "There is life in a look AT the crucified One," because there is life in a look FROM the crucified One. May Jesus look and by His Grace may the sinner look, too! Amen.

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PETER'S FALL AND RESTORATION

NO. 2771

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 23, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 22, 1882.

“And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times. So Peter went out and wept bitterly.”
Luke 22:61, 62.

PETER'S fall, as we noticed in our reading, is four times recorded, at considerable length, but it is not once excused. There is not, in any one of the records, a single word said by way of palliation of his great guilt. John pictures Peter's sin in colors of an almost neutral tint, yet he does not lessen its gravity.

Why, do you think, is this sad record thus given four times? Is it not in order that we should give it fourfold attention? It deserves this special mention, first, because it must have greatly increased the grief of the Lord Jesus Christ to know that while He was enduring untold indignities on His people's behalf, His most prominent disciple was denying Him with oaths and curses down at the lower end of the hall. Surely, this must have cut Him to the quick! I cannot imagine that any of the tortures that He endured from His enemies could have caused Him so much pain as this wicked denial by one of His closest friends. Let your pity and love to Jesus flow in deep and broad streams while you behold him that ate bread with Him thus lifting up his heel against Him and even declaring that He knows not the Man! Blessed Master, there is not one tint of all the colors of grief that is lacking in the picture of Your passion! It is not possible to depict sufferings more acute and intense than was Yours when You died, “the Just for the unjust,” to bring us to God.

But, next, I think that Peter's fall and restoration are thus fully recorded to set forth the greatness of our Redeemer's saving power in the immediate prospect of His cruel death upon the Cross. Is it not wonderful to think that before He dies, He restores this great backslider—I had almost said, “this open apostate,” for so he was, according to his own language, though he was not so in heart? I can, in imagination, see poor Peter bending before the Cross of Calvary and looking up, through tears of grief and joy, as he mourns his great guilt and sees it all forgiven!

Then comes the dying thief, to represent another class of characters who bring great Glory to our dying Lord. Peter is the backslider restored—the dying thief is the sinner saved at the 11th hour. He was on the very brink of Hell, yet the Master stretched out His hand to rescue him,

saying, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." I cannot imagine two incidents revealing greater Divine Grace than these two, which so richly adorn and embellish the Cross! As captives chained to the wheels of the returning conqueror's chariot make his triumphal procession the more illustrious, so is Christ upon the Cross the more manifestly triumphant in His Infinite Grace as He leads the restored Peter back to his Apostleship and takes the penitent thief, plucked from Perdition, up with Himself into the Paradise of God!

Moreover, do you not think that there is, in this fourfold record, an instructive lesson for us concerning the frailty of the best of men? Holy Scripture does not tell us much about the best of men who lived in the olden times—its history of the saints is somewhat scanty—but it is particular in recording their faults, as if its special purpose was to remind us that the best of men are but men at the best! This Peter, who seemed to lead the van, was yet so frail and fallible—so far from being the first "Infallible Bishop of Rome"—that he even denied his Lord and Master! That is about the only point, so far as I can see, in which the Pope of Rome is like Peter, for he, too, has great presumption and he can, with his bulls and his curses, go about as far as Peter did in denying his Lord! Peter's fall seems to say to each of us, "You, too, are weak. You, too, will fall if you are left to yourself. Therefore trust wholly to your Master, but never trust in yourself. Look always to Him and rely not upon your own experience, or the firmness of your own resolutions—for you will assuredly fall, as Peter did, unless the almighty hand of Christ shall hold you up."

These lessons might profit us even if we learned no others, but I think we may find some more as I now proceed to speak to you, first, concerning *Peter's fall*. Next, concerning the *means of his recovery*. Thirdly, concerning the *signs of his restoration* and, afterwards, if we have time for them, I hope to make a few general remarks upon the whole incident of Peter's fall and restoration.

I. First, then, concerning PETER'S FALL.

It was a very sad fall because it was *the fall of one of the most favored of Christ's disciples*. We know that there is such a thing as election and that there is such a thing as election out of election and, in the case of Christ's disciples, the principle was carried still further, for there were some who were the elect out of the elect of the elect! Christ had many disciples, yet He said to the Apostles, "I have chosen you twelve." Out of those twelve, he had evidently chosen three—Peter, James and John—who were privileged to be with Him on various occasions when all others were shut out. Peter had been especially favored, so that probably not even John surpassed him in the honor which his Master had put upon him. After his declaration concerning Christ's Messiahship and Deity, Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." So you see that Peter was a highly favored man—and for him to deny his Master was a very terrible sin. The higher our privilege, dear Friends, the greater is our responsibility! The nobler our vocation is, the more horrible is our sin when we fall into it.

Secondly, Peter's fall was especially sad because he had been faithfully warned concerning it. Our Lord had said to the eleven, "All of you shall be offended because of Me this night." And then, when Peter declared that he would not be offended, our Lord plainly foretold his triple denial. When Jesus, after the first part of his agony in the garden, came back to the three especially favored disciples and found them all asleep, he said to Peter, "Simon, do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch you and pray lest you enter into temptation." So that Peter knew the danger to which he was exposed. He was not, as some inexperienced persons are, surprised all of a sudden—carried off their feet by a fierce tornado of temptation. If he did not watch and pray, he ought to have done so, for he had been expressly warned, yes, and told that in that very night, not only would he be in danger, but that he would actually fall into the snare which Satan, the great fowler, was setting for him! After that warning, he was not like a bird caught in a trap which it has not seen, but like one that flies boldly into the snare. Solomon says in Proverbs, "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird"—yet Peter ran into it in spite of all the warning that he had received. This made his sin all the greater! And if any of you sin against the Light of God, your sin will be all the more gross and aggravated.

Further, the guilt of Peter's sin is enhanced by the fact that it *came so soon after his claim of fidelity to his Master*. He had said to Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended." Now, mark that declaration was made in the evening and the sun had not risen—the cock had not crowed—before he had thrice denied his Master! It may have been quite late in the evening when he uttered his boastful declaration and the night had only darkened down to midnight, or an hour or two after, before he had, with oaths and curses, denied that he even knew his Lord. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if we eat our words as soon as that—if we go home from this House of Prayer and fall into sin. Or if tomorrow, while yet the sacred bread of the Communion Table is scarcely digested, we shall so act as practically to deny Christ—it will be a very terrible thing! It would have been bad enough if Peter had sinned thus 20 years after making his profession of love to Christ—but to deny his Lord an hour or two after such a vehement declaration—this was wicked, indeed!

Observe, also, that *Peter's sin had degrees in it*. This makes it the more interesting to us, especially if we have, ourselves, gone any part of the same evil way, for, the first time he denied his Master, it was not in the same style as the third time. Being let into the High Priest's palace, the damsel who opened the door looked him in the face and, afterwards, when Peter was sitting with the servants and officers around the fire, this somewhat busy lady came up to him and, gazing into his face, said, "You, also, were with Jesus of Galilee." Peter made a kind of evasive answer. There was a sort of subterfuge in it—"I know not what you are saying." As much as if he had said, "I do not understand you." This was really a denial of Christ, but he had so worded it as to quiet his conscience to some extent—he had not positively, in so many words, denied his Master. He was trying to do a little dodging, as some people nowadays do,

and he thought, perhaps, that he might be able to draw back from the position into which he had been led by his curiosity. There was no oath the first time, no cursing—but a simple evasive answer—really, in God's sight, a denial of his Lord, yet not so pronounced as it afterwards became.

The second time, he seems to have got up from where he sat by the fire. He was evidently not comfortable there and he had gone out to the porch, a good way off from the rest. And then, still wanting to see the end of the matter, he had come back. He did not press his way into the inner circle around the fire, and sit there, but he stood and leaned forward just to warm his hands. And then it was that this woman, noticing how restless he had been, came up with a companion of hers and, looking at him, began to say to the other woman, "I know that he is one of them, I am sure that he is." And then she and the other both broke out saying, "You were with Him! We are sure you were with Him." And the men joined in the cry, perhaps most of them said, "Oh, yes, he is one of them!" And then Peter "denied with an oath, I do not know the Man." Oh, how dreadful for him to call Christ, "the Man," when he had boldly declared that He was the Son of God! What a terrible fall was this!

After this, Peter gets up and goes away from the fire altogether. It is a large place, so he still keeps within the enclosure, but he gets up into a corner where the light does not fall upon him. And there he remains for about an hour, not very easy, you may be sure. At last, he begins to talk to those around him. He thought that they would not find him out, now, because the firelight did not reach so far, but he did not remember that his tongue would tell tales, for those near him said, "Listen! That fellow has the accent of Galilee! He is a Galilean and all the people who were with Jesus were Galileans. Depend upon it, he is one of them! We are sure that he is, for his speech betrays him." The accent of his countrified speech showed Peter up as being one of the fishers from the Lake of Galilee—so now they come all around him and they said to him, "We know that you are a disciple of Jesus." Then there was the High Priest's servant, whose kinsman's ear Peter had cut off—he said, "Did not I see you in the Garden with Him? I carried a lantern and I know that you are the man that chopped my relation's ear off. I am sure that you are!" Then Peter, worst of all, not only denied his Master, but, as if he knew that a true Christian would not swear and, therefore, the way to prove that he was no Christian was to curse and swear, therefore he did it! He cursed and swore to convince them that he was not a disciple of Jesus Christ. Oh, but this was dreadful! This was terrible! No excuse is given for Peter in God's Word, nor will we try to think of any, but we will, each one of us, pray, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe."

There is another aggravation of Peter's sin which I must mention, that is that *all this was done very close to where his Lord and Master was suffering at that time*. I think that this Tabernacle might very well picture the kind of place that palace was. Take away those galleries and leave this upper portion—here is Christ, with the High Priests and all the rest of them, in this upper part. Perhaps it was not so much raised above the rest of the hall as this platform is, but, still, it was a raised place. And

there were the servants sitting down below where they could see everything, and also be seen, in the open square with a big fire blazing up in the midst—sending its volumes of smoke up to the midnight sky. And there is the Christ, His back turned towards Peter, but He is within hearing. Oh, I think that fact alone ought to have checked Peter's tongue and inspired him with such love, pity and sympathy that he would have found it impossible to deny his Master. And for you and me to sin in the very Presence of the Majesty of Heaven, (and all sin does that), is an enormous crime.

What was the reason why Peter thus sinned? I answer, first, that it was because of his fear of man. Bold Peter became a raving coward! And, ah, how many have denied their Master because they have been afraid of a jest or a jeer! It was but a silly maid and another gossip with her, and a few idle women and men around the outdoor fire, but Peter was afraid of them and, therefore, he was not afraid to deny his Master.

Perhaps the chief reason for Peter's denial of his Lord was his confidence in himself. If Peter had felt himself to be weaker, he would really have been stronger. But, because he felt so strong in himself, he therefore proved to be weak as water and so denied his Master.

We know, also, that it was caused by a lack of watchfulness and prayer on the part of Peter. He was off his guard when he was sitting or standing comfortably by the fire and, therefore, he fell so sadly. His fall was caused, I expect, by a general lack of steadfastness in his character. He was impetuous, impulsive, quick, ready, brave, courageous, but, at the same time, he lacked backbone. He did, even after this, lack that essential element of a strong character, for Paul had to "withstand him to the face, because he was to be blamed." But, in this time of testing, he manifested a sad lack of solidity of character. He was carried away by surrounding circumstances and even when they happened to be against his Lord and Master, he was still carried away with them! Those of you who have abundance of life in you, and plenty of force of character, must make sure that you also have the force of Grace, lest your vivacity—the very thing which makes you to be leaders among us—should become your ruin in the time of trial! He is well kept whom God keeps and he it is also who, with prayer and watchfulness, guards himself against all the dangers that surround him. Thus I have tried to describe to you Peter's fall.

II. Now, secondly, notice THE MEANS OF PETER'S RECOVERY. They are worth notice.

The first means was, *the crowing of the cock*. It seemed strange that it should crow, the first time, before the period that was known among the Jews as "the cock-crowing." That happened after Peter had denied his Master once, but he does not appear to have taken any notice of it, for he afterwards denied his Master again and yet again. And just as he was speaking the third time, while the words were in his mouth, shrill and clear over that palace wall came the clarion of the cock. Oh, that crow must have gone home to Peter's heart! We cannot preach half such impressive sermons as that bird then delivered, for its message forced its way into Peter's conscience! God has many ways of reaching man's con-

science. I have known Him touch the conscience by very singular means—very frequently by the observation of a little child—by the sudden death of a neighbor or a friend—even by some sentence in a newspaper. There are many birds that God can cause to crow when He bids them, and they startle the sinner as much as that one in Jerusalem startled Peter! But that was not enough, nor was it half enough to bring him to repentance.

The next thing that touched Peter, and the main thing, was *the look of Christ*. It is not possible for any of us to give such a look as that. It was such a look as Jehovah gave to the primeval darkness when He said, "Let there be light," and the darkness was dissipated by one glance of Jehovah's eyes. So the darkness, which the devil had cast over Peter's soul, was made to fly by one flash from the eyes of Jesus! There were volumes of meaning in that look. "Is that Peter, who declared that he would never deny Me? Remember, Peter, what I said, and what you answered—and see which of us turns out to be right." That look also said to Peter, "All these griefs and all this shame that I am enduring do not pierce Me so keenly to the heart as your denial does." Yet was it not also a look of inexpressible tenderness, as if the Master said by it, "I still love you, Peter, so come back to Me and I will yet restore you!" I think it was a heart-piercing look and a heart-healing look all in one—a look which revealed to Peter the blackness of his sin and also the tenderness of his Master's heart towards him. That look did the work—that was the great means of Peter's recovery. First, the crowing of the cock, or something in Providence, and then the look of Christ, or something of Grace.

Then, what came in next was Peter's *remembrance of Christ's words*, for that look awakened his memory and his memory reminded him of all that his Master had said to him—and of all the happy fellowship he had had with the dear Master and what wonders he had seen Him do. I dare say that Peter remembered how he had once walked upon the water and how he began to sink until Jesus stretched out His hand to save him. At any rate, memory did its work, for, "Peter called to mind the words that Jesus said unto him, Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times. And when he thought about it, he wept." So those three things co-operated in producing Peter's recovery.

But there was one thing, at the back of all these, which we must never forget—that is, the prayer of Christ for Peter. He said to him, "I have prayed for you," and the effect of that prayer was made apparent in the Apostle's restoration. That look was effectual upon Peter because the Lord Jesus had, in private, made prevalent intercession for him. So his faith was not to fail him and he was to come out of the devil's sieve with not one particle of the genuine wheat that was in him, fallen to the ground, but only the chaff taken away! That was the great means which Christ used for Peter's recovery and I beg you, dear Friends, to emulate your Savior's example in this respect. Pray for the fallen, look lovingly and pitifully upon the fallen, for your very look may do them good. Speak to the fallen, seek to guide the fallen back to Christ and who knows how many of them you may be helped to restore?

III. Now, in the third place, I am to speak very briefly upon THE SIGNS OF PETER'S RESTORATION. What are those signs?

First, *he went out*. There was something suggestive in that action of his. It might be very cold outside, but Peter left the warmth of the fire. His heart was hot within him, so he could stand the cold and, therefore, he went out. It is always a sign of repentance in Christians who have fallen when they leave the company where they were led astray. If any of you were once professors of the faith and you have turned aside through the evil associations that you have formed, cut yourselves loose from those associations at once! "Oh," someone says, "but I might be a loser if I were to do so." You cannot lose as much as you will if you lose your soul! "Oh, but I do not see how I can escape." You must find a way of escape somehow—you must do as Lot did. Though he had all his wealth in Sodom, he had to flee from it—and the message to you professors who are among the ungodly is, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." Thus Peter went out and it was a wise thing for him to do.

He not only went out, but *he wept*. As he kept on turning over his sin, it appeared to him in all its blackest hue. We are told that *he wept bitterly*. Convulsive weeping came upon him—he could not stand himself—his very heart seemed as if it would flow away in rivers of repentant tears.

It is a blessed sign of the work of Grace in the soul when the man who has sinned quits his evil companions and mourns over his sin as one who is in bitterness for his first-born. If any of you have sinned like Peter, go and weep like Peter. If you have fallen like Peter, then let your soul bitterly bewail your transgression. Many talk about the greatness of David's sin, but if they knew the depths of David's repentance and the heartbreak that came with it, they would not so glibly speak of it. There is a tradition that Peter never heard a cock crow, or thought of this incident, as long as he lived, without weeping. And although that is only a tradition, I can well believe it was the case, for that is just what would be likely to happen to a true penitent.

IV. Now I close with A FEW GENERAL REMARKS UPON THE INCIDENT.

My first remark is—*Christian, it is bad for you to be in evil company*. It was bad for Peter to be among those who were standing or sitting round that fire. On a cold night everyone likes a nice comfortable fire. Yes, but you had better suffer discomfort and inconvenience rather than associate with wicked men. Peter was sitting in the seat of the scorner, so we do not wonder that, at last, he used the scorner's language! Keep out of evil company if you possibly can. If you are obliged to go where bad language is used, do just as you do when you have to go out in a shower of rain—carry an umbrella to shield you from the rain and go through it as quickly as you can. When, in your daily calling, you have to mix with ungodly men, carry the spirit of watchfulness and prayer with you—and slip away from their society as quickly as you can.

My next remark is that *it is idle for a true disciple to try to disown his discipleship*. Peter says, "I am not one of Christ's disciples," but, even by the firelight, he looks like one of them. He swears that he is not and gets

away up in the corner where there is no light. But, as soon as he begins talking, they say, "You are one of them!" His very speech causes him to be discovered—and if you are a genuine Christian, you can no more hide yourself than can the violet in the grass, whose perfume tells the passer-by that it is there! There is something about you which will cause people to find you out. I should recommend those of you who have believed in Christ, but have not joined the Church, or made a confession of your faith, to do so speedily because, whether you do so or not, the ungodly will be down upon you! When once Christ sets the mark of His Cross upon your forehead, all sorts of people will see it and they will say, "You are one of Christ's followers! Your very speech betrays you. There is something about you that is different from the rest of us, and which tells us that you have been with Jesus." Do not try to hide this distinguishing mark if you have it—and even if you do, you will not be able to do so.

The next general remark is—when *you have to depict your own character, always use the black pencil*. Never try to extenuate anything. We shall never have any biographies, written by uninspired men, after the fashion of these Bible biographies. I am sure that if Peter had been the minister of a neighboring Baptist Church and had died, and I had been asked to write his biography, I should not have mentioned his denial of his Lord. Or if I had done so, I would have had his wife down on me if she was alive! And, if not, all the members of the congregation would have said, "What a shame it was to say anything about that matter after the man was dead! Mr. Spurgeon has written a brother-minister's biography and he has put in all the details of that sad incident which ought to have been suppressed." Very likely it ought to be, but it never is suppressed in the *Bible* narratives—we get all that happens recorded there. When Mark wrote, as we believe, under the guidance of Peter, he did not keep back anything, but put all down as black as it really was!

But, next, *when you are writing of a Brother's character, try to describe it as fairly as possible*, for that is what John does in his description of Peter's fall. It is very mildly drawn compared with Peter's own account of it. We must never say what is false, but when there has been something that is wrong, let us always put the kindest construction we possibly can upon it. There are always two ways of telling a tale and they may both be true. The one is to lay heavy stress upon all the faults. The other is to do as John does—to mention them, but to say no more about them than he feels really obliged to say. Let us be truthful, but let it never seem as if we had any grudge against the wrongdoer. The sacred writers often teach us this lesson and here, Peter gives the worst account of himself, and John gives a more favorable report concerning his erring Brother.

Another remark I have to make is—*observe the power that is in people's eyes*. You must often have noticed this. What a power there was in that maid's eyes when she gazed earnestly upon Peter! It was that earnest gaze of the girl that made Peter deny his Master. But, then, see the power for good that there was in Christ's eyes. "The Lord turned and looked at Peter." Eyes can say far more than lips can! Often there is more heart-affecting eloquence in the eyes than there is in the tongue. Sometimes you Christian people, members of the Church, may be by the side

of a man who utters a wrong word—but you need not tell him of it—just look at him, that will be enough. If an ungodly man shall even swear in your presence, do not give him a supercilious look, as much as to say, “O you wicked sinner, to do such a thing in the presence of such a holy man as I am!” But there is another kind of look, as if you felt so grieved and were amazed that he could so take in vain the name of the ever-blessed God—that is the sort of look to give him. If the Lord will manage your eyes for you, you will find that they will be potent messengers of love for Him. God give you to have those sanctified eyes which can work wonders for Him!

My last remark is this—*what a mercy it was that Christ did not treat Peter as Peter treated Him!* Peter said, “I know not the Man.” Ah, me, but if the blessed, meek and lowly One had said, “I know not the man,” it would have been all over with Peter! May God grant that Christ may not say of anyone of us, at the Last Great Day, “I know not the man”! He *will* say it of all who know Him not, and whom He does not know—they are not acquainted with one another—and if they continue as they are, He will say, “Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.” Though He has eaten and drunk in your presence and taught in your streets, yet will He say, “I know you not. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity.” The mercy is that He never said that to Peter. And He will never say that to you, or to me if we come and cast ourselves in penitence at His feet, bemoaning our sin, and putting our trust in Him alone! May God grant this blessing to each one of you, dear Friends for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

**MATTHEW 26:31-35, 57, 58, 69-75; MARK 14:53, 54, 66-72;
LUKE 22:54-62; JOHN 18:15-18, 25-27.**

The story of Peter’s denial of his Master is recorded in all four of the Gospels. There are some differences of expression in each version, so it will not be repetitious if we read all four of them. And if we read them attentively, we shall get a clear view of the whole incident.

Matthew 26:31-33. *Then Jesus said unto them, All you shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended.* This was a very presumptuous speech, not only because of the self-confidence which it displayed, but also because it was a flat contradiction of what the Master had just said. “All you shall be offended because of Me this night.” Peter thought he knew better than Christ did, so he said, “Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended.”

34. *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, That this night, before the cock crow—*The cock-crowing was a recognized mark of time; it was just before the rising of the sun. “This night, before the rooster crows”—

34, 35. *You shall deny Me thrice. Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You.* Here, again, he contradicts his Master straight to His face!

35. *Likewise also said all the disciples.*

57, 58. *And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.*

69-75. *Now Peter sat outside in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, You also were with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what you say. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the Man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely you also are one of them; for your speech betrays you. Then he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man. And immediately the cock crew. Then Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.* Now let us read Mark's account, which will especially interest you if you remember that, probably, Mark wrote under the direction of Peter and, no doubt, received many of his facts from Peter. You will notice how severe is this description of the whole scene—it is just such an one as the chief actor in it would be sure to give as he recalled his fall and restoration.

Mark 14:53, 54. *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. Then Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.* Thus we learn what a cold night it was—that night in which the Savior's "sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Often, at Jerusalem, the days are extremely hot, yet the nights are as cold as if it were winter through the abundant dews that fall and cause a dampness everywhere.

66, 67. *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there came one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him.* I think I see her, with her eyes fixed upon him, as he was warming himself at the fire: "She looked upon him."

67, 68. *And said, And you also were with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what you say. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.* This first time was not the regular time of cock-crowing, but those birds crow when they please. Before the fixed period called the cock-crow, Peter was to deny his Master three times—this was the first time.

69, 70. *And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely you are one of them: for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.* "You have the peculiar brogue of that part of the country. You are a Galilean, and your speech shows it."

71, 72. *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom you speak. And the second time the cock crew. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times. And when he thought about it, he wept.* He does not say that he went out and wept bitterly, as Luke says in his version of the incident.

This is Peter's own account of it, so he says as little as he can to his own credit, while he tells all that is to his discredit. You notice that there seem to be some slight differences between these two accounts and it is quite natural that it should be so. If any two honest men here were to describe any scene that they had witnessed, the two would be sure to differ in some particulars, yet both accounts might be true. Matthew tells us that Jesus said to Peter, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times," but Mark tells us that He said, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." Yes, but there is no real contradiction, and the incident introduced by Mark shows how, to the very letter, both of those utterances of our Savior were fulfilled. So is it with regard to those who spoke to Peter. When we come to another account, you will see that they differ very considerably, yet they are all true, for all that.

Luke 22:54-56. *Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. Then Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire. The flickering light helped to reveal his features to this maid "as he sat by the fire."*

56-58. *And earnestly looked upon him and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him and said, You are also of them. Then Peter said, Man, I am not.* Both Matthew and Mark say that it was a maid, and another maid who spoke to Peter. And now Luke mentions a man—but there is no reason why all three of them could not have united in bringing this charge. One maid began the accusation, and the others joined with her, so the whole story is correct.

59-61. *And about the space of one hour later another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilean. Then Peter said, Man, I do not know what you are saying. And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.* The Savior had been standing in the upper part of the room which was, probably, roofed over, while Peter and the rest were down below in the courtyard, which was open to the sky and, therefore, they needed a fire to warm them. Jesus had been standing before His judge, but all of a sudden, as the cock crew, He "turned and looked at Peter."

61. *Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the cock crow, you will deny Me three times.* That cock-crowing had come at the very moment Christ had foretold, for Peter had already denied his Master thrice.

62. *So Peter went out and wept bitterly.* Now hear what John has to say about this matter. He wrote after the other three Evangelists and he

generally supplies their deficiencies. He it is who tells us how Simon Peter got into the hall.

John 18:16. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple.* You know who that was, for John always hides his own name as much as possible.

15, 16. *That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. Then went out that other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, and spoke unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.* No doubt she had a lamp in her hand, that she might watch the features of those who were admitted. So, when Peter came in, she had a good view of his face and, afterwards, when he was at the fire, this is the woman who went and showed him up.

17. *Then the damsel that kept the door said unto Peter, Are not you also one of this Man's disciples?* She evidently knew that John was one of them, so she put this question to Peter, "Are not you also one of this Man's disciples?"

17, 18. *He said, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.* Matthew tells us that, at first, he sat with them, but now he is standing, as though he was uneasy, or going out and coming in again. And now he is questioned again.

25-27. *And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Are not you also one of His disciples? He denied it and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the Garden with Him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.* John does not say anything about Peter's oath, or about his cursing because that had been told by the others, and John had no desire to write anything that would reflect upon Peter. Indeed, he tells us that it was he who went and spoke to the maid that let Peter in—he seems as if he wished us to know that he had been the means of introducing Peter to the place of temptation! And it is interesting to remember that he was the man who was with Peter on the morning of the Resurrection, so that no doubt he had been the first to find him after his fall.

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

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

MAJESTY IN MISERY

NO. 2825

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 5, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1883.

“And the men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him saying, Prophecy, who is it that struck You? And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.”
Luke 22:63-65.

I SUPPOSE that all this cruelty took place while our Lord was before Caiaphas, in the dead of night, before the Sanhedrim had been fully gathered together to hold their trial at daybreak. His enemies were in so great a hurry to condemn Him that as soon as He arrived at the high priest's house, they had a kind of preliminary examination that they might try the tack upon which they meant to sail in endeavoring to procure a conviction against Him. Thus, after He had been, in an informal and illegal way, condemned without any proper trial, they left Him in the custody of their officers until early in the morning when they summoned the rest of their companions, so as to go through again the farce of trying Him whom they knew to be innocent.

While these officials had Christ in their keeping, they might at least have left Him in peace and quietness. According to the rules of all civilized nations, a prisoner detained in custody should be guarded from insult and ill-treatment while in that condition. Whatever his ultimate punishment may be after he has been tried and found guilty, while he is as yet uncondemned, he is reckoned to be under the protection of the State that has arrested him—and he ought not to be subjected to insult or injury. But here, as if they had been so many savages, the judges of our Lord abandoned Him to those outcasts whom they employed to do their foul work—and those wretched creatures treated Him with mingled cruelty and scorn—“The men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him.” Could they not have allowed Him a little time of rest? The traces of the bloody sweat must still have been upon Him. They could see, by the emaciation of His Person, that He was, as it had been long before foretold that He would be, “a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He must already have been ready to faint under the rough usage which had been meted out to Him both before and at His preliminary trials before Annas and Caiaphas. His tormentors must have seen how exhausted He was, yet they had no pity for Him in their hard, unfeeling hearts! They al-

lowed Him no respite and gave Him no opportunity to prepare Himself to answer the charges that were about to be brought against Him. There were none found to vindicate His Character, or to plead His cause—and the intervals between the informal and the more formal trials were spent in mockery and in scorn.

These men were gross cowards. I am sure that they must have been because they were so cruel, for cruelty is one of the badges of cowardice wherever you find it. These are the very men who, in the garden, “went backward, and fell to the ground,” when Christ did but say, “I am He,” in answer to their declaration that they were seeking “Jesus of Nazareth.” They went out, with swords and staves, to take Him prisoner, yet they fell to the ground when He did but speak a word or two to them! But now that they had Him in their power and perceived that He was, apparently, not inclined to exert the Divine energy with which He was endowed, but that He was as submissive as a sheep before her shearers, they determined to be as cruel as they could be to Him. God grant that the sin of cruelty to anything that lives may never be justly laid to the charge of any one of us! If you have acted cruelly, even though it is to the meanest thing in creation, despise yourself, for you are of a lower order than the creature that you tortured! And if these men could have judged themselves aright, they would have despised themselves. They seem to me to have been the very meanest of mankind who, having such a gentle Sufferer in their power, instead of showing any humanity to Him, seemed as if they could not sufficiently abuse Him. And so they indulged their vile nature to the utmost in mocking and persecuting Him.

I. I hope that some spiritual profit may come to us while we are considering this terrible part of the suffering of our Lord. And, first, I want you, in imagination, to, gaze upon MAJESTY IN MISERY.

There stands Jesus of Nazareth. I will not attempt to picture Him. There has never yet been a painter who could portray the lineaments of that wondrous face! The highest art has never yet been able to satisfy itself upon that point even though it has borrowed its outline and its colors from the Scriptures themselves. The most skillful hand grows unsteady in the Presence of One so glorious in His griefs. I will not, therefore, attempt to draw a portrait of my Lord and Master, but will simply ask you, by faith, to behold Him, clothed with the garment that was without seam, bound, delivered over to the officers and surrounded by them while they mocked and scoffed at Him. Letting your eyes rest upon Him in a loving look, regarding Him as the great center of your heart’s affection, what do you see—you who believe in His Deity—and who can say that He is “very God of very God” to you?

If your eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, you will see *Omnipotence held captive*. “The men that held Jesus” did not really know who He was. He appeared to them to be a poor Galilean peasant. Speaking the country brogue, they saw that He was a humble, lowly, emaciated Man and, as He had been committed to their charge, they held Him as their prisoner. But they did not recognize that He was the Almighty God, the very Deity

that created the heavens and the earth, for, “all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.” He was, at that very moment, “upholding all things by the word of His power” and, amid all His weakness, and in all His sufferings, He was still “over all, God blessed forever,” whom all the holy angels continued to adore. Is it not a great mystery that Omnipotence should thus be held captive? What a marvelous thing it is that He who can create or who can destroy, according to the good pleasure of His own will, should take upon Himself our nature and in that Nature should sink so low as to become subject even to the very coarsest and most cruel of mankind! What a wondrous stoop of condescension is here! Omnipotence allows itself to be bound and never proves itself more truly Omnipotent than when it restrains itself and permits itself to be held as a prisoner by sinful men!

Look again at this Majesty in misery and you will see *glory mocked*, for “the men that held Jesus mocked Him.” To them He seemed to be a fit subject for ridicule and derision in professing to be a king, when He had neither an armed host nor multitudes of followers who could hope to stand for a single second against the mighty Caesar who held Israel in bondage! Yes, but there was a Glory in Christ which He had deigned to veil and to conceal for a while, but which angels still beheld and adored—yet these men were mocking Him! There are some themes which seem to strike a speaker dumb and this subject has something like this effect upon me. It appears to me amazing that the God who had reigned in Glory over myriads of holy angels, should be mocked by miscreants who could not even have lived an instant longer in His Presence if He had not permitted them to do so! Yet I see, in my text that He who made the heavens and the earth stood there to be despised and rejected of men and to be treated with the utmost contumely and scorn. I can make that statement, but you cannot realize what it means. This is one of those great mysteries of the faith that seem to stagger you. You believe it without the slightest hesitation, yet, the more you try to really grasp and comprehend it, the more it seems to elude you and to tower above you!

Thus, we see Omnipotence held captive and Glory mocked.

Next, we see *Goodness smitten*—perfect, infinite, unutterable Goodness stricken, bruised, assailed, assaulted—“The men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him.” To strike wickedness is an act of justice. And even to lift the sword against oppression may not always be a thing to be condemned. But to strike Him who never did any man a wrong, but who has done all men some measure of good and who has given to some men all conceivable good—ah, this is indeed brutish! The blessed Son of God who stood there, had within His soul that mercy which endures forever, yet they struck Him—there burned in His heart a love which many waters could not quench and which the floods could not drown, yet they struck Him! He had come here upon no errand of vengeance, but to bring peace and goodwill to men—and to set up a Kingdom of joy and love—yet they bound Him! Ah, me, it is amazing that Goodness should be so good

as to submit to this shameful indignity! None but Divine Goodness would have submitted to it.

See what these mockers and smiters did next to our Lord. They produced a handkerchief, or a cloth of some kind, and they put it over His eyes. *Omniscience must seem to be blinded*, which, in truth, it cannot be. Yet, in the Christ there was the Omniscience of the Godhead and, to the utmost of their power, these men blinded Him in the hope that He might not see what they were doing. I know some who are trying to act that way at this present time. The only god that they have is a blind god. They believe in what they call, “the forces of nature,” and then they condescendingly talk as though God was only the aggregate of the forces of nature working according to certain mechanical laws that can never be altered. The god in whom they profess to believe is a god that does not see. They tell us that it is idle to pray, or to think that God takes any interest in such insignificant individuals as we are. Ah, I remember reading about those gods of the philosophers—“They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them.” “But our God is in the heavens,” seeing all that happens and doing as He pleases among the hosts above and among men below. He is not now to be blindfolded, as He was once, when He condescended to wear our nature and to bear our sin. Yet it is amazing that He should ever have permitted this indignity to be put upon Him. The spouse in the Canticles truly sings, “His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set”—exceeding the very stars of Heaven for brightness—yet they covered them over! His eyes flamed with love and in them there did gleam bright diamonds of pity for all the sorrows of mankind—yet those cruel men did hide those precious eyes of His, blindfolding the Christ of God!

Now, surely, they had made Him suffer enough, far too much—yet again the infinite beauties of His blessed Countenance were to be marred, for “they struck Him on the face.” “Oh, but had we been there,” we say, “our indignation would have burned against them for striking that dear face!” Yet we had need lay aside our indignation and bring forward penitence, instead, for we, also, have sometimes struck that dear face of Jesus, which is as the Sun of Heaven, far brighter than the sun which lights up the world! All other beauties put together cannot equal the marvelous charms of that Countenance which was marred more than any man’s. There is nothing under Heaven, or in Heaven, itself, that can rival the face of the Well-Beloved, yet these men struck it! I think an angel might well shiver with horror if, for the first time, he heard that men had struck the face of His Lord! It was but His *Human* face, it is true, but therein they struck at all of Deity that they could reach. It was man striking God in the face! A slap in the face of Deity was what it really meant. Ah, me, that my Master should ever have had to endure such in-

sult and pain—that He should ever have been willing to suffer such indignity as this—was there ever love like unto His?

Then the mockers said, “Prophecy, who is it that struck You!” That was *Justice defied*. They seemed to say to our Lord, as they struck Him, “Tell us what our name is; say who struck that blow. You cannot resist it. You cannot avenge Yourself, but, at least, see if You can tell the name of him that struck You. We defy You to do it.” Ah, He had written down their names and they will find out, one day, that He knows them all, for there are none who strike the Savior who will not have their blows come back upon themselves unless they repent of their sin! There was Justice defied, as “they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that struck You?”

I say again that I am not worthily able to speak on such a theme as this. And I think I never shall be, however long I may live. It is not within the compass of lips of clay, with words of air, to describe the condescending sufferings of Him who, though He was rightly called, “Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,” nevertheless stooped so low as to be mocked, struck, blindfolded, and struck again for your sakes and mine—

**“Vexed, I try and try again,
Still my efforts are all in vain—
Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ.”**

The wonder of this Majesty in misery can be described in four words. The first wonder is that, under all this torture, our Lord was so *patient*. Not a flush of anger appeared on His cheek, not a flash of wrath from His eyes. He bore it all, bore it in His very soul, with Diving Patience, the very patience of “the God of Patience.”

The next wonder is that He was *silent* under all this cruelty—not a word did He utter either in complaint or in condemnation of His assailants. This proved His true greatness. Eloquence is easy compared with silence and, perhaps, it would not have been true of Christ that “never man spoke like this Man,” if it had not also been true of Him that never man was silent like this Man. He fulfilled to the letter the ancient prophecy, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth.” Lord, teach us how to imitate Your patience and Your silence!

Notice, in the third place, how *eloquent* He was by that very silence. He said more for us, and more to us, by holding His tongue than if He had delivered Himself of many burning sentences. It is matchless eloquence that is seen in the calm serenity of Christ in the presence of these cruel persecutors, in the forgiving Character of Christ under the most exasperating circumstances and in the patience of Christ under unparalleled sufferings!

And yet again, I see something so triumphant in our Savior’s griefs that, while I call Him patient, silent, and eloquent, I must also call Him *victorious*. His persecutors could not make Him give way to anger. They could not destroy His mercy. They could not slay His love. They could not

cause Him to think of Himself. They could not make Him declare that He would go no further with His work of saving sinners, now that men began to scoff at Him, strike Him and despitefully use Him. No, the strong-souled Christ still perseveres in His merciful work, even as a mighty hunter pursues his game upon the mountain, leaping from crag to crag and cliff to cliff, defying danger and death that he may secure the creature on whose track he has gone. So, O mighty Christ, You did accomplish Your glorious purpose of love and mercy! You did lead captivity captive by suffering, to the bitter end, all that was inflicted upon You, even unto the death of the Cross!

Thus have I tried to picture Majesty in misery, but I have not been able to describe either Christ's Majesty or His misery as they deserve to be described. Meditate on them and pray the Spirit of God to give you such a sight of them as human nature, by itself, can never afford you!

II. Now I pass on to notice, secondly, that my text seems to me to show us **SIN AT ITS SPORT**.

All this sad scene represents what sin did when it had the opportunity—when all restraining bands were loosed and it could act according to its own evil will. It also represents what sin is still doing, as far as it can, and what would always be the action of sin if it were not hindered by the almighty power of God.

What, then, does sin do in the hour of its liberty? I invite you to notice, first—and to pay particular attention to any part that may come home to yourself—the *levity of sin*. These men are grossly insulting the Christ of God, but, to them, it is a sport, a game. They play at blindfolding Him—it is simply mirth and amusement to them. Sad, indeed, is it that sin should ever be what men call sport, yet I need scarcely remind you how often it is so, even now, to many. They run after it with the utmost eagerness and they call it pleasure—they call that which is provoking God pleasure—they call that which crucified Christ pleasure! They say that “they must see life,” and they call that, “life,” which forced from Jesus a bloody sweat and which afterwards dragged Him to a cruel death! And, alas, they say of many a sin, “What a delight it is to us! Would you make our life miserable by taking away our enjoyments?” So it becomes a matter of enjoyment to them to strike Christ on the face and to mock Him! Perhaps I am addressing some who have even made the Bible into a jest-book—their puns and mirth have been pointed with passages of Holy Writ. Possibly others have made rare fun out of some venerable Christian, some faithful servant of the living and true God. Well, Sirs, if you have done so, I would have you know how heinous is your sin in thus making sport of the godly—such “sport” as that, unless you repent of it, will damn you forever! As surely as you live, it will shut you out from the great Father's love and close the door of Mercy against you, world without end! Yet that is how sin acts when it has its liberty. Yes, and it sports even with the wounds of a Crucified God! Alas, that it should ever do so!

Notice, next, *the utter wantonness of sin*. If these men really wanted to get amusement out of Christ, they were able to get it, but what need was

there for them to also *strike* Him? What need was there of all that superfluity of cruelty by which they put Him to such shame and pain? If Christ must die, at least let Him die in peace—why that spitting in His face, that terrible scourging, that awful aggravation of His griefs? It was because men will sin out of sheer wantonness! I have known some persons sin in such strange ways that I have wondered why they did it. It was not for pleasure—at least I could not see any pleasure in it. It caused the man's own family to be utterly miserable and brought them and himself, too, down to poverty—what mirth or merriment could there be in *that*? There are some who seem as if they could never be happy unless they were engaged in making themselves unhappy forever and ever. They are not content without committing some extravagance in sin and making their whole lives an outrageous series of rebellions against God. If any of you have ever been guilty of such wantonness in sin, may the Holy Spirit cause a gracious influence to steal over you so that you will no longer grieve the Christ of God, but will, yourself, grieve that you should ever have sinned so shamefully against Him!

Then note, next, *the cruelty of sin*. I have already asked and I repeat the question—What need was there for these men to strike the Savior? What pleasure could they derive from all the pain they caused Him? By the mouth of His ancient Prophets, the Lord said, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!” It was in their own interests that He thus pleaded with men, for He would not have them injure themselves—and sin is always self-injury—it is a sort of suicide. Whenever a man does wrong, mischief must certainly come of it, and God knows this, so He beseeches men not to act so foolishly. And, oh, when a man mocks at true religion, rejects Christ and postpones the day of repentance, He is piercing again that dear heart that bled for the unworthy, and grieving that blessed Spirit who still strives with the sons of men, though He is often vexed and grievously provoked by them. Why are you so unkind to your God? Surely, there can be no necessity for committing such a sin as this!

Then, observe *the desperate unbelief that there often is in sin*. These men would not have blindfolded Christ if they had really believed Him to be the Son of God. They acted as they did because they had no faith whatever in Him. This is the great evil that lies at the root of most men's sins—they believe not in Jesus Christ whom God has sent. It is this of which the Spirit of God convinces men, as our Savior foretold concerning Him—“He will convince the world of sin...because they believe not on Me.” Yet there is nothing more reasonable, nothing more worthy to be believed, than the Revelation of God as given to us in the Holy Scriptures! A man has only to test and try for himself whether it is true, or not, and he shall soon have the proof of its verity in his own bosom. Let him really believe it and then see whether it does not make him both holy and happy—that shall be to him the test of its truth.

Notice, again, *how often there is in sin a kind of defiance of God*. If a boy were to come to his father and were to say to him, “I will do all manner of rude and unkind things to you, yet you will not chastise me,” it

would not be long before that father would make his son smart if he were, himself, worthy to be a father! But sinners act towards God in that kind of way. They often do to God what these persecutors did to Christ, as far as they can. They mock Him, strike Him and defy Him. Am I addressing anyone who has ever called down upon himself the curse of God? Beware lest that blasphemous prayer of yours be answered the next time you utter it, for it is God's way to answer prayer and, perhaps, He will answer yours—and then where will you be? Some have even dared to defy God thus—"Well, even if it is as you say, I am willing to take my chances—I will not submit to God." Ah, Sir, Pharaoh tried that plan and he repented of it, I think, when it was too late! In the midst of the Red Sea, when the waters began to overwhelm him and all his mighty host, *then* he learned what were the consequences of saying, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" Every sin has in it a measure of defiance of God—it is like these men striking Christ upon the face and saying to Him—"Prophecy, who is it that struck You?"

I will not linger longer upon this part of my theme except just to say that there is one more thing about sin that is peculiarly lamentable, namely, *the multiplicity of sin*. Read the 65th verse—"And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him." One thing, two things, 20 things will not content them—they must say "many other things" against Him! When a man once gives himself up to sin, it is like getting into a current which bears him onward where, at first, he had no thought of going. If you wade into the waters of sin, it will not be long that you will be able to retain a foothold and, by-and-by, unless the Lord shall, in His Grace, prevent such a calamity, the rapid current will bear you away to your everlasting destruction! It is no use for you to say, "This far will I go in sin, but no farther." You cannot stop when you please—if you once commit yourself to the influence of sin, you know not where it will carry you. Alas, alas, some men seem as if they never could sin enough to satisfy themselves! They multiply their transgressions beyond all count. Every iron of iniquity that they have is thrust into the fire. Both hands are diligently engaged in doing mischief. Sometimes they rise up early, but, more often, they sit up late—possibly all through the night, that they may waste the more precious hours in their wickedness! So God is grieved and Christ is wounded afresh by the sin of man. It is a sad, sad picture. I cast a veil over it and turn to something brighter and better.

III. We have seen Majesty in misery, and sin at its sport. Now, thirdly, let us see LOVE AT ITS LABOR.

All that shame and suffering was endured by our Savior for love of each of us who can truly say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." All this blindfolding, mocking, and striking was borne by Christ for your sake, Beloved, and mine. I will not try to describe it further, but I will ask you to just spend a minute or two in trying to realize that sad scene. For you—as much as if there were no other person in the whole universe—for you the King of Glory became the King of Scorn and bore all this despis-

ing and rejection of men! For you, John. For you, Mary. For you, old friend. For you, in your youth. If you, whoever you are, believe in Him, He was your Substitute. Your faith gives you the assurance that He was enduring all this for *you*—for you, I say, as much as if He had no other redeemed one, but had paid the ransom price all for *you*. Less than this would not have sufficed for you, though it is, indeed, sufficient for all the innumerable host redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus!

Let us, then, see love at its labor. I mean, our love to our Lord, though I might also speak of our Lord's love to us, and what it did for us. What shall our love do to show how grateful we are to Jesus for all that He endured for us? Well, first, *let it set penitence to confess*. Come, my Heart, here is room for the display of your grief. Why was Christ mocked in Jerusalem? Surely it was because you have mocked God with prayers that were no prayers, with hymns carelessly sung, with Scripture read as if they were merely the writings of men, with professions of religion that were hollow and empty! Brothers and Sisters, have you not some of these things to repent of? If you have mocked Him thus, the mocking that He endured in the hall of the high priest was on your account.

And as He was blindfolded, let us weep because our unbelief has often blindfolded Him. We imagined that He did not know about us, or that He had forgotten us. We thought that He could not see the end from the beginning and that He would not be able to bring good out of evil. Let me ask you, dear Friends—have you not often made Christ to be a blindfolded Christ so far as your apprehension of Him was concerned? If so, because you have thus blindfolded God by your unbelief, you are, by your sin, imitating the guilt of these men who literally blindfolded Christ.

And as we behold Him struck, let us again grieve as we remember how it was written of Him, "He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Every sin that we have ever committed made a gory furrow upon His precious back! Those black and blue bruises that alternate upon His sacred shoulders were caused by the cruel scourging to which each of us contributed our share by our transgressions. O Beloved, weep as you see Him bearing what you ought to have borne!

And when you read that they asked Him taunting questions while His eyes were blindfolded, ask yourself, O child of God, whether you have not often done the same! Have you never asked for a sign, instead of walking by faith? I confess that I have sometimes wished that I could have some token or indication of what my Lord thought. Ah, that is what these cruel men sought from Christ—they tried to get Him to convince them that He knew them when His eyes were blinded. O Brothers and Sisters, let us never seek a sign as that wicked and adulterous generation did! Let us walk by faith, not by sight, and implicitly trust our Lord! Because we have not trusted Him as we should have done, but have demanded of Him signs and tokens, we have been too much like these men who asked Him, "Prophecy, who is it that struck You?"

I said that we would see love at its labor, so I want you, next, to let your love *urge faith to confide in Christ*. Come, dear Friends, in all this suffering of our Savior, let us see fresh reasons for trusting ourselves more entirely in the hands of Christ. Those men held Jesus in order that neither death nor Hell might ever be able to hold us. He was held in our place, so He says concerning us, as He said concerning His disciples in the garden, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." The great Substitute is held as a prisoner so that all for whom He stood as Surety might be set at liberty forever!

He also was mocked. And to what end? We deserve eternal shame and contempt because of our sin, but He took all that shame upon Himself and made this wonderful exchange. As He put on the rags of our shame, He said to us, "Take My glittering vesture and wear it!" And now, the Glory which He had with the Father from eternity, He has put upon His people, that they may be like He and may be with Him where He is forever and ever! What a wonderful exchange is this! As Thomas read the Deity of Christ in His wounds, so do I read the eternal glory of His people in the mockery which He endured on their behalf.

When you see your Lord struck, why is that but that there may be no striking and no wounds for you, now or forever? You shall go free, for Jesus has borne all that you deserved to bear! He bore blow after blow that not one might ever fall upon *you*.

Why, too, was Jesus blindfolded but that we might be able to see? Our sin had blinded us to all that was worth seeing, but His death has taken away the scales and we can now see because He was caused not to see. Because He suffered these miserable miscreants to bind His eyes, therefore are our eyes unbound, today, and they shall be yet more unbound in that day when we shall behold Him face to face and be no more parted from Him.

And why was Jesus blasphemed by the "many other things" which they falsely laid to His charge? He was blasphemed that we might be justified! He was unrighteously accused and slandered in order that we might be able to boldly say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died." Therefore, be glad, Beloved—while you sorrow over your Lord's griefs, rejoice over what those griefs have brought to you and what they will continue to bring to you throughout eternity!

Now, lastly, let our love at its labor *awaken our zeal to consecration to our Lord*. Was He held captive? Then come, my most burning zeal, and inflame me with devotion to His cause! Was He held thus for *me*? Then He shall hold me fast and never let me go! My Lord, I do surrender myself, my life, my all, to You, to be Your willing captive forever! Take these eyes, these lips, these hands, these feet, this heart—and as you were and are altogether mine, so let me be altogether Yours. Is not this a fair requital? Does any child of God object to that?

Then, next, as they despised Him, come, my Soul, what do you say to this? Why, that I will despise the world that did despise my Lord and Sa-

rior! O world, world, world, you are a blind, blear-eyed, black-hearted thing to have treated my Master so! Shall I conform to your customs? Shall I flatter you? Shall I ask for your applause? No, you are crucified to me. As a felon nailed up to the cross, so, O world, are you to me because you have crucified the Christ, the infinitely-lovely Son of God! Henceforth, the world is crucified to us and we to the world!

And as they blindfolded Jesus, what then? Why, I will be blindfolded, too! I will henceforth see no charm, no attraction anywhere but in my Lord. My eyes shall behold Him and no other in the glory that is yet to be revealed and, today, I can say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire but You." Go through the world, Beloved, blindfolded to all but Christ, and you shall do well!

And, as they struck Jesus on the face, what will you and I do to show how much we love that face which was so shamefully ill-treated? My heart brings up before me a vision of that "sacred head, once wounded," encircled by the crown of thorns—that dear face, so bruised and battered, yet even then more beautiful than all the other loveliness of Heaven besides! Jesus, Son of God, and Son of Man, we adore You and we hasten to kiss those blessed feet of Yours, in loving adoration, and we do it all the more because wicked men did strike You upon the cheek! Reverence and love we gladly give to Him who once was struck by outcasts and who afterwards was nailed to the accursed tree!

And, inasmuch as these men said "many other things blasphemously against Him," come, my Brothers, let us say many things in His praise! And, Sisters, join us in the holy exercise! No one shall close our lips, faulty as they are, from speaking in honor of our dear Lord! Sometimes, with the Prophet, we are ready to confess that we are men of unclean lips and that we dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips, but, such as we are, we will render to Him the calves of our lips and give glory to His holy name! Never be ashamed to speak up for your Lord, Beloved. Never blush to acknowledge that you belong to Him. No, if you blush at all, blush with shame that you do not love Him more and serve Him better! By the memory of that dear face, blindfolded and struck, while cruel men all around slander Him with their blasphemous accusations, I charge you to—

***"Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
You soldiers of the Cross!"***

God help you to do so!

Oh, that some here who have never believed in Jesus Christ would now begin to trust Him! I do not invite you, just now, so much to believe in Him in His glory as to believe in Him in His shame. Was He really the Son of God and did He suffer for guilty men all that we have been talking of, and far more than that? Then I must believe in Him! To me, Jesus Christ seems to be a Character that men could never have invented. He must be historical for He is so original. Unaided human minds could never have thought out such a Character! There are strange things in

Buddhism and other false religions, and men with wild imaginations have conceived curious notions concerning their gods, but I challenge anyone to show me, in any book except God's Book, anything that can parallel the story of the Eternal God, Himself, becoming Man in order to make atonement for the sins of His creatures, that is, the sins committed by them against Him. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, I must believe in Him! What is more, I must believe that He died for me—

***“That on the Cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free.”***

Having so believed—I speak as God's witness to all who can hear me—I feel an inward peace that nothing can break, a holy joy that nothing can disturb and a sacred calm which death, itself, shall not be able to destroy. I have been at the deathbeds of many of our Brothers and Sisters who have been accustomed to worship here and who have been members of this Church. And—note this testimony, I pray you—I have never seen one of them afraid to die! I have not met with one coward among them all! But I have heard some of them singing triumphantly in their last hours, as merrily as though it were their marriage day—while others have been as calm and quiet as if to die were but to go to bed, sleep a while and wake again in the morning!

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—in this very Lord who stooped from the heights of Glory to the depths of shame and suffering—and you, also, shall find that your confidence in Him shall be rewarded even in this life! While, as for the world to come—ah then, when there shall be no blindfolded eyes for Him—no mockery and scorn and smiting for Him—but all shall be Glory forever and ever, then you and I, if we are believers in Him, shall eternally share His Glory! God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

SETTING JESUS AT NOTHING—TREATING HIM WITH CONTEMPT

NO. 2051

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1888.

*“And Herod with his men of war set Him at nothing.”
Luke 23:11.*

IT is your Lord whom Herod set at nothing! Once worshipped of angels and all the heavenly host, He is treated with contempt by a ribald regiment. In Himself “the brightness of His Father’s glory and the express image of His Person.” But now set at nothing by men not worthy of the name. Soon to reassume all His former glory with the Father and to descend in infinite splendor to judge the earth in righteousness and reign as King of kings—and yet here He is set at nothing! It is a sight of horror and of shame. How could angels bear to see it? This paltry prince and his rough retinue made nothing of Him who is All in All. They treated Him as beneath their contempt.

The most contemptible flouted Him. The mean soldier in the petty army of a petty prince made unholy mirth of Heaven’s high Lord and earth’s Redeemer. What a sorrowful and shameless business! May we be helped to sorrow over it! These wretches were of our race. May we mourn because of Him! When the thorns of grief and repentance are at our breast, may God grant that they may act as lancets to let out the foul blood of our pride, for we, too, are partakers in this tremendous crime, since our sin involved our Savior in the necessity of bearing this barbarous scorn.

Herod himself treated Him with contempt. In this loathsome being I see the most likely person to think nothing of the Lord Jesus. Let me just say a word or two about this member of a detestable family, that I may see whether his like can be found here tonight. I will not give you any history of this Herod. It is not worth while. This “fox” is not worth unearthing. The page of history is stained by the Herodian name. I will give you enough concerning him to help you to answer the question—Are *you* like he? Have you set Christ at nothing? Have you treated Christ with contempt?

I. This shall be our first enquiry—WHO IS THE MOST LIKELY PERSON TO TREAT OUR LORD WITH CONTEMPT?

Herod was a man who had once heard the Word of God. Yes, heard it with a measure of attention and apparent benefit. We read, “Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy and observed him. And when he heard him, he did many things and heard him gladly.” According to the margin, Herod “kept him or saved him”—preserving him

from those who would have laid violent hands upon him. But he broke away from his respectful regard of John and now that Jesus stands before him, his memory of the Baptist does not restrain him from mocking the Baptist's Lord. He had silenced that eloquent tongue and now he had no care to listen to anything which might further bestir his conscience.

We often find that the greatest despisers of Christ are those who formerly were hearers and readers of His Word but have turned from it. An apostate Methodist is a scoffer—a runaway Baptist is an infidel. It looks as if men must have some knowledge of the Truth of God to be able to fight against it in the most malicious way. The viper must be warmed in the man's bosom that he may have strength to bite him. Is not this a wretched business? Am I talking to any here who not so many years ago were regular attendants upon a faithful ministry but who have grown weary of it and given it up? I do not know what reason you give. But I suppose the real reason is that you love the world better than Christ and so you have left His people and His Word.

It troubles your conscience that you have done so and now you try to conceal your uneasiness by picking holes in your former minister and finding fault with the Truths of God which he preached to you. I know the tricks and manners of apostates. Wanting an opiate for your consciences, you invent a fault in the Gospel, or try to disbelieve it altogether. What an unhappy thing that the hopeful hearer should decline into a hopeless despiser! Herod heard John but he ridiculed Jesus. See to what unconverted hearers may come?

If I look at Herod again, I see in him a man who, after hearing the Word faithfully preached, had distinctly done violence to his conscience. He heard John until John came home to him about the woman with whom he was living in an incestuous union. Herodias would have killed John at once—and though Herod did not dare to go so far as that, he shut him up in prison. A filthy lust must not be rebuked—Herod imprisons his reprover. He knew that John was right and he trembled at his rebuke. But he could not give up his sin and so he put the servant of God in a dungeon. He was held fast, as many a man before, and since has been held fast, by an evil woman.

She demanded of him that at the very least the man of God should be cast into prison. How dare he speak against what the prince chose to do! How dare a peasant censure so great a man as Herod about his personal life! So, instead of bowing before the supreme authority of right and listening to the voice of truth as uttered by the Lord's Elijah, he must exercise his royal power and lay his reprover by the heels. The man who could do this was in training for the more daring act of setting the Lord Jesus at nothing.

First despise the man, and then the Master. First do violence to your better self and then scoff at godliness. My Friend, do you remember that night when you distinctly decided for the devil? Do you recollect when, after having the evil set before you and seeing it and counting the cost, you decided to continue in it? Then you turned with bitterness upon the hon-

est reprover whose rebuke you had aforetime endured. Perhaps it was your wife upon whom you turned with anger. What hard words you said to her for the gentle remark she ventured to make! It was an effort for you. You gave conscience an awful wrench. And therefore you put yourself into a passion and talked like an insulted man.

Or was it your brother? It may be you left his society in order to be free from his remarks. Was it your child, or your friend? You could not put them in prison. But you were determined that you would not bear any more of their protests. You abused and silenced them. Not because you thought they were wrong, but because they made you feel that *you* were wrong. By all this you have prepared yourself to treat the Lord with contempt. And we cannot wonder that you do so.

This man also had yielded to sinful companions and had committed a gross sin as the result of it, for when Herodias danced and he promised to give her whatsoever she desired, she asked the head of John the Baptist on a platter. And he, not liking to break his word in the presence of the assembled guests and not willing to stand out against the woman with whom he lived in unhallowed intercourse, yielded and the Baptist's head was taken from his shoulders. Ah, well, *you* may not have sinned quite in that way. But you, too, once had better thoughts and higher aims. Your companions were too many for you and drove all good out of you.

I do not mention this that you may dare to cast the blame upon others of that which was really your own act and deed. If there had been a spark of true manhood in you, you would have resisted the suggestion of those enemies in the garb of friends. But you are soft and plastic, like wax, in the hand of evil. Instead of being as you ought to be, like granite towards evil and like wax towards good you now feel as if you had gone too far to turn back. You are now fixed in an evil estate. A black sin seems to bar the way to repentance. Truly, even now, you will be welcomed to the bosom of mercy, but you are not anxious enough for it. It is a long lane that has no turning, but you seem to have got into such a lane and you are driven along it by evil forces.

This is the man that thinks nothing of Christ—the man who thinks so much of drinking and dancing and of the companions which such things have brought around him. Of course he does not think anything of Christ, for His ways would take from him these vile associates. How should he value the holy Jesus? Will swine ever think much of pearls? It is vain that we set before you beauties for which you have no eyes, hopes for which you have no heart. Jesus cannot be valued by a man of Herod's sort, who puts so high a value upon the opinion of those who sit with him at his banquets.

Once more—the man who thinks nothing of Christ is the man that means to go on in sin, even as Herod did. The die was cast—his mind was made up for evil. He would be very glad to hear Christ—he has no objection, still, to go to a place of worship and listen to a preacher. He would be very pleased to see a miracle—he would join in a revival, for he would be glad to enjoy something sensational—but he does not mean to give up the

sin in which he lives, nor the company which eggs him on in it. He does not mean to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye. Not he! He is too fond of the vice, too much ensnared by his passions.

And so, as he gives his heart to his lust, he takes away his heart from Christ. No, he treats religion with derision, because it is opposed to his bent and inclination. What a sad thing! I generally find when man speaks against the Lord Jesus, that if you follow him home he would rather not have you go indoors for fear his inner life should be known. He does not want you to see the skeleton in the closet. I have so often met with this fact in actual life that when I have heard a man speak bitterly of my Master, I have formed my opinion and have not been wrong. A little enquiry has revealed so much that I have said, "It is not at all surprising that such a man should speak evil of Christ. It is as natural to such a man to talk against Christ as for a dog to bark."

When a bad fellow once praised Socrates, that philosopher said, "I wonder what I can have been doing amiss, that such a man should speak well of me." If lustful lips praised the Savior, one might begin to be afraid. But when they denounce and deride Him, we feel that it is the only homage which vice can pay to Purity.

This, then, is the man who sets Jesus at nothing. I wonder whether he is here tonight! Possibly it is a woman who is doing this. Women fall into precisely the same evils as men from their own side of the house and the same remarks apply to both sexes. You who once were hearers, you who once were impressed, you who did willful violence to conscience. You who persist in sin, you who are the slaves of evil company and dare not do right for the life of you, for fear of ridicule—you are the kind of people of whom Herod was a sad specimen—you set Jesus at nothing. You treat my Master in contempt.

II. Having tried to find out Herod, let us now answer a second question—ON WHAT GROUND DID HE TREAT OUR LORD WITH CONTEMPT?

Men have some reason or other for their acts, although often those reasons are most unreasonable. Before we consider the unhallowed reasons for this great crime, let us do homage to the name of the Son of God. O Lord Jesus, even in Your lowest humiliation You are worthy of all reverence. To Your friends You are all the more dear and the more honored because You were greatly despised. You, bound and brought a prisoner before the tetrarch, are free to rule our hearts. You were charged with sedition but we fall at Your blessed feet and proclaim You King of kings!

Herod sets Him up as the butt of his ridicule and makes nothing of Him. As Herbert puts it—

***"Herod and all his bands do set Me light,
Who teach all hands to war, fingers to fight,
And only the Lord of Hosts and might.
Was ever grief like Mine?"***

I suppose that part of the reason why he and his men of war made nothing of our Lord was because of His gentleness and patience. Our Lord had no sword and none of the temper of men who wear weapons. His visage

was not like the face of a man of war—it was marred with grief but not with anger. Worn with sorrow but not with battle. He was the lamb and not the lion, the dove and not the eagle and therefore the fighting men despised Him.

If he had any weapons they were His tears and His almighty love. But these the Herodian ruffians utterly despised. All unarmed He stood before them and when He was reviled He reviled not again. You know how men of muscular strength and physical bravado value men by their muscles and bones and think nothing of those who are feeble in arm and body. The Savior, in His emaciation and faintness, must have seemed a poor creature to these ruffians. The Christian religion teaches us to be meek and gentle, to forgive injuries and even to give up our own rights rather than to inflict wrong.

Such precepts savor of cowardice to the blustering world. Non-resistance they cannot hear of. They do not like the word “Forgive.” “Surely,” they say, “a worm will turn?” Thus they think so little of Christ that they prefer an earthworm’s example to that of the Lord. The sweet savor of gentle forbearance, which the spirit of Jesus breathes into the hearts of His people, is held in contempt by many. They call it cant and hypocrisy because it is so alien to their nature, so inconsistent with their ideas of manly conduct.

Furthermore, our Lord was ridiculed by Herod because He refused to gratify his curiosity and amuse his love of sensation. The wicked Herod virtually said to the holy Jesus, “Come, work us a miracle. We hear that you did deliver from death, now release yourself from our hands. We hear that you did multiply loaves and fishes and feed multitudes. Give us a banquet here. You can do all things, so reports say of You—come, do some little thing that we may see and believe. Did not Moses work miracles before Pharaoh? Work a miracle before us.”

There stands our Lord, with all power in His hands but He will not lift a finger for His own deliverance and Herod’s amusement. O blessed Jesus, it is the same still, You will not dazzle nor amuse and therefore men prefer any charlatan to You. Herod then begins to question Him. He asks Him this and that and the other, with many a jest rolled in between. But he receives no answer. He who answered blind beggars when they cried for mercy is silent to a prince who only seeks to gratify his own irreverent curiosity. Then the men-at-arms laugh at their silent victim. “Why,” they say, “the man is dumb. Either He can say nothing for Himself, or He is obstinate and ill-mannered. He speaks not when He is spoken to. Has He lost His wits?”

Thereupon they multiply their profane jests and make nothing of the silent One. I do not doubt that often men turn away from the faith because their curiosity is not gratified and they see nothing marvelous in it. A Gospel for the age! A brand new Gospel every year might suit them. But the old is stale—they know all about it and sneer at it. Plain Gospel is too plain for them. They desire adornment, or at least mystery and the pomp which veils the unknown. They would rather go where there are gorgeous

ceremonies and mutterings in an unknown tongue amid the smoke of incense and the harmony of music. The simple Gospel of, “Believe and live,” does not suit them. For it seems fit only for the poor and uneducated—thus they treat Jesus with contempt.

Moreover, the royal claims of Jesus excited their scorn. I think I hear the “Aha! Aha! Aha!” of Herod as he said, “Call *Him* a King? You could find such kings as this in every street of Jerusalem. Talk of a kingdom for Him! Go to the pool of Bethesda and fetch up some poor wretch who lies waiting there for the moving of the water and call *him* a king! King? What hosts are at Your command? What kingdom do You govern? What laws can You make? Here! Put the white robe upon Him. Let Him at least *look* like a monarch. Yes, that old robe will do! Is He not every inch a King?”

Then the soldiery took up the jest! How bitterly, how derisively did they make His royalty the football of contempt! Thus today the world makes nothing of the royalty of King Jesus. A nominal king He may be but as a real king they will not have Him. Those who would be in the dust before the mean prince have no esteem for Him. There is no pomp about the pure religion of Jesus. There is no glory of philosophy about His teaching. And so they set Him and His cause at nothing. Ah, me, what will a rebellious people do in the day when He appears to claim His throne and punish sedition?

Then, too, they denied His prophetic office. “Look!” said Herod, “He will not speak. I have asked Him twenty questions and He will not answer one of them. This is a pretty Prophet! John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness but this man has no voice at all. A dumb Prophet! Why, He is mute as a fish and has nothing to say for Himself.” With such unhallowed merriment did Herod and his men of war treat the Lord with contempt. How they provoked Him! But He stands in the majesty of His self-government, quiet to the end. Here was an Omnipotence which restrained the lips of Omnipotence. It was a wondrous power, that God-like patience which enabled indignant Holiness to withhold its word of condemnation.

The Prophet proved His commission by His silence. And yet He provoked their scorn, so that they set Him at nothing. At this time, because the Christian faith is silent upon a great many questions, certain men deride it. When men come to it with captious questions they receive no answer and they are irritated thereby. When they idly demand a miracle and it does not yield to their desires, they have fresh jeers for it. “You preach up the faith of Christ as the only true and Divine religion—let us see it work wonders. Where are your miracles? We have asked you fifty questions about the past and the future and you do not reply. Where is the ground for your boastings?” Thus they make nothing of Christ and disdain His claim to teach with authority.

Those, I suppose, were the grounds upon which Herod and such as Herod, make light of Christ. Poor grounds they are, and such as will fail to justify them before the bar of God.

III. Now, dear Friends, let us consider—DO MEN NOW SET OUR LORD AT NOTHING? DO MEN NOW TREAT OUR LORD WITH CONTEMPT?

Herod is dead and buried and there is no sort of reason why we should not let him rot into oblivion. I therefore speak to *you* and try to discover whether *you* are setting Christ at nothing. Are *you* treating our Lord with contempt? I fear there are such. Who are they?

Some set Him at nothing for they will not even consider His claims. "Oh," they say, "we have plenty else to think about besides religion. What is there in it which will fill our pockets? There is nothing at all in it worth a moment's attention." How do they know? They do not know. Nothing in it? God gives His own Son to die for guilty men and there is nothing in it? The highest thoughts of God are set forth in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and you do not think it worth while even to consider what God has therein revealed?

A man goes to a bookstall and turns over a book. It is a novel—he reads a page and would like to buy it. But suppose it is a book upon the glories of Christ. Does he read, then? Does he wish to buy it? No. It is one of those dry theological books and he shuts it up. He will make no bid for a volume on so dull a subject. He would like to know of Alexander the Great or even of Tom Thumb but for the world's Redeemer he cares nothing. He makes nothing of Christ—he treats our Lord with contempt.

Do I not convict some here present tonight? They have never set apart one solitary hour in their lives to the honest and candid consideration of the claims of Jesus, the Divine Savior. If it is so, you have, indeed, made Christ very cheap. And if you perish for lack of Him, your blood is on your own heads! If this is the medicine that will heal your disease, and you huff at it, and will not even hear of the cures it has worked, who is to blame if you perish? Who is to save the man who will not listen when salvation is put before him? Yet the great mass of our fellow citizens are of this kind.

In London there are millions who make so little of Christ that they will not even come to hear what His ministers have to say about Him, nor read their Bibles, nor show the least interest in the matter. In many a house in London, Mahomet is practically as much esteemed as Jesus. Ah me,

There are many others who prefer their business to Jesus. They would not mind giving some little attention to the Lord Jesus but then they are too busy just now. They say that they really cannot afford the time. O my busy Hearer! You will have to find time to die before long—why not think of that solemn certainty? You are very busy and yet you find time to eat. Have you no time to feed your soul? You find time to put on your dress, have you no time to dress your souls? You seek out the surgeon when you are ill. Have you no time to seek out a Savior for your sin-sick soul? Ah, it is not that—you have the time but you have not the heart.

Others prefer amusements to the Lord Jesus. "Well," says one, "we must have recreation. In my spare time I like a game." I know that. I am not for denying you healthy recreation but everything should be in order and I claim first place for Jesus Christ and His salvation. What? Is it not worth while to give up a sport to seek Jesus? Do you think a game of cards more important than seeking the pardon of your sin? An evening at the theater or the music hall—do you really think so little of Jesus that

you can live without Him and satisfy your mind with these poor things? Can you suffer the paltry amusements of the world to stand before the Lord Jesus?

Yet it is so with some of you—I wish it were not. My Master’s blood and righteousness, the salvation of a soul from Hell, the preparing of a heart for Heaven—these are laid away in the lumber-room—to allow the childish pleasures of a vain world to engross your thoughts. You will know better one day. God grant you may learn wisdom while yet it may be of use to you. Too late! What awful words! May you even now feel that if the Son of God has lived and died for men, it is of the first importance that you put business and pleasure in their proper places and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Another sort of persons make nothing of Christ because they profess to see nothing profound and philosophical in the faith which He has revealed. These are the Greeks, to whom the doctrine of the Cross is foolishness. O foolish Greeks! These wise men will not hear some of us because we can be understood by the people. “Anybody can understand you,” they say, “you speak after the manner of the crowd and what you say is simple enough to be clear to the most ignorant. We like something deeper, something too profound to be readily grasped. We are above commonplace people and need something more intellectual and philosophical.”

A man of note once said to me, “Why do you keep on preaching to those thousands at Newington? Preach so that the mob will leave you and the elite will support you.” To whom I answered that if one man’s soul was of less value than another, his was of the least value who could talk so slightingly of others. Those who make no pretense to culture are often far more sensible people than those who affect superiority. The man who thinks that he is intellectual and talks in that fashion is a miserable snob, and has scarcely a soul at all.

When a man despises the multitude, he deserves to be despised himself. But, my dear Sir, if the salvation of Christ is very simple and very plain, is it not so much the better? Have you not enough of philanthropy to make you feel that if you could have a Gospel only for the elite, it would be a matter of deep regret? Is not a Gospel for the multitude the thing to be desired? Do you not desire the vast mass to be saved? I hope you do. But I fear you make nothing of Christ when you despise His Gospel because you imagine that it is not deep enough and philosophical enough for you. The most profound science in the world is the science of the Cross! Christ Himself is the highest wisdom, for He is the wisdom of God.

Others treat Christ with contempt because they confide in *themselves*. They think themselves quite good enough without a Savior. If they are not quite perfect, they believe that they can make themselves so and be saved without an atoning sacrifice, or a new heart, or union to Christ. They are doing their best and they make no doubt, whatever, that they will find their way to Heaven as well as others. Do you thus think? You are in grave error.

There was a learned Romanist who once ventured to say that if salvation could only be had on terms of Free Grace, he would not have it. Do you know what happened? Why, he did not have it—that was all. And that is what will happen to you—if you will not have salvation as a free gift of Divine Grace, without any merit wherewith to purchase it—then you must go without it and perish in your sin. For the terms of Free Grace will never be altered to suit the pride of the human heart.

If any man sets up his righteousness in the place of Jesus Christ, the sin-removing Lamb, why then he has made nothing of Christ and the Lord will make less than nothing of him. Alas, that any man should be so profane as to think himself so good that he does not need God's Grace and the atoning blood! Such pride treats the Lord Christ with contempt and will bring sure destruction upon the man who is guilty of it.

I have no doubt that there are many, also, who treat Christ with contempt because they have no conscience whatever as to His present claims upon them. O dear Sirs, if you did but know His kindness to the sons of men, even to His enemies and how He sought them with His tears and then bought them with His blood, you would feel forced to love Him—

***“Surely Christ deserves the noblest place
In every human heart.”***

Truly know Jesus and you must love Him.

But some men do not think that they owe Him anything, or are in any need of Him. It is nothing to such that He died, for they did not require His death to save them—in their judgment they are not lost. Those who are of this mind will leave this Tabernacle tonight and will go back to the world just as they came in, practically saying, “Whether Jesus lived or whether He died and whatever He did or was, I care nothing, for I owe Him nothing.” And yet you owe Him everything. You had not been here tonight if it were not for the mercy which has spared you and which has come to you through Him. The axe would have had you down long ago but for His intercession.

There had been no Gospel to set before you tonight if it had not been for the death agony of the Lord Jesus. You owe the very opportunity of hearing the Gospel and the opportunity of accepting it to His dying love. Oh, that you had a conscience which would make you just towards Jesus! Oh, that you felt that you were bound to love Him and live for Him, because of all that He has done for guilty men!

As they have no conscience of His claims upon them, so many have no fears concerning the day of His appearing. Whether you believe it or not, Jesus, as your Judge, is at the door. He said, years ago, “Behold, I am coming quickly.” He is still coming and must soon arrive to commence the last dread session of justice. What matters it how many more years may elapse? They will fly like the wind. The day will come when Heaven and earth shall be ablaze. The thick darkness will lower down—

***“And, withering from the vault of night,
The stars shall pale their feeble light.”***

The hour will come when the earth and sky will rock and reel and pass away, rolled up like a worn-out vesture. Then shall the trumpet ring out exceeding loud and long—“Awake, you dead and come to judgment!” How will you endure that voice which shall disturb the stillness of the sepulcher? “Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment!” How it will peal forth! None of you will be able to resist the call. From your beds of dust you will start up amazed to a terrible awakening. From the sea, from the land, from the teeming cemetery, from the lonely grave, men will rise, and all of them stand before Christ!

In that day you will see nothing but the Great White Throne and Him that sits upon it. You will be unable to close your eyes, or to turn your gaze elsewhere. There will He sit and you will know Him by His scars—

***“How resplendent shine the nail-prints!
Every eye shall see Him move.”***

Still shall the trumpet thrill out the summons, “Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!” And you must come, whether you will or not. And if you have despised the Lord as Savior, you will tremble before Him as Judge. You will then hear His voice, which in itself is sweeter than the harps of Heaven but to the ungodly it will be more full of thunder than the crash of tempest—“Depart! Depart! Depart!”

O my Hearer, what will then become of you? The prospect is terrible—but you have no concern about it. To die, to rise, to be judged, to be condemned—you take no account of it. Like Herod, you set him at nothing. Like Herod, you treat Him with contempt. How dare you do so? How dare you despise the great Judge? Ah, my Lord, have mercy upon them! Have mercy upon them now and turn them from doing to You and to themselves this grievous wrong of making nothing of the Lord of All. They set Him at nothing!

This is very heavy preaching to me. If it is as painful to you to hear as to me to speak, you will be glad when I have done. I pray that these solemn words may long remain upon your hearts. Oh, that they might bring you to Jesus at once by the power of the Holy Spirit!

IV. But I close with this—WHAT DO BELIEVERS SAY ABOUT THEIR LORD? Herod made nothing of Him—what do *we* make of Him? Well, we say, first, that we mourn and lament that there ever was a time when we ourselves made nothing of the glorious One. It is many years ago with some of us. But we cannot forget it, nor cease to bewail it. There were a certain number of years in our lives in which it was nothing to us that Jesus should die.

O my dear Hearers, perhaps some of you have been lately converted after forty, or fifty, or sixty years of sin. Repent with all your hearts that you were Herods so long. Christ has forgiven you. But can you forgive yourselves? No. I think that you still smite on your breast and say, “Lord, I grieve that ever I lived a moment without acknowledging You as my Lord—that I ever ate a meal or drew in a breath without bowing before You.” Lord, bury those years in forgetfulness which we spent in forgetfulness of You!

Next, it is now our grief that any others should set the Lord Jesus at nothing. It must be a great grief to any man here if she who lies in his bosom treats the Lord with contempt. Dear woman, I know what your daily burden must be if the husband who is so dear to you does not love your Savior whom you love with a higher love. What an anguish it is to nourish and bring up children and see them refuse our Lord! I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the Truth. And no greater sorrow than to see them running into evil ways.

Could we really see the heart of an unregenerate man or woman it would cause us the utmost distress. If we felt as we ought to feel, if there were only one unconverted person in this Tabernacle, we should make a Bochim of it till that heart was yielded to Christ. If there existed only one man or woman who did not love the Savior. And if that person lived among the wilds of Siberia and it were necessary that all the millions of Believers on the face of the earth should journey there and plead with him to come to Jesus before he could be converted, it would be well worth all the zeal and labor and expense of all that effort.

One soul would repay the travail in birth of myriads of zealous Christians. Lord, we cannot bear it that there should go on existing men and women who make nothing of the bleeding Son of God! It is an awful thing—as awful as Hell itself! Out in that street tonight think of the thousands who will be hunting for the precious life. Walk along our crowded thoroughfares and think of the myriads even of this city who live and die without God and without hope, making nothing of Jesus and you will feel a heartbreak which will make life a burden. I could wish that you felt that heartbreak for their sakes and for Christ's sake.

But then, dear Friends, what do we make of Christ ourselves now? Well, that I cannot tell you, except it is in one word—Christ is All. Herod made nothing of Him. We make everything of Him—

***“All my spacious powers can wish,
In You do richly meet;
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.”***

Could any of you who love my Lord tell me what you think of Him? I am sure that you would break down in the attempt. For my own part, I always fail in the glad endeavor—

***“When my tongue would hope to express
All His love and loveliness,
Then I lisp and falter forth
Broken words not half His worth.”***

If we could give every drop of our blood for Jesus. If we could be burnt at a slow fire for a century for Him, He deserves all our suffering and all our life. Could our zeal know no respite, a whole eternity of service would not adequately set forth what we think of Him.

I close with this practical thought. Sometimes Believers show their love and their appreciation of their Master by special acts of homage. Herod, you see, when he made nothing of Him, said, “Here, bring out that glittering white robe of mine and put it on Him, that we may heap contempt

upon Him. He calls Himself a King! Let us pay Him homage!” They mocked Him, and they put the robe upon Him and then sent Him back to Pilate. Now, I want you to imitate Herod in the opposite direction. Let us do our Lord special honor tonight. Let us crown Him. As soon as we have opportunity, let us make some special offering of our substance to His cause.

Let us set apart a season for adoration and reverent worship. Let us resolve that for His sake we will speak well of His name to somebody to whom we have not yet spoken. It may be that some of you can sing a hymn to Jesus with choice music, or write a glorious verse for His dear sake. Go, take your pen and dip it in your heart and write a fresh tract in honor of His blessed name. Herod set Him at nothing but let us set Him on high in our best manner. Set Him at the highest figure that your thought and your imagination can reach.

It may be that some Brother here could preach about his Lord and yet he has not opened his mouth from timidity. Come, try, my Friend. Shake off your bashfulness. It may be that some Sister here might teach women, or get together a class of youngsters and glorify Christ by instructing them. I long to undo what Herod did and pay the Well-Beloved a recompense for His shame. Oh, how would I honor Him! But what am I? What can one person do? Come, all of you, my Brethren, and help to cry “Hosanna!”

Alas, what are we all together? The music has no volume in it, compared with what He deserves. Come, all you saints and worship Him! And what are all the saints on earth? Come, you in Heaven, who bear the palm, redeemed, perfected and white-robed as you are—come, worship Him who washed your robes in His own blood! And what are all they? Even the armies of the redeemed suffice not. Come, all holy ones and praise Him—

***“Angels, assist our mighty joys!
Strike all your harps of gold!
But when you raise your highest notes,
His love can never be told.”***

Therefore do I summon all things that are to praise the Lord, without whom was not anything made. I charge all living things to adore Him who is the resurrection and the life. Let space become one great mouth for song. Let time unceasingly flow with hallelujahs. Let eternity become an orchestra to the praise of Jesus who was mocked of Herod and his men of war. Glory be to His name! Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Amen.

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OUR LORD BEFORE HEROD

NO. 1645

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad: for he was desirous to see Him for a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him in many words; but He answered him nothing.”
Luke 23:8. 9.

AFTER Pilate had declared to the chief priests and scribes that he found no fault at all in Jesus, they were afraid that their victim would escape and, therefore, their fury was raised to the highest pitch and they cried out the more vehemently against Him. In the course of their outcries they made use of the word, “Galilee,” going, as it seems to me, a little out of their way in order to drag in the name—“He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.” Galilee was a region held in very great contempt and they mentioned it to cast a slur upon our Lord, as if He were a mere boor from among the clowns of Galilee. To Pilate, they thought that the mention of the name would, perhaps, act like the proverbial red rag held before an infuriated bull, for he appears to have been troubled by seditious persons from that province.

We all remember that they were Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. The Galileans were reputed to be an ignorant people, apt to be led astray by impostors and so enthusiastic that they ventured their lives against the Romans. The priests would not only cast contempt upon Jesus, whom they were known to call the Galilean, but also excite the prejudices of Pilate, so that he might condemn Him to die as one of a nest of rebels. They were mistaken, however, in the consequences of their device, for Pilate caught at the word, “Galilee,” directly. That province was not immediately under his rule—it was under the sway of the tetrarch Herod Antipas and, therefore, he thought within himself, “I can kill two birds with one stone—I can get rid of this troublesome business by sending this prisoner to Herod—and I can also greatly gratify the king by showing him this attention.”

Pilate had quarreled with Herod and now, for some purpose of his own, he resolved to patch up a friendship by pretending great deference to his sovereign powers by sending one of his subjects to be tried by him. Pilate, therefore, asked, “Is this man a Galilean?” and when they told him that He was—for He was so by repute, His birth at Bethlehem having been willfully ignored—then Pilate at once commanded that He be led to Herod, for Herod was in his palace at Jerusalem attending the Passover festival.

See, then, my Brothers and Sisters, our Divine Master conducted in His third march of sorrow through Jerusalem! First, He was led from the garden to the house of Annas; then He was conducted through the streets from the hall of Caiaphas to the judgment hall of Pilate. And now, by Pilate's orders, He is led a third time by the angry crowd of priests through the streets to the palace of Herod, there to await His fourth examination! Certain of the old writers delight to remark that as there were four evangelists to do honor to our Lord, so were there four judges to do Him shame. Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod. We are on safer ground when we observe with the early Church the coalition of the heathen and the Jews—"For of a truth against Your holy Child Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel determined before to be done."

This morning I shall endeavor to set forth this portion of the sad narrative under two heads, which will be these—Herod before Jesus—and Jesus before Herod.

I. I call your attention, first, to HEROD BEFORE JESUS because you must know something of his character, something of the meaning of his questions, before you can rightly understand the sorrow which they caused Jesus, our Lord and Master. This Herod Antipas was the son of the old Herod the Great who had put to death the babes at Bethlehem in the hope of destroying the King of the Jews. He was a chip off the old block, but still, he was several degrees baser than his father. There was nothing of the grandeur of his father about him. There was the same evil disposition without the courage and the decision. He did not, in some things, out-Herod Herod, for in certain points he was a more despicable person. Herod the Great may be called a lion, but our Lord very descriptively called this lesser Herod a fox, saying, "Go and tell this fox."

He was a man of dissolute habits and frivolous mind. He was very much under the sway of a wicked woman who destroyed any little good there might have been in him. He was a lover of pleasure, a lover of himself, depraved, weak and trifling to the last degree. I almost grudge to call him a man, therefore let him only be called a tetrarch. This petty tetrarch had once been the subject of religious impressions. These Herods all, more or less, felt the influence of religion at times, though they were by no means benefited thereby. The impressions made upon his conscience by John did not last with Herod. They were, at first, powerful and practical, for we are informed that, "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

I suppose he reformed many matters in his kingdom and cast off, perhaps, some of his grosser vices. But when, at last John began to denounce him for having taken his brother's wife to be his paramour, while yet the brother lived, he cast his reprover into prison. And then you remember how, with reluctance, Herod, to please his mistress, beheaded John in prison. Mark this—probably there is no more dangerous character living than a man who has once come under religious influences so as

to be materially affected by them—and yet has broken loose and cast off all fear of God! He has done despite to his conscience so violently that from now on he will know few qualms.

In such a man is fulfilled the saying of our Lord, “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest and finds none. Then he says, I will return into my house from where I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept and garnished. Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.” The mind of Herod Antipas was in the condition of the chamber which has been swept and garnished, for his life had been somewhat reformed, but the unclean spirit with the terrible seven had come back to his old den and now he was a worse man by a great deal than he had ever been before. The dog returned to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

This Herod was an Idumaeon, that is to say, one of the descendants of Esau, an Edomite, and though he had professedly become a Jew, yet the old blood was in him, as it is written concerning Edom, “He did pursue his brother with the sword and cast off all pity.” The true Jacob stood before one of the seed of Esau, a tetrarch, profane and worldly like his ancestor—and scant was the pity which He received. Esau was descended from Abraham according to the flesh, but with Jacob was the Covenant according to the spirit—it bodes no good to the spiritual seed when it comes, even for a moment, under the power of the carnal seed!

We see how the child of the flesh takes to mocking, while the child according to promise is called to patience. Herod was in such a state of mind that he furnishes me with a typical character which I would use for the instruction and admonition of you all. He is a type of some who frequently come to this Tabernacle and go to other places of worship, occasionally—people who were once under religious impressions and cannot forget that they were so—but who will never be under any religious impressions again. They are now hardened into vain curiosity! They wish to know about everything that is going on in the Church and Kingdom of Christ, but they are far enough from caring to become part and parcel of it, themselves. They are possessed with an idle curiosity which would lift the golden lid of the Ark and intrude behind the veil.

They like to gather together all the absurd stories which are told about ministers and to retail all the odd remarks that were ever made by preachers for centuries. All the gossip of the Churches is sure to be known to them, for they eat up the sins of God’s people as they eat bread! It is not likely that their knowledge of religious things will be of any use to them, but they are always eager after it. The Church of God is their lounge; Divine service is their theater; ministers are to them, as actors, and the Gospel, itself, so much play-house property. They are a sort of religious Athenians, spending their time in nothing else than in hearing some new thing, hoping that, perhaps, some singular and unexpected discourse may be delivered in their hearing which they can retail in the next company where they would raise a laugh. To them, preaching is all a farce

and, worked up with a few falsehoods of their own, it makes excellent fun for them and causes them to be regarded as amusing fellows. Let them look at Herod and see in him their *leader*, the type of what they really are or may soon become!

First, let us see idle curiosity at its best. Look here, Sirs, and then look in a glass and trace the likeness! To begin with, we find that Herod's curiosity had been created in him by his having heard many things concerning Jesus. How did he come to hear of Him? His great deeds were common talk—all Jerusalem rang with the news of His miracles and wondrous words. Herod, a convert to the Jewish faith, such as he was, took interest in anything that was going on among the Jews and all the more so if it touched upon the kingdom, for the jealousy which set his father in a rage was not altogether absent in his son. No doubt, also, he had heard of Christ from John. John would not long have preached to Herod without using his own grand text, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

I am sure that, though he was a preacher of righteousness, he had not left off being the herald of the coming Savior! And so, from the stern lips of the great Baptist, Herod had heard concerning the King of the Jews and something concerning His Kingdom. When John was dead, Herod heard still more of Christ, so that, astonished with what was being done, he said, "This is John the Baptist whom I have beheaded: he is risen from the dead!" Jesus became a kind of nightmare to his conscience. He was disturbed and alarmed by what he heard that the Prophet of Nazareth was doing. Besides that, there was one in his household who doubtless knew a great deal about the Savior, for in Herod's court was the husband of a woman who ministered unto the Lord of her substance.

The lady's name was Joanna and her husband was Chuza, Herod's steward—I suppose Herod's butler and manager of his household. From Chuza he could readily have learned concerning Jesus and we may be sure that he would enquire, for the fear of the great Prophet was upon him. Thus Herod's curiosity had been excited about our Lord Jesus Christ for a considerable time and he longed to see Him. I am not sorry when this happens to any of my Hearers. I am right glad that they should hear something about the Lord from His friends, something about Him from His ministers and from those of us whose highest glory it is that, though we are not worthy to unloose the laces of His shoes, yet it is all our business here below to cry, "Behold the Lamb!" So these rumors, this talk, these admonitions had begotten in Herod's mind the desire that his eyes should light on Jesus—so far, so good.

Often men at this day come up to the House of Prayer that they may hear the preacher—not because they want to be converted, not because they have any idea of ever becoming followers of Jesus—but because they have heard something about true religion which excites their curiosity and they want to know what it is all about. They are fond of curiosities of literature and so they would study curiosities of religion, oddities of oratory and things remarkable of a theological kind. It is said of Herod, in consequence of this curiosity, that he *rejoiced* to see Jesus. It is said that he

was, “exceedingly glad.” What a hopeful state to be in! May we not expect great things when a man sees Jesus and is exceedingly glad? As I read this passage to myself, I thought, Why, the language might well describe a child of God! Our text might fitly be spoken concerning ourselves!

Let me read it line by line and remark upon it. “When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad.” So were the Apostles when Jesus manifested Himself to them, for it is written, “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” What other sight could bring to a true Believer such joy? “For he was desirous to see Him.” Are we not? Are not all His people longing for that blessed vision which will make their Heaven throughout eternity? “For he was desirous to see Him for a long season.” This is also true of us—our hearts are weary with watching and our eyes fail for the sight of His face. “Why does He tarry?” we cry. “Make haste, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.” “Because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.”

This, also, is our hope—we would both see and feel some gracious miracle—upon our eyes, that they may be opened, or upon our hands, that we may have greater power in the Master’s work! Or upon our feet, that we may run in the ways of obedience. And especially upon our hearts, that we may be always soft and tender, pure and gracious, to feel the mind of God. Yes, these words read very prettily, indeed! But yet, you see, the meaning was not the high and spiritual one which we could put into them, but the low and groveling one which was all that Herod could reach. He was “exceedingly glad,” but it was a frivolous gladness because he hoped that now his curiosity would be satisfied.

He had Jesus in his power and he hoped, now, to hear some of the oratory of the Prophet of whom men said, “Never man spoke like this Man.” He hoped to see Him work a miracle, even He, of whom the record was, “He has done all things well.” Could not the great Prophet be induced to multiply loaves and fishes? Might he not persuade Him to heal a blind beggar, or make a lame man leap as a hart? Would not a miracle make rare mirth in Herod’s palace and cause a new sensation in the mind of the worn-out debauchee? If, for instance, a corpse were dug up and Jesus would restore it to life, it would be something to tell when next the king sat down to a drinking bout with Herodias and her like! When each was trying to exceed the other in telling strange tales, Herod would top them all!

In this style many people come to hear the Gospel. They want to have an anecdote of their own about a notorious preacher—and if they do see something ludicrous, or hear something striking, they will invent a tale and swear that they heard it and saw it, though the lie might well choke them! They act thus because they come to hear for nothing but to feed their hungry curiosity! None carry this to such an extreme as those who did at one time feel a measure of the power of the Word of God but have shaken it off. These are the mockers whose bands are made strong. These are the idlers who turn even the testimony of the Lord into food for mirth! Still, at the first blush, there is something that looks very hopeful about

them and we are pleased that they exhibit such gladness when Christ is set forth before them.

One evil sign about Herod was the fact that his conscience had gone to sleep after having, for a while, troubled him. For a little while he had been afraid of Jesus and trembled lest John had risen from the dead. But that fear had subsided and superstition had given way before his Sadducean skepticism. He hoped that Jesus would perform some wonderful thing in his presence, but he had lost all dread of the Just and Holy One. He was a man of vain mind—the man whom he feared one day—he murdered the next! And He whom he welcomed with gladness, he hurried off with derision. There was left to Herod no feeling towards Jesus but the craving after something new, the desire to be astonished, the wish to be amused.

I think I see him now, sitting on his throne, expectant of wonders, like the trifler that he was. “Now we shall see,” he says, “now we shall see what we shall see! Perhaps He will deliver Himself by sheer force! If He walked the sea, He will probably fly away in the air! Perhaps He will render Himself invisible and so pass away through the midst of the chief priests. I have heard that many a time when they would have stoned Him or cast Him down from the brow of a hill, He departed, gliding through their midst—perhaps He will do the same this morning.” There sits the cunning prince, thinking what the wonder will be—regarding even displays of Divine power as mere showman’s tricks, or magician’s illusions!

When Jesus was set before Him, he began to ask Him questions. “Then he questioned Him in many words.” I am glad the questions are not recorded. They could have done us no good and, besides, our modern Herods, nowadays, are great masters of the art and need not that any man teach them. We need not to be furnished with the old-fashioned quibbles and questions, for the supply is quite equal to our requirements. Fools can ask more questions in 10 minutes than wise men are able to answer in 50 years! I say we do not need the old questions, but I daresay they would run somewhat in this line, “Are You that King of the Jews whom my father strove to slay? How came You are a Nazarene? Have You been a miracle worker, or is it all slight of hand and black magic? John told me something about You. Did You deceive him, or is it true? Have you raised the dead? Can you heal the sick?”

Trying all the while to excite Him to work a miracle, he raised doubts and chopped logic volubly, for the text suggestively mentions his, “many words.” The curious in religion are generally very apt at asking questions, not that they want Christ; not that they want Heaven; not that they want pardon of sin—not that they want *any* good thing—but still they would like to know everything that is dark and mysterious in theology. They would like to have a list of the difficulties of belief, a catalog of the curiosities of spiritual experience. Some men collect ferns, others are learned upon beetles, but these persons pry into Church life, its doctrines, pursuits, aims and infirmities—especially the latter! They could write a book upon orthodox England and unorthodox England and dwell with unction upon mental vagaries.

It furnishes them with something new and adds to their store of information—and so they spare no prying questions, for they would analyze manna from Heaven, and distil the tears of Christ—nothing is sacred to them! They put Scripture on the rack and laugh at the words of the Holy Spirit!

Thus have I set forth idle curiosity in its latter stage. Now let us pass on and see how Jesus treated this curiosity, considering it under the head of IDLE CURIOSITY DISAPPOINTED. “He questioned Him in many words, but He answered him nothing!” If Herod had wanted to believe, Jesus would have been ready enough to instruct. If Herod had possessed a broken heart, Jesus would have hastened with tender words to bind it up. If Herod had been a candid enquirer; if his doubts had been sincere and true, the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth, would have been delighted to speak with him!

But Jesus knew that Herod would not believe in Him and would not take up his cross and follow Him and, therefore, He would not waste words on a heartless, soulless profligate. Had He not said to His own disciples, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine”? He saw in this man one so mean, cunning, cowardly and heartless that He viewed him as a fox to be let alone rather than a lost sheep to be sought after! He was a tree twice dead and plucked up by the roots. All the Master did was to maintain an absolute silence in his presence, “and let him question as he might, He answered him nothing.”

Observe, my Brothers and Sisters, that our Lord Jesus Christ came not into this world to be a performer! He did not leave His Glory to earn the wondering approbation of men. And as Herod regarded Him as a mere wonderworker and would have turned his court into a theater where Jesus would be the chief actor, our Lord very wisely held His peace and did nothing at all. And sometimes His ministers might be wise if they were silent, too. If they know that men have no desire to learn, no spiritual wish or aspiration, I say they might be wise if they held their tongue altogether. I have sometimes admired George Fox, who, on one occasion, when the crowd had gathered round him, expecting him to deliver some fiery address, stood still by the space of two hours while they clamored that he should speak.

Never a word did they get from him. He said he would famish them of words for words were all they wanted and not the power of the Spirit. Probably they remembered his silence better than they would have remembered his most vehement discourse. Sometimes silence is all that men deserve and the only thing which, in any probability, will impress them. As the Lord Jesus was no performer, He did not gratify Herod, but answered him not a word. Moreover, be it remembered that Herod had already silenced the Voice and no marvel that he could not hear the Word. For what was John? He said, “I am the *voice* of one crying in the wilderness.” What was Jesus but the Word? He that silences the Voice may well be denied the Word!

Had not his shallow soul been moved—I was about to say, to its depths, such depths as they were—had he not been admonished by one of the

greatest of the children of men? For among them that were born of women there had not, then, been a greater than John the Baptist! Had not a burning and shining light shone right into his very eyes? And if he refused to hear the greatest of the sons of men and to see the brightest light that God had then kindled, it was but right that the Savior should refuse him even a ray of light and let him perish in the darkness which he had, himself, created. Ah, Sirs, you cannot trifle with religious impressions with impunity! God thinks it no trifle! He who has once been moved in his soul and has put away the heavenly Word of God may fear that it will be said of him, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man. Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."

May not some conscience here, if it has but a little life in it, be alarmed at the memory of former rejections of the Gospel, frequent quenching of the Spirit, repeated trampling upon the blood of Jesus? If God never speaks to you again in the way of mercy, you have no right to expect that He should do so! And if, from this day to the Day of Judgment, the Lord should never give you another word of mercy, who shall say that you have been treated harshly? Have you not deserved it at His hands as Herod had done?

Furthermore, remember that Herod might have heard Christ hundreds of times before if he had chosen to do so. Jesus was always to be found by those who desired to listen to Him. He did not go sneaking about Galilee, or holding secret conventicles in holes and corners. He always spoke in the synagogue and Herod might have gone there. He spoke in the street or by the seashore, or on the mountain side and Herod might have gone there, too. Jesus stood out boldly before the people and His teaching was public and free—if Herod had wished to hear Him, he might have done so times beyond number! Therefore now, having despised all these opportunities, the Savior will not furnish Him with another which he would have treated in the same manner. He answers him nothing and by so doing answered him terribly.

Beware how you use opportunities. Dear Hearers, beware how you use your Sabbaths. There may come a day when you would give a thousand worlds for another Sabbath, but it shall be denied you. There may come a day when you would count out all your wealth to have another invitation to Christ, but it will be denied you, for you must die and the voice of Mercy will never ring in your ears again! They that will not when they may, shall not when they could! Many will knock after the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door. But when He shuts, no man opens. The door was shut on Herod.

Observe that our Master had good reason for refusing to speak to Herod this time, over and above what I have mentioned—because He would not have it supposed that He yielded to the pomp and dignity of men! Jesus never refused an answer to the question of a beggar, but He would not gratify the curiosity of a king. Herod dreams that he has a right to ask whatever impertinent questions he may choose to invent, but Jesus knows nothing of men's rights in such a matter—it is all Grace with Him—and to Him the prince upon the throne is not an atom better than the

peasant in the cottage! And so when Herod, in all his pride and glory thinks full sure that Christ will pay deference to him and, perhaps, will pay him court to win his favor, Jesus disregards him!

He wants nothing of the murderer of John the Baptist! Had Herod been the poorest and most loathsome leper throughout all Judea. Had he been the meanest beggar in the street who was lame or blind, his voice would at once been heard by the Lord of Mercy! But He will not answer the prince who hopes for homage at His hands, nor feed the idle wishes of a crafty reprobate! What favor did He need at Herod's hand? He had not come to be set free—He had come to die and, therefore, His face is set like a flint, and, with heroic courage, He answers him not a word. Now, then, you have seen frivolous curiosity at its best and you have seen it disappointed, as it generally is to this day. If people come to hear the Gospel out of this frivolous curiosity, they usually retire saying, "Really, I do not see anything in it. We have heard nothing eloquent, nothing profound, nothing outrageous."

Just so. There is nothing in the Gospel to please the luxurious, though everything to bless the poor! Jesus answered Herod nothing and He will answer you nothing if you are of Herod's order. It is the doom of triflers that they should get no answer from the Gospel! Neither the Scriptures, nor the ministry, nor the Spirit of God, nor the Lord Jesus will speak with them. What was the result of this disappointment upon Herod? Idle curiosity curdles into derision. He thinks Jesus is a fool, if not an idiot, and he says so and begins to deride Him. With his men of war he mocks Him and "set Him at naught," which signifies to make nothing of Him. He calls his soldiers and says, "Look at this creature—He will not answer a word to what I have to say—is He bereft of His senses? Wake Him up and see."

Then they mock and laugh and jest and jeer. "Here," says Herod, "He calls Himself a King! Bring out one of my shining white robes and put it on Him! We will make a King of Him." So they put it about His blessed Person and again heap insults upon Him. Was it not strange—this decking Him in a gorgeous robe of dazzling white? The mediaeval writers delight to dwell on the fact that Herod arrayed our Lord in white and afterwards Pilate clothed Him in red. Is He not the Lily of the valley and the Rose of Sharon? Is He not matchlessly white for innocence and then gloriously red in His atoning blood? Thus, in their very mockery, they are unconsciously setting forth to us both His spotless holiness and His majestic royalty!

When they had insulted to their full, they sent Him back to Pilate, kicking Him from foot to foot at their pleasure, as if He were a football for their sport. Then our Lord made His fourth sorrowful march through the streets of the city over which He had wept. That is what idlers in the long run do with Christ—in their disappointment they grow weary of Him and His Gospel and they cry, "Put Him away; there is nothing in Him, nothing of what we looked for, nothing to satisfy curiosity, nothing sensational; take Him away!" Away goes Jesus, never to return, and that is the end of Herod and the end of a great many more.

II. My time is nearly gone, but bear with me while, for a few minutes, I try to set forth JESUS IN THE PRESENCE OF HEROD. Although no blows are recorded, I greatly question whether our Divine Master suffered anywhere more than He did in the palace of Herod. You and I, perhaps, apprehend most easily the woe of the coarser sufferings when they scourged Him and when they plaited the crown of thorns and put it upon His head. But the delicate and sensitive mind of our Master was, perhaps, more touched by what He suffered in the palace of Herod than by the rougher torture. For, first, here is a Man fully in earnest for the salvation of our souls—and in the midst of His grievous passion He is looked upon as a mountebank and a mere performer who is expected to work a miracle for the amusement of an impious court.

How it cuts an earnest man to the quick when he finds that, let him do what he may, people do not sympathize with him in earnest, but are coolly criticizing his style, or imitating his mannerisms, or admiring his expressions as matters of literary taste. It is heart-breaking, when your ardor makes you self-forgetful, to find others pecking at trifles, or making your efforts into a kind of show. The Christ must have been wounded in His very soul when He was treated as a mere performer—as if He had left the Father's bosom and was about to give Himself to death and yet was aiming to amuse or to astonish! I know how it saddens my Lord's servants when they preach their very hearts out, to bring men to repentance, and the only result is to elicit the remark that, "His arguments were very telling and that pathetic passage was very fine." There is a thorn in such chill words to pierce deeper than the crown of thorns! Horrible indifference smites like the Roman scourge.

Then to think of our Lord's being questioned by such a fop as Herod! A Man of earnest and intense soul, living for one thing only, and that the redemption of mankind—is here worried by the foolish questions of a man of the world! Were you ever in an agony of bodily pain, yourself, and did some frivolous person call upon you and begin to torture you with the most wicked nonsense and absurdities? Have you not felt that his chatter was worse than the pain? It must have been so with Jesus. When the ridiculous must question the sublime, the result is misery! With the bloody sweat yet damp upon His brow and with the accursed spit still defacing His blessed Countenance, the Man of Sorrows must be tortured by the driveling of a heartless idler! With His heart all bowed down under a sense of the awful penalty of sin, the great Substitute for sinners must be molested by the petty small talk and ribald jests of the meanest of mankind!

Solving eternal problems and building up an Everlasting Temple unto the living God, He must be twitted by a vainglorious tetrarch; tormented and tortured by foolish questions fit only to be asked of an impostor. We think the Cross, itself, was not a worse instrument of torture than the haughty tongue of this debauched monarch! Then the ribaldry of the whole thing must have tortured our Lord. The whole of them gathered round about Him with their hoarse laughter and coarse jests. He has become a byword and a proverb to them. When you are merry, you can enjoy merriment, but when the heart is sad, laughter is wretchedly discor-

dant and embitters your grief. Now this one laughs and then another sneers—while a third thrusts out the tongue and they are all uproariously jovial! In harmony they are all making nothing of Him, though with awful earnestness He is lifting the world out of the slough of despair and hanging it in its place, again, among the stars of Glory!

Jesus was performing more than Herculean labors and these little beings, like so many gnats and flies, were stinging Him! Small things are great at torturing and these worthless beings did their utmost to torment our Lord. Oh, the torture of the Master's spirit! Remember, it was no small sorrow to our Lord to be silent. You tell me that He appears majestic in His silence? It is so, but the pain of it was acute. Can you speak well? Do you love to speak for the good of your fellow men and do you know that when you speak, full often your words are spirit and life to those who hear you? It will be very hard to feel compelled to refuse them a good word. Do not imagine that the Lord despised Herod as Herod despised the Lord. Ah, no! The pity of His soul went out to this poor frivolous creature who must make sport of the Savior's sufferings and treat the Son of the Highest as though He were a court fool who must play before him.

The Savior's infinite love was breaking His heart, for He longed to bless His persecutor and yet He must not speak, nor give forth a warning word. True, there was little need for words, for His very Presence was a sermon which ought to have melted a heart of stone—but yet it cost the Savior a mighty effort to keep down the floodgates and hold in the blessed torrents of His holy speech which would have flowed out in compassionate pleading. Silent He must be, but the anguish of it, I can scarcely tell. Sometimes to be permitted to speak a word is the greatest comfort you can have. Have you ever been in such a state that if you could cry out it would have been a relief to you? What anguish, then, to be forced to be as a dumb man! What woe to be forced to be silent with all these mockers about Him and yet to be pitying them all!

As a man might pity a moth that flies into the flame of the candle and will not be delivered, so did our Lord pity these creatures. How sad that they could make sport of their own damnation, fling the salvation of God to the ground and tread it down as swine tread down their husks! Oh, it grieved the Master's heart! It moved His soul to its very center. Think of the utter contempt that was poured upon Him. I do not judge that this was the bitterest of His woes, for their contempt was an *honor* to Him. But it *was* one ingredient of His cup of mingled wormwood and gall that they should so despise Him as to clothe Him in a white robe and mock His kingship—when on that kingship their only hope was hung! They “set Him at naught,” that is, put Him down as nothing, jeered and jested at Him—and if there was nothing, even, about His Manhood which they could respect—they invented ways by which they could pour scorn upon Him.

Luke is the Gospel of the Man—if you want to read about Jesus in His Manhood, read Luke—and there you will see how His very Manhood was trampled in the mire by these inhuman creatures who found their joy in despising Him! See, then, your Lord and Master, and let me put two or three questions to you. Do you not think that this peculiar silence of Je-

sus was a part of His anguish in which He was bearing the punishment for your sins of the tongue? Ah me, ah me! Redeemed of the Lord, how often have you misused your speech by wanton words! How often have we uttered murmuring words, proud words, false words, words of despite to holy things—and now our sins of the tongue are all coming upon Jesus and He must stand silent and bear our penalty!

And is it not possible that when they put the gorgeous robe upon Him, He was bearing your sins of vanity, your sins of dress and pride when you made yourselves glorious to behold and arrayed yourselves in gorgeous robes and glittering apparel? Know you not that these things are your *shame*? For had you had no sin, you would have needed none of these poor rags—and may not the Christ in white and red be bearing your sins of folly? And do you not think that when they were making Him nothing and despising Him, He was, then, bearing our sins when we set Him at naught with our words of despite and derision—and when, perhaps, in our ungodly days we, too, made sport of holy things and jested at the Word of God? Ah me, I think it was so and I ask you to look at Him and say as you see Him there, “It is not Herod after all! It is *my* tongue, *my* vanity, *my* trifling with holy things which caused Him this exquisite torture! Lord Jesus, Substitute for me, let all these transgressions of mine be put away once and for all by Your meritorious passion.”

Finally, we read that Herod and Pilate were made friends from that day on and I hope if there are any here that are true-hearted Christians, if they have had any ill-will towards one another, they will think it a great shame that Herod and Pilate should be friends and that any two followers of Jesus should not be friends at the sight of the suffering Master! As for those two foxes, Pilate and Herod, they were tied, tail to tail, that day by our great Samson! Our Lord has often been a point of union for wicked men—not by His intent and purpose—but because they have joined together to oppose Him. I have often smiled in my heart to see how superstition and skepticism will march together when they are anxious to oppose the Gospel. Then the Sadducee says, “Give me your hand, dear Pharisee. We have a common interest here, for this Man would overturn us all.” The Gospel is the mortal enemy both of the skeptical Sadducee and the superstitious Pharisee—and so they lay aside their differences to assail it.

Now, then, if the wicked unite before our Lord Jesus when He wears the white robe, should not His people much more be united, especially when they remember that He said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another.” I charge you by your homage to Him you call Master and Lord, if you have any difference of any sort with any Christian Brother or Sister, let not yon sun go down till you have ended it by hearty love for Jesus’ sake! Let it be seen that Christ is the great Uniter of all those who are in Him. He would have us love one another even as He has loved us! And His prayer is that we may be one. May the Lord hear that prayer and make us one in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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

WHY SHOULD I WEEP?

NO. 1320

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”
Luke 23:27-31.

CAN you picture the scene? Jesus is given up by Pilate to the Jews that they may do their will with Him and, led by a small band of soldiers, He is conducted into the public street, bearing His Cross upon His shoulders. Perhaps they judged Him to be weary with His night of watching and worn with His suffering from the scourge, and they feared lest He might die upon the road and, therefore, with a cruel mercy, they laid hold upon one in the crowd who had too loudly expressed His sympathy, impressed him into military service and compelled him to assist in carrying the instrument of execution. You see the haughty scribes and the ribald throng—but the center of the spectacle, and the cause of it all was our Lord Himself—Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

We cannot paint Him. All who have ever attempted to do so have, to a large extent, been unsuccessful, for there was upon His face a mingled majesty and meekness, loveliness and lowliness, sanctity and sorrow which it would not be possible to express upon canvas or to represent in words. About His Person there were abundant marks of cruelty. He had been scourged. Everyone could see it. His own garments, which they had put upon Him, could not conceal the marks of the Roman lash. The traces of the crown of thorns were on His brow and the rough treatment of the soldiers had left its tokens, too, so that His visage was more marred than that of any man. And His form more than the sons of men.

And now He is being led away to be put to the shameful death of the Cross. There were some glad eyes there, delighted that, at last, their victim was in their power and that the eloquent tongue which had exposed their hypocrisy would now be silenced in death. There, too, were the unfeeling Romans, to whom human life was a trifle. And all around, gathered in dense masses, the brutal mob, bribed to shout against their best Friend. But all then present were not in this savage mood. There were some—and to the honor of the sex it is recorded that they were women—who entered their protest by their cries and lamentations.

Not silently in their sorrow did they weep, but they began to lament aloud and bewail audibly, as though they were attending the funeral of some dear friend, or expected the death of one of their kindred. The voice of a woman's weeping has great power with most of us, but it would not stir the stony hearts of Roman legionaries. The wail of women was no more to them than the moaning of the winds among the forest trees! Yet it must have struck many of the less stern and stolid mold and filled their souls with some measure of kindred feeling. Chiefly, however, did it strike One, the most tender hearted among them all, One whose ear was delicately sensitive to every sound of sorrow.

And though He had not answered Herod and had given Pilate but a few words of reply. And though amidst all the mockeries and scourging He had been as dumb as a sheep before her shearers, yet He paused and, looking round upon the weeping company, piteously, yet sublimely broke the silence by saying to them, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." As for the words, themselves, they are especially noteworthy, because they constitute the last connected discourse of the Savior before He died. All that He said afterwards was fragmentary and mainly of the nature of prayer. A sentence to John and to His mother, and to the dying thief. Just a word or two looking downward, but for the most part He uttered broken sentences which flew upwards on the wings of strong desire.

This was His last address, a farewell sermonette delivered amid surroundings most sad and solemn, restraining tears and yet, at the same time, causing them to flow. We reckon the words to be all the more weighty and full of solemnity because of the occasion, but even apart from this, the truths delivered were, in themselves, of the utmost importance and solemnity. This last discourse of our Lord before His death was terribly prophetic to a world rejecting Him—portentous of a thousand woes to a people whom He loved—woes which even He could not avert because they had rejected His interposition and refused the mercy which He came to bring. "Daughters of Jerusalem," said He, "weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."

Not many hours before, He had, Himself, set them the example by weeping over the doomed city, and crying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!" Looking even upon the surface of the words you will perceive that they bear His undoubted image and superscription. Who but He would have spoken after this sort? You are sure that the passage is genuine, for it is, in all respects, so inimitably Christ-like. See how self-oblivious He was—for Himself He asks not even tears of sympathy. Was there no cause for grief? Yes, cause enough, and yet He says, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves," as if all His thoughts were taken up with other griefs than His own and He would not have a tear wasted upon Him, but spent on woes which grieved Him more than His own pangs.

Observe the majesty of the speech, too, steeped as the speaker was in misery. You can see that His is sorrow which well deserved to be wept

over, but He is not overcome by it, but rather His royal soul reigns in the future. And as a King, He anticipates His scepter and His Judgment Seat and foretells the doom of those who now insult Him. Here is no cowardly spirit, no confession of defeat, no appeal for pity, no shadow of petty resentment, but on the contrary, a majestic consciousness of strength! With His calm, prophetic eye, He looks beyond the intervening years and sees Jerusalem besieged and captured. He speaks as though He heard the awful shrieks which betokened the entrance of the Romans into the city and the smiting down of young and old, women and children.

No, mark how His piercing eyes see yet further—He beholds and describes the day when He shall sit upon the Throne of Judgment and summon all men to His bar. When He who was, then, the weary Man before His foes should alarm the ungodly by the appearance of His Countenance, so that they would call to the mountains to fall upon them and to the rocks to hide them from His face! He speaks as if conscious of the majesty that would be upon Him in that dreadful day and yet, at the same time, pitiful towards those who, by their sins, were bringing upon themselves so terrible a doom! He says, in effect, “Weep for those concerning whom it would have been better that they had never been born, and for whom annihilation would be a consummation devoutly to be wished.”

He dries up the tears which were flowing for Himself, that the women may draw up the sluices of their souls and let the torrents of their grief flow forth for *impenitent sinners* who will be filled with unutterable dismay at His Second Coming. May the Holy Spirit help me while handling this awful subject! The text very readily divides itself into two parts. The one may be headed, “*Weep not.*” The other, “*Weep.*” The first is, “*Weep not,*” or what the Savior suggested. The second is, “*Weep,*” or what the Savior commanded.

I. He said to the weeping women, “**WEEP NOT.**” There are some cold, calculating expositors who make it out that our Lord reproveth these women for weeping and that there was something wrong, or, if not altogether wrong, yet something very far from commendable in their sorrow. I think they call it, “the sentimental sympathy,” of these kind souls. There is no being much more unnatural than a cold-blooded commentator who bites at every letter and nibbles at the grammatical meaning of every syllable, translating with his lexicon, but never exercising common sense, or allowing even the least play to his heart.

Blame these women? No! *Bless* them again and again! It was the one redeeming trait in the dread march along the Via Dolorosa! Let it not be *dreamed* that Jesus could have censured those who wept for Him! No! No! No—a thousand times, No! These gentle women appear in a happy contrast to the chief priests with their savage malice, and to the thoughtless multitude with their fierce cry of, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” They seem, to me, to have shown a noble courage in daring to express their sympathy with One whom everybody else hunted to death with such ferocity. To espouse His cause amid those hoarse cries of, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” was courage more than manly! Those women were heroines more valiant than those who rush upon the spoil. Those lamentations, in sympathy

with Him who was being led to die, are worthy of our praise and not of our criticism!

Our Lord accepted the sympathy they evinced and it was only His great disinterested unselfishness which made Him say, "Spare your griefs for other sorrows." It was not because they were *wrong*, but because there was something still more necessary to be done than even to weep for Him. I do not think we erred when we sang just now—

***"A moment give loose to grief,
Let grateful sorrows rise,
And wash the bloody stains away
With torrents from your eyes."***

Have we not all felt it to be a gracious exercise to sing in unison that almost dirge—

***"Oh come and mourn with me awhile;
Oh come to the Savior's side;
Oh come, together let us mourn:
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.
Have we no tears to shed for Him,
While soldiers scoff and Jews deride?
Ah! Look how patiently He hangs;
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified?"***

Who among us, for words like these, can blame Dr. Watts and others when they sing—

***"Thus might I hide my blushing face,
While His dear Cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt my eyes to tears?"***

There can be nothing ill about the weeping of these women and, therefore, let us proceed to say, first, that *their sorrow was legitimate* and well-grounded. There was reason for their weeping! They saw Him suffering, friendless and hunted to death—they could not but bewail Him!

Had I been there and seen Him all alone, and marked the cruel eyes that watched Him, and heard the malicious voices which assailed Him, I, too, must have wept! I hope I am not so past feeling as to have looked on without overflowing sorrow. See those bleeding shoulders, those lacerated temples—mark, above all, that quiet, unrivalled God-like Countenance, so marred with sacred grief! One must have wept, surely, if one had a heart anywhere within him, to think that He who suffered thus, and was about to suffer so much more, should be so gentle and so unresisting! Was not this cause for intense sympathy? He was meek and lowly in heart and, therefore, He returned none of those fierce looks and answered none of those ferocious words.

He was like a lamb in the midst of wolves, or a dove surrounded by a thousand hawks, or a milk-white hare amid baying hounds! There was none to pity and none to help! Shall we, then, refuse our compassion? No! You women's eyes, you did well to weep—how could you help it, since you were mothers of children and, therefore, had hearts to love? How could you help weeping for Him who was so lowly, so gentle, so unselfish, so submissive to all they put upon Him? Surely it was a superfluity of malice to be hunting Him to death who, even in life, was so much the Man of Sorrows! And then He was so innocent and pure! What had He done

amiss? They could not answer Pilate's challenge—"Why, what evil has He done?" There was no fault in Him, they could not find any!

You could see by the very look of Him that He was the purest of all mankind—that all around Him was sin and vanity—yet He, alone, was Holiness and Truth! Why, then, should they lead Him forth among malefactors and nail those blessed hands and feet to the wood and hang Him to a tree? Above all, in addition to His being innocent of fault, He had been so full of kindness—of *more* than kindness—of infinite love to all mankind and even in His deepest sorrow boundless benevolence shone in His Countenance, beaming as the sun! He looked upon His enemies and His glance was royal but it was tender, too. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was trembling on His lips. He would not harm them. Not He! He would not curse them though His curse had withered them, nor even frown upon them, though that frown might have secured His liberation! He was too good to render evil for evil!

These women remembered what a life He had led. They remembered how He had fed the hungry—perhaps some of them had even eaten of the loaves and fishes. They remembered how He had healed their children, raised their dead and had dislodged foul fiends from the bodies of their friends. He had preached openly in their streets and He had never taught ill will, but always gentleness and love. He had been popular and stood at the head of the multitude at one time, but He had never used His power for selfish purposes. He had ridden through their streets in pomp, but the pomp was simple and homely—on a colt, the foal of an ass had He ridden with children for His courtiers—and with no sound of the trumpets of war, but only with the children's cries of, "Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord."

Why should they crucify Him? He had done nothing but good! His noble Presence seemed to appeal to the women and they asked each other, "For which of His works would they slay Him? For which of His actions would they put Him to death?" He, the Friend of the friendless, why should He die? I cannot, I say again, but *commend* the tears of these women! It is little marvel that they should weep and bewail when they saw the Innocent One about to die. I think, too, that *this weeping on the part of the women was a very hopeful emotion*. It was far better, certainly, than the non-emotion or the cruelty of those who formed that motley throng. It showed some tenderness of heart, and tenderness of heart, though it is but natural, may often serve as a groundwork upon which better and holier and more spiritual feelings may be placed.

It is objected that persons weep when they hear the story of other griefs besides those of Jesus and I am glad they do. Should they not weep with them that weep? It is also objected that this natural sympathy may, in many cases, be as much due to the skill of the orator as in others it is the undoubted result of the music of the oratorio. I know it is so. I am going to show you that mere emotional sympathy is not all, nor a half, nor a tenth of what is needed. Still, I should be sorry if I thought myself capable of remembering the griefs of Jesus without emotion while other men's woes affected me. And I should greatly deplore the fact if it were, indeed, true that you were all, especially you women, so hardened that you could

think of Jesus of Nazareth bleeding and dying without your hearts beginning to melt.

The emotion is good, at any rate, so far that if it were *absent* you would be bereft of humanity and turned to stones. It is hopeful because it opens a door through which something better may enter. This tenderness is a natural stock suitable for grafting something far higher upon. He who can weep for the sorrows of Christ may soon be on the road towards weeping over the *sin* which caused the sorrow, or he may be on the highway towards being able to lament, as Christ bids men lament, those other griefs and miseries which sin brings upon themselves and upon their children. I would not carry the emotional towards Christ to an excess, nor ask men to make Jesus' death *only* a fountain of sorrow, since it is also a source of joy. I would deplore that idolatrous emotion which weeps before a hideous image, or mourns over touching a picture. But still, I would not have men, at the thought of Jesus dying, act as if they were sticks and stones, but prove that they mourn for Him whom they have pierced.

Having said this much, we now add that *on our Lord's part, such sorrow was fitly repressed*, because, after all, though naturally good, it is not more than natural, and falls short of spiritual excellence. It is no proof of the work of the Spirit upon your heart that you weep as you hear the story of Christ's death, for probably you would have been even more affected had you seen a murderer hanged. It is no proof that you are truly saved because you are moved to great emotions whenever you hear the details of the Crucifixion, for the Bulgarian atrocities excited you equally as much. I think it good that you should be moved, as I have said before, but it is only naturally and not *spiritually* good.

Doubtless there are many who have shed more tears over the silly story of a love-sick maid in a frivolous novel than they have ever given to the story of the Lover of our souls. Though they have felt emotion when they have pictured the sufferings of Emmanuel, they have felt even more when the bewitching pen of fiction has sketched some imaginary picture of fancied woes. No, no, these natural sympathies are not to be commended so that we wish you to be continually exercised with them! Our Lord did well to give them healthy bounds. Besides, such feeling is generally very evanescent. Tears of mere emotion, because of the external sufferings of Christ, are speedily wiped away and forgotten.

We do not know that any of these women ever became our Lord's converts. Among those who met in the upper room we do not know that any had taken part with this company of weepers. These were women of Jerusalem and the followers of Christ at His death, who ministered unto Him, were generally women from Galilee. For this see Matthew 27:54-56. I fear that the most of these Jerusalem sympathizers forgot tomorrow that they had wept today. I may be mistaken, but there is nothing in the mere fact of their lamenting the Savior's doom which would prove them to be His regenerated followers. The morning cloud and the early dew are fit emblems of such fleeting emotions.

Such weeping, too, is morally powerless—it has no effect upon the mind. It does not change the character. It does not cause the putting away of sin, nor create real and saving faith in Jesus Christ. Many tears are

shed under powerful sermons that are so much wasted fluid—when the discourse is over, the sorrow has ceased. There was no work of Grace upon the inner heart, it was all surface work and no more. The worst of it is, such feeling is often deceptive, for people are apt to think, “I must have something good in me, for what a time of weeping I had under the sermon and how tender I felt when I heard the description of Christ upon the Cross!”

Yes, and thus you may wrap yourself up in the belief that you are under the influence of the Holy Spirit when, after all, it is only ordinary human feeling. You may conclude, “Surely these drops come from a heart of flesh,” when it may be only moisture condensed upon a heart of stone! This feeling, too, may stand in the way of something a great deal better. Jesus would not have these women weep for one thing, because they were to weep for *another* thing which far more seriously demanded their weeping! You need not weep because Christ died one-tenth as much as because your sins rendered it necessary that He should die! You need not weep over the Crucifixion, but weep over *your transgressions*, for your sins nailed the Redeemer to the accursed tree!

To weep over a dying Savior is to lament the *remedy*—it were wiser to bewail the *disease*. To weep over the dying Savior is to wet the surgeon’s knife with tears—it were better to bewail that spreading polyp which that knife must cut away! To weep over the Lord Jesus as He goes to the Cross is to weep over that which is the subject of the highest joy that ever Heaven and earth have known! Your tears are scarcely needed there—they are natural—but a deeper wisdom will make you brush them all away and chant with joy His victory over death and the grave! If we must continue our sad emotions, let us lament that we should have broken the Law which He thus painfully vindicated. Let us mourn that we should have incurred the penalty which He, even to the death, was made to endure.

Jesus wished them not so much to look at His outward sufferings as at the secret inward cause of that outward sorrow, namely, the transgression and the iniquity of His people which had laid the Cross upon His shoulders and surrounded Him with enemies! As I quoted, just now, certain verses which led us to lament our Lord, let me propose to you as better, still, those words of Watts—

**“’Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.
’Twas you that pulled the vengeance down
Upon His guiltless head:
Break, break, my heart, oh burst my eyes!
And let my sorrows bleed.
Strike, mighty Grace, my flinty soul,
Till melting waters flow,
And deep repentance drowns my eyes
In sorrow and in woe.”**

II. Now we pass on from, “Weep not,” to, “WEEP.” May God the Holy Spirit help us to dwell upon that for a while with profit to our souls. Though Jesus stops one channel for tears, he opens another and a wider one. Let us look to it. First, when He said, “Weep for yourselves,” He

meant that *they were to lament and bewail the sin which had brought Him where He was*, seeing He had come to suffer for it. And He would have them weep because that sin would bring them and their children into yet deeper woe.

You know that just before He uttered this remarkable saying, the husbands, the fathers and the sons of those women had been crying with loud voices, "Let Him be crucified," and when Pilate had taken water and washed his hands to show that he was innocent of the blood of Jesus, they had imprecated upon their nation, and upon their unborn sons, the curse which follows from such a deed. "Then answered all the people, His blood be on us and on our children." And though these women lamented and mourned, yet over their heads, the men who had spoken for the nation had gathered the thunder cloud of Divine Wrath! Jesus points to it and says, "Weep for the national sin, weep for the national curse which will surely come upon you, because you are putting the Just One to death."

Yes, deeper, still, was His meaning, for all those about Him were, in a sense, guilty of His death. And you, and I, and all the rest of mankind have been, in our measure, the cause of the Savior's Crucifixion. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, this is the reason why we should weep—because we have broken the Divine Law and rendered it impossible that we should be saved except Jesus Christ should die! If we have not believed in Jesus Christ, we have this cause for lamentation—that our sin abides upon us at this present moment! That curse which crushed the Savior down till He cried, *Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani*, is resting upon some who are here this morning!

O Souls, you need not pity the dying Christ, but pity yourselves! On your own selves your sin is resting! And your children growing up unconverted, hardened in rebellion against God by your example—their sin is resting upon them, too, and this is the overflowing cause why you should weep! And you Believers, you from whom sin has been lifted, who are forgiven for His name's sake—yet lament that you should have sinned—and with your joy for pardoned guilt mourn that Christ had to carry the burden which you heaped together and to bear the penalty which you deserved! All round, Brothers and Sisters, there is abounding cause for sorrow for sin—a sweet sorrow from the Lord's people and a bitter sorrow from those who have no part nor lot in the result of Christ's passion as yet, but who, nevertheless, are partakers in the crime which slew the Son of God!

I beg you, now, to look again into the reason why our Lord bade them weep. It was, first, for their sin, but it was next *for the impending punishment of their sins*. The punishment of the *national* sin of the Jew was to be the scattering of his nation and the total destruction of its holy city! And well does our Savior speak of it in terrible language, for under all Heaven and in all history there never was such a scene of misery as the siege and destruction of Jerusalem! I need not give you any outline of it because you must be familiar with that painful subject where every horror seems to be combined in one and exaggerated to the utmost! Nothing has ever surpassed it! I question if anything ever equaled it.

But our Lord, as I have hinted, looked further than the Roman sword and the massacre of the Jews. Often, in His preaching, you do not know whether He is talking of the siege of Jerusalem or of the Judgment Day, for the one was on His mind such a foreshadowing, rehearsal and type of the other—so that in His language He often seemed to melt the two into one. He means to you and to me, this morning, to speak, not of besieged Jerusalem, but of that Day of Wrath, that dreadful day—what man among us shall be able to abide its coming? There is surely cause enough for weeping, for when that day comes it will find some men in such a state that it would have been better for them that they had never been born!

When the dreadful sentence shall come from the Judge, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels,” they will bless the barren womb and the breast at which no child has sucked! Then will impenitent sinners bitterly exclaim, “Cursed be the day when I was born! Let not the day when my mother bore me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto you; making him very glad.” They will wring their hands in anguish and curse their existence and wish that they had never seen the light! So terrible will the doom of the wicked be, that mothers who looked upon the birth of their children as the consummation of their joy, shall wish they had been barren and never carried a babe at their breasts! They shall count those happy who were childless, whom, perhaps in their hearts, in their past lives they despised. Existence is, in itself, a blessing—but what shall be the misery which shall make men wish that they had never breathed? Yet, alas, such is the condition of multitudes while I am speaking to you, and such will soon be the condition of some who are looking into my face now, unless they repent! Alas! Alas! Weep for yourselves and for your children!

Further, our Lord went on, with that melting voice of His, in overflowing grief to say that they might reserve their tears for those who would, before long, wish to be annihilated, but wish in vain. “Then shall men begin to say to the rocks, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us.” The falling of the mountain would grind them to powder and they wish for that! The descent of the hill upon them would bury them in a deep abyss and they would rather be immured in the bowels of the earth forever than have to look upon the face of the Great Judge! They ask to be crushed outright, or to be buried alive sooner than to feel the punishment of their sins!

Then shall be fulfilled the Word of the Lord by His servant, John, “And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them” (Rev. 9:6). Ah, Sirs, extinction is a blessing too great to be permitted to the ungodly! Earth will have no heart of compassion for the men who polluted her and rejected her Lord. The mountains will reply, “We fall at God’s bidding, not at the petition of His enemies,” and the hills, in their stolid silence, will answer, “We cannot, and we would not if we could, conceal you from the Justice which you, yourselves, willfully provoked.” No, there shall be no refuge for them, no annihilation into which they can fly! The very hope of it were Heaven to the damned. Oh, could they but expect it! But it must not, shall not be. Their cry for extinction shall be in vain.

Now, if you have tears for Jesus dying, reserve them for those to whom death is but the beginning of evils! If you have griefs for Him to whom they said, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the paps that gave You suck," have still more tears for those who shall curse the hour in which they were conceived! Here is, indeed, a subject which demands the tears of nations and of ages—souls lost beyond all remedy, seeking destruction, itself, as a blessing and beginning petitions of unutterable anguish which shall never cease and never be put into use! *Then our Lord goes on to draw a wonderful parallel and contrast between His sufferings and those to be lamented*, for He says, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall they do in the dry?" I suppose He meant, "If I, who am no rebel against Caesar, suffer so, how will those suffer whom the Romans take in actual rebellion at the siege of Jerusalem?"

And He meant, next, to say, "If I who am perfectly innocent, must nevertheless be put to such a death as this, what will become of the guilty?" If when fires are raging in the forest, the green trees, full of sap and moisture, crackle like stubble in the flame, how will the old dry trees burn which are already rotten to the core and turned to touchwood—and so prepared as fuel for the furnace? If Jesus suffers, who has no sin, but is full of the life of innocence and the sap of holiness, how will they suffer who have long been dead in sin and are rotten with iniquity? As Peter puts it in another place, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins with us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Note well that the sufferings of our Lord, though in some respects far beyond all conceivable woes, have yet some points about them in which they differ with advantage from the miseries of lost souls. For, first, our Lord knew that He was innocent and, therefore, His righteousness upheld Him. Whatever He suffered, He knew that He deserved none of it. He had no stings of conscience, nor agonies of remorse. Now, the sting of future punishment will lie in the indisputable conviction that it is well deserved. If there were one woe in Hell more than a lost soul deserved, it would act as an opiate to its pain—but the justice of every infliction will be the tooth of the worm, the edge of the sword. No dream of innocence, or conceit of self-righteousness will survive the Judgment Day—conscience will be awakened and armed to do its work—the wicked will perceive their guilt and cling to it and this will make their punishment the more severe. The finally impenitent will be tormented by their own passions which will rage within them like an inward Hell.

But our Lord had none of this! There was no evil in Him, no lusting after evil, no self-seeking, no rebellion of heart, no anger or discontent. A man in whom there is no evil passion to stir up cannot know those fierce pangs and wild throes with which raging sin feeds the soul. Pride, ambition, greed, malice, revenge—these are the fuel of Hell's fire. Men's selves, not devils, are their tormentors! Their inward lusts are worms that never die and fires that never can be quenched! There could be none of this in our Divine Lord. Again, lost souls hate God and love sin, but Christ ever loved God and hated sin.

Now, to love evil is misery when undisguised and rightly understood sin is Hell. It is love of evil continued in the soul which causes the perpetuity of the lost estate of men. But the holy Jesus, though suffering beyond all conception, could not feel the pangs which come of hating good and loving evil. He was the green tree and the ungodly are the dry trees. Yet if the Innocent One suffers so, with what pains will guilty souls be racked by their avenging consciences? Our Lord Jesus knew that every pang He suffered was for the good of others—He endured cheerfully because He saw that He was redeeming a multitude that no man can number from going down to the Pit. But there is no redeeming power about the sufferings of the lost—they are not helping anyone, nor achieving a benevolent design.

The great God has good designs in their punishment, but they are strangers to any such a purpose. Our Lord had a reward before Him because of which He endured the Cross, despising the shame. But the finally condemned have no prospect of reward nor hope of rising from their doom. How can they expect either? *He* was full of hope, they are full of despair. “It is finished” was, for Him, but there is no, “It is finished” for them. Their sufferings, moreover, are self-caused—their sin was their own. He endured agonies because others had transgressed and He willed to save them. Their sufferings are self-chosen, for they would not be persuaded to forsake their sins. But He, from necessity of love, was made to bleed—the cup could not pass from Him if His people were not redeemed.

The torments of the lost will be self-inflicted—they are suicides to their souls—the venom in their veins is self-created and self-injected. They torment themselves with sin to which they cleave, but it pleased the Father to bruise the Son—but the necessity for His bruising lay not in Himself, but in others. Now, dear Friends, I think I have said enough on this painful matter to assure you that the most terrible warning to impenitent men in all the world is the death of Christ. For if God spared not His own Son, on whom was only laid imputed sin, will He spare sinners whose sins are actual and their own? If He smote Him to the death who only stood in the sinner’s place, will He let the impenitent sinner go free? If He who always did His Father’s will and was obedient even unto death, must be forsaken of God, what will become of those who reject Christ and live and die enemies to the Most High?

Here is cause for weeping! And, very solemnly would I say it, God help me to say it so that you may feel it—the most dreadful thought is that perhaps we, ourselves, are in the condition of guiltiness before God and are hastening on to the judgment which Christ has foretold! Oh, think if within the next six months—no, stretch it as far as you like—if within the next 50 years some of us should be asking the hills to cover us and wishing that we never had been born? What an awful prospect! And yet, unless we are renewed in heart and made Believers in Jesus Christ, that certainly must be our doom! Think of your children, too, who are growing up about you, capable of understanding and responsible for their actions. Oh, if they live as they now live, and die as they now are, you may wish they had never been given to you and had never borne your name! Think of this and weep!

Dear Friends, if the Lord would put you into a right state of heart, you would scarcely think of an unconverted person's condition without the deepest pity. You would not hear an oath in the street without the tear starting in your eyes! That was a dreadful spectacle which I pictured to you just now—our Lord bearing His Cross and the women weeping. But how much more awful is that before me! I see a soul carrying about itself the instrument of its own destruction and going onward with it to its doom! Sin is the cross to which the soul will be fastened and habits and depravities are the nails! The soul is bearing its sin and loving to bear it! Look, it is going to execution, but at each step it laughs! Every step it takes is bearing it towards Hell and yet it makes mirth! Lo, the infatuated one scoffs at the voice that warns him and every scoff he utters is increasing his guilt!

Look forward to his end, its never-ending end! Look forward to it steadily, with calm and tearful gaze—is it not an awful spectacle? But what if you should be beholding *yourselves* as in a vision, or seeing your child in the glass of prophecy! If it is your case, I beseech you, repent of your sins, bewail your condition and fly to Christ for shelter! And if it is your child, give Heaven no rest! Plead continually at the Throne of Grace till you have brought down a blessing from God upon your offspring! Never cease to pray until your sons and your daughters are safely landed on the Rock of Ages and so secured there that they will need no other rock to hide them in the day when Christ shall come.

I beseech you, beloved Christian Friends, ask for tenderness towards sinners, towards *all* sinners, and let your tenderness be shown in fervent prayer, in incessant effort and in holy sympathy towards the wandering ones. Alas, I have but stuttered and stammered compared with the manner in which I hoped to have spoken! I may have failed in expressing myself, but God can bless the word none the less! The subject is worthy of an angel's tongue! It needs Christ, Himself, to expound it completely. Would God He might, by His Spirit, expound it to your hearts in the leisure of this afternoon. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 23:1-31*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—178, 265, 312.**

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CHRIST'S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
Luke 23:34.*

WHAT tenderness we have here; what self-forgetfulness; what almighty love! Jesus did not say to those who crucified Him, "Be gone!" One such word and they would have all fled. When they came to take Him in the garden, they went backward and fell to the ground when He spoke but a short sentence! And now that He is on the Cross, a single syllable would have made the whole company fall to the ground, or flee away in fright.

Jesus says not a word in His own defense. When He prayed to His Father, He might justly have said, "Father, note what they do to Your beloved Son. Judge them for the wrong they do to Him who loves them and who has done all He can for them." But there is no prayer against them in the words that Jesus utters. It was written of old, by the Prophet Isaiah, "He made intercession for the transgressors"—and here it is fulfilled! He pleads for His murderers, "Father, forgive them."

He does not utter a single word of upbraiding. He does not say, "Why do you do this? Why pierce the hands that fed you? Why nail the feet that followed after you in mercy? Why mock the Man who loved to bless you?" No, not a word, even, of gentle upbraiding, much less anything like a curse. "Father, forgive them." You notice Jesus does not say, "I forgive them," but you may read that between the lines. He says that all the more because He does not say it in words. But He had laid aside His majesty and is fastened to the Cross and, therefore, He takes the humble position of a suppliant, rather than the more lofty place of One who had power to forgive. How often, when men say, "I forgive you," is there a kind of selfishness about it? At any rate, self is asserted in the very act of forgiving. Jesus takes the place of a *pleader*, a pleader for those who were committing murder upon Himself. Blessed be His name!

This word on the Cross we shall use, tonight, and we shall see if we cannot gather something from it for our instruction, for, though we were not there and we did not actually put Jesus to death, yet we really caused His death—we, too, crucified the Lord of Glory and His prayer for us was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

I am not going to handle this text so much by way of exposition, as by way of experience. I believe there are many here to whom these words will be very appropriate. This will be our line of thought. First, *we were, in a measure, ignorant*. Secondly, *we confess that this ignorance is no excuse*. Thirdly, *we bless our Lord for pleading for us* and fourthly, *we now rejoice in the pardon we have obtained*. May the Holy Spirit graciously help us in our meditation!

I. Looking back upon our past experience, let me say, first, that WE WERE, IN A MEASURE, IGNORANT. We who have been forgiven, we who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, we once sinned in a great measure through ignorance. Jesus says, "They know not what they do." Now, I shall appeal to you, Brothers and Sisters—when you lived under the dominion of Satan and served yourselves and sin—was there not a measure of ignorance in it? You can truly say, as we said in the hymn we sang just now—

"Alas! I knew not what I did."

It is true, first, that we were ignorant of *the awful meaning of sin*. We began to sin as children—we knew that it was wrong, but we did not know all that sin meant. We went on to sin as young men—perhaps we plunged into much wickedness. We knew it was wrong, but we did not see the end from the beginning. It did not appear to us as rebellion against *God*. We did not think that we were presumptuously defying God, setting at nothing His wisdom, defying His power, deriding His love, spurning His holiness, yet we were. There is an abysmal depth in sin. You cannot see the bottom of it. When we rolled sin under our tongue as a sweet morsel, we did not know all the terrible ingredients compounded in that deadly bittersweet. We were, in a measure, ignorant of the tremendous crime we committed when we dared to live in rebellion against God. So far, I think, you are with me.

We did not know, at that time, *God's great love for us*. I did not know that He had chosen me from before the foundation of the world. I never dreamed of that! I did not know that Christ stood for me as my Substitute, to redeem me from among men. I did not know the love of Christ—did not understand it. You did not know that you were sinning against eternal Love, against infinite compassion, against a distinguishing Love such as God had fixed on you from eternity. So far, we knew not what we did.

I think, too, that we did not know all that we were doing in *our rejection of Christ and putting Him to grief*. He came to us in our youth and, impressed by a sermon, we began to tremble and to seek His face. But we were decoyed back to the world and we refused Christ. Our mother's tears, our father's prayers, our teacher's admonitions often moved us—but we were very stubborn and we rejected Christ. We did not know that, in that rejection, we were virtually putting Him away and crucifying Him! We were denying His Godhead, or else we would have worshipped Him. We were denying His love, or else we would have yielded to Him. We were

practically, in every act of sin, taking the hammer and the nails and fastening Christ to the Cross, but we did not know it. Perhaps, if we had known it, we would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. We knew we were doing wrong, but we did not know all the wrong that we were doing.

Nor did we know fully *the meaning of our delays*. We hesitated—we were on the verge of conversion, but we went back and turned, again, to our old follies. We were hardened, Christless, still prayerless, and each of us said, “Oh, I am only waiting a little while till I have fulfilled my present engagements, till I am a little older, till I have seen a little more of the world!” The fact is, we were refusing Christ and choosing the pleasures of sin instead of Him—and every hour of delay was an hour of crucifying Christ, grieving His Spirit and choosing this harlot world in the place of the lovely and ever-blessed Christ! We did not know that.

I think we may add one thing more. *We did not know the meaning of our self-righteousness*. We used to think, some of us, that we had a righteousness of our own. We had been to Church regularly, or we had been to the Meeting House whenever it was open. We were christened; we were confirmed, or, perhaps, we rejoiced that we never had either of those things done to us. Thus, we put our confidence in ceremonies, or the *absence* of ceremonies! We said our prayers; we read a chapter in the Bible night and morning. We did—oh, I do not know what we did *not* do! But there we rested—we were righteous in our own esteem. We had not any particular sin to confess, nor any reason to lie in the dust before the Throne of God's majesty. We were about as good as we could be and we did not know that we were, even, then, perpetrating the highest insult upon Christ, for, if we were not sinners, why did Christ die? And, if we had a righteousness of our own which was good enough, why did Christ come here to work out a righteousness for us?

We made Christ to be a superfluity, by considering that we were good enough without resting in His atoning Sacrifice. Ah, but we did not think we were doing that! We thought we were pleasing God by our religiousness, by our outward performances, by our ecclesiastical correctness! But all the while we were setting up antichrist in the place of Christ! We were making out that Christ was not needed! We were robbing Him of His office and glory! Alas, Christ would say of us with regard to all these things, “They know not what they do.” I want you to look quietly at the time past wherein you served sin and see whether there was not a darkness upon your mind, a blindness in your spirit, so that you did not know what you did.

II. Well now, secondly, WE CONFESS THAT THIS IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE. Our Lord might urge it as a plea, but *we* never could. We did not know what we did and so we were not guilty to the fullest possible extent—but we were guilty enough—therefore let us acknowledge it.

For first, remember, *the law never allows this as a plea*. In our own English law, a man is supposed to know what the law is. If he breaks it, it

is no excuse to plead that he did not know it. It may be regarded by a judge as some extenuation, but the law allows nothing of the kind. God gives us the Law and we are bound to keep it. If I erred through not knowing the Law, still it was a sin. Under the Mosaic Law there were sins of ignorance and for these there were special offerings. The ignorance did not blot out the sin. That is clear in my text, for, if ignorance rendered an action no longer sinful, they why would Christ say, "Father, *forgive* them"? But He does—He asks for mercy for what is *sin*—even though the ignorance, in some measure, is supposed to mitigate the criminality of it.

But, dear Friends, *we might have known*. If we did not know, it was because we *would* not know. There was the preaching of the Word, but we did not care to hear it. There was this blessed Book, but we did not care to read it. If you and I had sat down and looked at our conduct by the light of the Holy Scripture, we might have known much more of the evil of sin, much more of the love of Christ, much more of the ingratitude which is possible in refusing Christ and not coming to Him.

In addition to that, *we did not think*. "Oh, but," you say, "young people never think!" But young people *should* think. If there is anybody who need not think, it is the old man whose day is nearly over. If he thinks, he has but a very short time in which to improve—but the young have all their lives before them. If I were a carpenter and had to make a box, I would not think about it *after* I had made the box. I would think, before I began to cut my timber, what sort of box it was to be. In every action, a man thinks *before* he begins or else he is a fool. A young man ought to think more than anybody else, for now he is, as it were, making his box. He is beginning his life-plan—he should be the most thoughtful of all men. Many of us, who are now Christ's people, would have known much more about our Lord if we had given Him more careful consideration in our earlier days. A man will consider about taking a wife. He will consider about making a business. He will consider about buying a horse or a cow, but he will not consider about the claims of Christ and the claims of the Most High God! And this renders his ignorance willful and inexcusable.

Beside that, dear Friends, although we have confessed to ignorance, *in many sins we did not know a great deal*. Come, let me quicken your memories. There were times when you knew that such an action was wrong when you began it. You looked at the gain it would bring you—and you sold your soul for that price and deliberately did what you were well aware was wrong. Are there not some here, saved by Christ, who must confess that, at times, they did violence to their conscience? They did despite to the Spirit of God, quenched the Light of Heaven, drove the Spirit away from them, distinctly knowing what they were doing! Let us bow before God in the silence of our hearts and acknowledge to all of this. We hear the Master say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Let us add our own tears as we say, "And forgive us, also, because in some things we *did* know. In *all* things we *might* have known, but we were

ignorant for lack of thought, which thought was a solemn duty which we ought to have rendered to God."

One more thing I will say on this head. When a man is ignorant and does not know what he ought to do, what should he do? Well, he should do nothing till he does know! But here is the mischief of it—*when we did not know, yet we chose to do the wrong thing*. If we did not know, why did we not choose the *right* thing? But, being in the dark, we never turned to the right, but always blundered to the left from sin to sin! Does not this show us how depraved our hearts are? Though we are seeking to be right, when we are left alone, we go wrong of ourselves. Leave a child alone. Leave a man alone. Leave a *tribe* alone without teaching and instruction—what comes of it? Why, the same as when you leave a field alone! It never, by any chance, produces wheat or barley! Leave it alone and there are rank weeds, thorns and briars—showing that the natural set of the soil is towards producing that which is worthless!

O Friends, confess the innate evil of your hearts as well as the evil of your lives, in that, when you did not know, yet, having a perverse instinct, you chose the evil and refused the good and, when you did not *know enough of Christ* and did not *think enough of Him* to know whether you ought to have Him or not, you would not have come to Him that you might have life! You needed light but you shut your eyes to the sun. You were thirsty but you would not drink of the living spring and so, your ignorance, though it was there, was a *criminal* ignorance which you must confess before the Lord. Oh, come to the Cross, you who have been there, before, and have lost your burden there! Come and confess your guilt, again, and clasp that Cross afresh! Come and look to Him who bled upon it and praise His dear name that He once prayed for you, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Now, I am going a step further. We were, in a measure, ignorant, but we confess that that measurable ignorance was no excuse.

III. Now, thirdly, WE BLESS OUR LORD FOR PLEADING FOR US.

Do you notice *when* it was that Jesus pleaded? It was *while they were crucifying Him*. They had not just driven in the nails, they had lifted up the Cross and dished it down into its socket—and dislocated all His bones so that He could say, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint." Ah, dear Friends, it was *then* that, instead of a cry or groan, this dear Son of God said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." They did not ask for forgiveness for themselves—Jesus asks forgiveness for them! Their hands were stained with His blood and it was then, even then, that He prayed for them! Let us think of the great love with which He loved us, even while we were yet sinners, when we were rioting in sin, when we drank it down as the ox drinks down water! Even *then* He prayed for us! "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Bless His name tonight! He prayed for you

when you did not pray for yourself! He prayed for you when you were crucifying Him!

Then think of His plea, *He pleads His Sonship*. He says, "Father, forgive them." He was the Son of God and He put His Divine Sonship into the scale on our behalf. He seems to say, "Father, as I am Your Son, grant Me this request and pardon these rebels. Father, forgive them." The filial rights of Christ were very great. He was the Son of the Highest. "Light of Light, very God of very God," the second Person in the Divine Trinity—and He puts that Sonship here before God and says, "Father, Father, forgive them." Oh, the power of that Word from the Son's lips when He is wounded, when He is in agony, when He is dying! He says, "Father, Father, grant My one request! O Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And the great Father bows His awful head in token that the petition is granted.

Then notice that Jesus here, silently, but really *pleads His sufferings*. The attitude of Christ when He prayed this prayer is very noteworthy. His hands were stretched upon the transverse beam. His feet were fastened to the upright tree and there He pleaded! Silently His hands and feet were pleading and His agonized body from the very sinew and muscle pleaded with God! His Sacrifice was presented complete and so it is His Cross that takes up the plea, "Father, forgive them." O blessed Christ! It is thus that we have been forgiven, for His Sonship and His Cross have pleaded with God and have prevailed on our behalf.

I love this prayer, also, because of the *indistinctness* of it. It is, "Father, forgive them." He does not say, "Father, forgive the soldiers who have nailed Me here." He includes them. Neither does He say, "Father, forgive sinners in ages to come who will sin against Me." But He means them. Jesus does not mention them by any accusing name—"Father, forgive My enemies. Father, forgive My murderers." No, there is no word of accusation upon those dear lips. "Father, forgive *them*." Now into that pronoun, "them," I feel that I can crawl. Can you get in there? Oh, by a humble faith, appropriate the Cross of Christ by trusting in it and get into that big little word, "*them*"! It seems like a chariot of mercy that has come down to earth into which a man may step—and it shall bear him up to Heaven. "Father, forgive them."

Notice, also, what it was that Jesus asked for—to omit that would be to leave out the very essence of His prayer. *He asked for full absolution for His enemies*—"Father, forgive them. Do not punish them. Forgive them. Do not remember their sin. Forgive it, blot it out, throw it into the depths of the sea. Remember it not, My Father. Mention it not against them any more forever. Father, forgive them." Oh, blessed prayer, for the forgiveness of God is broad and deep! When man forgives, he leaves the remembrance of the wrong behind. But when God pardons, He says, "I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." It is *this* that Christ asked for you and me long before we had any repentance, or any faith—and in

answer to that prayer we were brought to feel our sin! We were brought to confess it and to believe in Him! And now, glory be to His name, we can bless Him for having pleaded for us and obtained the forgiveness of all our sins!

IV. I come now to my last remark, which is this—WE NOW REJOICE IN THE PARDON WE HAVE OBTAINED.

Have you obtained pardon? Is this your song?—

***“Now, oh joy! My sins are pardoned,
Now I can, and do believe.”***

I have a letter, in my pocket, from a man of education and standing, who has been an agnostic. He says that he was a sarcastic agnostic and he writes praising God and invoking every blessing upon my head for bringing him to the Savior's feet. He says, “I was without happiness for this life and without hope for the next.” I believe that that is a truthful description of many an unbeliever. What hope is there for the world to come apart from the Cross of Christ? The best hope such a man has is that he may die the death of a dog and that may be the end of him. What is the hope of the Roman Catholic when he comes to die? I feel so sorry for many devout and earnest friends, for I do not know what their hope is. They do not hope to go to Heaven—not for some time, at any rate—they believe some “purgatorial” pains must be first endured. Ah, this is a poor, poor faith to die on—to have such a hope as that to trouble your last thoughts! I do not know of any religion but that of Christ Jesus which tells us of sin pardoned, absolutely pardoned!

Now, listen. Our teaching is not that, when you come to die, you *may, perhaps*, find out that it is all right, but, “Beloved, now we are the sons of God.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” He has it now and he knows it, and he rejoices in it! So I come back to the last head of my discourse—we rejoice in the pardon Christ has obtained for us. We are pardoned! I hope that the larger portion of this audience can say, “By the Grace of God, we know that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb.”

Pardon has come to us through Christ's plea. Our hope lies in the plea of Christ and especially in His death. If Jesus paid my debt—and He did it if I am a believer in Him—then I am out of debt. If Jesus bore the penalty of my sin—and He did it if I am a Believer—then there is no penalty for me to pay, for we can say to Him—

***“Complete Atonement You have made,
And to the utmost farthing paid
Whatever Your people owed.
Nor can His wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Your Righteousness,
And sprinkled with Your blood.
If You have my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath Divine—
Payment God can't twice demand,
First of my bleeding Surety's hand,***

And then, again, at mine."

If Christ has borne my punishment, I shall never bear it! Oh, what joy there is in this blessed assurance! Your hope that you are pardoned lies in this—that Jesus died. Those dear wounds of His bled for you!

We praise Him for our pardon because *we do know, now, what we did*. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I know not how much we ought to love Christ because we sinned against Him so grievously! Now we know that sin is, "exceedingly sinful." Now we know that sin crucified Christ. Now we know that we stabbed our heavenly Lover to His heart! We slew, with ignominious death, our best and dearest Friend and Benefactor! We know that, now, and we could almost weep tears of blood to think that we ever treated Him as we did! But, it is all forgiven, all gone! Oh, let us bless that dear Son of God who has put away even such sins as ours! We feel them more, now, than ever before. We know they are forgiven and our grief is because of the pain that the purchase of our forgiveness cost our Savior. We never knew what our sins really were till we saw Him in a bloody sweat. We never knew the crimson hue of our sins till we read our pardon written in crimson lines with His precious blood! Now we see our sin and yet we do not see it, for God has pardoned it, blotted it out, cast it behind His back forever!

From now on *ignorance*, such as we have described, *shall be hateful to us*. Ignorance of Christ and eternal things shall be hateful to us. If, through ignorance, we have sinned, we will have done with that ignorance! We will be students of His Word. We will study that masterpiece of all the sciences, the knowledge of Christ Crucified. We will ask the Holy Spirit to drive far from us the ignorance that genders sin. God grant that we may not fall into sins of ignorance any more, but we may be able to say, "I know whom I have believed and, henceforth I will seek more knowledge till I comprehend, with all saints, what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ, and know the love of God, which passes knowledge!"

I put in a practical word here. If you rejoice that you are pardoned, *show your gratitude by your imitation of Christ*. There was never before such a plea as this, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Plead like that for others. Has anybody been injuring you? Are there persons who slander you? Pray, tonight, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Let us always render good for evil, blessing for cursing—and when we are called to suffer through the wrong-doing of others—let us believe that they would not act as they do if it were not because of their ignorance. Let us pray for them and make their very ignorance the plea for their forgiveness—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

I want you to think of the millions in London just now. Think of those miles of streets, pouring out their children this evening! Think of those public houses with the crowds streaming in and out. Go down our streets

by moonlight. See what I almost blush to tell. Follow men and women, too, to their homes, and be this your prayer—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." That silver bell—keep it always ringing. What did I say? "That silver bell"? No, it is the *golden* bell upon the priest's garments. Wear it on your garments, you priests of God, and let it always ring out its golden note, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." If I can set all God's saints imitating Christ with such a prayer as this, I shall not have spoken in vain.

Brothers and Sisters, I see *reason for hope in the very ignorance that surrounds us*. I see hope for this poor city of ours, hope for this poor country, hope for Africa, China and India. "They know not what they do." Here is a strong argument in their favor, for they are more ignorant than we were. They know less of the evil of sin and less of the hope! Send up this fiery shaft of prayer, straight to the heart of God, while Jesus, from His Throne, shall add His prevalent intercession, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

If there are any unconverted people here, and I know that there are some, we will mention them in our private devotion, as well as in the public assembly. And we will pray for them in words like these, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." May God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON
LUKE 23:33-46; JOHN 19:25-30.

We have often read the story of our Savior's sufferings, but we cannot read it too often. Let us, therefore, once again repair to "the place which is called Calvary." As we just now sang—

***"Come, let us stand beneath the Cross,
So may the blood from out His side
Fall gently on us, drop by drop.
Jesus, our Lord is crucified."***

We will read, first, Luke's account of our Lord's crucifixion and death.

Luke 23:33. *And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.* They gave Jesus the place of dishonor. Reckoning Him to be the worst criminal of the three, they put Him between the other two. They heaped upon Him the utmost scorn which they could give to a malefactor—and in so doing they unconsciously honored Him. Jesus always deserves the chief place wherever He is. In all things He must have the pre-eminence. He is King of sufferers as well as King of saints.

34. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* How startled they must have been to hear such words from One who was about to be put to death for a supposed crime! The men that drove the nails, the men that lifted up the tree must have been started back with amazement when they heard Jesus talk to God as His Father—and pray for them—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Did ever Roman legionary hear such words before? I should say not. They were so distinctly and diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of Rome. There it was, blow for blow—only in the case of Jesus, they gave blows where none had been received. The crushing cruelty of the Romans must have been startled, indeed, at such words as these, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

34, 35. *And they parted His raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding.* The gambling soldiers little dreamed that they were fulfilling the 22nd Psalm, which so fully sets forth our Savior's sufferings and which He probably repeated while He hung on the tree. David wrote, “They parted My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture.” “And the people stood beholding,” gazing, looking on the cruel spectacle. You and I would not have done that—there is a public sentiment which has trained us to hate the sight of cruelty, especially of deadly cruelty to one of our own race—but these people thought that they did no harm when they “stood beholding.” They also were thus fulfilling the Scriptures, for the 17th verse of the 22nd Psalm says, “They look and stare upon Me.”

35. *And the rulers also with them derided Him.* Laughed at Him, made Him the object of course jests.

35, 36. *Saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is Christ, the Chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar.* In mockery, not giving it to Him, as they did later in mercy, but in mockery, pretending to present Him with weak wine, such as they drank.

37. *And saying, If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.* I fancy the scorn that they threw into their taunt—“If You are the King of the Jews”—that was a bit of their own. “Save yourself”—that they borrowed from the rulers. Sometimes a scoffer or a mocker cannot exhibit all the bitterness that is in his heart except by using borrowed terms, as these soldiers did.

38. *And a superscription also was written over Him in the letters of Greek, Latin and Hebrew—THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.* John tells us that Pilate wrote this title and that the chief priests tried in vain to get him to alter it. It was written in the three current languages of the time, so that the Greek, the Roman and the Jew might, alike, understand who He was who was thus put to death. Pilate did not know as much about Christ as we do, or He might have written, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS AND OF THE GENTILES, TOO.

39. *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed at Him, saying, If You are Christ, save Yourself and us.* He, too, borrows this speech from the rulers who derided Christ, only putting the words, “and us,” as a bit of originality. “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”

40-41. *But the other answering rebuked him saying, Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss.*

A fine testimony to Christ—"This Man has done nothing amiss"—nothing unbecoming, nothing out of order, nothing criminal, certainly—but nothing even, "amiss." This testimony was well spoken by this dying thief.

42-46. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up His ghost.* He yielded His life. He did not die, as we have to do, because our appointed time has come, but willingly the great Sacrifice parted with His life—"He gave up the ghost." He was a willing Sacrifice for guilty men. Now let us see what John says concerning these hours of agony, these hours of triumph.

John 19:25. *Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.* Last at the Cross, first at the sepulcher. No woman's lips betrayed her Lord; no woman's hands ever smote Him; their eyes wept for Him; they gazed upon Him with pitying awe and love. God bless the Marys! When we see so many of them about the Cross, we feel that we honor the very name of Mary.

26. *When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the Disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman, behold your son! Sad, sad spectacle! Now was fulfilled the word of Simeon, "Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul, also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."* Did the Savior mean, as He gave a glance to John, "Woman, you are losing one Son, but yonder stands another who will be a son to you in My absence"? "Woman, behold your son!"

27. *Then said He to the Disciple, Behold your mother!* "Take her as your mother, stand in My place, care for her as I have cared for her." Those who love Christ best shall have the honor of taking care of His Church and of His poor. Never say of any poor relative or friend, the widow or the fatherless, "They are a great burden to me." Oh, no! Say, "They are a great honor to me—my Lord has entrusted them to my care." John thought so—let us think so! Jesus selected the Disciple He loved best to take His mother under his care. He selects those whom He loves best, today, and puts His poor people under their wings. Take them gladly and treat them well.

27. *And from that hour that Disciple took her into his own home.* You expected him to do it, did you not? He loved his Lord so well.

28. *After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.* There was a prophecy to that effect in the Psalms, and He must fulfill it. Think of our dying Savior prayerfully going through the whole of the Scriptures and carefully fulfill-

ing all that is there written concerning Him—"That the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, I thirst."

29, 30. *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar,* For He did receive it. It was a weak kind of wine, commonly drunk by the soldiers. This is not that mixed potion which He refused, wine mingled with myrrh, which was intended to stupefy the dying in their pains—"When He had tasted thereof, He would not drink"—for He would not be stupefied. He came to suffer to the bitter end the penalty of sin and He would not have His sorrow mitigated. But when this slight refreshment was offered to Him, He received it. Having just expressed His human weakness by saying, "I thirst," He now manifests His all-sufficient strength by crying, *with a loud voice* as Matthew, Mark and Luke all testify.

30. *He said, It is finished.* What, "it," was it that was finished? I will not attempt to expound it. It is the biggest, "it," that ever was! Turn it over and you will see that it will grow, and grow, and grow, and grow till it fills the whole earth—"It is finished."

30. *And He lowered His head, and gave up the ghost.* He did not give up the ghost and *then* bow His head because He was dead. But He bowed His head as though in the act of worship, or as leaning it down upon His Father's bosom—and *then* gave up the ghost.

Thus have we had two Gospel pictures of our dying Lord. May we remember them and learn the lessons they are intended to teach.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—561, 279, 278.

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UNKNOWN DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS

NO. 3068

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING IN THE YEAR 1861.

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”
Luke 23:34.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon Christ's cries from the Cross (in addition to those mentioned later) are as follows: #2562, Volume 44—CRIES FROM THE CROSS; #2803, Volume 48—THE SADDEST CRY FROM THE CROSS; #2344, Volume 40—CHRIST'S DYING WORDS FOR HIS CHURCH; #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

IT needs a tongue as eloquent as that which uttered these words to fitly describe the scene before us. Christ, the King of kings, and yet the sorrowful Substitute for sinners, has been stripped naked. The mocking soldiers have unconsciously fulfilled the Scripture which said, “They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots.” He has been thrown roughly to the ground. His legs and arms have been stretched out upon the transverse wood. Rough hands have grasped the cruel nails. Stern blows have been dealt with the heavy hammer—He now begins to know the physical sufferings of crucifixion. He looks down to the faces of the men who have been putting him to exquisite torture and to bitter shame and utters not a single word of complaint, much less of accusation or of vengeance. And He breathes a prayer, “Father, forgive them”—My murderers, the rough men who have stripped Me, the cruel men who have nailed My hands and pierced My feet—“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

Brothers and Sisters, the sayings of Christ upon the Cross have a deeper meaning than that which appears upon the surface. They were texts of which His eternal life should be the sermon—they were no common words. As no Word of Scripture is of private interpretation, no Word of the Savior upon the Cross loses its force and significance in later times. What He said then, He is saying now. What He said then was but the utterance of a sentence which shall roll through the ages and which shall prevail with God through time and throughout eternity. “Father, forgive them,” was the prayer of a dying Man, but it was not a dying prayer. “They know not what they do,” was the plea of lips that were about to be closed, but it was no plea which was doomed to silence—it is heard in Heaven today, as much as when Jesus first offered it on Calvary from His Cross!

The text seems to me to be of great depth. I shall not attempt to fathom it tonight, but reserve it for some future sermons, only tonight exploring two of its parts, rather flitting like a swallow across its surface, than like the leviathan stirring its depths. [Mr. Spurgeon carried out this intention with Sermons #897, Volume 15—THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2263, Volume 38—CHRIST'S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

There are two things in the text, *the unknown depths of sin*—"They know not what they do." And *the unknown heights of mercy*, as manifested in Christ's dying plea—"Father, forgive them." May God grant His blessing while I shall endeavor to set forth both, according as the Spirit of God shall enable me to do so!

I. And first, my Friends, it appears from the text that THERE ARE UNKNOWN DEPTHS IN HUMAN INIQUITY. "They know not what they do."

You will tell me, perhaps, that Christ applied this remark to His murderers who did not know that He was the Son of God, for if they had known Him to be the Messiah, "they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." And it might have been said to them, "You did it ignorantly in unbelief." I grant you that this was the immediate meaning of Christ's words, but I think, to return to what I have already affirmed, this saying is true of the entire human family—whenever any of us sin, we know not what we do. Do not misunderstand me. There is no man in the world who has not enough perception left to teach him the difference between right and wrong. Even upon the natural conscience of man there is engraved so much of the Law of God that his conscience either accuses or excuses him. I can scarcely think that there is any race of bushmen, or that there is a single tribe of aboriginal savages who have altogether lost that "candle of the Lord which searches all the inward parts of the belly." They know enough to leave them without excuse, so that if they perish, they perish through willful sin. Yet I must admit, at the outset, that it is possible for the conscience to become so blind through prevailing customs, so seared through lengthened habit and so preserved through absolute ignorance, that men may sin and yet know not what they do. There may be some in whom the judgment has left its seat—they have become maniacs so far as any moral judgment is concerned. They sin with both their hands and, perhaps, write down that very sin as being righteousness, and their obscenity as being a sacrifice acceptable to God! There are none such, however, here. I think in a land like this, with an open Bible, with a preached Gospel, with the Presence of the Spirit of God, I need not address such an assembly as this as not knowing what they do in that sense. If you sin, my Hearers, you sin against light and knowledge. You sin knowing that you do wrong. You put out your hand to touch the accursed thing knowing that it is accursed. You sin willingly and many shall be your stripes, seeing that you know your Master's will and do it not! But still, of the whole human race it is nevertheless true that when they sin, "they know not what they

do.” Let me show you, as briefly and forcibly as I can, how this is the fact.

Who among us knows, to the full, the real meaning and nature of sin? I can give some description to you of what sin is, but I question, Brothers and Sisters, whether even the most enlightened of us know the whole of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Sinner, I address myself pointedly to you. Do you know that when you sin, you call God a fool? You say that His Law is not the best thing for you, that He has made a mistake and has asked you to do that which would not conduce to your happiness. You call God a fool—is that nothing? Do you know that when you sin, you call God a liar? He tells you that sin is a bitter and an evil thing. You say, “No, it is sweet. It is pleasant. At any rate, I will taste it.” You give the lie to the Eternal God! Is that nothing? Whenever you sin, you call God a tyrant. You do, in fact, avow that He has given Laws which are hard and arbitrary, which He ought not to have given and which you are determined to break because you feel that they are not for your happiness—they do not promote your comfort! And is this nothing? Is this nothing—to call the all-wise God a fool, the truthful God a liar and the good and generous God a tyrant?

But there is more than this in your sin. Every time a man sins, he aims a blow at the crown of God. He refuses to let God be the King but puts his hand, his wicked hand, upon the diadem of Deity and would dash the crown from God’s head if he could. No, more! He aims a blow at God’s very existence. The language of sin is, “No God!” And every time a sinner sins, he tries to get rid of God—and his aim and drift is to stop the Eternal One and to put the King of kings out of His own universe. Is this nothing? Is this nothing? Does not even this, feeble though the explanation is, make sin to be exceedingly sinful? Verily, when we sin, we know not what we do! I can hardly believe that there is a man or woman in this assembly who would, in cold blood, stand up and say, “I defy God! I will do my best to drive Him from His throne. Yes, and to drive Him from existence!” And yet, Sinner, every time you curse, or lie, or swear, or break God’s Law in any way whatever, you do, in fact, do all these things and I think I may say you know not what you do.

Let us now shift the kaleidoscope and get another view of this great and solemn Truth of God. *Some of us know what we do if we judge of sin by its loathsomeness in God’s sight.* There is no man living who knows how much God hates and abhors sin! You may detest the loathsome toad. You may give way to a wicked disposition and hate some enemy till you cannot live till that enemy is slain. But you cannot loathe the toad, you cannot hate your foe so thoroughly as God abhors and hates sin! Wherever sin is, there is God’s utmost hate, anger and ire. He cannot endure it! His eyes cannot light upon it without burning it up and His hand is always longing to smite it to the death. Why, look Sirs, God had a choice archangel—a glorious being whose wings were like the beams of the rising sun, whose stature was like a great snow-clad mountain and whose beauty was as a fair field girt with flowers. He sinned and God

spared neither him nor the angels that followed him in his rebellion, but cast them down to Hell and reserved them “in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” Angelhood could not save an angel—angelic stature, a seraphic voice and a cherubic flight could not save Satan and his hosts when the stain of sin had fallen on them! How much, then, must God hate sin?

When God had made the world, He smiled and said, “It is good.” The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, for the world was very good and God’s own heart was glad at the sight of the new-made world. But when Adam sinned, God did not spare Eden, with all its perfections of beauty! And later, when the iniquity of man was fully ripe, He did not spare the round world itself, but bade the floods leap up from their cavernous darkness and bade the clouds burst their swaddling bands, and the earth was covered with a flood, for “it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.”

No, if we still want to see more clearly how God hates sin, let us see how sin came upon His own Son, His only-begotten, His well-beloved Son. It came there, not by any deed of His own, but because He took our iniquities upon Himself and, therefore, was numbered with the transgressors. And did His Father spare Him? Far from it! He smote Him with the rod, He scourged Him with the lash, He pierced Him to the heart with His sword. He gave up His darling to the power of the dog, and “Lama Sabachthani?” was a sorrowful proof that God hates and loathes sin, let it be wherever it may. [See Sermon #2133, Volume 36—“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Now, Sirs, would you go and press to your bosom and dandle and pamper and pet that thing which God loathes and hates? I think not. If we ever had, before our eyes, God’s hatred of sin and this were revealed to our heart by the Holy Spirit, we would long to be rid of it and, therefore, I say that when we take hold of it and embrace it, we know not what we do.

Again, *what man among us knows sin in its awful consequences?* Is there a mother here who would go home tonight and ask herself the quickest way to damn her child’s soul? Is there a father here who would take counsel with his own wickedness as to the readiest method of sending his son to Hell? I think not. And yet, when the father is a drunk or a swearer, what does he do but do his worst to ruin his child? And when the mother is prayerless, Godless, Christless, does she not do her utmost to murder her child’s soul? Verily, we in our relationships, when we go into sin, know not what we do! What master could sit down wantonly to undermine the spiritual health of his workmen? What citizen would wish to become the deadly upas tree dropping poison from all its branches? What man of influence would wish to be the basilisk whose eyes should tempt men to their destruction? Not one! And yet when you commit iniquity—and especially those of you who occupy the responsible position of parents, or masters, or ministers, or employers in any way—

you do your best to destroy the souls of others! So I can truly say, "Surely you know not what you do."

Do you know, Sinner, that every time you sin, your sin affects the whole world? Let me not stagger you. It is only our finite vision which prevents us seeing the effect of even one thought upon the entire universe. The word I am speaking, just now, sets in motion a wave in the air which reaches your ears. It will abide in your memory, to a certain degree, throughout eternity. In limiting the sphere of my voice to your ears, I have set eternity pulsating—you shall think these things over either in the waves of fiery Hell, or in the fields of glorious Heaven. Eternity has been affected by the speech of a man! And so it is with what you do—there is an effect produced on earth, in Heaven, in Hell by whispered blasphemy or by an unseen lust—you cannot sin alone! You are part of a universe—you cannot disentangle yourself from the meshes of the net of society. You are in the ship of the universe and you cannot get out of it. You cannot even be thrown out of it, as Jonah was cast out of the ship into the sea. Your sin is dragging other men down to Hell, or else the Grace that is in you is helping to lift up others towards God and Heaven. Mind that when you sin, for from this day on I think that you will hardly be able to say as, perhaps, you may have done before, that you know not what you do.

But Sinner, let me speak to you solemnly—to you—about something in which no imagination is needed. Do you see that man yonder? What is he doing? I see a pearly gate within which I mark the splendors of unutterable bliss and hear the hymns of the Paradise of God! What is that man doing? He is putting bolts and bars upon that gate to shut himself out. Do you call him a madman? Sinner, that madman is you! Your sins are shutting you out of Heaven. Do you see yonder man? He is carrying wood on his weary shoulders and stooping to the very ground as he bears his burden. For what purpose is he carrying that fuel? It is to make a bed of fire on which he shall lie and swelter in flames forever! Do you call him a madman? Sinner, that madman is yourself! What is Hell but the laying on upon your back of a whip whose knots you have yourself tied? What is it but the drinking of a cup of gall, every drop of which was distilled from your own sin? These are awful things to say, but I feel that when I look at what Hell is, in all its horrors, and what the loss of Heaven is, with all its dreadful darkness, I must say to you when you sin, surely you know not what you do! The man who puts himself to death with the halter, or drives the knife into his heart, or throws himself into his watery grave may have some present griefs which may, to him, though not to us, seem to be an excuse for fleeing from them. But you, when you sin, are a suicide without excuse because you flee from good that stands before you to an evil that has no mixture of benefit or mercy! You leap into the fire yourself—a fire which you have yourself kindled and which your own blasphemous breath has fanned! Oh, may God teach us, when we sin, what we have really done, that we may not do it

again and that, by His Grace, we may be led to the precious blood of Christ to have the guilt of it washed away!—

***“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel’s veins.
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.”***

Only once more upon this point and then I will leave it. “They know not what they do.” *Sinner, do you know that when you sin, eternity is involved in every act?* Faith binds me to eternal bliss—sin and unbelief fetter me to everlasting woe. I think I hear the voice of a spirit which has been these last ten years in Hades. Listen! Listen! There is a cry, a groan, but now the words are audible—“Fool that I was to come here! Here I am tortured in indescribable agony that is to go on forever—and for what? For a few hours of giddy mirth, for a few silly jokes that I might indulge my pride rather than submit to the Free Grace of God. Why am I here? Because I would serve Satan—and God knows that it was a bitter service and what little sweet it had is all forgotten now.” Do you hear this man as he speaks to himself? “Oh, if I could ever escape from this dreadful dungeon, it would be a Heaven to me! If these awful fires could be quenched, if this gnawing worm would but die, then I would be content! If after ten thousand, thousand, thousand years I could hope to make my escape from this pit of woe, it would set all the bells of my heart a-ringing for very joy at the bare possibility that, at last, I might escape! But what is it that I see written before me? Forever! Forever, on my chains! Forever, branded on my limbs of pain! Forever, on yon waves of fire! Forever, in the angry gaze of an incensed Deity! Forever, in those hungry depths which seem to yawn to suck me into deeper woe! Forever, forever, forever, forever!” O drunkard, swearer, whoremonger—when you sin the next time, remember that the deed you do entails everlasting consequences which will run on forever, forever, FOREVER! Surely, when you have sinned in the past, you must have been ignorant of this overwhelming Truth of God—you could not have known what you were doing!

But have I some here who say that they do know what they are doing? They have been so faithfully warned, so affectionately dealt with, so earnestly prayed for that when they sinned, they sinned willfully, knowing what they did. O my dear Hearers, that is true of some of you! I have often felt, when I have come out of the pulpit, that you would be without excuse in the Day of Judgment. God knows that I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God—Divine Sovereignty in all its absoluteness and the sinner’s responsibility in all its fullness! I have preached to you the Doctrines of Grace, but I have not, therefore, kept back the demands of God upon you. And I know that should you perish, it will neither be for want of preaching, nor of weeping. Well, Sirs, if you do perish with the Gospel preached in your ears, you perish fearfully indeed!

Room there! Room—make way you priests of MODOCH! Stand back, you followers of ASHTAROTH, you worshippers of BAAL, stand back! Give up

your choice seats, the highest places in the synagogue of Hell! Make room, for here comes a man who read his Bible and heard the Word faithfully preached! Give him the choicest place. Now cannibals, pirates and all you poor beings who sinned, but knew not what you did, make room, for here comes a man who sinned with God before his very eyes and blindly rushed upon the spear of the Almighty when the light of Heaven was shining upon his eyeballs! Make room for him, I say! Get up, you who have been guilty of murder and of the shedding of blood in lands where Christ was never preached! Get up and give your place to this man! “What?” they say, “have you become like one of us?” Yes, we say, not only like one of you, but deeper than your depth, more fiery than your flames, more horrible than your horrors shall be the dread, the doom, the destruction of this man of whom it could not be said, “He knew not what he did.” God have mercy upon you, my Hearers! May His Sovereign Grace be extended toward you. May the lines of His election embrace you, the blood of Christ’s redemption wash you, the voice of His effectual calling awaken you and the power of His Grace preserve you! Or alas, woe unto you, Newington! Woe unto you, Southwark! If the Gospel preached unto you had been preached in Sodom, it had continued unto this day! And if in Tyre and Sidon—they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes!

I have thus tried, in all simplicity, as God’s servant, to expound Christ’s plea—“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

II. Now, very briefly—but oh, may God grant that it may be with the unction of the Holy One—let me speak upon THE UNKNOWN HEIGHTS OF GRACE.

If there were any men in all the world who under the Covenant of Works, or under that mangle-mangle covenant which some preach, which is half Law and half works, and neither Law nor works—if there were any men who should have been excluded from the Election of Grace it was those men who nailed the Savior to the Cross! And yet, mark this, while Christ did not mention by name the best of the Pharisees, He did mention, before God, particularly and personally, those degraded men who with many an addition of cruel mockery, nailed Him to the Cross! “Father, forgive *them*.” He did not say, “Father, forgive Pontius Pilate, for he sinned unwillingly.” He did not say, “Father, forgive Judas, for he repented and cast down his ill-gotten gain in the Temple.” But He said, “Father, forgive *them*.” There they are—the mark of the nails has not yet gone out of their hands—there is the print of the head of the nails in the center of their palm even now. Look, the blood of Jesus is on their clothes—the very blood which spurted forth from the Redeemer’s hands when they drove the nails through them! Yet He prays, “Father, forgive *them*.” There they are—they are grinning at their ghastly work and saying, “Aha! Aha!” and joining with the ribald crew and thrusting their tongues into their checks, saying, “He saved others, Himself He could not save.” And yet there is heard, above the clamor of their iniquity which appeals to God for justice, the cry of the Savior, “Father, forgive them.”

There is no consciousness of need of forgiveness in them. Their hearts are hard as nether millstones. They laugh at the prayer itself. "Forgive?" they say, "we have done many a worse piece of work than this! We need not be forgiven." They are as cold as ice and stern as steel—and hard as the granite rock. And yet Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them." There are no past good works to recommend them—they never did a good thing in their lives—they are soldiers who have slain, every man, perhaps his hundred men! They have learned to split a little infant on the blade of their swords. They know how to rip up, and tear, and cut off a head and gouge out eyes—they are men whose deeds of blood must be written in fire, but whose deeds of goodness have never yet come to light! And yet Jesus cries, "Father, forgive them." They are men who if the Gospel were preached to them, would reject it. If Christ were offered to them, they would refuse Him. If they were moved by some qualms of conscience, they would stifle them. If they were wept over by the minister, they would ridicule his tears. If they were pleaded for by the Church, they would laugh at the pleas and yet the Savior says, "Father, forgive them." Amid such splendors of Grace, where shall I find words to fitly describe them? Language, you are a dull, cold thing in such a case as this! Words, you have not strength enough to carry the mighty meaning of my soul just now! Was there ever Grace like this, except, when Jesus prayed for me and said, "Father, forgive *him*"? And when He prayed for you, my Brother, and you, my Sister, and said, "Father, forgive *them*"?

O my Hearers, when Jesus pleads for us, it is not because there is anything in us why He should plead! It is not because we flee to Him that He pleads for us! It is not because we long for mercy and value it that He pleads for us. He prays for us long before we pray to Him! He died for us before we knew anything about our death in sin. And He lived and pleaded before His Father's Throne when we were cursing, blaspheming and defying Him. Ah, Souls, I would that you could get rid, once and for all, of any idea that Jesus Christ needs anything in you to move His heart of compassion towards you! Where He loves, He loves for His own sake, not because of the worthiness of the object of His love. The source of Grace is in the God of Grace, not in the receiver of Grace! The reason for pardon is not in the penitent, but in the Pardoner. The ground of acceptance is not in our faith, but in Christ, the Author and Finisher of that faith—and hence it is that the Gospel is adapted to the worst of sinners—to the scum, the chaff, the off-scouring, the parings, the filth, the vileness, the rottenness, the stench, the offal of the world! Oh, if we had a Gospel that was half Grace and half human goodness, then the good, the upright, the educated, the refined, the moral would have some degree of hope! But the poor outcast would have none. But now, tonight, I preach a Gospel which comes right down to you, just where you are, in the bog, the mire, the slough, next door to Hell, lying at Hell's gate—not like Lazarus when the dogs licked his sores at the rich man's gate, but lying at the gate of Hell while Hell hounds lick your wounds—cast out from God, abhorred, detested, abhorrent to yourself, obnoxious to your

own conscience—such a sinner that you wish you had never been born, or that you had been a viper, a snake, a toad rather than have been a man! Yet can God’s Grace reach even you and “unto you is the word of this salvation sent.” I do believe that over such sinners as you Jesus pleads tonight, “Father, forgive them.”

And now, my dear Hearers, is there something in you which seems to say, “Unite in that prayer”? Does the Spirit of God whisper in your soul, “Tonight is the hour of mercy. Jesus Christ is passing by—He is interceding for the transgressors”? Then I pray you say, “Father, forgive me.” What? Shall my Master say, “Father, forgive them,” and will not you pray for yourself? The adamant might melt, the steel dissolve—and will not you melt? Spirit of God, bring the fire and melt the heart! And now, poor Soul, say, “Father, forgive me. I did not know the full guilt of my sin, but I knew enough to make me so guilty that I deserve Your wrath. I have no merits, Lord. I have no righteousness. If You slay me, You are just. If You curse me, I deserve it. But Father, forgive me!” Do not use Christ’s plea—that is His, not yours. He could say, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” You must use another plea. “Father, forgive me through Your Son’s precious blood.”

Oh, I think my soul would be ready to leap from earth to Heaven if I could but be sure that there was someone here who was saying in his heart, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and am no more worthy to be called Your son.” Or if some heart were saying, “By His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, by His precious death and burial, by His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, Father, forgive me!” Soul, your prayer is heard—“go, and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.”

Go home and tell your friends and your kinsfolk what God has done for your soul and, by-and-by, come here and tell us what God has done for you—and then come to this Communion Table and spiritually eat with us of His flesh and drink of His blood, “for His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed.”

May the Lord add His blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 136.

[Sermon #787, Volume 13—A SONG, A SOLACE, A SERMON AND A SUMMONS—
is a sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the whole of this Psalm,
although he used as a text, the refrain, “for His Mercy endures forever.”—Read/download the entire
sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

This is, indeed, one of the chief songs of praise which we find in the Scriptures. And it is not surprising that such a poet as John Milton should have written that version of it that we often sing—

***“Let us with a gladsome mind,
Praise the Lord, for He is kind:
For His mercies shall endure,***

Ever faithful, ever sure.”

Verses 1-3. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good, for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for His mercy endures forever.* Here, you see, we have three titles of God, first as Jehovah, secondly as the Elohim, thirdly as the Adonai or Lord. By whatever name God is known, He is worthy of our highest praise. Whether it is the name referring to His Self-Existence, or the name relating to His Covenant engagements, or the name applying specially to His rule and governorship—in any and every capacity, let us praise Him. Notice that each of these three verses begins, “O give thanks.” We are to praise the Lord for His greatness and to give Him thanks for His goodness. Our praise shall consist largely of the element of gratitude as we think of all that He has done for us. Although I lay no stress upon the fact of these verses being three and upon the names of God being three, yet it is very remarkable that throughout the Old Testament, even when there is no distinct allusion to the Doctrine of the Trinity, yet still the threefold praise is constantly being repeated, as if this sublime Truth of God lay latent, but yet was not unknown to those godly ones who dived deep into the mystery of the Triune Unity of God. Let us who have this Truth so clearly revealed to us, give thanks unto the Triune Jehovah with all the powers of our threefold nature—body, soul and spirit.

4, 5. *To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever. To Him that by wisdom made the heavens: for His mercy endures forever.* [See Sermon #1981, Volume 33—GOD THE WONDER-WORKER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The making of the heavens is a great marvel of wisdom and, inasmuch as that wondrous work sprang from the unaided wisdom of God, it is a subject for which we should unceasingly praise Him. When men invent some notable piece of machinery, they are generally long in bringing it to perfection and they usually borrow various ideas from those who have preceded them. But it was not so with God. By His own perfect Wisdom, He struck out the arch of Heaven and made all that it covers.

6. *To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for His mercy endures forever.* Once in the history of the globe, the earth and the waters were mingled together but, at God’s bidding, the earth rose to its assigned position and the deeps received the sea and they have kept their places ever since, except when God caused the Flood to cover the whole earth.

7-9. *To Him that made great lights: for His mercy endures forever: the sun to rule by day, for His mercy endures forever. The moon and stars to rule by night, for His mercy endures forever.* What should we have been without light? Could any poor unhappy creatures ever have lived in a dark world? Let us praise God for the light! Let us bless Him for the sun—that great mercy, but let us not forget the lesser mercies—the moon and the stars which He also made. It is well, when we are praising God, to dwell upon all His bounties for, sometimes, mercies which appear

small from one point of view become all the greater from another point of view. Stars seem little to us, but what vast orbs they really are! Let us praise the great Creator for every kind of light that He has made, and let us especially praise Him for all spiritual light, and even for His ministers who are stars in His right hand. They are but little twinkling lights compared with the great Sun of Righteousness, but still, "He made the stars also." Therefore let Him have due praise for it, "for His mercy endures forever." So far, we have been reminded of the wonders worked by the great Creator. Now we are called upon to give thanks to the Lord for His deliverance of His ancient people out of Egypt.

10-14. *To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever: and brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm for His mercy endures forever: to Him which divided the Red sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever.* It was a great miracle by which the Red Sea was divided. I suppose it was somewhere about eight or nine miles in breadth at the place where the Israelites crossed it, yet the sea rolled back and stood in a heap on either side and left a clear passage for the people through the very heart of the sea! God's mercy made a way for His people through the sea, and a path for them through the mighty waters. But it was no less a mercy to make them go through the sea. They had not been accustomed to any kind of travelling and certainly not to such travelling as that—through the heart of the sea—but the Lord inspired them with confidence, so that they went down into the very depths without fear and came up again on the other side! But God's mercy is always consistent with His justice, so there was very different treatment for the Egyptians.

15, 16. *But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which led His people through the wilderness: for His mercy endures forever.* In this Psalm you have three leadings. There is, in verse 11, leading out—"Brought out Israel." In verse 16 there is leading through—"Led His people through the wilderness." And in the 21st verse we shall find that there is leading into—"And gave their land for an heritage." So God leads us out from the region of sin, He leads us through the wilderness of this life's trial and He leads us into the rest which remains for His people. "To Him which led His people through the wilderness: for His mercy endures forever." You are today, dear Friends, experiencing that kind of leading. Long ago some of you were led out of the realm of sin—now you are passing through this great and terrible wilderness wherein there would be thirst and hunger were it not for the heavenly water and manna. And we might fear the fiery serpents were it not for Him who was lifted up upon the Cross as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Yet the Lord will safely lead you through the wilderness and give you the land of promise.

17. *To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever.* His mercy and His vengeance are quite compatible—the one has not done away with the other.

18-20. *And slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan for His mercy endures forever.* Here are four verses where we think that one might have sufficed. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we often use only one verse when we ought to use four! Scripture sets us a better example—it frequently repeats its references to some one thing because in that one thing there are included many mercies. It would be well if the diligence in describing details which we use with regard to our troubles could be exercised upon descriptions of our mercies, for then we would imitate the Psalmist's style and say, "O give thanks to Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan." [See Sermon #1285, Volume 22—SIHON AND OG, OR MERCIES IN DETAIL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

21, 22. *And gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even an heritage unto Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever.* Here we have the same thought put into two verses, to show us how to dwell with lengthened notes and repeated Hallelujahs upon the goodness and mercy of God. Notice how many of these verses begin with, "And," as if every mercy had been linked to another which went before it and would be linked to another which would come after it. I like to see these *And*s. They remind us that there is more to follow. After all that we have received from God, there is yet more to come! God has not come to the end of His mercies.

23, 24. *Who remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endures forever: and has redeemed us from our enemies: for His mercy endures forever.* Redemption—what a grand note that is! What voice can ever reach its fullness and its loftiness! Let us praise the name of the Lord as we remember the price and the power with which He "has redeemed us from our enemies."

25. *Who gives food to all flesh.* There is food for you, then, poor hungry one! There is food for you, child of God. He "who gives food to all flesh," can certainly give food to all spirits.

25, 26. *For His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of Heaven: for His mercy endures forever.*

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

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

A PLEA FROM THE CROSS

NO. 3558

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 1917.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THE LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 29, 1871.

*"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."
Luke 23:34.*

To the godly heart there is a brighter light on Calvary than anywhere else beneath the sun. He who often resorts to Golgotha, if his spirit is right, must be wise. It is the University of Saints! He who would know sin—its heinousness, its penalty—must see the Son of God making Expiation for it by His death on the accursed tree. He who would know love—the love which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown—must read it in the Savior's face—or, if you will, written in crimson lines in the Savior's heart, pierced with the spear. He who would know how he may get his sin forgiven, must resort to the Cross. There, and there only, is seen the way by which sin can be pardoned and the sinner accepted with God! And he who, finding pardon there, would seek to be useful to his fellow men and bring them into the same condition, must, himself, keep near that Cross, that he may speak much of it and, in the power of it, may be able to persuade and to prevail with the sons of men. Abide at the Cross, Beloved—there is no air so healthy and quickening as that which is breathed there! There was the birthplace of your hope! There its native air! There must be on earth, the climax of your joy! Live upon a Crucified Savior as you live by a Crucified Savior!

And now this word which we hear at Calvary, the first word of our Savior after He had been fastened to the Cross—this word I shall not attempt to fathom, or go into the depths of it, but shall rather touch the surface of it, skimming it, and uttering a few such sentences, as it were, one after the other that have arisen to my mind while listening to the voice of our Lord in this, His plaintive cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I will suppose that I have many here, and I fear I need not make it a supposition, who as yet are unpardoned, unreconciled to God. Will you come with me and make a pilgrimage to Calvary? Will you look at your Savior? He has just come up the hill of doom! They have thrown Him upon His back. There is the Cross—the executioners have stretched out His hands and His feet—they have taken the nails—they have driven them through His hands and feet! He is fastened to the wood, and now as they are lifting Him up, before it jars into the ground, you hear Him cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

I want you to learn a few lessons out of this. And the first shall be, see here—

I. THE SAVIOR'S LOVE TO SINNERS.

It is His last hour, but He thinks of them! He had searched for them in His health and strength. He went about doing good. He came to seek and to save the rebellious and He had spent His active life in their service. He is about to die, but the ruling passion is strong in death. He is still seeking sinners and if He can preach no more, yet He can pray! And if He will not speak to them, yet He can speak to God *for* them, and so He continues to show which way His heart runs, by the prayer for those that nailed Him to the wood, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He had been 30 years in their midst and His holy soul had been much vexed by them. He had endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, but you see He has not cast them off—He has not turned His love to wrath. He is not weary of them, but He still pleads, "Father, oh, forgive them." What love is this! One would suppose that the pain which He then felt might have distracted His mind from others, and His prayer might have been for Himself, that patience might be given, that strength might be sustained! But no, oblivious of Himself, His only care is still for those He seeks—the sinful sons of men! Just as an arrow from a bow shot forth with such force that it speeds onward to its target, His whole strength and soul speeds onward to the mark of the salvation of the sons of men! One thing, one thing only, does He do—He seeks their good! And I say again, if not now by active ministering to them, yet by ministering *for* them, He prays "Father, forgive them." It is one thing to love persons at a distance and to have philanthropic desires for their good—it is quite another thing to live with them and still have the same fondness towards them. And it is quite another thing by far to receive bad treatment from them—contumely, scorn and a worse thing even than that, to be about to receive your death from them—and still to pray for them! But such is the perseverance of Jesus' love that it cannot be turned aside. They have spit into His face, but still He prays for them. They have scourged Him with their cruel lashes. They have hounded Him along the streets. They have, at last, pierced His hands and feet, and stripped Him! And they now hang Him up upon the Cross between Heaven and earth—but still nothing can diminish the flame of His love, nor turn aside His heart's desire from them—it is still for them He lives, for them He dies. "Father, oh, forgive them," is the sign and proof that He is still holding to the one great work He undertook! Now I would, O Sinner, I would that you would learn this lesson. Herein is love, behold what love! Will you not come and share in it? What keeps you back? Can you hold your heart from Immanuel? Can you refuse to love such a dear lover of the sons of men? I think if our hearts were not adamant or worse, they would melt at the sight of the pleading love of Jesus upon the Cross. Come, Soul, have done with your hardness—let a drop of Christ's blood melt that heart of yours! Have done with your carelessness—let a spark of love set your heart on fire towards Him! Are you afraid to come, afraid

of Him who died for sinners, afraid of love, terrified at mercy? Oh, be not so, but come and welcome! Put your trust in Him who, with His dying breath, proves the strength of His Almighty love by pleading for His foes! Let that stand for the first remark. Here is the strong love of Christ. Here, next, we see—

II. HOW LOVE SHOWS ITSELF.

How did Jesus prove His love in this last great moment? It was *by prayer!* Love shows itself in prayer. Prayer, alone, would not be a sufficient proof of love, but He who dies and prays, whose life is a prayer, and whose death is a prayer, proves His love by adding to His life and death the vocal utterance of both in this cry, “Father, forgive them.” If Jesus Christ would prove His love to you, He does it by praying for you. Observe, then, the extreme value of prayer. It is a ripe fruit of the Cross. It is, if I may call it so, a golden apple of the Cross—intercessory prayer! See, then, Sinner, the need there is for you to pray. If Jesus prays and proves His love by prayer, and if the saints on earth who love you pray for you, depend upon it, prayer is no light thing. Bend those knees of yours, lift your eyes to Heaven and let a prayer go up from the depths of your spirit, “Father, forgive me! Your Son has prayed, so pray I. He says, ‘Father, forgive them,’ and I pray, ‘Father, forgive me.’” Ought not this to bring every sinner to his knees? Would it not, if men were in their senses? Would not the sight of a dying Christ pleading for the guilty make the guilty plead? Oh, who can restrain prayer for himself when Jesus leads the way? When He says, “Forgive them,” will you not say, “Amen”? Oh, deserve you not right well to perish if you cannot join your assent to the Divine Intercession of the pleading Savior! Sinner, I beseech you now, in the secret of your soul, to pray, “Father, forgive me.” “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Is there no woman, is there no man, that could pray that now? You need not speak—let but your lips move. But, oh, since Jesus Christ tonight is set forth before you in the delightful attitude of an Intercessor praying for the guilty, I implore you pray for yourselves—and may God send you, this night, an answer of peace—may your pardon be signed and sealed to the comfort of your spirit!

And now leaving that observation, we pass to the next. We saw the love of Jesus. We saw how that love shows itself in prayer. See next—

III. WHAT IT IS THE SAVIOR ASKS.

He asks *forgiveness*, “Father, forgive them.” If the Savior should pray for all of us here present, He need not amend that prayer. It was suitable to those who nailed Him to the tree. They needed pardon for the murder of their Savior. It was suitable to the clamoring multitude, who had said, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.” They needed forgiveness for that blood which they then brought upon themselves, but it is equally suitable to each one here present, “Forgive them.” May I ask you to look back upon your past lives? Have you been kept from grosser sins? Thank God for it, but your sins of heart, of mind, of tongue, your sins of omission. What? Are these nothing? God grant you may feel them to be something and may you feel, tonight, that what you need is even as if you had been an open offend-

er—you need forgiveness and if, perchance, there are some here who have gone into open sin with a high hand and an outstretched arm, yet, my Brother, yet my Sister, this prayer needs no enlargement to suit you, “Father, forgive them.” “Father, forgive them,” forgiveness covers all! A man receipts a bill. He puts his name at the bottom. If that bill were for ten thousand pounds or ten pence, it is the same, the receipt has covered all—and Jesus’ hand, when He puts it with the bloody red nail prints upon the great record of our sins, draws a red line down the page and blots out the whole—and leaves not a single sin on the page! “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” Oh, the greatness of that word, “forgiven”! Blessed be the Lord Jesus for praying such a prayer as that! Do you know, I do not think it need be altered for the best man and the best woman here, for even our best things need forgiveness. When you have prayed the best prayer you ever prayed, you might well ask God to forgive it! If you have preached the best sermon you ever preached, you may ask to be forgiven it, for some sin has mingled with your holiest action, so forgiveness is needed at best, and always needed at the worst—needed today, tomorrow and allthrough life, and needed when the breath leaves the body—always needed that blessed prayer that sweeps the compass of mortal existence—that comprehends so much, “Father, forgive them.” This is the great thing love asks, for the forgiveness of those for whom she pleads. But passing on you will observe—

IV. FOR WHOM IT IS THAT OUR SAVIOR, IN THIS CASE, OFFERED THE PETITION. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Now that little word, “them,” is a great word because it is so little. “Father, forgive *them*.” The Savior is explicit—He does not mention the names of the four soldiers who pierced His hands and feet. No. He meant them, but He meant more. He does not mention the names of these in the crowd who were gazing upon Him with insolent stare—He meant them. He does not mention those that had cried, “Crucify Him, crucify Him”—He had meant them. He does not say, “Father, forgive them, for they knew not what they *did*”—for that would look as if He only prayed for sins that had already been committed. He does not say, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they *shall do*,” for that would look as if He only prayed for sins that would be committed! But He says, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they *do*.” And putting it thus in the present, it seems as though the petition had one hand to reach out to the past sins of mankind before He died, and another hand to the sins to come of mankind after He had offered the Sacrifice. “They know not what they do.” It is put so indefinitely, the, “them,” and the, “do,” the tense of the verb and the pronoun—they are so indefinite that I bless God for the wide extent of their range! “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Who, then, is included in that word, “them”? I venture to say every man that is willing to be included—every man that feels he is included! Did you slay Christ? Have your sins caused Him to die? Do you know, tonight, that your sins fastened Him to the cruel tree? Could you

join in the hymn we sung just now? Then, when Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," He included *you* in that prayer, and *me* in that prayer, and tens of thousands besides in that word, "them."

Yet, yet you will observe in that word He put it specially. He does not exclude any, but He does include some more peculiarly than others, for His prayer is for those who *knew not what they did*. Can I get in there? I think I can. I believe that most here present can. I do not think all the sons of men can—Judas, for instance, I fear he did know what he did, and deliberately sold his Lord and Master. I am half afraid that Pilate, to a great extent, knew what he did, and there are some of whom it is written, "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that you shall pray for it." A great Doctrine, but it is in the Word—a terrible Doctrine, but there it stands! You know how Peter put it in that first sermon. He said, "I know, my brethren, that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers"—as if he felt that had they known what they did, their sin had been unpardonable. And the Apostle Paul, himself, speaking of his own persecution, said, "Because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief." There is a deliberate Crucifixion of Christ as Christ, knowing what you are doing—doing it out of sheer malice to the Christ of God, out of intense hatred to Him, to Him personally—which is unpardonable, for this reason, that the man who commits it never repents. Could he repent, the pardon were sure, but the capacity to do that argues incapacity to ever be made penitent. The man is given over, hardened—he perishes in his sin!

But the Lord Jesus in this prayer felt that those around Him did not know what they were doing—the most of them did not know He was God's Son. They would not have crucified Him had they known—they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. They did know—most of them knew—that He was a righteous Man and they must have felt they were doing very wrong in putting Him to death, but they did not recognize Him as the Messiah and as the Son of God—otherwise the most of them would have held back their hand. Now, though I have sinned against light and knowledge, and you have done the same, my Brothers and Sisters, yet in our past sin we did not deliberately intend to put Christ to death. We did not, like Satan of *malice propense*, desire to overthrow the Kingdom of God and Christ. Blessed be God, He saved us from that! We went far, very far, horribly far, but restraining Grace kept us back from that, and the Savior puts it there—makes such the object of His prayer. I do not say He excludes those who did it knowingly, but He does include peculiarly those who did not know what they did—whose sin, to a great extent, as to its far-reaching heinousness was wrapped in ignorance. He says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Then the prayer of love is offered for a vast company of sinners in darkness and ignorance, who have sinned, but who have not been allowed utterly, knowingly, willfully, viciously to crucify the Son of God and put Him to an open shame!

Now I want you to notice what this prayer of love admits. There is something in it that ought never to be forgotten. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." You see, then, this prayer, even of a patient, loving, gentle Savior, who wishes to plead all He can on the behalf of those for whom He prays—*this prayer admits that they need to be forgiven who have sinned ignorantly*. Some people have thought, "If I did not know it to be sin to the full extent, then it was not sin." Ah, not so! It *was* sin, for Christ asks to have it forgiven! If I, doing what I did not fully understand, yet did wrong, I am not excused the wrong because I did not know to the fullest extent how wrong it was. I am just as guilty as if I did know, from some points of view, though not from others, but from any point of view, I still need to be forgiven. Ignorance of the law does not prevent the guilt of him who breaks it. As you know, my Brothers and Sisters, human law, the law of the land, for instance—never takes ignorance of the law as a complete excuse for the breach of the law! The laws of England always assume that every man knows the law. The law is made—it is a public law and he who breaks it cannot go before the Magistrate and say—"I did not know it was the law; you must discharge me." The Magistrate may, as a *man*, say, "Well, if you did not know it was law, there is some excuse for you." As a Magistrate, he must not say that, for the law judges the man on its own self as publicly known, and does not allow for the excuse of not knowing the law.

If the Savior, in His infinite mercy, said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," it was a plea—of course, but not a plea of law. Sinai has no room for that excuse, for Sinai says, "If you don't know, you ought to have known." And in this particular case, especially, if they did not know Christ to be God, they ought to have known it. The prophecies were so clear. The Person of Christ so exactly fitted in to every type and every prophetic declaration, that it was "a willful blindness that had happened unto Israel." They ought to have known it. One sin is never an excuse for another sin. It was a sin for them not to know! That sin, therefore, did not excuse them for committing the other. It is only Sovereign Grace that brought that in as a plea—it is not justice, nor is it law—it the heart of mercy that pleads that.

What I want you to notice, now, then, is though I did not know when I sinned as child and as a young man all that was meant by sin, though I especially did not know that I was crucifying Christ, yet the guilt is just the same as before God, and I need to be forgiven for it, or else it will be laid to my charge and I shall be punished as surely as God's Law stands fast. Do you think the Savior would say, "Father, forgive them," if it were not a wrong? He never prayed a superfluous prayer! The prayer, "Forgive," is a sentence in itself, teaching us that sins of ignorance are sins. Oh, my dear Hearers, there are none of us who know to the full extent the sin of our sin! The most tender heart here does not know the blackness of its sin! I have sometimes talked with persons under conviction who have told me what dreadful sinners they were, and they have looked a little surprised when I have said, "But you are ten times worse than

you think you are.” No, they scarcely thought that could be possible, yet I would venture to say that to the most tender-hearted penitent that ever lived, you have no idea, my Friend, of the aggravation of your sin, nor is it possible you should have, nor do I know that it is desirable. So long as you know enough of your sin to hate it, and to flee to Christ for the pardon of it, that will suffice. But, oh, the scholarship that would be needed to understand all the depths of sin, it were the scholarship of the Cross over again—you would have need to die like Christ to know what sin means in its infinite, its boundless guilt! Do not ask to know that, but do pray that the Lord would search you and forgive you your sins. You did not know of pardoned sins you have committed, manifold sins that have passed by your notice, that you have not observed and, consequently, could not have confessed in particular. Beseech the Savior, whose cry is, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” to pray for unknown mercy by His unknown agony for your unknown sin! It is a wondrous prayer, this, but we cannot stay much longer on it.

We make yet another remark, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

V. THIS PRAYER WARNS US.

I have felt intense pleasure in thinking it over, but at the same time that pleasure has been mingled with great bitterness. There is such a warning there, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” It does not say, as I have already said, that if they *did* know, Christ would not pray for them, but it does seem to hint that. In the background I see a something—not that every sin committed against light is unpardonable—God be thanked that is not so, but some sins committed against light and knowledge so harden the heart that the man never repents! He never will, he will go to Hell hardened like steel! And I am afraid some of you are in great likelihood of committing it. Those who have not heard the Gospel cannot very readily commit this, unless their conscience has been desperately violated, but some of you who have been hearers often, and perhaps were once professors—who have knowingly chosen the wrong path and have deliberately sacrificed your character for drink or gain or lust—I will not say that you have passed that boundary, but I do tremble as I hear the booming of that text, “There is a sin unto death; I do not say that you shall pray for it,” even as I hear the Master’s words, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” But these persons knew what they did, did it deliberately, did it over again and again, and again—perhaps went to the Lord’s Table and deliberately went to their uncleanness, stood up in public, it may be, and then deliberately went to their filthiness. Or they listened to the sermon on Sunday and they said, “I’ll do better”—and then deliberately went on Monday to their drunken companions again! Oh, Man, you may have stood in the street, perhaps, and said to yourself, “Now, which shall it be? I feel as if I were called to serve God, but yet how can I give up such-and-such a darling lust?” There is a point in men’s lives wherein if they deliberately choose the wrong, knowing it is wrong, with the Light of God shining on their

eyeballs—yet they deliberately give up Christ, Heaven, pardon and they choose Hell and their own delusions—I fear that with many from that hour the wax is cooled upon their death warrant and it will never be reversed, for this text, though it gently flows from the Savior’s lips and drops like dew, has about it the lightning flash and thunderbolt that startles, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”

But there are some who know what they do and take the hammer and nail Christ up to the Cross! They take a spear and pierce His side and do it knowing what they are doing! And all the while they are glibly talking of religion, taking the Bible to make jokes out of it, taking the very ministers they once professed to love and scoffing them, taking the Doctrines of the Gospel and making these a cloak for their sins—these men—what will I say of them? God have mercy upon them, but I fear, I fear, that He never will, for they will never seek it, and He will never grant it! Could they seek it, He would give it. While a man can seek, he shall find. While a heart can melt, God will pity. There is never a contrite soul but what God looks with love upon it. But here is the mischief, for these men, who know what they do, repent not, but are seared as with a hot iron—they become wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever!

But I must close here. This shall be a closing word. At the same time, you see the text woos. It warns, but it woos. How it woos the ignorant, especially! “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Oh, some of you have dropped in here tonight who, perhaps, don’t often listen to the Gospel. You have been living a life of sin. You knew it was sin, You knew it was sin, but you did not know that you were nailing Christ to the Cross. You sought your own pleasure, you sought your own gratifications. You have been very guilty. You have lived a careless, Godless, Christless life, but still you did not mean to sin against God so as to crucify Christ. You see you have done so—now you feel you are guilty of it—but before, you had not that Light of God that you now have. Then Jesus says, “Come to Me, come to Me! My prayer goes up to Heaven for you, you ignorant one.” Sinful, but without light, Jesus intercedes! Oh, join your prayer with the prayer of Jesus, and say, “Father, forgive Your ignorant child, Your sinful, wayward child. I do not plead, ‘I knew not what I did,’ but Christ pleads it for me! I plead that Jesus died. Oh, for His sake, have pity! Hear His blood as it drops from His hands and feet; hear it and plead for me, ‘Father, forgive them.’”

Oh if you will seek the Lord, you shall have Him! If you will but turn your eyes to Him upon the Cross, you shall live! Whoever among you in this house will but trust Him, shall find Him able and willing to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Oh, come and welcome, come and welcome! And may God grant that you may come tonight—

***“But if your ears refuse
The language of His Grace,
And hearts grow gross like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race.
The Lord in vengeance dressed***

***Will lift His hand and swear
‘You that despised My promised rest
Shall have no portion there.’***

God bless you. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 27:32-49.**

Verse 32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His Cross.* Perhaps they were afraid that Christ would die from exhaustion, so they compelled Simon to bear His Cross. Any one of Christ’s followers might have wished to have been this man of Cyrene, but we need not envy him, for there is a cross for each of us to carry. Oh, that we were as willing to bear Christ’s Cross as Christ was to bear our sins on His Cross! If anything happens to us by way of persecution or ridicule for our Lord’s sake, and the Gospel’s, let us cheerfully endure it! As knights are made by a stroke from the sovereign’s sword, so shall we become princes in Christ’s realm as He lays His Cross on our shoulders.

33, 34. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.* Golgotha was the common place of execution for malefactors, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem, outside the gate of the city. There was a special symbolical reason for Christ’s suffering outside the gate, and His followers are bid to “go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb 13:11-13). A stupefying draught was given to the condemned, to take away something of the agony of crucifixion—but our Lord came to suffer—and He would not take anything that would at all impair His faculties. He did not forbid His fellow sufferers drinking the vinegar mingled with gall (“wine mingled with myrrh,” Mark 15:23), but He would not drink thereof. Jesus did not refuse this draught because of its bitterness, for He was prepared to drink even to the last dreadful dregs the bitter cup of wrath which was His people’s due.

35. *And they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots.* There is a world of meaning in that short sentence, “and they crucified Him,” driving their bolts of iron through His blessed hands and feet, fastening Him to the Cross and lifting Him up to hang there upon a gallows reserved for felons. We can scarcely realize all that the Crucifixion meant to our dear Lord, but we can join in Faber’s prayer—

***“Lord Jesus! May we love and weep,
Since You, for us, are crucified.”***

Then was fulfilled all that our Lord had foretold in Chapter 20:17-19, except His Resurrection, the time for which had not arrived.

The criminals' clothes were the executioners' profits. The Roman soldiers who crucified Christ had no thought of fulfilling the Scriptures when they parted His garments, casting lots, yet their action was exactly that which had been foretold in Psalm 22:18! The seamless robe would have been spoiled if it had been torn, so the soldiers raffled for the vesture, while they shared the other garments of our Lord. The dice would be almost stained with the blood of Christ, yet the gamblers played on beneath the shadow of His Cross. Gambling is the most hardening of all vices. Beware of it in any form! No games of chance should be played by Christians, for the blood of Christ seems to have bespattered them all.

36. *And sitting down they watched Him there.* Some watched Him from curiosity, some to make sure that He really did die, some even delighted their cruel eyes with His sufferings—and there were some, hard by the Cross, who wept and bewailed, a sword passing through their own hearts while the Son of Man was agonizing even unto death!

37. *And set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.* What a marvelous Providence it was that moved Pilate's pen! The representative of the Roman Emperor was little likely to concede kingship to any man, yet he deliberately wrote, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," and nothing would induce him to alter what he had written! Even on His Cross, Christ was proclaimed King, in the sacerdotal Hebrew, the classical Greek, and the common Latin, so that everybody in the crowd could read the inscription! When will the Jews admit Jesus as their King? They will do so one day, looking on Him whom they pierced. Perhaps they will think more of Christ when Christians think more of them—when our hardness of heart towards them has gone, possibly their hardness of heart towards Christ may also disappear.

38. *Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.* As if to show that they regarded Christ as the worst of the three criminals, they put Him between the two thieves, giving Him the place of dishonor. Thus was the prophecy fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors." The two malefactors deserved to die, as one of them admitted (Luke 23:40, 41), but a greater load of guilt vested upon Christ, for, "He bore the sin of many," and, therefore, He was rightly distinguished as the King of Sufferers, who could truly ask—"Was ever grief like Mine?"

Verses 39, 40. *And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, You who destroys the temple, and builds it in three days, save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross.* Nothing torments a man when in pain more than mockery. When Jesus Christ most needed words of pity and looks of kindness, they who passed by, reviled Him, wagging their heads. Perhaps the most painful part of ridicule is to have one's most solemn sayings turned to scorn, as were our Lord's words about the temple of His body—"You who destroys the temple, and builds it in three days, save Yourself." He might have saved Himself—He might have "come down from the Cross"—but if He had

done so, we could never have become the sons of God! It was because He was the Son of God that He did not come down from the Cross, but hung there until He had completed the Sacrifice for His people's sin. Christ's Cross is the Jacob's ladder by which we mount up to Heaven! This is the cry of the Socinian today, "Come down from the Cross. Give up the atoning Sacrifice and we will be Christians!" Many are willing to believe in Christ, but not in Christ Crucified. They admit that He was a good Man and a great Teacher, but by rejecting His vicarious Atonement, they practically un-Christ the Christ, as these mockers at Golgotha did.

41-43. *Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross and we will believe Him. He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God.* The chief priests, with the scribes and elders, forgetting their high station and rank, joined the ribald crew in mocking Jesus in His death pangs! Every word was emphatic—every syllable cut and pierced our Lord to the heart. They mocked Him as a Savior—"He saved others; Himself He cannot save." They mocked Him as a King—"If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him." They mocked Him as a Believer—"He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." They mocked Him as the Son of God—"For He said, I am the Son of God." Those who say that Christ was a good Man, virtually admit His Deity, for He claimed to be the Son of God. If He was not what He professed to be, He was an impostor. Notice the testimony that Christ's bitterest enemies bore even as they reviled Him—"He saved others." "He is the King of Israel" (R. V.) "He trusted in God."

44. *The thieves, also, who were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.* The sharers of His misery, the wretches who were crucified with Him, joined in reviling Jesus. Nothing was lacking to fill up His cup of suffering and shame. The conversion of the penitent thief was all the more remarkable because he had but a little while before been among the mockers of his Savior! What a trophy of Divine Grace he became!

45. *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.* Some have thought that this darkness covered the whole world, and so caused even a heathen to exclaim, "Either the world is about to expire, or the God who made the world is in anguish." This darkness was supernatural—it was not an eclipse. The sun could no longer look upon its Maker surrounded by these who mocked Him. He covered his face and traveled on in tenfold night, in very shame that the great Sun of Righteousness should, Himself, be in such terrible darkness.

46. *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? That is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* In order that the Sacrifice of Christ might be complete, it pleased the Father to forsake His well-beloved Son. Sin was laid on Christ, so God must turn away His face from the Sin-Bearer. To be deserted

of His God was the climax of Christ's grief, the quintessence of His sorrow! See here the distinction between the martyrs and their Lord—in their dying agonies they have been Divinely sustained—but Jesus, suffering as the Substitute for sinners, was forsaken of God! The saints who *have* known what it is to have their Father's face hidden from them, even for a brief space, can scarcely imagine the suffering that wrung from our Savior the agonizing cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

47. *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This Man calls for Elijah.* They knew better, yet they jested at the Savior's prayer. Wickedly, willfully and scornfully, they turned His death shriek into ridicule!

48, 49. *And straightway one of them ran and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. The rest said, Let Him be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.* A person in such agony as Jesus was suffering might have mentioned many pangs that He was enduring, but it was necessary for Him to say, "I thirst," in order that another Scripture might be fulfilled. One of them, more compassionate than his companions, ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, from the vessel probably brought by the soldiers for their own use, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. It always seems to me very remarkable that the sponge, which is the very lowest form of animal life, should have been brought into contact with Christ, who is at the top of all life. In His death the whole circle of Creation was completed. As the sponge brought refreshment to the lips of our dying Lord, so may the least of God's living ones help to refresh Him, now that He has ascended from the Cross to the Throne!

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

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

THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS

NO. 897

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”
Luke 23:34.***

OUR Lord was at that moment enduring the first pains of crucifixion. The executioners had just then driven the nails through His hands and feet. He must have been, moreover, greatly depressed and brought into a condition of extreme weakness by the agony of the night in Gethsemane and by the scourging and cruel mocking which He had endured all through the morning from Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod and the Praetorian guards. Yet neither the weakness of the past, nor the pain of the present could prevent Him from continuing in prayer. The lamb of God was silent to men, but He was not silent to God. Dumb as a sheep before her shearers, He had not a word to say in His own defense to man, but He continues in His heart crying unto His Father and no pain and no weakness can silence His holy supplications.

Beloved, what an example our Lord here presents to us! Let us continue in prayer so long as our heart beats! Let no excess of suffering drive us away from the Throne of Grace, but rather let it drive us closer to it—

***“Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live.”***

To cease from prayer is to renounce the consolations which our case requires. Under all distractions of spirit and overwhelming of heart, great God, help us still to pray and never from the Mercy Seat may our footsteps be driven by despair. Our blessed Redeemer persevered in prayer even when the cruel iron tore His tender nerves and blow after blow of the hammer jarred His whole frame with anguish—and this perseverance may be accounted for by the fact that He was so in the habit of prayer that He could not cease from it—He had acquired a mighty velocity of intercession which forbade Him to pause. Those long nights upon the cold mountain-side—those many days which had been spent in solitude, those perpetual ejaculations which He would dart up to Heaven—all these had formed in Him a habit so powerful, that the severest torments could not slow its force.

Yet it was more than habit. Our Lord was baptized in the spirit of prayer. He lived in it, it lived in Him. It had come to be an element of His Nature. He was like that precious spice, which, being bruised, does not cease to give forth its perfume, but rather yields it all the more abundantly.

dantly. Because of the blows to the pestle, its fragrance is no outward and superficial quality, but an inward virtue essential to its nature—which the pounding does but fetch from it—causing it to reveal its secret soul of sweetness. So Jesus prays, even as a bundle of myrrh gives forth its smell, or as birds sing because they cannot do otherwise. Prayer wrapped His very soul as with a garment and His heart went forth in much array. I repeat it, let this be our example—never, under any circumstances, however severe the trial, or depressing the difficulty—let us cease from prayer.

Observe, further, that our Lord, in the prayer before us, remains in the vigor of faith as to His Sonship. The extreme trial to which He now submitted Himself could not prevent His holding fast His Sonship. His prayer begins, “Father.” It was not without meaning that He taught us when we pray to say, “Our Father,” for our prevalence in prayer will much depend upon our confidence in our relationship to God. Under great losses and crosses one is apt to think that God is not dealing with us as a father with a child, but rather as a severe judge with a condemned criminal. But the cry of Christ, when He is brought to an extremity which we shall never reach, betrays no faltering in the spirit of Sonship. And in Gethsemane, when the bloody sweat fell fast upon the ground, His most bitter cry commenced with, “*My Father,*” asking that if it were possible the cup of gall might pass from Him. He pleaded with the Lord as His Father, even as He over and over again had called Him on that dark and doleful night.

Here, again, in this, the first of His seven expiring cries, it is “Father.” O that the Spirit that makes us cry, “Abba, Father,” may never cease His operations! May we never be brought into spiritual bondage by the suggestion, “If you are the Son of God.” Or if the Tempter should so assail us, may we triumph as Jesus did in the hungry wilderness. May the Spirit which cries, “Abba, Father,” repel each unbelieving fear. When we are chastened, as we must be (for what sort is there whom his father chastens not?) may we be in loving subjection to the Father of our spirits and live. But never may we become captives to the spirit of bondage, so as to doubt the love of our gracious Father, or our share in His adoption.

More remarkable, however, is the fact that our Lord’s prayer to His Father was not for Himself. He continued on the Cross to pray for Himself, it is true, and His lamentable cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” shows the personality of His prayer. But the first of the seven great cries on the Cross has scarcely even an indirect reference to Himself. It is, “Father, forgive *them.*” The petition is altogether for others and though there is an allusion to the cruelties which they were exercising upon Him, yet it is remote.

And, you will observe He does not say, “I forgive them”—that is taken for granted—He seems to lose sight of the fact that they were doing any wrong to Him. It is the wrong which they were doing to the *Father* that is on His mind. The insult which they are paying to the Father, in the Person

of the Son—He thinks not of Himself at all. The cry, “Father, forgive them,” is altogether unselfish. He, Himself, is in the prayer, as though He were not. So complete is His self-annihilation that He loses sight of Himself and His woes. My Brethren, if there had ever been a time in the life of the Son of Man when He might have rigidly confined His prayer to Himself, without anyone complaining, surely it was when He was beginning His death throes.

We would not marvel, if any man here were fastened to the stake, or fixed to a cross, if his first and even his last and *all* his prayers were for support under so arduous a trial. But see, the Lord Jesus began His prayer by pleading for others! Can’t you see what a great heart is revealed here? What a soul of compassion was in the Crucified! How Godlike, how Divine! Was there ever such a one before Him, who, even in the very pangs of death, offers as His first prayer an intercession for others? Let this unselfish spirit be in you, also, my Brothers and Sisters. Look not every man upon his own things, but every man, also, on the things of others. Love your neighbors as yourselves and as Christ has set before you this paragon of unselfishness, seek to follow Him, treading in His steps.

There is, however, a crowning jewel in this diadem of glorious love. The Sun of Righteousness sets upon Calvary in a wondrous splendor, but among the bright colors which glorify His departure, there is this one—the prayer was not alone for others, but it was for His cruelest enemies. His enemies, did I say? There is more than that to be considered. It was not a prayer for enemies who had done Him an ill deed years before, but for those who were then and there murdering Him! Not in cold blood did the Savior pray, after He had forgotten the injury and could the more easily forgive it, but while the first red drops of blood were spurting on the hands which drove the nails! While yet the hammer was stained with crimson gore, His blessed mouth poured out the fresh warm prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

I say, not that that prayer was confined to His immediate executioners. I believe that it was a far-reaching prayer, which included Scribes and Pharisees, Pilate and Herod, Jews and Gentiles—yes, the whole human race, in a certain sense, since we were all concerned in that murder—but certainly the immediate persons upon whom that prayer was poured like precious nard were those who then and there were committing the brutal act of fastening Him to the accursed tree. How sublime is this prayer if viewed in such a light! It stands alone upon a mount of solitary glory! No other had been prayed like it before. It is true, Abraham and Moses and the Prophets had prayed for the wicked—but not for wicked men who had pierced their hands and feet!

It is true that Christians have since that day offered the same prayer, even as Stephen cried, “Lay not this sin to their charge,” and many a martyr has made his last words at the stake words of pitying intercession for

his persecutors. But you know where they learned this. Let me ask you, where did He learn it? Was not Jesus the Divine original? He learned it nowhere—it leaped up from His own Godlike Nature. A compassion peculiar to Himself dictated this originality of prayer. The inward royalty of His love suggested to Him so memorable an intercession—which may serve us for a pattern—but of which no pattern had existed before.

I feel as though I could better kneel before my Lord's Cross at this moment than stand in this pulpit to talk to you. I want to adore Him. I worship Him in heart for that prayer! If I knew nothing else of Him but this one prayer, I must adore Him—for that one matchless plea for mercy convinces me most overwhelmingly of the Deity of Him who offered it and fills my heart with reverent affection. Thus have I introduced to you our Lord's first vocal prayer upon the Cross. I shall now, if we are helped by God's Holy Spirit, make some use of it.

First, we shall view it as *illustrative of our Savior's intercession*. Secondly, we shall regard the text as *instructive of the Church's work*. Thirdly, we shall consider it as *suggestive to the unconverted*.

I. First, my dear Brethren, let us look at this very wonderful text as ILLUSTRATIVE OF OUR LORD'S INTERCESSION. He prayed for His enemies, then—He is praying for His enemies now. The past on the Cross was an earnest of the present on the Throne. He is in a higher place and in a nobler condition, but His occupation is the same—He continues, still, before the Eternal Throne, to present pleas on the behalf of guilty men, crying, "Father, O forgive them." All His intercession is, in a measure, like the intercession on Calvary and Calvary's cries may help us to guess the character of the whole of His intercession above.

The first point in which we may see the character of His intercession is this—it is *most gracious*. Those for whom our Lord prayed, according to the text, did not deserve His prayer. They had done nothing which could call forth from Him a benediction as a reward for their endeavors in His service. On the contrary, they were most undeserving persons who had conspired to put Him to death. They had crucified Him! Crucified Him wantonly and malignantly. They were even, then, taking away His innocent life. His clients were persons, who, so far from being meritorious, were utterly undeserving of a single good wish from the Savior's heart. They certainly never asked Him to pray for them—it was the last thought in their minds to say, "Intercede for us, You dying King! Offer petitions on our behalf, You Son of God!"

I will venture to believe the prayer itself, when they heard it, was either disregarded and passed over with contemptuous indifference, or perhaps it was caught at as a theme for jest. I admit that it seems to be too severe upon humanity to suppose it possible that such a prayer could have been the theme for laughter, and yet there were other things enacted around the Cross which were quite as brutal, and I can imagine that this, also,

might have happened. Yet our Savior not only prayed for persons who did not deserve the prayer, but, on the contrary, merited a *curse*—persons who did not ask for the prayer and even scoffed at it when they heard it.

Even so in Heaven there stands the great High Priest, who pleads for guilty men—for *guilty* men, my Hearers! There are none on earth that deserve His intercession. He pleads for none on the supposition that they do deserve it. He stands there to plead as the Just One on the behalf of the unjust. Not if any man is *righteous*, but, “if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.” Remember, too, that our great Intercessor pleads for such as never asked Him to plead for them. His elect, while yet dead in trespasses and sins, are the objects of His compassionate intercessions and while they even scoff at His Gospel, His heart of love is entreating the favor of Heaven on their behalf.

See, then, Beloved, if such is the Truth of God, how sure you are to find favor with God who earnestly asks the Lord Jesus Christ to plead for you. Some of you, with many tears and much earnestness, have been beseeching the Savior to be your Advocate. Will He refuse you? Stands it to reason that He can? He pleads for those that *reject* His pleadings, much more for you who prize them beyond gold! Remember, my dear Hearer, if there is nothing good in you and if there is everything conceivable that is malignant and bad, yet none of these things can be any barrier to prevent Christ’s exercising the office of Intercessor for you! Even for *you* He will plead. Come, put your case into His hands! For you He will find pleas which you cannot discover for yourselves and He will put the case to God for you as for His murderers, “Father, forgive them.”

A second quality of His intercession is this—*its careful spirit*. You notice in the prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Our Savior did, as it were, look His enemies through and through to find something in them that He could urge in their favor. But He could see nothing until His wisely affectionate eyes lit upon their ignorance—“they know not what they do.” How carefully He surveyed the circumstances, and the characters of those for whom He prayed! Just so it is with Him in Heaven. Christ is no careless Advocate for His people. He knows your precise condition at this moment and the exact state of your heart with regard to the temptation through which you are passing. More than that, He foresees the temptation which is awaiting you and in His intercession He takes note of the future event which His prescient eyes behold.

“Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.” Oh, the condescending tenderness of our great High Priest! He knows us better than we know ourselves! He understands every secret grief and groan. You need not trouble yourself about the wording of your prayer—He will put the wording right. And even the understanding as to the exact petition, if you should fail in it, He cannot—for as He knows what is the mind of God—so He knows

what is your mind, also. He can spy out some reason for mercy in you which you cannot detect in yourselves and when it is so dark and cloudy with your soul that you cannot discern a foothold for a plea that you may urge with Heaven, the Lord Jesus has the pleas ready-framed and petitions ready drawn up—and He can present them acceptable before the Mercy Seat. His intercession, then, you will observe, is very gracious and in the next place it is very thoughtful.

We must next note its *earnestness*. No one doubts who reads these words, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” that they were Heaven-piercing in their fervor. Brethren, you are certain, even without a thought, that Christ was terribly in earnest in that prayer. But there is an argument to prove that. Earnest people are usually witty and quick of understanding to discover anything which may serve their turn. If you are pleading for life and an argument for your being spared is asked of you, I will guarantee you that you will think of one when no one else might. Now, Jesus was so in earnest for the salvation of His enemies, that He struck upon an argument for mercy which a less anxious spirit would not have thought of—“They know not what they do.”

Why, Sirs, that was in strictest justice but a scant reason for mercy! And indeed, ignorance, if it is willful, does not extenuate sin and yet the ignorance of many who surrounded the Cross *was* a willful ignorance. They should have known that He was the Lord of Glory. Was not Moses plain enough? Had not Elijah been very bold in his speech? Were not the signs and tokens such that one might as well doubt which is the sun in the firmament as the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah? Yet, for all that, the Savior, with marvelous earnestness and consequent dexterity, turns what might not have been a plea, into a plea, and puts it thus—“Father, forgive them, *for* they know not what they do.” Oh, how mighty are His pleas in Heaven, then, in their earnestness!

Do not suppose that He is less quick of understanding there, or less intense in the vehemence of His entreaties. No, my Brethren, the heart of Christ still labors with the eternal God. He is no slumbering Intercessor, but, for Zion’s sake, He does not hold His peace—and for Jerusalem’s sake He does not cease—nor will He, till her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns. It is interesting to note, in the fourth place, that the prayer here offered helps us to judge of His intercession in Heaven as to its *continuance*, perseverance and perpetuity. As I remarked before, if our Savior might have paused from intercessory prayer, it was surely when they fastened Him to the tree—when they were guilty of direct acts of deadly violence to His Divine Person, He might then have ceased to present petitions on their behalf. But sin cannot tie the tongue of our interceding Friend.

Oh, what comfort is here! You have sinned, Believer, you have grieved His Spirit, but you have not stopped that potent tongue which pleads for

you! You have been unfruitful, perhaps, my Brother, and like the barren tree you deserve to be cut down—but your lack of fruitfulness has not withdrawn the Intercessor from His place. He interposes at this moment, crying, “Spare it yet another year.” Sinner, you have provoked God by long rejecting His mercy and going from bad to worse, but neither blasphemy nor unrighteousness, nor infidelity shall stop the Christ of God from urging the suit of the very chief of sinners! He lives and while He lives He pleads—and while there is a sinner upon earth to be saved, there shall be an Intercessor in Heaven to plead for him. These are but fragments of thought, but they will help you, I hope, to realize the intercession of your great High Priest.

Think yet again, this prayer of our Lord on earth is like His prayer in Heaven because of its *wisdom*. He seeks the best thing and that which His clients most need, “Father, *forgive* them.” That was the great point in hand—they needed most of all, then and there, *forgiveness* from God. He does not say, “Father, enlighten them, for they know not what they do,” for mere *enlightenment* would but have created torture of conscience and hastened on their Hell. No, He cries, “Father, forgive.” And while He used His voice, the precious drops of blood which were then distilling from the nail wounds were pleading, too, and God heard and doubtless did forgive.

The first mercy which is necessary to guilty sinners is forgiven sin. Christ wisely prays for the blessing most needed. It is so in Heaven—He pleads wisely and prudently. Let Him alone, He knows what to ask for at the Divine hand! Go to the Mercy Seat and pour out your desires as best you can, but when you have done, always put it thus, “O my Lord Jesus, answer no desire of mine if it is not according to Your judgment. And if in anything that I have asked I have failed to seek for what I need, amend my pleading, for You are infinitely wiser than I.” Oh, it is sweet to have a Friend at court to perfect our petitions for us before they come unto the great King!

I believe that there is never presented to God anything but a perfect prayer now. I mean that before the great Father of us all, no prayer of His people ever comes up imperfect. There is nothing left out and there is nothing to be erased, and this, not because their prayers were originally perfect in themselves, but because the Mediator makes them perfect through His infinite wisdom—and they come up before the Mercy Seat molded according to the mind of God Himself and He is sure to grant such prayers.

Once more, this memorable prayer of our crucified Lord was like His universal intercession in the matter of its *prevalence*. Those for whom He prayed were, many of them, forgiven. Do you remember that He said to His disciples when He bade them preach, “beginning at Jerusalem.” And on that day when Peter stood up with the Eleven and charged the people that with wicked hands they had crucified and slain the Savior, 3,000 of

these persons who were thus justly accused of His crucifixion became Believers in Him and were baptized in His name. That was an answer to Jesus' prayer! The priests were at the bottom of our Lord's murder—they were the most guilty—and it is said, “a great company, also, of the priests believed.” Here was another answer to the prayer!

Since all men had their share representatively, Gentiles as well as Jews, in the death of Jesus, the Gospel was soon preached to the Jews and within a short time it was preached to the Gentiles, also. Was not this prayer, “Father, forgive them,” like a stone cast into a lake, forming, at first, a narrow circle and then a wider ring and soon a larger sphere, until the whole lake is covered with circling waves? Such a prayer as this, cast into the whole world, first created a little ring of Jewish converts and of priests and then a wider circle of such as were beneath the Roman sway! And today its circumference is as wide as the globe itself, so that tens of thousands are saved through the prevalence of this one intercession, “Father, forgive them.”

It is certainly so with Him in Heaven—He never pleads in vain. With bleeding hands, He yet won the day. With feet fastened to the wood, He was yet victorious. Forsaken of God and despised of the people, He was yet triumphant in His pleas. How much more so now the tiara is about His brow? How much more so now His hand grasps the universal scepter and His feet are shod with silver sandals and He is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords? If tears and cries out of weakness were Omnipotent, even more mighty, if possible, must be that sacred authority which, as the risen Priest, He claims when He stands before the Father's Throne to mention the Covenant which the Father made with Him. O you trembling Believers, trust Him with your concerns!

Come here, you guilty, and ask him to plead for you! O you that cannot pray, come, ask Him to intercede for you. Broken hearts and weary heads and disconsolate bosoms, come to Him who into the golden censer will put *His* merits and then place *your prayers* with them so that they shall come up as the smoke of perfume, even as a fragrant cloud into the nostrils of the Lord God of Hosts, who will smell a sweet savor and accept you and your prayers in the Beloved! We have now opened up more than enough room for your meditations at home this afternoon and, therefore, we leave this first point. We have had an illustration in the prayer of Christ on the Cross of what His prayers always are in Heaven.

II. Secondly, the text is INSTRUCTIVE OF THE CHURCH'S WORK. As Christ was, so His Church is to be in this world. Christ came into this world not to be ministered unto, but to minister—not to be honored, but to save others. His Church, when she understands her work, will perceive that she is not here to gather to herself wealth or honor, or to seek any temporal aggrandizement and position. She is here *unselfishly* to live, and if need be, unselfishly to *die* for the deliverance of the lost sheep, the sal-

vation of lost men. Brethren, Christ's prayer on the Cross, I told you, was altogether an unselfish one. He does not remember Himself in it.

Such ought to be the Church's life-prayer, the Church's active interposition on the behalf of sinners. She ought to live never for her ministers or for herself, but always for the lost sons of men. Do you imagine that Churches are formed to maintain ministers? Do you conceive that the Church exists in this land merely that so much salary may be given to bishops and deans, and prebends and curates and I know not what? My Brethren, it were well if the whole thing were abolished if that were its only aim! The aim of the Church is not to provide backdoor relief for the younger sons of the nobility when they have not brains enough to win their livelihood any other way! Churches are not made so that men of ready speech may stand up on Sundays and talk and so win daily bread from their admirers!

No, there is another end and aim from this. These places of worship are not built that you may sit here comfortably and hear something that shall make you pass away your Sundays with pleasure. A Church in London which does not exist to do good in the slums and dens and kennels of the city is a Church that has no reason to justify its existence any longer! A Church that does not exist to reclaim heathenism, to fight with evil, to destroy error, to put down falsehood—a Church that does not exist to take the side of the poor, to denounce injustice and to hold up righteousness—is a Church that has no right to be! Not for yourself, O Church, do you exist, any more than Christ existed for Himself! His Glory was that He *laid aside* His Glory and the Glory of the Church is when she lays aside her respectability and her dignity and counts it to be her Glory to gather together the outcasts and her highest honor to seek amid the foulest mire the priceless jewels for which Jesus shed His blood!

To rescue souls from Hell and lead them to God, to hope, to Heaven—this is her heavenly occupation! O that the Church would always feel this! Let her have her bishops and her preachers and let them be supported and let everything be done for Christ's sake decently and in order, but let the end be looked to, namely, the *conversion* of the wandering, the *teaching* of the ignorant, the help of the *poor*, the maintenance of the *right*, the putting down of the wrong and the upholding at all hazards of the crown and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Now the prayer of Christ had a *great spirituality of aim*. You notice that nothing is sought for these people but that which concerns their souls, "Father *forgive* them." And I believe the Church will do well when she remembers that she wrestles not with flesh and blood, nor with principalities and powers, but with *spiritual* wickedness and that what she has to dispense is not the Law and Order by which magistrates may be upheld, or tyrannies pulled down, but the *spiritual* government by which hearts are conquered to Christ and judgments are brought into subjection to His

Truth. I believe that the more the Church of God strains after, before God, the forgiveness of sinners and the more she seeks in her life prayer to teach sinners what sin is and what the blood of Christ is and what the Hell that must follow if sin is not washed out and what the Heaven is which will be ensured to all those who are cleansed from sin—the more she keeps to this—the better.

Press forward as one man, my Brethren, to secure the root of the matter in the forgiveness of sinners. As to all the evils that afflict humanity, by all means take your share in battling with them! Let temperance be maintained, let education be supported! Let reforms, political and ecclesiastical, be pushed forward as far as you have the time and effort to spare! But the *first* business of every Christian man and woman is with the hearts and consciences of men as they stand before the Everlasting God. O let nothing turn you aside from your Divine errand of mercy to undying souls! This is your one business. Tell sinners that sin will damn them—that Christ, alone, can take away sins—and make this the one passion of your souls, “Father, forgive them, forgive them! Let them know how to be forgiven. Let them be actually forgiven and let me never rest except as I am the means of bringing sinners to be forgiven, even the guiltiest of them.”

Our Savior’s prayer teaches the Church that while her spirit should be unselfish and her aim should be spiritual, *the range of her mission* is to be unlimited. Christ prayed for the wicked. What if I say the most wicked of the wicked, that ribald crew that had surrounded His Cross? He prayed for the ignorant. Does He not say, “They know not what they do”? He prayed for His persecutors—the very persons who were most at enmity with Him lay nearest to His heart! Church of God, your mission is not to the respectable few who will gather about your ministers to listen respectfully to their words! Your mission is not to the *elite* and the eclectic, the intelligent who will criticize your words and pass judgment upon every syllable of your teaching! Your mission is not to those who treat you kindly, generously, affectionately!

Not to these, I mean, alone, though certainly to these as among the rest. But your great errand is to the harlot, to the thief, to the swearer and the drunkard, to the most depraved and debauched! If no one else cares for these, the Church always must, and if there are any who are first in her prayers it should be these who, alas, are generally last in our thoughts. The ignorant we ought diligently to consider. It is not enough for the preacher that he preaches so that those instructed from their youth up can understand him. He must think of those to whom the most common phrases of theological truth are as meaningless as the jargon of an unknown tongue. He must preach so as to reach the meanest comprehension, and if the ignorant many come not to hear him, he must use

such means as best he may to *induce* them, no, *compel* them to hear the Good News.

The Gospel is meant, also, for those who persecute religion—it aims its arrows of love against the hearts of its foes. If there are any whom we should first seek to bring to Jesus, it should be just these who are the farthest off and most opposed to the Gospel of Christ. “*Father, forgive them. If You pardon none besides, yet be pleased to forgive them.*” So, too, the Church should be *earnest* as Christ was. And if she is so, she will be quick to notice any ground of hope in those she deals with. She will be quick to observe any plea that she may use with God for their salvation. She must be *hopeful*, too, and surely no Church ever had a more hopeful sphere than the Church of this present age! If ignorance is a plea with God, look on the heathens at this day—millions of them never heard Messiah’s name! Forgive them, great God, indeed they know not what they do!

If ignorance is some ground for hope, there is hope enough in this great city of London, for have we not around us hundreds of thousands to whom the simplest Truths of the Gospel would be the greatest novelties? Brethren, it is sad to think that this country should still lie under such a pall of ignorance, but the sting of so dread a fact is blunted with hope when we read the Savior’s prayer aright—it helps us to hope while we cry, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It is the Church’s business to seek after the most fallen and the most ignorant and to seek them perseveringly. She should never stop her hand from doing good. If the Lord is coming *tomorrow*, it is no reason why you Christian people should subside into mere talkers and readers, meeting together for mutual comfort and forgetting the myriads of perishing souls.

If it is true that this world is going to pieces in a fortnight and that Louis Napoleon is the Apocalyptic beast—or if it is not true—I care not a fig! It makes no difference to my duty and does not change my service. Let my Lord come when He will, while I labor for Him I am ready for His appearing! The business of the Church is still to watch for the salvation of souls. If she stood gazing, as modern prophets would have her do—if she gave up her mission to indulge in speculative interpretations—she might well be afraid of her Lord’s coming. But if she goes about her work and with incessant toil searches out her Lord’s precious jewels, she shall not be ashamed when her Bridegroom comes!

My time has been much too short for so vast a subject as I have undertaken, but I wish I could speak words that were as loud as thunder, with a sense and earnestness as mighty as the lightning! I would gladly excite every Christian here and kindle in him a right idea of what his work is as a part of Christ’s Church. My Brethren, you must not live to yourselves! The accumulation of money, the bringing up of your children, the building of houses, the earning of your daily bread—all this you may do—but there

must be a greater object than this if you are to be Christ-like, as you should be, since you are bought with Jesus' blood.

Begin to live for others! Make it apparent unto all men that you are not yourselves the end-all and be-all of your own existence, but that you are spending and being spent—that through the good you do to men God may be glorified and Christ may see in you His own image and be satisfied.

III. Time fails me, but the last point was to be a word SUGGESTIVE TO THE UNCOVETED. Listen attentively to these sentences. I will make them as terse and condensed as possible. Some of you here are not saved. Now, some of you have been very ignorant and when you sinned you did not know what you did. You knew you were sinners, you knew *that*, but you did not know the far-reaching *guilt* of sin. You have not been attending the House of Prayer long. You have not read your Bible. You have not Christian parents.

Now you are beginning to be anxious about your souls. Remember your ignorance does not excuse you, or else Christ would not say, "Forgive them." They must be *forgiven*, even those that know not what they do, and therefore they are individually guilty. But still that ignorance of yours gives you just a little gleam of hope. The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance! The God whom you have ignorantly forgotten is willing to pardon and ready to forgive. The Gospel is just this—trust Jesus Christ who died for the *guilty* and you shall be saved! O may God help you to do so this very morning and you will become new men and new women—a change will take place in you equal to a new birth—you will be new creatures in Christ Jesus!

But ah, my Friends, there are some here for whom even Christ Himself could not pray this prayer, in the widest sense at any rate, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," for you *have* known what you did, and every sermon you hear and especially every impression that is made upon your understanding and conscience by the Gospel adds to your responsibility and takes away from you the excuse of not knowing what you do! Ah, Sirs, you know that there is the world and Christ and that you cannot have both! You know that there is sin and God and that you cannot *serve* both! You know that there are the pleasures of evil and the pleasures of Heaven and that you cannot have both! Oh, in the light which God has given you, may His Spirit also come and help you to choose that which true wisdom would make you choose.

Decide today for God, for Christ, for Heaven! The Lord decide You for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 23:1-34.

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WITNESSING AT THE CROSS

NO. 3363

A SERMON

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

***“And one of the malefactors who was hanged, railed on Him, saying, If you are Christ, save Yourself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise.”
Luke 23:39-43.***

THE dying thief was certainly a very great wonder of Divine Grace. He has generally been looked upon from one point of view only—as a sinner called at the eleventh hour and, therefore, an instance of special mercy because he was so near to death. Enough has been made of that circumstance by others! To my mind, it is by no means the most important point in the narrative. Had the thief been predestined to come down from the Cross and live for half a century longer, his conversion would have been neither more nor less than it was. The work of Grace which enabled him to die in peace would, if it had been the Lord's will, have enabled him to live in holiness. We may well admire Divine Grace when it so speedily makes a man fit for the bliss of Heaven! But it is equally to be adored when it makes him ready for the battle of earth. To bear a saved sinner away from all further conflict is great Grace. But the power and love of God are, if anything, even more conspicuous when, like a sheep surrounded by wolves, or a spark in the midst of the sea, a Believer is enabled to live on in the teeth of an ungodly world and maintain his integrity to the end! Dear Friend, whether you die as soon as you are born-again, or remain on earth for many years is comparatively a small matter—and will not materially alter your indebtedness to Divine Grace! In the one case the great Husbandman will show how He can bring His flowers speedily to perfection. And in the other He will prove how He can preserve them in blooming beauty despite the frosts and snows of earth's cruel winter! In either case your experience will reveal the same love and power.

There are other things, it seems to me, to be seen in the conversion of the thief besides the one single matter of his being brought to know the Lord when near to death's door.

Observe the singular fact that our Lord Jesus Christ should die in the company of two malefactors. It was probably planned in order to bring Him shame and it was regarded by those who cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" as an additional ignominy. Their malice decreed that He should die as a criminal and *with* criminals—and in the center, between two—to show that they thought Him the worst of the three. But God, in His own way, baffled the malice of the foe and turned it to the triumph and Glory of His dear Son, for had there been no dying thief hanging at His side, then one of the most illustrious trophies of His love would not have been gained! And we would not have been able to sing to His praise—

***"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day—
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away!"***

His enemies gave our Lord Jesus an opportunity for still continuing the seeking, as well as the saving of the lost! They found Him an occasion for manifesting His conquering Grace when they supposed they were heaping scorn upon Him. How truly did the Prophet in the Psalm say, "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision," for that which was meant to increase His misery revealed His majesty! Moreover, though it was intended to add an ingredient of bitterness to His cup, I do not doubt that it supplied Him with a draught of comfort. Nothing could so well have cheered the heart of Jesus and taken His mind off, for just an instant, His own bitter pangs, as having an object of pity before Him, upon whom He could pour His mercy! The thief's confession of faith and expiring prayer must have been music to his Savior's ears—the only music which could in any degree delight Him amid His terrible agonies. To hear and to answer the prayer, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom," afforded our Lord a precious solace. An angel strengthened Him in the Garden, but here it was a man, nailed up at His side, who ministered consolation by the indirect, but very effective method of seeking help at His hands.

Furthermore, the long-continued testimony and witness for Christ among men was at that time exceedingly feeble and ready to expire, but the thief's confession maintained it. The Apostles, where were they? They had fled. Those disciples who ventured near enough to see the Lord, scarcely remained within speaking distance. They were poor confessors of Christ, scarcely worthy of the name! Was the chain of testimony to be broken? Would none declare His Sovereign Power? No, the Lord will never let that testimony cease, and lo, He raises up a witness where least you would expect it—on a cross! One just ready to die bears witness to the Redeemer's innocence and to His assured coming to a Kingdom! As many of the boldest testimonies to Christ have come from the stake, so here was one that came from a cross and gained for the witness the honor of being the last testifier to Christ before He died!

Let us always expect, then, dear Friends, that God will overrule the machinations of the foes of Christ so as to get honor from them. At all times of the world's history, when things appear to have gone to pieces and Satan seems to rule the hour, do not let us despair, but be quite sure that, somehow or other, the Light of God will come out of darkness and good out of evil!

We will now come close up to the dying thief and look, first, at *his faith*. Secondly, at *his confession of faith*. Thirdly, at *his prayer of faith*. And fourthly, at *the answer of his faith*. First, then, may the Holy Spirit help us concerning this dying malefactor, to consider—

I. HIS FAITH.

It was of the operation of the Spirit of God and there was *nothing in his previous character to lead up to it*. How came that thief to be a Believer in Jesus? You who carefully read the Gospels will have noticed that Matthew says (Matt 27:44), "The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." Mark also says, "They that were crucified with Him reviled Him." These two Evangelists plainly speak of both thieves as reviling our Lord! How are we to understand this? Would it be right to say that those two writers speak in broad terms of the thieves as a class because one of them so acted, just as we in common conversation speak of a company of persons doing such-and-such, when, in fact, the whole matter was the deed of one man of the party? Was it a loose way of speaking? I think not! I do not like the look of suppositions of error in the Inspired volume. Would it not be more reverent to the Word of God to believe that the thieves did both revile Jesus? May it not be true that, at the first, they both joined in saying, "If you are the Christ, save Yourself and us," but that afterwards, one, by a miracle of Sovereign Grace, was led to a change of mind and became a Believer? Or would this third theory meet the case—that at the first the thief who afterwards became a penitent, having no thought upon the matter, by his silence gave consent to his fellow's reviling so as fairly to come under the charge of being an accomplice therein—but when it gradually dawned upon his mind that he was under error as to this Jesus of Nazareth, it pleased God in Infinite Mercy to change his mind so that he became a confessor of the Truth of God, though he had at first silently assented to the blasphemy of his companion? It would be idle to dogmatize, but we will gather this lesson from it—that faith may enter the mind, notwithstanding the sinful state in which the man is found. Grace can transform a reviling thief into a penitent Believer!

Neither do we know the outward means which led to this man's conversion. We can only suppose that he was affected by seeing the Lord's patient demeanor, or, perhaps, by hearing that prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Surely there was enough in the sight of the Crucified Lord with the blessing of God's Spirit to turn a heart of stone into flesh! Possibly the inscription over the head of our

Lord may have helped him—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Being a Jew, he knew something of the Scriptures, and putting all the facts together, may he not have seen in the prophecies a light which gathered around the head of the Sufferer and revealed Him as the true Messiah? Possibly the malefactor remembered Isaiah's words, "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Or, perhaps, the saying of David, in the 22nd Psalm rushed upon his memory, "They pierced My hands and My feet." Other texts which he had learned in his youth at his mother's knee may have come before his mind—and putting all these together, he may have argued, "It may be. Perhaps it is. It is. It must be. I am sure it is. It is the Messiah, led as a lamb to the slaughter." All this is but our supposition and it leads me to remark that there is much faith in this world which comes, "not with observation," but is worked in men by unknown instrumentalities. And so long as it really exists, it matters very little how it entered the heart, for in every case it is the work of the Holy Spirit! The *history* of faith is of small importance compared with the *quality* of faith!

We do not know the origin of this man's faith, but we do know that *it was amazing faith under the circumstances*. I very gravely question whether there was ever greater faith in this world than the faith of this thief, for he, beyond all others, realized the painful and shameful death of the Lord Jesus and yet believed! We hear of our Lord's dying upon the Cross, but we do not realize the circumstances and, indeed, even if we were to think upon that death very long and intently, we shall never realize the shame, weakness and misery which surrounded our Lord as that dying thief did, for he was suffering the pangs of crucifixion at the Savior's side and, therefore, to him it was no fiction, but a vivid reality! Before him was the Christ in all His nakedness and ignominy surrounded by the mocking multitude—and dying in pain and weakness—and yet he believed Him to be Lord and King! What do you think, Sirs? Some of you say you find it hard to believe in Jesus, though you know that He is exalted in the highest heavens. But had you seen Him on the Cross. Had you seen His marred Countenance and emaciated body, could you then have believed on Him and said, "Lord remember me when you come into Your Kingdom"? Yes, you could have done so if the Spirit of God had created faith in you like that of the thief! But it would have been faith of the first order, a jewel of priceless value! As I said before, so I say again—the vivid sympathy of the thief with the shame and suffering of the Lord rendered his faith remarkable in the highest degree!

This man's faith, moreover, was singularly clear and decided. He rolled his whole salvation upon the Lord Jesus and said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." He did not offer a single plea fetched from his works, his present feelings, or his sufferings—he cast himself upon the generous heart of Christ! "You have a Kingdom—You are going to it. Lord, remember me when You come into it." That was all.

I wish that some who have been professors for years had as clear a faith as the thief—but they are too often confused between Law and Gospel, works and Grace—while this poor felon trusted in nothing but the Savior and His mercy. Blessed be God for clear faith! I rejoice to see it in such a case as this, so suddenly worked and yet so perfect—so outspoken, so intelligent, so thoroughly restful!

That word, “restful,” reminds me of a lovely characteristic of his faith, namely, *its deep peace-giving power*. There is a world of rest in Jesus in the thief’s prayer, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.” A thought from Christ is all he needed! And after the Lord said, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise,” we never read that the petitioner said another word. I did think that, perhaps, he would have said, “Blessed be the name of the Lord for that sweet assurance. Now I can die in peace.” But his gratitude was too deep for words and his peace so perfect that calm silence seemed most in harmony with it. Silence is the thaw of the soul, though it is the frost of the mouth—and when the soul flows most freely, it feels the inadequacy of the narrow channel of the lips for its great water floods—

“Come, then, expressive silence, muse His praise.”

He asked no alleviation of pain, but in perfect satisfaction died as calmly as saints do in their beds!

This is the kind of faith which we must all have if we would be saved. Whether we know how we come by it or not, it must be a faith which rolls itself upon Christ and a faith which consequently brings peace to the soul. Do you possess such faith, dear Friend? If you do not, remember that you may die all of a sudden, and then into Paradise you will never enter! Look well to this and believe in the Lord Jesus at once! And now in the second place, we are going to look at this man’s—

II. CONFESSION OF FAITH.

He had faith and he confessed it. He could neither be baptized nor sit at the Communion Table, nor unite with the Church below. He could not do any of those things which are most right and proper on the part of other Christians, but he did the best he could under the circumstances to confess his Lord!

He confessed Christ, first of all, almost of necessity, because *a holy indignation made him speak out*. He listened for a while to his brother thief, but while he was musing, the fire burned and then spoke he with his tongue, for he could no longer bear to hear the innocent Sufferer reviled. He said, “Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss.” Did this poor thief speak out so bravely and can some of you silent Christians go up and down the streets and hear men curse and blaspheme the name of Christ—and not feel stirred in spirit to defend His cause? While men are so loud in their reviling, can you be quiet? The stones you tread on may well cry out against

you! If all were Christians and the world teemed with Jesus' praise, we might, perhaps, afford to be silent. But, amidst abounding superstition and loud-mouthed infidelity, we are bound to show our colors and avow ourselves on Christ's side! We doubt not that the penitent thief would have owned his Lord apart from the railing of his comrade, but as it happened, that reviling was the provoking cause. Does no such cause arouse *you*? Can you play the coward at such a time as this?

Observe next, that *he made a confession to an unsympathetic ear*. The other thief does not seem to have made any kind of reply to him, but it is feared that he died in sullen unbelief. The believing thief made his confession where he could not expect to gain approbation, yet he made it none the less clearly. How is it that some dear friends who love the Lord have never confessed their faith even to their Christian Brothers and Sisters? You know how glad we would be to hear of what the Lord has done for you, but yet we have not heard it! There is a mother who would be so happy if she did but know that her boy was saved, or that her girl was converted—and you have refused her that joy by your silence! This poor thief spoke for Jesus to one who did not enter into his religious experience—and you have not even told yours to those who would have communed with you and rewarded you with comfort and instruction! I cannot understand cowardly lovers of Christ! How you manage to smother your love so long, I cannot tell. Love is usually like a cough, which speaks for itself, or a candle which must be seen, or a sweet perfume which is its own revealer! How is it that you have been able to conceal the day which has dawned in your hearts? What can be your motive for coming to Jesus only by night? I cannot understand your riddle and I hope you will explain it away. Do confess Jesus if you love Him, for He bids you do it and says, "He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in Heaven."

Observe well that this poor thief's confession of faith *was attended with a confession of sin*. Though he was dying a most horrible death by crucifixion, yet he confessed that he was suffering justly. "We indeed justly." He made his confession not only to God, but to men, justifying the law of his country under which he was then suffering. True faith confesses Christ and, at the same time, confesses its sin. There must be repentance of sin and acknowledgment of it before God if faith is to give proof of its authenticity. A faith that never had a tear in its eye, or a blush on its cheek, is not the faith of God's elect! He who never felt the burden of sin, never felt the sweetness of being delivered from it! This poor thief is as clear in the avowal of his own guilt as in his witness to the Redeemer's innocence! Reader, could we say the same of you?

The thief's confession of faith *was exceedingly honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ*. He confessed that Jesus of Nazareth had done nothing amiss—when the crowd around the Cross were condemning Him with speech and gesture! He honored Christ by calling Him, Lord, while others mocked Him. He honored Christ by believing in His Kingdom even while

Jesus was dying on the Cross and by entreating Him to remember him though he was in the agonies of death. Do you say that this was not much? Well, I will make bold to ask many a professor whether he could honestly say that throughout the whole of his life he has done as much to honor Christ as this poor thief did in those few minutes! Some of you certainly have not, for you have never confessed Him at all! And others have confessed Him in such a formal manner that there was nothing in it. Oh, there have been times when, had you played the man and said right straight out, in the midst of a ribald crew, "I do believe in Him whom you scoff and I know the sweetness of that dear name which you trample under foot," you might have been the means of saving many souls—but you were silent and whispered to yourself that prudence was the better part of valor and so you allowed the honor of your Master to be trailed in the mire! Oh, had you, my Sister, taken your stand in the family—had you said, "You may do what you will, but as for me, I will serve the Lord"—you might have honored God far more than you have done, for I fear you have been living in a halting, hesitating style, giving way to a great deal which you knew was wrong, not bearing your protest, not rebuking your brother in his iniquity, but studying your own peace and comfort instead of seeking the Redeemer's Glory! We have heard people talk about this dying thief as if he never did anything for his Master, but let me ask the Christian Church if it has not members in its midst—gray-haired members, too, who have never, through 50 years of profession, borne one such bravely honest and explicit testimony for Christ as this man did while he was agonizing on a cross? Remember, the man's hands and feet were tortured and he was suffering from that natural fever which attends upon crucifixion! His spirit must have melted within him with his dying grief—and yet he was as bold in rebuke, as composed in prayer, and as calm in spirit as if he were suffering nothing! And thus he reflected much Glory upon his Lord.

One other point about this man's confession is worthy of notice, namely, that he *was evidently anxious to change the mind of his companion*. He rebuked him and he reasoned with him. Dear Friends, I must again put a personal question. Are there not many professing Christians who have never manifested a tithe as much anxiety for the souls of others as this thief felt? You have been a Church member 10 years, but did you ever say as much to your brother as this dying thief said to the one who was hanging near him? Well, you have meant to do so. Yes, but did you ever do it? You reply that you have been very glad to join others in a meeting. I know that, too, and so far so good! But did you ever personally say as much to another as this dying man did to his old companion? I fear that some of you cannot say so. I, for my part, bless and magnify the Grace of God which gave this man one of the sweet fruits of the Spirit, namely, holy charity towards the soul of another so soon after he, himself, had come to believe in Jesus! May we, all of us, have it yet more and

more! So much for the confession of his faith. Now a little, in the third place, about—

III. HIS PRAYER OF FAITH.

“Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.” He *addressed the dying Savior as Divine*. Wonderful faith this, to call Him Lord who was “a worm and no man,” and was hanging there upon the Cross to die! What shall we say of those who, now that He is exalted in the highest heavens, yet refuse to acknowledge His Deity? This man had a clearer knowledge of Christ than they have! The Lord take the scales from their eyes and make them pray to Jesus as Divine!

He prayed to Him, also, as having a kingdom. That needed faith, did it not? He saw a dying Man in the hands of His foes nailed to the Cross—and yet he believed that He would come into a kingdom! He knew that Jesus would die before long, the marks of the death-agony were upon Him—and yet he believed that He would come to a kingdom! O glorious faith! Dear Friend, do you believe in Christ’s Kingdom? Do you believe that He reigns in Heaven and that He will come a second time to rule over all the earth? Do you believe in Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords? Then pray to Him as such, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.” May God give you the faith which set this thief a praying in so excellent a fashion!

Observe that *his prayer was for a spiritual blessing only*. The other thief said, “Save Yourself and us!” He meant, “Save us from this cross. Deliver us from the death which now threatens us!” He sought temporal benefits, but this man asked only to be remembered by Christ in His Kingdom. Do your prayers run that way, dear Friends? Then I bless the Lord that He has taught you to seek eternal, rather than temporal blessings! If a sick man cares more for pardon than for health, it is a good sign. Soul mercies will be prized above all others where faith is in active exercise.

Observe how humbly he prays. He did not ask for a place at Christ’s right hand. He did not, in fact, ask the Lord to do *anything* for him, but only to “remember” him. Yet that, “remember,” is a great word and he meant much by it. “Do give a thought to Your poor companion who now confesses his faith in You. Do in Your Glory dart one recollection of Your love upon poor me and think on me for good.” It was a very humble prayer and all the sweeter for its lowliness. It showed his great faith in Jesus, for he believed that even to be remembered by Him would be enough. “Give me but the crumbs that fall from Your table, and they shall suffice me. But a thought, Lord Jesus, but one thought from Your loving mind, and that shall satisfy my soul.”

Did not his prayer drip with faith as a honeycomb with honey? It seems to me as if it laid soaking in his faith till it was saturated through and through with it, for *he prays so powerfully*, albeit so humbly. Consider what his character had been, and yet he says, “Lord, remember *me* when You come into Your Kingdom.” Note well that it is a thief—an out-

cast, a criminal on the gallows who thus prays! He is an outcast by his country's laws and yet he turns to the King of Heaven and asks to be remembered! Bad as he is, he believes that the Lord Jesus will have mercy upon him! Oh, brave faith!

We see how strong that faith was because he had no invitation to pray. I do not know that he had ever heard Christ preach. No Apostle had said to him, "Come to Christ and you will find mercy," and yet he came to Jesus! Here comes an uninvited guest in the sweet bravery of holy confidence in Christ's majestic love—he comes boldly and pleads, "Lord, remember me!" It was strong faith which thus pleaded. Remember, too, that he was upon the verge of death. He knew that he could not live very long and probably expected the Roman bone-breaker to give him, very soon, the final blow! But in the very hour and article of death he cried, "Lord, remember me," with the strong confidence of a mighty faith. Glory be to God who worked such a faith in such a man as this! We have done when we have mentioned, in the fourth place—

IV. THE ANSWER TO HIS FAITH.

We will only say that *his faith brought him to Paradise*. We had a Paradise, once, and the first Adam lost it. Paradise has been regained by the Second Adam, and He has prepared for Believers an Eden above, fairer than that first Garden of delights below! Faith led the dying thief to *be with Christ* in Paradise which was best of all! "Today shall you be *with Me* in Paradise." Whatever the joy of Christ, and the Glory of Christ, the thief was there to see it and to share it as soon as Christ Himself!

And it brought him Paradise *that very day*. Sometimes a crucified man will be two or three days a-dying. Jesus, therefore, assures him that he shall not have long to suffer and confirms it with a, "verily," which was our Lord's strong word of asseveration, "Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Such a portion will faith win for each of us, not today, perhaps, but one day. If we believe in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, we shall be with Him in the delights and happiness of the spirit world and with Him in the Paradise of everlasting Glory. If we commenced to believe at once and were to die immediately, we would be with Christ at once, as surely as if we had been converted 50 years ago! You cannot tell how short your life will be, but it is well to be ready. A friend was here last Lord's-Day of whom I heard this morning that he was ill—and in another hour that he was dead. It was short work. He was struck down and gone at once. That may be the lot of any one of you. And if it should be, you will have no cause whatever to fear it if you now, like the thief, trust yourself wholly in Jesus' hands, crying, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom."

The lesson of our text is not merely that Christ can save in our last extremity, though that is true, but that now, at this moment, Jesus is able to save us, and that, if saved at all, salvation must be an immediate and complete act, so that, come life or come death, we are perfectly saved! It

will not take the Lord long to raise the dead—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible—and the Lord takes no time in regenerating a soul. Dead souls live in an instant when the breath of the Spirit quickens them! Faith brings instantaneous pardon! There is no course of probation to go through! There are no attainments to be sought after and no protracted efforts to be made in order to be saved. You are saved if you believe in Jesus! The finished work of Christ is yours. You are God's beloved, accepted, forgiven, adopted child! Saved you are, and saved you shall be forever and ever if you believe!

Instantaneous salvation! Immediate salvation! This, the Spirit of God gives to those who trust in Jesus! You need not wait till tomorrow's sun has dawned. Talk not of a more convenient season. Sitting where you are, the Almighty Grace of God can come upon you and save you—and this shall be a sign unto you that Christ is born in your heart, the hope of Glory—when you believe in Him as your Pardon, Righteousness, and All-in-All, you shall have peace. If you do but trust yourself in Jesus' hands, you are a saved soul and the angels in Heaven are singing high praises to God and the Lamb on your account! Farewell.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-24.**

Verse 1. *Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.* This brother had been put to great shame. He was beaten before the judgment seat, if you remember, and now he has the great and lasting honor of being mentioned by the Apostle with himself. God will honor those who bear dishonor for His name's sake. Be not ashamed even to be beaten for Christ—the stripes are stripes of glory!

2. *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.* The Epistles were written to distinct churches, but they have a bearing upon all Christians. Hence the Apostle says, "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Let us thank God no Scripture is of private interpretation—every promise belongs to all the Seed. If you are a Believer, you may freely appropriate to yourselves whatever was said of old to any individual Believer, or to any congregation of Believers!

3, 4. *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the Grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.* Paul is a great preacher of Divine Grace and, therefore, he is a great giver of thanks. Grace should be followed with thankfulness. "I thank my God." What a beautiful expression! Not only, "I thank God," but, "I thank *my* God." He has God in possession! He has taken Him to be his own forever and ever! Beloved, have we all done the same? Can we say, "I thank my God"? You notice how often

Paul, in the first ten verses mentions the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think it is 11 times. He was full of Christ. Not only did he love Christ in his heart, but he had Christ's name continually on his tongue, for he was not ashamed of the sweet name of Jesus Christ! Honey in the mouth, music in the ear, Heaven in the heart is that sweet name of Jesus!

5. *That in everything you are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge.* The church of Corinth was a church of all the talents—it was not, however, a church so much of all the Graces, and so it was a very poor example for us. I sometimes think that its mode of worship is recorded rather as a warning beacon than as an example to us. It caused, incidentally through the abundance of their gifts and everybody wanting to exercise his gift, great divisions, and there was an absence of humility and love in the church. However, Paul is thankful for what they have.

6, 7. *Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. So that you come behind in no gift: waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is a fine trait in their character—they did look to the Second Advent—it operated upon them, it helped them in many ways. We cannot now mention all the holy uses which lie in the warning for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but it ought to be a good description of all Christians.

8, 9. *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful.* Blessed is His name that He is. We are often very unfaithful. Man is always so, but “God is faithful.”

9, 10. *By whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.* Where it is not so, the life of piety seems to ooze away. The blessing of God cannot rest upon a church unless we dwell together in unity, and for unity it is necessary that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11-15. *For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that everyone of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. Lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name.* It may have been an accidental circumstance that he did not happen to have baptized them, but he is glad of it, for he says that in the temper they were in, some of them would have made a boast of it.

16, 17. *And I baptized also the household of Stephanus: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize,*

but to preach the Gospel. There were other people who could baptize for him. It was enough that he should concentrate all his energies upon that one matter of preaching the Gospel—not that he neglected the Divine command—but that it was not necessary that he, any more than his Master, should personally baptize, for we read that, “Jesus Christ baptized not, but His disciples.” Not to put a dishonor upon the ordinance, but to let us see that the ordinance does not depend upon the man, but upon that sacred name into which we are baptized—and upon the true faith of the person baptized.

17. *Not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect.* A very remarkable passage! Paul could have used the wisdom of words. In some of his Epistles he gives us a specimen of his mighty rhetoric. He was a born master of speech. There was a touch of poetry in him and always a high logical power, but he would not use it in his preaching, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect. You may do what you like with human wisdom—put a bit into its mouth and try to lead it into obedience to Christ—but somehow or other its tendency is to rebel against Him!

18-21. *For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God.* You have only to study the history of the world at the time when Paul was writing, and you will see that the “world, by wisdom knew not God.” It had made itself exceedingly philosophical and sage, but if you weigh its wisest conclusions, you will find that they were only polished folly. There is nothing left us of all the wisdom of that period! Time itself has proved it—no, has disproved it!

21, 22. *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign.* Some miracle, something that shall attest it in a supernatural way.

22-24. *And the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* Beloved, you know how true this is! It has been a wonderful power in you, and this day it is the only wisdom which you desire to possess!

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

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

THE DYING THIEF IN A NEW LIGHT

NO. 1881

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 31, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 23, 1885.

*“But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God,
seeing you are in the same condemnation?
And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds:
but this Man has done nothing wrong.
And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when
You come into Your Kingdom.”
Luke 23:40-42.*

A GREAT many persons, whenever they hear of the conversion of the dying thief, remember that he was saved in the very article of death and they dwell upon that fact, and that, alone. He has always been quoted as a case of salvation at the 11th hour and so, indeed, he is. In his case it is proven that as long as a man can repent, he can obtain forgiveness. The Cross of Christ avails even for a man hanging on a gallows and drawing near to his last breath. He who is mighty to save was mighty, even during His own death, to pluck others from the grasp of the Destroyer, though they were in the act of expiring.

But that is not everything which the story teaches us and it is always a pity to look exclusively upon one point—and thus to miss everything else—perhaps miss that which is more important! So often has this been the case that it has produced a sort of revulsion of feeling in certain minds, so that they have been driven in a wrong direction by their wish to protest against what they think to be a common error. I read the other day that this story of the dying thief ought not to be taken as an encouragement to death-bed repentance! Brothers, if the author meant—and I do not think he did—that this ought never to be so used as to lead people to postpone repentance to a dying bed, he spoke correctly. No Christian man could or would use it so injuriously—he must be hopelessly bad who would draw from God's long-suffering an argument for continuing in sin!

I trust, however, that the narrative is not often so used, even by the worst of men, and I feel sure that it will not be so used by any of you. It cannot be properly turned to such a purpose—it might be used as an encouragement to thieving just as much as to the delay of repentance. I might say, “I may be a thief because this thief was saved,” just as rationally as I might say, “I may put off repentance because this thief was saved when he was about to die.” The fact is, there is nothing so good but men can pervert it into evil if they have evil hearts! The justice of God is made

a motive for despair and His mercy an argument for sin! Wicked men will drown themselves in the rivers of the Truth of God as readily as in the pools of error! He that has a mind to destroy himself can choke his soul with the Bread of life, or dash himself in pieces against the Rock of Ages. There is no doctrine of the Grace of God so gracious that graceless men may not turn it into licentiousness.

I venture, however, to say that if I stood by the bedside of a dying man, tonight, and I found him anxious about his soul, but fearful that Christ could not save him because repentance had been put off so late, I would certainly quote the dying thief to him—and I would do it with good conscience—and without hesitation. I would tell him that, though he was as near to dying as the thief upon the cross was, yet if he repented of his sin and turned his face believingly to Christ, he would find eternal life. I would do this with all my heart, rejoicing that I had such a story to tell one at the gates of eternity! I do not think that I would be censured by the Holy Spirit for thus using a narrative which He has, Himself, recorded—recorded with the foresight that it would be so used. I would feel, at any rate, in my own heart, a sweet conviction that I had treated the subject as I ought to have treated it—and as it was intended to be used for men *in extremis* whose hearts are turning towards the living God. Oh, yes, poor Soul, whatever your age, or whatever the period of life to which you have come, you may now find eternal life by faith in Christ!—

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

Many good people think that they ought to guard the Gospel, but it is never so safe as when it stands out in its own naked majesty! It needs no covering from us. When we protect it with provisos, guard it with exceptions and qualify it with observations, it is like David in Saul’s armor—it is hampered and hindered and you may even hear it cry, “I cannot go with these.” Let the Gospel alone and it will save! Qualify it and the salt has lost its savor. I will venture to put it thus to you. I have heard it said that few are ever converted in old age and this is thought to be a statement which will prove exceedingly awakening and impressive for the young. It certainly wears that appearance, but, on the other hand, it is a statement very discouraging to the old! I object to the frequent repetition of such statements, for I do not find their counterpart in the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles!

Assuredly our Lord spoke of some who entered the vineyard at the 11th hour of the day. And among His miracles, He not only saved those who were dying, but even raised the *dead*! Nothing can be concluded from the Words of the Lord Jesus against the salvation of men at *any* hour or age! I tell you, that in the business of your acceptance with God, through faith in Christ Jesus, it does not matter what age you are! The same promise is to each of you, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” And whether you are in the earliest stage of life, or are within a few hours of eternity, if you fly for refuge, *now*, to the hope set before you in the

Gospel, you shall be saved! The Gospel that I preach excludes none on the ground either of age or character!

Whoever you may be, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," is the message we have to deliver to you! If we address to you the longer form of the Gospel, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," this is true of every living person, be his age whatever it may! I am not afraid that this story of the dying and repenting thief who went straight from the cross to the crown, will be used by you wrongly, but if you are wicked enough to use it so, I cannot help it. It will only fulfill that solemn Scripture which says that the Gospel is a savor of death unto death to some, even that very Gospel which is a savor of life unto life to others!

But I do not think, dear Friends, that the only specialty about the thief is the lateness of his repentance. So far from being the only point of interest, it is not even the chief point! To some minds, at any rate, other points will be even more remarkable. I want to show you very briefly that there was a specialty in his case as to the *means of his conversion*. Secondly, a specialty in *his faith*. Thirdly, a specialty in *the result of his faith while he was here below*. And, fourthly, a specialty in *the promise won by his faith*—the promise fulfilled to him in Paradise.

I. First, then, I think you ought to notice very carefully THE SINGULARITY AND SPECIALITY OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THE THIEF WAS CONVERTED.

How do you think it was? Well, we do not know. We cannot tell. It seems to me that the man was an unconverted, impenitent thief when they nailed him to the cross because one of the Evangelists says, "The *thieves*, also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." I know that this may have been a general statement and that it is reconcilable with its having been done by one thief, only, according to the methods commonly used by critics, but I am not enamored of critics even when they are friendly. I have such respect for Revelation that I never, in my own mind, permit the idea of discrepancies and mistakes—and when the Evangelist says, "they," I believe he meant, "they," and that *both* these thieves did, at the beginning of their crucifixion, rail at the Christ with whom they were crucified. It would appear that by some means, or other, this thief must have been converted while he was on the cross. Assuredly nobody preached a sermon to him, no evangelistic address was delivered at the foot of his cross and no meeting was held for special prayer on his account. He does not even seem to have had an instruction, or an invitation, or an exhortation addressed to him—and yet this man became a sincere and accepted Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Dwell upon this fact, if you please, and note its practical bearing upon the cases of many around us. There are many among my hearers who have been instructed from their childhood, who have been admonished, warned, entreated, invited and yet they have not come to Christ—while this man, without any of these advantages—nevertheless believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and found eternal life! O you that have lived under the sound of the Gospel from your childhood, the thief does not comfort you,

but he accuses you! What are you doing to abide so long in unbelief? Will you never believe the testimony of Divine Love? What more shall I say to you? What more can *anyone* say to you?

What do you think could have converted this poor thief? It strikes me that it may have been—it *must* have been—the sight of our great Lord and Savior! There was, to begin with, our Savior's wonderful behavior on the road to the Cross. Perhaps the robber had mixed up with all sorts of society, but he had never seen a Man like this. Never had cross been carried by a Cross-Bearer of His look and fashion. The robber wondered who this meek and majestic Person could be. He heard the women weep and he wondered, in himself, whether anybody would ever weep for him. He thought that this must be some very singular Person that the people should stand about Him with tears in their eyes. When he heard that mysterious Sufferer say so solemnly, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but for your children," he must have been struck with wonder! When he came to think, in his death-pangs, of the singular look of pity which Jesus cast on the women and of the self-forgetfulness which gleamed from His eyes, he was smitten with a strange relenting—it was as if an angel had crossed his path and opened his eyes to a new world—and to a new form of manhood, the likes of which he had never seen before.

He and his companion were coarse, rough fellows. This was a delicately formed and fashioned Being, of superior order to himself, yes, and of superior order to any other of the sons of men! Who could He be? What must He be? Though he could see that He suffered and fainted as He went along, he marked that there was no word of complaining, no note of execration in return for the reviling cast upon Him. His eyes looked love on those who glared on Him with hate! Surely that march along the Via Dolorosa was the first part of the sermon which God preached to that bad man's heart. It was preached to many others who did not regard its teaching, but upon *this* man, by God's special Grace, it had a softening effect when he came to think over it and consider it. Was it not a likely and convincing means of Grace?

When he saw the Savior surrounded by the Roman soldiers—saw the executioners bring forth the hammers and the nails and lay Him down upon His back and drive the nails into His hands and feet—this crucified criminal was startled and astonished as he heard Him say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He, himself, had probably met his executioners with a curse, but he heard this Man breathe a prayer to the great Father! And, as a Jew, as he probably was, he understood what was meant by such a prayer. But it did astound him to hear Jesus pray for his murderers. That was a petition, the like of which he had never heard nor even dreamed of! From whose lips could it come but from the lips of a Divine Being? Such a loving, forgiving, God-like prayer proved Him to be the Messiah! Who else had ever prayed so? Certainly not David and the kings of Israel, who, on the contrary, in all honesty and heartiness imprecated the wrath of God upon their enemies! Elijah himself would not have prayed in that fashion, rather would he have called fire from Heaven on the centurion and his company. It was a new, strange

sound to him. I do not suppose that he appreciated it to the fullest, but I can well believe that it deeply impressed him and made him feel that his Fellow-Sufferer was a Being about whom there was an exceedingly mystery of goodness.

And when the Cross was lifted up, that thief hanging on his own cross looked around and I suppose he could see that inscription written in three languages—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." If so, that writing was his little Bible, his New Testament—and he interpreted it by what he knew of the Old Testament. Putting this and that together—that strange Person, incarnate loveliness, all patience and all majesty, that strange prayer and now this singular inscription, surely he who knew the Old Testament, as I have no doubt he did, would say to himself, "Is this He? Is this truly the King of the Jews? This is He who worked miracles, raised the dead and said that He was the Son of God—is it all true and is He really our Messiah?" Then he would remember the words of the Prophet Isaiah, "He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Surely, He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "Why," he would say to himself, "I never understood that passage in the Prophet Isaiah before, but it must point to Him! The chastisement of our peace is upon Him. Can this be He who cried in the Psalms—"they pierced My hands and My feet"?"

As he looked at Him again, he felt in his soul, "It must be He! Could there be another so like He?" He felt conviction creeping over his spirit. Then he looked again and he marked how all men down below rejected, despised and hissed at Him. They hooted Him and all this would make the case the more clear. "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him."

Perhaps this dying thief read the Gospel out of the lips of Christ's enemies. They said—"He saved others." "Ah!" he thought, "did He save others? Why could He not save *me*?" What a grand bit of Gospel that was for the dying thief—"He saved others!" I think I could swim to Heaven on that plank—"He saved others" and, if He saved others, He can surely save me!

Thus the very things that the enemies disdainfully threw at Christ would be Gospel to this poor dying man. When it has been my misery to read any of the wretched prints that are sent us out of scorn, in which our Lord is held up to ridicule, I have thought, "Why, perhaps those who read these loathsome blasphemies may, nevertheless, learn the Gospel from them!" You may pick a jewel from a dunghill and find its radiance undiminished! And you may gather the Gospel from a blasphemous mouth and it shall be, none the less, the Gospel of salvation! Perhaps this man learned the Gospel from those who jested at our dying Lord and so the servants of the devil were unconsciously made to be the servants of Christ!

But, after all, surely that which won him most must have been to look at Jesus, again, as He was hanging upon the cruel tree. Possibly nothing about the physical Person of Christ would be attractive to him, for His visage was more marred than that of any man and His form more than the

sons of men. But there must have been in that blessed face a singular charm. Was it not the very image of perfection? As I conceive the face of Christ, it was very different from anything that any painter has yet been able to place upon his canvas. It was all goodness, kindness and unselfishness—and yet it was a royal face! It was a face of superlative justice and unrivalled tenderness. Righteousness and uprightness sat upon His brow, but infinite pity and goodwill to men had also taken up their abode. It was a face that would have struck you at once as one by itself, never to be forgotten, never to be fully understood. It was all sorrow, yet all love! It was all meekness, yet all resolution! All wisdom, yet all simplicity! The face of a child, or an angel and yet peculiarly the face of a Man. Majesty and misery, suffering and sacredness were strangely combined in it. He was evidently the Lamb of God and the Son of Man.

As the robber looked, he believed. Is it not amazing—the very sight of the Master won him? The sight of the Lord in agony, shame and death! Scarcely a word. Certainly no sermon, no attending worship on the Sabbath. No reading of gracious books; no appeal from mother, or teacher, or friend. The sight of Jesus won him! I put it down as a very singular thing, a thing for you and for me to remember and dwell upon with quite as much vividness as we do upon the lateness of this robber's conversion!

Oh, that God in His mercy might convert everybody in this Tabernacle! Oh, that I could have a share in it by the preaching of His Word! But I will be equally happy if you get to Heaven anyway—yes, if the Lord should take you there *without* outward ministries, leading you to Jesus by some simple method such as He adopted with this thief! If you do but get there, He shall have the Glory for it, and His poor servant will be overjoyed! Oh, that you would now look to Jesus and live! Before your eyes He is set forth, evidently crucified among you. Look to Him and be saved, even at this hour!

II. But now I want you to think with me a little upon THE SPECIALITY OF THIS MAN'S FAITH, for I think it was a very singular faith that this man exerted towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

I greatly question whether the equal and the parallel of the dying thief's faith will be readily found outside the Scriptures, or even in the Scriptures!

Observe that this man believed in Christ when he *literally saw Him dying the death of a felon*, under circumstances of the greatest personal shame! You have never realized what it was to be crucified. None of you could do that, for the sight has never been seen in our day in England. There is not a man or woman here who has ever realized in their own mind the actual death of Christ. It stands beyond us. This man saw it with his own eyes and for him to call *Him*, "Lord," who was hanging on a gallows, was no small triumph of faith! For him to ask Jesus to remember him when He came into His Kingdom, though he saw Jesus bleeding His life away and hounded to death, was a splendid act of reliance! For him to commit his everlasting destiny into the hands of One who was, to all appearance, unable, even, to preserve His own life, was a noble achievement of faith! I say that this dying thief leads the van in the matter of faith, for

what he saw of the circumstances of the Savior was calculated to *contradict* rather than help his confidence! What he saw was to his *hindrance* rather than to his help, for he saw our Lord in the very extremity of agony and death—and yet he believed in Him as the King shortly to come into His Kingdom!

Remember, too, that at that moment when the thief believed in Christ, *all the disciples had forsaken Him and fled*. John might be lingering at a little distance and holy women may have stood farther off, but no one was present to bravely champion the dying Christ. Judas had sold Him, Peter had denied Him and the rest had forsaken Him! And it was *then* that the dying thief called Him, “Lord,” and said, “Remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.” I call that splendid faith! Why, some of you do not believe even though you are surrounded with Christian friends—even though you are urged on by the testimony of those whom you regard with love! But this man, all alone, comes out and calls Jesus his Lord! No one else was confessing Christ at that moment—no revival was around him with enthusiastic crowds—he was all by himself as a confessor of his Lord. After our Lord was nailed to the tree, the first to bear witness for Him was this thief. The centurion bore witness afterwards, when our Lord expired, but this thief was a lone confessor, holding on to Christ when nobody would say, “Amen” to what he said. Even his fellow thief was mocking at the crucified Savior, so that this man shone as a lone star in the midnight darkness. O Sirs, dare you be Daniels? Dare you stand alone? Would you dare to stand out amidst a ribald crew and say, “Jesus is my King. I only ask Him to remember me when He comes into His Kingdom”? Would you be likely to proclaim such a faith when priests and scribes, princes and people were all mocking at the Christ and deriding Him? Brothers, the dying robber exhibited marvelous faith and I beg *you* to think of this the next time you speak of him.

And it seems to me that another point adds splendor to that faith, namely, that *he himself was in extreme torture*. Remember, he was crucified. It was a crucified man trusting in a crucified Christ! Oh, when our frame is racked with torture; when the most tender nerves are pained; when our body is hung up to die by we know not what great length of torment—*then* to forget the present and live in the future is a grand achievement of faith! While dying, to turn one’s eyes to Another dying at your side and trust your *soul* with Him is very marvelous faith! Blessed thief, because they put you down at the bottom as one of the least of saints, I think that I must bid you come up higher and take one of the uppermost seats among those who, by faith have glorified the Christ of God!

Why, see, dear Friends, once more, the specialty of this man’s faith was that *he saw so much* though his eyes had been opened for so short a time! He saw the future world! *He* was not a believer in annihilation, or in the possibility of a man’s not being immortal! He evidently expected to be in another world and to be in existence when the dying Lord should come into His Kingdom! He believed all that and it is more than some do nowadays. He also believed that Jesus would have a Kingdom, a Kingdom after

He was dead, a Kingdom though He was *crucified!* He believed that He was winning for Himself a Kingdom by those nailed hands and pierced feet! This was intelligent faith, was it not? He believed that Jesus would have a Kingdom in which others would share and, therefore, he aspired to have his portion in it. But yet he had fit views of himself and, therefore, he did not say, "Lord, let me sit at Your right hand," or, "Let me share in the dainties of Your palace." He only said, "Remember me. Think of me. Cast an eye my way. Think of Your poor dying comrade on the cross at Your right hand. Lord, remember me. Remember me." I see deep humility in the prayer and yet a sweet, joyous, confident exaltation of the Christ at the time when the Christ was in His deepest humiliation!

Oh, dear Sirs, if any of you have thought of this dying thief only as one who put off repentance, I want you now to think of him as one that did greatly and grandly believe in Christ and oh, that you would do the same! Oh, that you would put a great confidence in my great Lord! Never did a poor sinner trust Christ too much. There was never a case of a guilty one who believed that Jesus could forgive him and, afterwards, found that He could not—who believed that Jesus could save him on the spot and then woke up to find that it was a delusion. No! Plunge into this river of confidence in Christ! The waters are waters to swim in, not to drown in! Never did a soul perish that glorified Christ by a living, loving faith in Him! Come, then, with all your sin, whatever it may be—with all your deep depression of spirit, with all your agony of conscience—come along with you and grasp my Lord and Master with both hands of your faith and He shall be yours and you shall be His—

***"Turn to Christ your longing eyes,
View His bloody Sacrifice!
See in Him your sins forgiven,
Pardon, holiness and Heaven!
Glorify the King of Kings,
Take the peace the Gospel brings."***

I think that I have shown you something special in the means of the thief's conversion and in his faith in our dying Lord.

III. But now, thirdly, as God shall help me, I wish to show you another specialty, namely, in THE RESULT OF HIS FAITH.

I have heard people say, "Well, you see, the dying thief was converted, but then he was not baptized! He never went to communion and never joined the church!" He could not do either and that which God Himself renders impossible to us, He does not demand of us. He was nailed to a cross—how could he be baptized? But he did a great deal more than that, for if he could not carry out the outward signs, he most manifestly exhibited the things which they signified, which, in his condition, was better still!

This dying thief, first of all, confessed the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is the very essence of Baptism. He confessed Christ. Did he not acknowledge Him to his fellow thief? It was as open a confession as he could make it. Did he not acknowledge Christ before all that were gathered around the Cross who were within hearing? It was as public a confession as he could possibly cause it to be! Yet certain cowardly fellows claim to be Christians

though they have never confessed Christ to a single person—and then they quote this poor thief as an excuse! Are they nailed to a cross? Are they dying in agony? Oh, no, and yet they talk as if they could claim the exemption which these circumstances would give them. What a dishonest piece of business!

The fact is that our Lord requires an open confession as well as a secret faith. And if you will not render it, there is no promise of salvation for you, but a threat of being denied at the last! The Apostle puts it, “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” It is stated in another place this way—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—that is Christ’s way of making the confession of Him. If there is a true faith, there must be a declaration of it. If you are candles and God has lit you, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” Soldiers of Christ must, like her Majesty’s soldiers, wear their uniforms—and if they are ashamed of them—they ought to be drummed out of the regiment! They are not honest soldiers who refuse to march in rank with their comrades. The very least thing that the Lord Jesus Christ can expect of us is that we confess Him to the best of our power. If you are nailed up to a cross, I will not invite you to be baptized. If you are fastened up to a tree to die, I will not ask you to come into this pulpit and declare your faith, for you cannot. But you are required to do what you can do, namely, to make as distinct and open an avowal of the Lord Jesus Christ as may be suitable in your present condition.

I believe that many Christian people get into a deal of trouble through not being honest in their convictions. For instance, if a man goes into a workshop, or a soldier into a barracks, and if he does not fly his flag from the first, it will be very difficult for him to run it up afterwards. But if he immediately and boldly lets them know, “I am a Christian and there are certain things that I cannot do to please you, and certain other things that I cannot help doing, though they displease you”—when that is clearly understood, after a while, the singularity of the thing will be gone and the man will be left alone. But if he is a little sneaky and thinks that he is going to please the world and please Christ, too, he is in for a rough time—let him depend upon it! His life will be that of a toad under a harrow, or a fox in a dog kennel if he tries the way of compromise. That will never do! Come out! Show your colors! Let it be known who you are and what you are—and although your course will not be smooth, it will certainly be not half as rough as if you tried to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds—a very difficult piece of business that!

This man came out, then and there, and made as open an avowal of his faith in Christ as was possible.

The next thing he did was to rebuke his fellow sinner. He spoke to him in answer to the ribaldry with which he had assailed our Lord. I do not know what the unconverted convict had been blasphemously saying, but his converted comrade spoke very honestly to him. “Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly; for we

receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing wrong." It is more than ever necessary in these days that believers in Christ should not allow sin to go unrebuked and yet a great many of them do so. Do you not know that a person who is silent when a wrong thing is said or done may become a participator in the sin? If you do not rebuke sin—I mean, of course, on all fit occasions and in a proper spirit—your silence will give consent to the sin and you will be an aider and abettor in it. A man who saw a robbery and who did not cry, "Stop, thief!" would be thought to be in league with the thief. And the man who can hear swearing, or see impurity and never utter a word of protest may well question whether he is right, himself. Our "other men's sins" make up a great item in our personal guilt unless we rebuke them. This our Lord expects us to do. The dying thief did it and did it with all his heart—and in doing so far exceeded large numbers of those who hold their heads high in the Church!

Next, *the dying thief made a full confession of his guilt*. He said to him who was hanged with him, "Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? *And we, indeed, justly.*" Not many words, but what a world of meaning was in them—"we, indeed, justly." "You and I are dying for our crimes," he said, "and we *deserve* to die." When a man is willing to confess that he deserves the wrath of God—that he deserves the suffering which his sin has brought upon him—there is evidence of sincerity in him. In this man's case, his repentance glittered like a holy tear in the eye of his faith, so that his faith was jeweled with the drops of his penitence. As I have often told you, I suspect the faith which is not born as a twin with repentance, but there is no room for suspicion in the case of this penitent confessor. I pray God that you and I may have such a thorough work as this in our own hearts as the result of our faith.

Then, see, *this dying thief defends his Lord right manfully*. He says, "We, indeed, justly, but this Man has done nothing wrong." Was not that beautifully said? He did not say, "This Man does not deserve to die," but, "This Man has done nothing wrong." He means that He is perfectly innocent! He does not even say, "He has done nothing wicked," but he even asserts that He has not acted unwisely or indiscreetly—"This Man has done nothing wrong." This is a glorious testimony of a dying man to One who was numbered with the transgressors and was being put to death because His enemies falsely accused Him. Beloved, I only pray that you and I may bear as good a witness to our Lord as this thief did! He outruns us all. We need not think much of the coming of his conversion late in life—we may far rather consider how blessed was the testimony which he bore for his Lord when it was most needed! When all other voices were silent, one suffering penitent spoke out and said—"This Man has done nothing wrong."

See, again, another mark of this man's faith. He prays *and his prayer is directed to Jesus*. "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." True faith is always *praying* faith. "Behold, he prays," is one of the most sure tests of the new birth. Oh, Friends, may we abound in prayer, for thus we shall prove that our faith in Jesus Christ is what it ought to be! This converted robber opened his mouth wide in prayer. He prayed

with great confidence as to the coming Kingdom and he sought that Kingdom first, even to the exclusion of all else. He might have asked for life, or for ease from pain, but he prefers the Kingdom—and this is a high mark of Grace.

In addition to thus praying, you will see that *he adores and worships Jesus*, for he says, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.” The petition is worded as if he felt, “Only let Christ *think* of me and it is enough. Let Him but remember me and the thought of His mind will be effectual for everything that I shall need in the world to come.” This is to impute Godhead to Christ! If a man can cast his all upon the mere memory of a person, he must have a very high esteem of that person. If to be remembered by the Lord Jesus is all that this man asks, or desires, he pays to the Lord great honor. I think that there was about his prayer a worship equal to the eternal hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. There was in it a glorification of his Lord which is not excelled even by the endless symphonies of angelic spirits who surround the Throne of God! Thief, you have well done!

Oh, that some penitent spirit here might be helped thus to believe, thus to confess, thus to defend his Master, thus to adore, thus to worship—and then the age of the convert would be a matter of the smallest imaginable consequence!

IV. Now, the last remark is this—There was something very special about the dying thief as to OUR LORD’S WORDS TO HIM ABOUT THE WORLD TO COME. He said to him, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” He only asked the Lord to remember him, but he obtained this surprising answer, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.”

In some respects I envy this dying thief, for this reason—that when the Lord pardoned me and pardoned the most of you who are present, He did not give us a place in Paradise that same day. We are not yet come to the rest which is promised to us. No, you are waiting here. Some of you have been waiting very long. It is 30 years with many of us. It is 40 years, it is 50 years with many others since the Lord blotted out your sins, and yet you are not with Him in Paradise. There is a dear member of this Church who, I suppose, has known the Lord for 75 years and she is still with us, having long passed the 90th year of her age. The Lord did not admit her to Paradise on the day of her conversion. He did not take any of us from Nature to Grace and from Grace to Glory, in a day. We have had to wait a good while. There is something for us to do in the wilderness and so we are kept out of the heavenly garden.

I remember that Mr. Baxter said that he was not in a hurry to be gone to Heaven and a friend called upon Dr. John Owen, who had been writing about the Glory of Christ, and asked him what *he* thought of going to Heaven. That great Divine replied, “I am longing to be there.” “Why,” said the other, “I have just spoken to holy Mr. Baxter and he says that he would prefer to be here, since he thinks that he can be more useful on earth.” “Oh,” said Dr. Owen, “my Brother Baxter is always full of practical godliness, but for all that I cannot say that I am at all desirous to linger in this mortal state. I would rather be gone.” Each of these men, seems to

me, to have been the half of Paul. Paul was made up of the two, for he was desirous to depart, but he was willing to remain because it was necessary for the people. We would put both together and, like Paul, have a strong desire to depart and to be with Christ, and yet be willing to wait if we can do service to our Lord and to His Church. Still, I think he has the best of it who is converted and enters Heaven the same night! This robber breakfasted with the devil, but he dined with Christ on earth and supped with Him in Paradise! This was short work, but blessed work! What a host of troubles he escaped! What a world of temptation he missed! What an evil world he left! He was just born, like a lamb dropped in the field, and then he was lifted into the Shepherd's bosom straight away!

I do not remember the Lord ever saying this to anybody else. I dare say it may have happened that souls have been converted and have gone Home at once, but I never heard of anybody that had such an assurance from Christ as this man had. "Verily, I say unto you"—such a personal assurance! "Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Dying thief, you were favored above many, "to be with Christ, which is far better," and to be with Him so soon!

Why is it that our Lord does not thus imparadise all of us at once? It is because there is something for us to do on earth. My Brothers and Sisters, are you doing it? Are you doing it? Some good people are still on earth, but why? But why? What is the use of them? I cannot make it out. If they are, indeed, the Lord's people, what are they here for? They get up in the morning and eat their breakfast and, in due course eat their dinner, their supper and go to bed and sleep. At a proper hour they get up the next morning and do the same as on the previous day. Is this living for Jesus? Is this life? It does not come to much. Can this be the life of God in man?

Oh, Christian people, do justify your Lord in keeping you waiting here! How can you justify Him but by serving Him to the utmost of your power? The Lord help you to do so! Why, you owe as much to Him as the dying thief! I know I owe a great deal more. What a mercy it is to have been converted while you were yet a boy, to be brought to the Savior while you were yet a girl! What a debt of obligation young Christians owe to the Lord! And if this poor thief crammed a life full of testimony into a few minutes, ought not you and I, who are spared for years after conversion, to perform good service for our Lord?

Come, let us wake up if we have been asleep! Let us begin to live if we have been half dead. May the Spirit of God yet make something of us, so that we may go as industrious servants from the labors of the vineyard to the pleasures of Paradise! To our once crucified Lord be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

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THE BELIEVING THIEF

NO. 2078

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come
into Your kingdom. And Jesus said unto him,
Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.”
Luke 23:42, 43.*

SOME time ago I preached upon the whole story of the dying thief. I do not propose to do the same today but only to look at it from one particular point of view. The story of the salvation of the dying thief is a standing instance of the power of Christ to save and of His abundant willingness to receive all that come to Him in whatever plight they may be. I cannot regard this act of Divine Grace as a solitary instance any more than the salvation of Zaccheus, the restoration of Peter, or the call of Saul, the persecutor. Every conversion is, in a sense, singular—no two are exactly alike and yet any one conversion is a type of others.

The case of the dying thief is much more similar to our conversion than it is dissimilar. In point of fact his case may be regarded as typical rather than as an extraordinary incident. So I shall use it at this time. May the Holy Spirit speak through it to the encouragement of those who are ready to despair!

Remember, beloved Friends, that our Lord Jesus at the time He saved this malefactor was at His lowest. His Glory had been ebbing out in Gethsemane and before Caiaphas and Herod and Pilate. But it had now reached the utmost low water mark. Stripped of His garments and nailed to the Cross, our Lord was mocked by a ribald crowd and was dying in agony—then was He “numbered with the transgressors,” and made as the offscouring of all things. Yet while in that condition He achieved this marvelous deed of Divine Grace. Behold the wonder worked by the Savior when emptied of all His Glory and a spectacle of shame upon the brink of death!

How certain is it that He can do great wonders of mercy *now*—seeing that He has returned unto His Glory and sits upon the Throne of light! “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” If a dying Savior saved the thief, my argument is that He can do even more, now that He lives and reigns. All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth—can anything at this present time surpass the power of His Grace?

It is not only the weakness of our Lord which makes the salvation of the penitent thief memorable. It is the fact that the dying malefactor saw it before his very eyes. Can you put yourself into his place and suppose yourself to be looking upon one who hangs in agony upon a cross? Could

you readily believe Him to be the Lord of Glory who would soon come to His kingdom? That was no mean faith which, at such a moment, could believe in Jesus as Lord and King. If the Apostle Paul were here and wanted to add a New Testament chapter to the eleventh of Hebrews, he might certainly commence his instances of remarkable faith with this thief.

He believed in a crucified, derided, and dying Christ and cried to Him as to one whose kingdom would surely come. The thief's faith was the more remarkable because he was, himself, in great pain and bound to die. It is not easy to exercise confidence when you are tortured with deadly anguish. Our own rest of mind has at times been greatly hindered by pain of body. When we are the subjects of acute suffering it is not easy to exhibit that faith which we fancy we possess at other times. This man, suffering as he did and seeing the Savior in so sad a state, nevertheless believed unto life eternal. Herein was such faith as is seldom seen.

Remember also, that he was surrounded by scoffers. It is easy to swim with the current and hard to go against the stream. This man heard the priests, in their pride, ridicule the Lord. The great multitude of the common people, with one consent, joined in the scorning—even his comrade caught the spirit of the hour and also mocked Jesus. And perhaps he did the same for a while. But through the Grace of God he was changed and believed in the Lord Jesus in the teeth of all the scorn. His faith was not affected by his surroundings.

But he, dying thief as he was, proclaimed his confidence. Like a jutting rock standing out in the midst of a torrent, he declared the innocence of the Christ whom others blasphemed. His faith is worthy of our imitation in its fruits. He had no member that was free except his tongue, and he used that member wisely to rebuke his brother malefactor—and defend *his Lord*. His faith brought forth a brave testimony and a bold confession.

I am not going to praise the thief or his faith—I am going to extol the glory of that Divine Grace which gave the thief such faith and then freely saved him by its means. I am anxious to show how glorious is the Savior—that Savior to the uttermost, who at such a time could save such a man and give him so great a faith and so perfectly and speedily prepare him for eternal bliss. Behold the power of that Divine Spirit who could produce such faith on soil so unlikely and in a climate so unfavorable.

Let us enter at once into the center of our sermon. Note first the man who was our Lord's last companion on earth. Note secondly that this same man was our Lord's first companion at the gate of Paradise. And then, thirdly, let us note the sermon which our Lord preaches to us from this act of Divine Grace. Oh, for a blessing from the Holy Spirit all the sermon through!

I. Carefully NOTE THAT THE CRUCIFIED THIEF WAS OUR LORD'S LAST COMPANION ON EARTH. What sorry company our Lord selected when He was here. He did not consort with the religious Pharisees or the philosophic Sadducees—He was known as “the friend of publicans and

sinners.” How I rejoice at this! It gives me assurance that He will not refuse to associate with me. When the Lord Jesus made a friend of me He certainly did not make a choice which brought Him credit. Do you think He gained any honor when He made a friend of you? Has He ever gained anything by befriending us?

No, my Brethren. If Jesus had not stooped very low He would not have come to me. And if He did not seek the most unworthy He might not have come to you. You feel it so and you are thankful that He came “not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” As the great Physician, our Lord was much with the sick—He went where there was room for Him to exercise His healing art. The whole have no need of a Physician—they cannot appreciate Him—and therefore He did not frequent their abodes. But after all, our Lord did make a good choice when He saved you and me. For in us He has found abundant room for His mercy and Grace. There has been plenty of elbow room for His love to work within the awful emptiness of our necessities and sins. And therein He has done great things for us, and we are glad.

Lest any here should be despairing and say, “He will never look on me,” I want you to notice that the last companion of Christ on earth was a sinner and no ordinary sinner. He had broken even the laws of man, for he was a robber. One calls him “a brigand,” and I suppose it is likely to have been the case. The brigands of those days mixed murder with their robberies—he was probably a freebooter in arms against the Roman government—making this a pretext for plundering as he had opportunity. At last he was arrested and was condemned by a Roman tribunal, which, on the whole, was usually just, and in this case was certainly just.

He himself confessed the justice of his condemnation. The malefactor who believed upon the cross was a convict who had lain in the condemned cell and was then undergoing execution for his crimes. A convicted felon was the person with whom our Lord last consorted upon earth. What a lover of the souls of guilty men is Jesus! How He stoops to the very lowest of mankind! To this most unworthy of men the Lord of Glory, before He gave up His life, spoke with matchless grace! He spoke to him such wondrous words as never can be excelled if you search the Scriptures through—“Today shall you be with Me in Paradise”!

I do not suppose that anywhere in this Tabernacle there will be found a man who has been convicted before the Law or who is even chargeable with a crime against common honesty. But if there should be such a person among my hearers, I would invite him to find pardon and change of heart through our Lord Jesus Christ. You may come to Him whoever you may be. For this man did. Here is a specimen of one who had gone to the extremes of guilt and who acknowledged that he had done so. He made no excuse and sought no cloak for his sin. He was in the hands of justice, confronted with execution—and yet he believed in Jesus and breathed a humble prayer to Him—and he was saved upon the spot!

As is the sample, such is the bulk. Jesus saves others of like kind. Let me, therefore, put it very plainly here so that no one may misunderstand

me—none of you are excluded from the infinite mercy of Christ! However great your iniquity—if you believe in Jesus, He will save you.

This man was not only a sinner, he was a sinner newly awakened. I do not suppose that he had seriously thought of the Lord Jesus before. According to the other Evangelists he appears to have joined with his fellow thief in scoffing at Jesus. If he did not actually himself use opprobrious words he was so far consenting that the Evangelist did him no injustice when he said, “The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.” But, now, suddenly, he wakes up to the conviction that the Man who is dying at his side is something more than a man. He reads the title over His head and believes it to be true—“This is Jesus the King of the Jews.”

Thus believing, he makes his appeal to the Messiah, whom he had so newly found, and commits himself to His hands. My Hearer, do you see this Truth of God—that the *moment* a man knows Jesus to be the Christ of God he may at once put his trust in Him and be saved? A certain preacher, whose Gospel was very doubtful, said, “Do you, who have been living in sin for fifty years believe that you can in a moment be made clean through the blood of Jesus?” I answer, “Yes, we do believe that in one moment, through the precious blood of Jesus, the blackest soul can be made white. We believe that in a single instant the sins of sixty or seventy years can be absolutely forgiven and that the old nature which has gone on growing worse and worse can receive its death wound and eternal life may be implanted in the soul at once.”

It was so with this man. He had reached the end of his tether, but all of a sudden he woke up to the assured conviction that the Messiah was at his side—and believing—he looked to Him and lived. So now, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have never in your life before been the subject of any religious conviction—if you have lived up till now an utterly ungodly life—if now you will believe that God’s dear Son has come into the world to save men from sin and will sincerely confess your sin and trust in Him—you shall be immediately saved. Yes, while I speak the word, the deed of Divine Grace may be accomplished by that glorious One who has gone up into Heaven with omnipotent power to save.

I desire to put this case very plainly—this man who was the last companion of Christ upon earth was a sinner in misery. His sins had found him out—he was now enduring the reward of his deeds. I constantly meet with persons in this condition—they have lived a life of wantonness, excess and carelessness and they begin to feel the fire-flakes of the tempest of wrath falling upon their flesh. They dwell in an earthly Hell—a prelude of eternal woe. Remorse, like an asp, has stung them and set their blood on fire—they cannot rest, they are troubled day and night. “Be sure your sin will find you out.” It has found them out and arrested them and they feel the strong grip of conviction.

This man was in that horrible condition—what is more, he was in the absolutely extreme. He could not live long—the crucifixion was sure to be fatal. In a short time his legs would be broken to end his wretched exist-

tence. He, poor soul, had but a short time to live—only the space between noon and sundown. But it was long enough for the Savior, who is mighty to save. Some are very much afraid that people will put off coming to Christ if we state this. I cannot help what wicked men do with the Truth of God but I shall state it all the same. If you are now within an hour of death, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. If you never reach your homes again but drop dead on the road, if you will *now* believe in the Lord Jesus you shall be saved—saved now—on the spot.

Looking and trusting to Jesus, He will give you a new heart and a right spirit and blot out your sins. This is the glory of Christ's Grace. How I wish I could extol it in proper language! He was last seen on earth before His death in company with a convicted felon to whom He spoke most lovingly. Come, O you guilty and He will receive you graciously!

Once more, this thief whom Christ saved at last was a man who could do no good works. If salvation had been by good works he could not have been saved. For he was fastened hand and foot to the tree of doom. It was all over with him as to any act or deed of righteousness. He could say a good word or two but that was all. He could perform no acts. And if his salvation had depended on an active life of usefulness, certainly he never could have been saved. He was also a sinner who could not exhibit a long-enduring repentance for sin for he had so short a time to live. He could not have experienced bitter convictions lasting over months and years, for his time was measured by moments and he was on the borders of the grave.

His end was very near, and yet the Savior could save him and did save him so perfectly that the sun went not down till he was in Paradise with Christ! This sinner, whom I have painted to you in colors none too black, was one who believed in Jesus and confessed his faith. He did trust the Lord. Jesus was a man and he called Him so. But he knew that He was also Lord and he called Him so and said, "Lord, remember me." He had such confidence in Jesus that he knew if He would but only think of him, if Jesus would only remember him when He came into His kingdom, that would be all that he would ask of Him.

Alas, my dear Hearers! The trouble with some of you is that you know all about my Lord and yet you do not trust Him. Trust is the saving act. Years ago you were on the verge of really trusting Jesus but you are just as far off from it now as you were then. This man did not hesitate—he grasped the one hope for himself. He did not keep his persuasion of our Lord's Messiahship in his mind as a dry, dead belief. No, he turned it into trust and prayer, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Oh, that in His infinite mercy many of you would trust my Lord this morning! You shall be saved, I am sure you shall—if you are not saved when you trust—I must myself also renounce all hope.

This is all that we have done—we looked and we lived and we continue to live because we look to the living Savior. Oh, that this morning, feeling your sin, you would look to Jesus, trust Him and confess that trust! Owning that He is Lord to the Glory of God the Father, you must and shall be

saved! In consequence of having this faith which saved him, this poor man breathed the humble, but fitting prayer, "Lord, remember me." This does not seem too much to ask. But as he understood it, it meant all that an anxious heart could desire. As he thought of the kingdom he had such clear ideas of the glory of the Savior that he felt that if the Lord would *think* of him, his eternal state would be safe.

Joseph, in prison, asked the chief butler to remember him when he was restored to power. But he forgot him. Our Joseph never forgets a sinner who cried to Him in the low dungeon. In His kingdom He remembers the moans and groans of poor sinners who are burdened with a sense of sin. Can you not pray this morning and thus secure a place in the memory of the Lord Jesus?

Thus I have tried to describe the thief. And after having done my best I shall fail of my objective unless I make you see that whatever this thief was—he is a picture of what *you* are. Especially if you have been a great offender and if you have been living long without caring for eternal things! And yet you, even you, may do as that thief did. You may believe that Jesus is the Christ and commit your souls into His hands and He will save you as surely as He saved the condemned brigand. Jesus graciously says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." This means that if you come and trust Him, whoever you may be, He will for no reason and on no ground and under no circumstances ever cast you out. Do you catch that thought? Do you feel that it belongs to you and that if you come to Him you shall find eternal life? I rejoice if you so far perceive the Truth.

Few persons have so much contact with desponding and despairing souls as I have. Poor, cast down ones, write to me continually. I scarcely know why. I have no especial gift of consolation but I gladly lay myself out to comfort the distressed and they seem to know it. What joy I have when I see a despairing one find peace! I have had this joy several times during the week just ended. How much I desire that any of you who are breaking your hearts because you cannot find forgiveness, would come to my Lord and trust Him and enter into rest! Has He not said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest"? Come and try Him and that rest shall be yours.

II. In the second place, NOTE THAT THIS MAN WAS OUR LORD'S COMPANION AT THE GATE OF PARADISE. I am not going into any speculations as to where our Lord went when He quit the Body which hung on the Cross. It would seem from some Scriptures that He descended into the lower parts of the earth—that He might fulfill all things. But He very rapidly traversed the regions of the dead. Remember that He died perhaps an hour or two before the thief and during that time the eternal glory flamed through the underworld and was flashing through the gates of Paradise just when the pardoned thief was entering the eternal world.

Who is this that enters the pearly gate at the same moment as the King of Glory? Who is this favored companion of the Redeemer? Is it some honored martyr? Is it a faithful Apostle? Is it a Patriarch like Abraham? Or a prince like David? It is none of these. Behold and be amazed at Sovereign

Grace! He that goes in at the gate of Paradise with the King of Glory is a *thief* who was saved in the article of death. He is saved in no inferior way and received into bliss in no secondary style. Verily there are last which shall be first!

Here I would have you notice the condescension of our Lord's choice. The comrade of the Lord of Glory for whom the cherub turns aside his sword of fire is no great one, but a newly-converted malefactor. And why? I think the Savior took him with Him as a specimen of what He meant to do. He seemed to say to all the heavenly powers, "I bring a sinner with Me. He is a sample of the rest." Have you ever heard of him who dreamed that he stood without the gate of Heaven and while there he heard sweet music from a band of venerable persons who were on their way to G

Enquiring "What are these?" he was told that they were the goodly fellowship of the Prophets. He sighed and said, "Alas, I am not one of those." He waited a while and another band of shining ones drew near, who also entered Heaven with hallelujahs and when he enquired, "Who are these and from where they came?" the answer was, "These are the glorious company of the Apostles." Again he sighed and said, "I cannot enter with them." Then came another body of men, white-robed and bearing palms in their hands who marched amid great acclamation into the golden city. These he learned were the noble army of martyrs. And again he wept and said, "I cannot enter with these."

In the end he heard the voices of much people and saw a greater multitude advancing among whom he perceived Rahab and Mary Magdalene, David and Peter, Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus and he espied especially the thief who died at the right hand of Jesus. These all entered in a strange company. Then he eagerly enquired, "Who are these?" and they answered, "This is the host of sinners saved by Divine Grace." Then was he exceeding glad and said, "I can go in with these." But he thought there would be no shouting at the approach of this company and that they would enter Heaven without song. Instead of which, there seemed to rise a seven-fold hallelujah of praise unto the Lord of Love. For there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over sinners that repent.

I invite any poor soul here that can neither aspire to serve Christ, nor to suffer for Him as yet, nevertheless to come in with other believing sinners—in the company of Jesus who now sets before us an open door. While we are handling this text, note well the blessedness of the place to which the Lord called this penitent. Jesus said, "*Today* shall you be with Me in Paradise." Paradise means a garden—a garden filled with delights. The garden of Eden is the type of Heaven. We know that Paradise means Heaven, for the Apostle speaks of such a man caught up into Paradise and he calls it the third Heaven. Our Savior took this dying thief into the Paradise of infinite delight, and this is where He will take all of us sinners who believe in Him. If we are trusting Him, we shall ultimately be with Him in Paradise.

The next word is better still. Note the glory of the society to which this sinner is introduced—"Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." If the

Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me," we should not need Him to add another word. Where He is, is Heaven to us. He added the word, "Paradise," because otherwise none could have guessed where He was going. Think of it, you uncomely soul. You are to dwell with the Altogether Lovely One forever! You poor and needy ones—you are to be with Him in His Glory, in His bliss, in His perfection. Where He is and as He is, you shall be. The Lord looks into those weeping eyes of yours this morning and He says, "Poor Sinner, you shall one day be with Me." I think I hear you say, "Lord, that is bliss too great for such a sinner as I am." But He replies—I have loved you with an everlasting love—therefore with loving kindness will I draw you, till you shall be with Me where I am.

The stress of the text lies in the speediness of all this. "Verily I say unto you, *today* shall you be with Me in Paradise." "Today." You shall not lie in purgatory for ages, nor sleep in limbo for so many years. But you shall be ready for bliss at once and at once, you shall enjoy it. The sinner was hard by the gates of Hell but almighty mercy lifted him up and the Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." What a change from the Cross to the crown, from the anguish of Calvary to the glory of the New Jerusalem!

In those few hours the beggar was lifted from the dunghill and set among princes. "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Can you measure the change from that sinner—loathsome in his iniquity when the sun was at high noon—to that same sinner clothed in pure white and accepted in the Beloved, in the Paradise of God, when the sun went down? O glorious Savior, what marvels You can work! How rapidly can You work them!

Please notice, also, the majesty of the Lord's Grace in this text. The Savior said to him, "Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Our Lord gives His own will as the reason for saving this man. "I say." He says it, who claims the right thus to speak. It is He who will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. He speaks royally, "Verily I say unto you." Are they not imperial words? The Lord is a King in whose Word there is power. What He says none can deny. He that has the keys of Hell and of death says, "I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Who shall prevent the fulfillment of His Word?

Notice the certainty of it. He says, "Verily." Our blessed Lord on the Cross returned to His old majestic manner as He painfully turned His head and looked on His convert. He was likely to begin His preaching with, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." And now that He is dying He uses His favorite manner and says, "Verily." Our Lord took no oath—His strongest asseveration was, "Verily, verily." To give the penitent the most plain assurance, He says, "Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise." In this the thief had an absolutely indisputable assurance that though he must die, yet he would live and find himself in Paradise with his Lord.

I have thus shown you that our Lord passed within the pearly gate in company with one to whom He had pledged Himself. Why should not you

and I pass through that pearly gate in due time, clothed in His merit, washed in His blood and resting on His power? One of these days angels will say of you and of me, "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" The shining ones will be amazed to see some of us coming. If you have lived a life of sin until now, and yet shall repent and enter Heaven—what an amazement there will be in every golden street to think that you have come there! In the early Christian Church, Marcus Caius Victorinus was converted. But he had reached so great an age and had been so gross a sinner that the pastor and Church doubted him.

He gave, however, clear proof of having undergone the Divine change, and then there were great acclamations and many shouts of, "Victorinus has become a Christian!" Oh, that some of you big sinners might be saved! How gladly would we rejoice over you! Why not? Would it not glorify God? The salvation of this convicted highwayman has made our Lord illustrious for mercy even unto this day—would not your case do the same? Would not saints cry, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" if they heard that some of you had been turned from darkness to marvelous light? Why should it not be? Believe in Jesus and it is so.

III. Now I come to my third and most practical point—NOTE THE LORD'S SERMON TO US FROM ALL THIS.

The devil wants to preach this morning a bit. Yes, Satan asks to come to the front and preach to you. But he cannot be allowed. Out of here, you deceiver! Yet I should not wonder if he gets at some of you when the sermon is over and whispers, "You see, you can be saved at the very last. Put off repentance and faith. You may be forgiven on your deathbed." Sirs, you know who it is that would ruin you by this suggestion. Abhor his deceitful teaching! Do not be ungrateful because God is kind. Do not provoke the Lord because He is patient.

Such conduct would be unworthy and ungrateful. Do not run an awful risk because one escaped the tremendous peril. The Lord will accept all who repent. But how do you know that you will repent? It is true that one thief was saved—but the other thief was lost. One is saved and we may not despair. The other is lost and we may not presume. Dear Friends, I trust you are not made of such diabolical stuff as to fetch from the mercy of God an argument for continuing in sin. If you do, I can only say of you, that your damnation will be just. You will have brought it upon yourselves.

Consider now the teaching of our Lord—see the glory of Christ in salvation. He is ready to save at the last moment. He was just passing away—His foot was on the doorstep of the Father's house. Up comes this poor sinner, the last thing at night—at the eleventh hour—and the Savior smiles and declares that He Himself will not enter except with this belated wanderer. At the very gate He declares that this seeking soul shall enter with Him. There was plenty of time for him to have come before—you know how apt we are to say, "You have waited to the last moment. I am just going off, and I cannot attend to you now." Our Lord had His dying

pangs upon Him and yet He attends to the perishing criminal and permits him to pass through the heavenly portal in His company.

Jesus easily saves the sinners for whom He painfully died. Jesus loves to rescue sinners from going down into the pit. You will be very happy if you are saved but you will not be one half so happy as He will be when He saves you. See how gentle He is—

***“His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes His brow;
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below.”***

He comes to us full of tenderness with tears in His eyes, mercy in His hands and love in His heart. Believe Him to be a great Savior of great sinners. I have heard of one who had received great mercy who went about saying, “He is a great forgiver.” And I would have you say the same. You shall find your transgressions put away and your sins pardoned once and for all if you trust Him now.

The next doctrine Christ preaches from this wonderful story is faith in its permitted attachment. This man believed that Jesus was the Christ. The next thing he did was to appropriate that Christ. He said, “Lord, remember me.” Jesus might have said, “What have I to do with you and what have you to do with Me? What has a thief to do with the perfect One?” Many of you good people try to get as far away as you can from the erring and fallen. They might infect your innocence! Society claims that we should not be familiar with people who have offended against its laws. We must not be seen associating with them, for it might discredit us. Infamous bosh!

Can anything discredit sinners such as we are by nature and by practice? If we know ourselves before God, are we not degraded enough in and of ourselves? Is there anybody, after all, who is worse than we are when we see ourselves in the faithful glass of the Word? As soon as ever a man believes that Jesus is the Christ, let him hook himself on to Him. The moment you believe Jesus to be the Savior, seize upon Him as *your* Savior. If I remember rightly, Augustine called this man, “*Latro laudabilis et mirabilis*,” a thief to be praised and wondered at—who dared, as it were—to seize the Savior for his own.

In this he is to be imitated. Take the Lord to be yours and you have Him. Jesus is the common property of all sinners who are bold enough to take Him. Every sinner who has the will to do so may take the Lord home with Him. He came into the world to save the sinful. Take Him by force as robbers take their prey. The kingdom of Heaven suffers the violence of daring faith. Get Him and He will never get Himself away from you. If you trust Him, He must save you.

Next, notice the doctrine of faith in its immediate power—

***“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through His blood.”***

“Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” He has no sooner believed than Christ gives him the seal of his believing in the full assurance that he shall be with Him forever in His Glory. O dear Hearts, if you believe this morning, you shall be saved this morning! God grant that you, by His rich Grace, may be brought into salvation here on the spot and at once!

The next thing is the nearness of eternal things. Think of that a minute. Heaven and Hell are not places far away. You may be in Heaven before the clock ticks again. Could we but rend that veil which parts us from the unseen! It is all there and all near. “Today,” said the Lord. Within three or four hours at the longest, “shall you be with Me in Paradise.” It is so near! A statesman has given us the expression of being “within measurable distance.” We are all within measurable distance of Heaven or Hell. If there is any difficulty in measuring the distance, it lies in its brevity rather than in its length—

***One gentle sigh the fetter breaks,
We scarce can say, ‘He’s gone,’
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the Throne.”***

Oh, that we, instead of trifling about such things because they seem so far away, would solemnly realize them—since they are really so very near! This very day, before the sun goes down, some Hearer now sitting in this place may see in his own spirit the realities of Heaven or Hell. It has frequently happened in this large congregation—someone in our audience has died before the next Sabbath has come round—it may happen this week. Think of that, and let eternal things impress you all the more because they lie so near.

Furthermore, know that if you have believed in Jesus you are prepared for Heaven. It may be that you will have to live on earth twenty, or thirty, or forty years to glorify Christ. And if so, be thankful for the privilege. But if you do not live another hour, your instantaneous death would not alter the fact that he that believes in the Son of God is meet for Heaven. Surely, if anything beyond faith is needed to make us fit to enter Paradise, the thief would have been kept a little longer here. But no, he is in the morning in the state of nature—at noon he enters the state of Divine Grace—and by sunset he is in the state of Glory!

The question never is, whether a deathbed repentance is accepted if it is sincere—the question is—is it sincere? If it is—if the man dies five minutes after his first act of faith—he is as safe as if he had served the Lord for fifty years. If your faith is true, if you die one moment after you have believed in Christ you will be admitted into Paradise—even if you shall have enjoyed no time in which to produce good works and other evidences of Divine Grace. He that reads the heart will read your faith written on its fleshy tablets and He will accept you through Jesus Christ—even though no act of Divine Grace has been visible to the eye of man.

I conclude by again saying that this is not an exceptional case. I began with that and I want to finish with it. So many demi-semi-gospelers are so terribly afraid of preaching Free Grace too fully. I read somewhere and I

think it is true, that some ministers preach the Gospel in the same way as donkeys eat thistles—namely, very, very cautiously. On the contrary, I will preach it boldly. I have not the slightest alarm about the matter. If any of you misuse Free Grace teaching, I cannot help it. He that will be damned can as well ruin himself by perverting the Gospel as by anything else. I cannot help what base hearts may invent.

But mine it is to set forth the Gospel in all its fullness of grace and I will do it. If the thief was an exceptional case—and our Lord does not usually act in such a way—there would have been a hint given of so important a fact. A hedge would have been set about this exception to all rules. Would not the Savior have whispered quietly to the dying man, “You are the only one I am going to treat in this way”? Whenever I have to do an exceptional favor to a person I have to say, “Do not mention this, or I shall have so many besieging me.”

If the Savior had meant this to be a solitary case, He would have faintly said to him, “Do not let anybody know. But you shall today be in the kingdom with Me.” No! Our Lord spoke openly and those about Him heard what He said. Moreover, the inspired penman has recorded it. If it had been an exceptional case it would not have been written in the Word of God. Men will not publish their actions in the newspapers if they feel that the record might lead others to expect from them what they cannot give. The Savior had this wonder of Divine Grace reported in the daily news of the Gospel because He means to repeat the marvel every day.

The bulk shall be equal to the sample, and therefore He sets the sample before you all. He is able to save to the uttermost—for He saved the dying thief. The case would not have been put there to encourage hopes which He cannot fulfill. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning and not for our disappointing. I pray you, therefore, if any of you have not yet trusted in my Lord Jesus come and trust in Him now. Trust Him wholly. Trust Him only. Trust Him at once. Then will you sing with me—

***“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.”***

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OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS

NO. 2311

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 4, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 9, 1889.**

***“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost.”
Luke 23:46.***

THESE were the dying words of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” It may be instructive if I remind you that the Words of Christ upon the Cross were seven. Calling each of His cries, or utterances, by the title of a Word, we speak of the seven last Words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me rehearse them in your hearing. The first, when they nailed Him to the Cross, was, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Luke has preserved that Word. Later, when one of the two thieves said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom,” Jesus said to him, “Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” This, also, Luke has carefully preserved. Farther on, our Lord, in His great agony, saw His mother, with breaking heart, standing by the Cross and looking up to Him with unutterable love and grief, and He said to her, “Woman, behold. your son!” and to the beloved Apostle, “Behold your mother!” and thus He provided a home for her when He, Himself, should be gone away. This utterance has only been preserved by John.

The fourth and central Word of the seven was, “Eloi, Eloi, Lama, Sabachthani?” which is, being interpreted, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” This was the culmination of His grief, the central point of all His agony. That most awful word that ever fell from the lips of man, expressing the quintessence of exceeding agony, is well put fourth, as though it had need of three words before it, and three words after it, as its bodyguard. It tells of a good Man, a son of God, *the* Son of God, forsaken of His God! That central Word of the seven is found in Matthew and in Mark, but not in Luke or John.

But the fifth Word has been preserved by John, that is, “I thirst,” the shortest, but not quite the sharpest of all the Master's Words, though under a bodily aspect, perhaps the sharpest of them all. John has also treasured up another very precious saying of Jesus Christ on the Cross, that is the wondrous Word, “It is finished.” This was the last word but one, “It is finished,” the gathering up of all His lifework, for He had left nothing undone, no thread was left unraveling, the whole fabric of Redemp-

tion had been woven, like His garment, from the top throughout, and it was finished to perfection! After He had said, "It is finished," He uttered the last Word of all, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," which I have taken for a text, tonight, but to which I will not come immediately.

There has been a great deal said about these seven cries from the Cross by many writers and though I have read what many of them have written, I cannot add anything to what they have said, since they have delighted to dwell upon these seven last cries, and here the most ancient writers, of what would be called the Romish school, are not to be excelled, even by Protestants, in their intense devotion to every letter of our Savior's dying Words. And they sometimes strike out new meanings, richer and more rare than any that have occurred to the far cooler minds of modern critics, who are, as a rule, greatly blessed with moles' eyes, able to see where there is nothing to be seen, but never able to see when there is anything worth seeing! Modern criticism, like modern theology, if it were put in the Garden of Eden, would not see a flower. It is like the sirocco that blasts and burns. It is without either dew or unction, in fact, it is the very opposite of these precious things, and proves itself to be unblessed of God and unblessed to men.

Now concerning these seven cries from the Cross, many authors have drawn from them, lessons concerning seven duties. Listen. When our Lord said, "Father, forgive them," in effect, He said to us, "Forgive your enemies." Even when they spitefully use you and put you to terrible pain, be ready to pardon them! Be like the sandalwood tree which perfumes the axe that fells it. Be all gentleness, kindness and love—and be this your prayer, "Father, forgive them."

The next duty is taken from the second cry, namely, that of penitence and faith in Christ, for He said to the dying thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Have you, like he, confessed your sin? Have you his faith and his prayerfulness? Then you shall be accepted even as he was! Learn, then, from the second cry, the duty of penitence and faith.

When our Lord, in the third cry, said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" He taught us the duty of filial love. No Christian must ever be short of love to his mother, his father, or to any of those who are endeared to him by relationships which God has appointed for us to observe. Oh, by the dying love of Christ to His mother, let no man here unman himself by forgetting his mother! She bore you—bear her in her old age and lovingly cherish her even to the last.

Jesus Christ's fourth cry teaches us the duty of clinging to God and trusting in God—"My God, my God." See how, with both hands, He takes hold of Him—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He cannot bear to be left of God. All else causes Him but little pain compared with the anguish of being forsaken of His God. So learn to cling to God, to grip Him with a double-handed faith, and if you do ever think that He has forsaken you, cry after Him, and say, "Show me why You contend with me, for I cannot bear to be without You."

The fifth cry, "I thirst," teaches us to set a high value upon the fulfillment of God's Word. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst." Take good heed, in all your grief and weakness, to still preserve the Word of your God, and to obey the precept. Learn the doctrine and delight in the promise. As your Lord, in His great anguish said, "I thirst," because it was written that so He would speak, have regard unto the Word of the Lord even in little things!

That sixth cry, "It is finished," teaches us perfect obedience. Go through with your keeping of God's Commandments. Leave out no Command, keep on obeying till you can say, "It is finished." Work your lifework, obey your Master, suffer or serve according to His will, but rest not till you can say with your Lord, "It is finished." "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

And that last Word, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," teaches us resignation. Yield all things. Yield up even your spirit to God at His bidding. Stand still and make a full surrender to the Lord, and let this be your watchword from the first even to the last, "Into Your hands, my Father, I commend my spirit." I think that this study of Christ's last Words should interest you, therefore let me linger a little longer upon it. Those seven cries from the Cross also teach us something about *the attributes and offices of our Master*. They are seven windows of agate and gates of carbuncle through which you may see Him and approach Him.

First, would you see Him as Intercessor? Then He cries, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Would you look at Him as King? Then hear His second Word, "Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Would you mark Him as a tender Guardian? Hear Him say to Mary, "Woman, behold your son!" And to John, "Behold your mother!" Would you peer into the dark abyss of the agonies of His soul? Hear Him cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Would you understand the reality and the intensity of His bodily sufferings? Then hear Him say, "I thirst," for there is something exquisite in the torture of thirst when brought on by the fever of bleeding wounds. Men on the battlefield who have lost much blood, are devoured with thirst, and tell you that it is the worst pang of all. "I thirst," says Jesus. See the Sufferer in the body and understand how He can sympathize with you who suffer, since He suffered so much on the Cross. Would you see Him as the Finisher of your salvation? Then hear His cry, "Consummatum est"—"It is finished." Oh, glorious note! Here you see the blessed Finisher of your faith! And would you then take one more gaze and understand how voluntary was His suffering? Then hear Him say, not as one who is robbed of life, but as one who takes His soul and hands it over to the keeping of another, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

Is there not much to be learned from these cries from the Cross? Surely these seven notes make a wondrous scale of music if we do but know how to listen to them! Let me run up the scale, again. Here, first, you have Christ's fellowship with men—"Father, forgive them." He stands side by

side with sinners and tries to make an apology for them—"They know not what they do." Here is, next, His kingly power. He sets open Heaven's gate to the dying thief and bids him enter. "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Thirdly, behold His human relationship. How near of kin He is to us! "Woman, behold your son!" Remember how He says, "Whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He belongs to the Human family. He is more of a Man than any man! As surely as He is very God of very God, He is also very Man of very man, taking into Himself the Nature, not of the Jew only, but of the Gentile, too. Belonging to His own nationality, but rising above all, He is the Man of men, the Son of Man.

See, next, His taking our sin. You say, "Which note is that" Well, they are all to that effect, but this one, chiefly, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It was because He bore our sins in His own body on the tree that He was forsaken of God. "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," and hence the bitter cry, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?" Behold Him, in that fifth cry, "I thirst," taking not only our sin, but also our infirmity—and all the suffering of our bodily nature. Then, if you would see His fullness as well as His weakness, if you would see His All-Sufficiency as well as His sorrow, hear Him cry, "It is finished." What a wonderful fullness there is in that note! Redemption is all accomplished! It is all complete! It is all perfect! There is nothing left, not a drop of bitterness in the cup of gall—Jesus has drained it dry! There is not a farthing to be added to the ransom price—Jesus has paid it all! Behold His fullness in the cry, "It is finished." And then, if you would see how He has reconciled us to Himself, behold Him, the Man who was made a curse for us, returning with a blessing to His Father and taking us with Him, as He draws us all up by that last dear word, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."—

"Now both the Surety and sinner are free."

Christ goes back to the Father, for, "It is finished," and you and I come to the Father through His perfect work!

I have only practiced two or three tunes that can be played upon this harp, but it is a wonderful instrument. If it is not a harp of ten strings, it is, at any rate, an instrument of seven strings, and neither time nor eternity shall ever be able to fetch all the music out of them! Those seven dying words of the ever-living Christ will make melody for us in Glory through all the ages of eternity.

I shall now ask your attention for a little time to the text itself—"Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

Do you see our Lord? He is dying and, as yet, His face is toward man. His last Word to man is the cry, "It is finished." Hear, all you sons of men, He speaks to you, "It is finished." Could you have a choicer Word with which He should say, "Adieu," to you in the hour of death? He tells you not to fear that His work is imperfect, not to tremble lest it should prove insufficient. He speaks to you and declares with His dying utterance, "It is

finished.” Now He has done with you and He turns His face the other way. His day's work is done, His more than Herculean toil is accomplished, and the great Champion is going back to His Father's Throne—and He speaks—but not to you. His last Word is addressed to His Father, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” These are His first Words in going Home to His Father, as, “It is finished,” is His last Word as, for a while, He quits our company. Think of these words and may they be your first words, too, when you return to your Father! May you speak thus to your Divine Father in the hour of death!

The words were much hackneyed in Romish times, but they are not spoilt even for that. They used to be said in the Latin by dying men, “*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.*” Every dying man used to try to say those words in Latin and if he did not, somebody tried to say them for him. They were made into a kind of spell of witchcraft—and so they lost that sweetness to our ears in the Latin—but in the English they shall always stand as the very essence of music for a dying saint, “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.”

It is very noteworthy that the last Words that our Lord used were quoted from the Scriptures. This sentence is taken, as I daresay most of you know, from the 31st Psalm, and the fifth verse. Let me read it to you. What a proof it is of how full Christ was of the Bible! He was not one of those who think little of the Word of God. He was saturated with it. He was as full of Scripture as the fleece of Gideon was full of dew. He could not speak, even in His death, without uttering Scripture. This is how David put it, “Into your hand I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth.” Now, Beloved, the Savior altered this passage, or else it would not quite have suited Him. Do you see, first, He was obliged, in order to fit it to His own case, to add something to it? What did He add to it? Why, that word, “Father”! David said, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit,” but Jesus said, “*Father*, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” Blessed advance! He knew more than David did, for He was more the Son of God than David could be. He was the Son of God in a very high and special sense by *eternal* filiation and so He begins the prayer with, “Father.”

But then He takes something away from it. It was necessary that He should do so, for David said, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me.” Our blessed Master was not redeemed, for *He was the Redeemer*, and He could have said, “Into Your hand I commit My spirit, for I have redeemed My people.” But that He did not choose to say. He simply took that part which suited Himself and used it as His own, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, you will not do better, after all, than to quote Scripture, especially in prayer! There are no prayers so good as those that are full of the Word of God! May all our speech be flavored with texts! I wish that it were more so. They laughed at our Puritan forefathers because the very names of their children were fetched out of passages of Scripture, but I, for my part, had much rather be laughed at for talking much of Scripture than for

talking much of trashy novels—novels with which (I am ashamed to say it) many a sermon nowadays is larded, yes, larded with novels that are not fit for decent men to read and which are coated over till one hardly knows whether he is hearing about a historical event, or only a piece of fiction—from which abomination, good Lord, deliver us!

So, then, you see how well the Savior used Scripture, and how, from His first battle with the devil in the wilderness till His last struggle with death on the Cross, His weapon was always, “It is written.” FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Now, I am coming to the text, itself, and I am going to preach from it for only a very short time. In doing so, firstly, *let us learn the doctrine of this last cry from the Cross*. Secondly, *let us practice the duty*. And thirdly, *let us enjoy the privilege*.

I. First, LET US LEARN THE DOCTRINE of our Lord's last cry from the Cross.

What is the Doctrine of this last Word of our Lord Jesus Christ? *God is His Father and God is our Father*. He who, Himself, said, “Father,” did not say for Himself, “Our Father,” for the Father is Christ's Father in a higher sense than He is ours. But yet He is not more truly the Father of Christ than He is our Father if we have believed in Jesus! “You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, “I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God, and your God.” Believe the Doctrine of the Fatherhood of God to His people! As I have warned you before, abhor the doctrine of the *universal fatherhood of God*, for it is a lie and a deep deception! It stabs at the heart, first, of the Doctrine of the Adoption which is taught in Scripture, for how can God adopt men if they are already all His children? In the second place, it stabs at the heart of the Doctrine of Regeneration, which is certainly taught in the Word of God. Now it is by regeneration and faith that we become the children of God, but how can that be if we are already the children of God? “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” How can God give to men the power to become His sons if they have it already? Believe not that lie of the devil, but believe this Truth of God, that Christ and all who are, by living faith in Christ, may rejoice in the Fatherhood of God!

Next learn this Doctrine, that *in this fact lies our chief comfort*. In our hour of trouble, in our time of warfare, let us say, “Father.” You notice that the first cry from the Cross is like the last—the highest note is like the lowest. Jesus begins with, “Father, forgive them,” and He finishes with, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” To help you in a stern duty like forgiveness, cry, “Father.” To help you in sore suffering and death, cry, “Father.” Your main strength lies in your truly being a child of God!

Learn the next Doctrine, that dying is going Home to our Father. I said to an old friend, not long ago, “Old Mr. So-and-so has gone Home.” I

meant that He was dead. He said, "Yes, where else would he go?" I thought that was a wise question. Where else would we go? When we grow gray, and our day's work is done, where should we go but home? So, when Christ has said, "It is finished," His next Word, of course, is, "Father." He has finished His earthly course and now He will go Home to Heaven. Just as a child runs to its mother's bosom when it is tired and wants to fall asleep, so Christ says, "Father," before He falls asleep in death.

Learn another Doctrine, that if God is our Father, and we regard ourselves as going Home when we die, because we go to Him, *then He will receive us*. There is no hint that we can commit our spirit to God and yet that God will not have us. Remember how Stephen, beneath a shower of stones, cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"? Let us, however we may die, make this our last emotion if not our last expression, "Father, receive my spirit." Shall not our heavenly Father receive His children? If you, being evil, receive your children at nightfall, when they come home to sleep, shall not your Father, who is in Heaven, receive you when your day's work is done? That is the doctrine we are to learn from this last cry from the Cross—the Fatherhood of God and all that comes of it to Believers.

II. Secondly, LET US PRACTICE THE DUTY.

That duty seems to me to be, first, *resignation*. Whenever anything distresses and alarms you, resign yourself to God. Say, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." Sing, with Faber—

***"I bow me to Your will, O God,
And all Your ways adore.
And every day I live I'll seek
To please You more and more."***

Learn, next, the duty of *prayer*. When you are in the very anguish of pain. When you are surrounded by bitter griefs of mind as well as of body, still pray. Drop not the, "Our Father." Let not your cries be addressed to the air. Let not your moans be to your physician, or your nurse, but cry, "Father." Does not a child so cry when it has lost its way? If it is in the dark at night, and it starts up in a lone room, does it not cry out, "Father!" And is not a father's heart touched by that cry? Is there anybody here who has never cried to God? Is there one here who has never said, "Father"? Then, my Father, put Your love into their hearts and make them say, tonight, "I will arise and go to my Father." You shall truly be known to be the sons of God if that cry is in your heart and on your lips.

The next duty is the *committal of ourselves to God by faith*. Give yourselves up to God. Trust yourselves with God. Every morning, when you get up, take yourself and put yourself into God's custody—lock yourself up, as it were, in the box of Divine Protection—and every night, when you have unlocked the box, before you fall asleep, lock it again and give the key into the hand of Him who is able to keep you when the image of death is on your face. Before you sleep, commit yourself to God. I mean, do that when there is nothing to frighten you, when everything is going smoothly, when the wind blows softly from the south and the boat is speeding to—

wards its desired haven—still make not yourself quiet with your own quieting! He who carves for himself will cut his fingers and get an empty plate. He who leaves God to carve for him shall often have fat things full of marrow placed before him. If you can trust, God will reward your trusting in a way that you know not as yet.

And then practice one other duty, that of *the personal and continual realization of God's Presence*. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." "You are here; I know that You are. I realize that You are here in the time of sorrow, and of danger; and I put myself into Your hands. Just as I would give myself to the protection of a policeman, or a soldier, if anyone attacked me, so do I commit myself to You, You unseen Guardian of the night, You unwearied Keeper of the day! You shall cover my head in the day of battle. Beneath Your wings will I trust, as a chick hides beneath the hen."

See, then, your duty. It is to resign yourself to God, pray to God, commit yourself to God and rest in a sense of the Presence of God. May the Spirit of God help you in the practice of such priceless duties as these!

III. Now, lastly, LET US ENJOY THE PRIVILEGE.

First, let us enjoy the high privilege of *resting in God in all times of danger and pain*. The doctor has just told you that you will have to undergo an operation. Say, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." There is every probability that that weakness of yours, or that disease of yours, will increase upon you and that, by-and-by, you will have to take to your bed and lie there, perhaps, for many a day. Then say, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." Do not fret, for that will not help you. Do not fear the future, for that will not aid you. Give yourself up (it is your *privilege* to do so) to the keeping of those dear hands that were pierced for you, to the love of that dear heart which was set abroach with the spear to purchase your redemption!

It is wonderful what rest of spirit God can give to a man or a woman in the very worst condition. Oh, how some of the martyrs have sung at the stake! How they have rejoiced when on the rack! Bonner's coal-hole, across the water there, at Fulham, where he shut up the martyrs, was a wretched place to lie on a cold winter's night, but they said, "They did rouse them in the straw, as they lay in the coal-hole, with the sweetest singing out of Heaven! And when Donner said, 'Fie on them that they should make such a noise!' they told him that he, too, would make such a noise if he was as happy as they were." When you have commended your spirit to God, then you have sweet rest in time of danger and pain!

The next privilege is that of a *brave confidence, in the time of death, or in the fear of death*. I was led to think over this text by using it a great many times last Thursday night. Perhaps none of you will ever forget last Thursday night. I do not think that I ever shall, if I live to be as old as Methuselah. From this place till I reached my home, it seemed one continued sheet of fire—and the further I went, the more vivid became the lightning flashes. But when I came, at last, to turn up Leigham Court Road, then the lightning seemed to come in very bars from the sky and, at last, as I

reached the top of the hill, and a crash came of the most startling kind, down poured a torrent of hail—hailstones that I will not attempt to describe, for you might think that I exaggerated! And then I felt, and my friend with me, that we could hardly expect to reach home alive. We were there at the very center and summit of the storm. All around us, on every side, and all within us, as it were, seemed nothing but the electric fluid—and God's right arm seemed bared for war. I felt then, "Well, now, I am very likely going Home," and I commended my spirit to God. And from that moment, though I cannot say that I took much pleasure in the peals of thunder, and the flashes of lightning, yet I felt quite as calm as I do here at this present moment—perhaps a little *more* calm than I do in the presence of so many people—happy at the thought that, within a single moment, I might understand more than all I could ever learn on earth and see in an instant more than I could hope to see if I lived here for a century! I could only say to my friend, "Let us commit ourselves to God. We know that we are doing our duty in going on as we are going, and all is well with us."

So we could only rejoice together in the prospect of being soon with God. We were not taken Home in the chariot of fire—we are still spared a little longer to go on with life's work—but I realize the sweetness of being able to have done with it all, to have no wish, no will, no word, scarcely a prayer, but just to take one's heart up and hand it over to the great Keeper, saying, "Father, take care of me. So let me live, so let me die. I have, henceforth, no desire about anything! Let it be as You please. Into Your hands I commend my spirit."

This privilege is not only that of having rest in danger, and confidence in the prospect of death—it is also full of consummate joy. Beloved, if we know how to commit ourselves into the hands of God, what a place it is for us to be in! What a place to be in—in the hands of God! There are the myriads of stars. There is the universe, itself! God's hand upholds its everlasting pillars and they do not fall. If we got into the hands of God, we get where all things rest and we get home and happiness! We have got out of the nothingness of the creature into the All-Sufficiency of the Creator. Oh, get you there! Hasten to get there, beloved Friends, and live, henceforth, in the hands of God!

"It is finished." You have not finished, but Christ has. It is all done. What you have to do will only be to work out what He has already finished for you, and show it to the sons of men in your lives. And because it is all finished, therefore say, "Now, Father, I return to You. My life, henceforth, shall be to be in You. My joy shall be to shrink to nothing in the Presence of the All-in-All, to die into the eternal life, to sink my ego into Jehovah, to let my manhood, my creature hood live only for its Creator and manifest only the Creator's Glory!

O Beloved, begin tomorrow morning and end tonight with, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." The Lord be with you all! Oh, if you have never prayed, God help you to begin to pray now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.
LUKE 23:27-49, MATTHEW 27:50-54.

Luke 23:27. *And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him.* Their best Friend, the Healer of their sick, the Lover of their children, was about to be put to death, so they might well bewail and lament.

28-30. *But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.* Our Savior spoke of the terrible siege of Jerusalem, the most tragic of all human transactions. I think I do not exaggerate when I say that history contains nothing equal to it. It stands alone in the unutterable agony of men, women and children in that dreadful time of suffering.

31. *For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* If the Christ of God is put to death even while the Jewish capital seems vigorous and flourishing, what shall be done when it is all dry and dead, and the Roman legions are round about the doomed city?

32. *And there were also two other malefactors, led with Him to be put to death.* Every item of scorn was added to our Savior's death and yet the Scriptures were thus literally fulfilled, for, "He was numbered with the transgressors."

33, 34. *And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots.* Do you bear the hammer fall? "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Do you see the bleeding hands and feet of Jesus? This is all that is extracted by that fearful pressure—nothing but words of pardoning love, a prayer for those who are killing Him—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

35. *And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is Christ, the chosen of God.* You know how mockery puts salt and vinegar into a wound. A man does not at any time like to be reviled, but when he is full of physical and mental anguish and his heart is heavy within him, then ridicule is peculiarly full of acid to him.

36, 37. *And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.* These rough soldiers knew how to put their jests in the most cruel shape and to press home their scoffs upon their suffering Victim.

38. *And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew.* These were the three languages that could be understood by all the people round about.

38. THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And so He is, and so He shall be. He has never quit the throne. The Son of David is still King of the Jews, though they continue to reject Him. But the day shall come when they shall recognize and receive the Messiah. "Then shall they look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for His only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for His first-born."

39. *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If you are Christ, save Yourself and us.* Matthew and Mark speak of both the thieves as railing at Jesus. We must take their expressions as being literally correct and, if so, both the malefactors *at first* cast reproaches in Christ's teeth.

40, 41. *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss.* Not only has He done nothing worthy of death, but He has done nothing improper, nothing out of place. "This man has done nothing amiss." The thief bears testimony to the perfect Character of this wondrous Man, whom he, nevertheless, recognized to be Divine, as we shall see in the next verse.

42-47. *And He said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, He glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man.* He was set there at the head of the guard, to watch the execution, and he could not help saying, as he observed the wonderful signs in Heaven and earth, "Certainly this was a righteous Man."

48. *And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.* What a change must have come over that ribald crowd! They had shouted, "Crucify Him!" They had stood there and mocked Him and now they are overcome with the sight, and they strike their breasts. Ah, dear Friends, their grief did not come to much! Men may strike their breasts, but unless *God* smites their *hearts*, all the outward signs of a gracious work will come to nothing at all.

49. *And all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.* Let "these things" be before your mind's eye this evening and think much of your crucified Lord, all you who are of His acquaintance, and who are numbered among His followers.

(As the Exposition is shorter than usual, an appropriate extract is added from Mr. Spurgeon's Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew).

Matthew 27:50. *Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.* Christ's strength was not exhausted. His last Word was uttered with a loud voice, like the shout of a conquering warrior! And what a Word it was, "It is finished"! Thousands of sermons have been preached upon that little sentence, but who can tell all the meaning that lies compacted within it? It is a kind of infinite expression for breadth, depth, length and height altogether immeasurable! Christ's life being finished, perfected, completed, He yielded up the ghost, willingly dying, laying down His life as He said He would—"I lay down My life for My sheep. I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

51-53. *And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.* Christ's death was the end of Judaism! The veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. As if shocked at the sacrilegious murder of her Lord, the Temple rent her garments, like one stricken with horror at some stupendous crime! The body of Christ being rent, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to bottom. Now was there an entrance made into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, and a way of access to God was opened for every sinner who trusted in Christ's atoning Sacrifice.

See what marvels accompanied and followed the death of Christ! The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened. Thus did the material world pay homage to Him whom man had rejected, while Nature's convulsions foretold what will happen when Christ's voice once more shakes not the earth, only, but also Heaven! These first miracles worked in connection with the death of Christ were typical of spiritual wonders that will be continued till He comes again—rocky hearts are rent, graves of sin are opened, those who have been dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in sepulchers of lust and evil, are quickened and come out from among the dead, and go unto the holy city, the New Jerusalem!

54. *Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.* These Roman soldiers had never witnessed such scenes in connection with an execution, before, and they could only come to one conclusion about the illustrious Prisoner whom they had put to death—"Truly this was the Son of God." It was strange that those men should confess what the chief priests and scribes and elders denied, yet since their day it has often happened that the most abandoned and profane have acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God while their religious rulers have denied His Divinity.

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THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS NO. 2644

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 25, 1882.

*“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost.”
Luke 23:46.*

*“Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth.”
Psalm 31:5.*

*“And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and asking, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”
Acts 7:59.*

THIS morning, dear Friends, I spoke upon the first recorded words of our Lord Jesus [Sermon #1666, Volume 28—*The First Recorded Words of Jesus*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] when He said to His mother and to Joseph, “How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” Now, by the help of the blessed Spirit, we will consider the last words of our Lord Jesus before He gave up the ghost. And with them we will examine two other passages in which similar expressions are used.

The words, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit,” if we judge them to be the last which our Savior uttered before His death, ought to be coupled with those other words, “It is finished,” which some have thought were actually the last He used. I think it was not so, but, anyway, these utterances must have followed each other very quickly and we may blend them together. And then we shall see how very similar they are to His first words as we explained them this morning. There is the cry, “It is finished,” which you may read in connection with our Authorized Version—“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” That business was all finished—He had been about it all His life and now that He had come to the end of His days, there was nothing left undone—and He could say to His Father, “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.”

Then if you take the other utterance of our Lord on the Cross, “Father, into your hands I commend My spirit,” see how well it agrees with the other reading of our morning text, “Did you not know that I must be in My Father’s house?” Jesus is putting Himself into the Father’s hands because He had always desired to be there, in the Father’s house with the Father. And now He is committing His spirit, as a sacred trust, into the

Father's hands that He may depart to be with the Father, to abide in His house, and go no more out forever.

Christ's life is all of a piece, just as the alpha and the omega are letters of the same alphabet. You do not find Him one thing at the first, another thing afterwards, and a third thing still later—He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." There is a wondrous similarity about everything that Christ said and did. You never need write the name, "Jesus," under any of His sayings as you have to put the names of human writers under their sayings, for there is no mistaking any sentence that He has uttered!

If there is anything recorded as having been done by Christ, a believing child can judge whether it is authentic or not. Those miserable false gospels that were brought out did very little, if any mischief, because nobody with any true spiritual discernment was ever duped into believing them to be genuine! It is possible to manufacture a spurious coin which will, for a time, pass for a good one, but it is not possible to make even a passable imitation of what Jesus Christ has said and done! Everything about Christ is like Himself—there is a Christ-likeness about it which cannot be mistaken! This morning, for instance, when I preached about the Holy Child Jesus, I am sure you must have felt that there was never another child as He was. And in His death He was as unique as in His birth, childhood and life. There was never another who died as He did and there was never another who lived altogether as He did. Our Lord Jesus Christ stands by Himself! Some of us try to imitate Him, but how feebly do we follow in His steps! The Christ of God still stands by Himself and He has no rival!

I have already intimated to you that I am going to have three texts for my sermon, but when I have spoken upon all three of them, you will see that they are so much alike that I might have been content with one of them.

I. I invite you first to consider OUR SAVIOR'S WORDS JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

Here observe, first, *how Christ lives and passes away in the atmosphere of the Word of God.* Christ was a grand original thinker and He might always have given us words of His own. He never lacked suitable language, for, "never man spoke like this Man." Yet you must have noticed how continually He quoted Scripture—the great majority of His expressions may be traced to the Old Testament. Even where they are not exact quotations, His words drop into Scriptural shape and form! You can see that the Bible has been His one Book. He is evidently familiar with it from the first page to the last and not with its letter, only, but with the innermost soul of its most secret sense and, therefore, when dying, it seemed but natural for Him to use a passage from a Psalm of David as His expiring words. In His death, He was not driven beyond the power of quiet thought—He was not unconscious, He did not die of weakness—He was strong even while He was dying! It is true that He said, "I thirst," but, after He had been a little refreshed, He cried with a loud voice, as only a strong man could, "It is finished!" And now, before He bows His head in the silence of death, He utters His final words, "Fa-

ther, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” Our Lord might, I say again, have made an original speech as His dying declaration. His mind was clear, calm, and undisturbed—in fact, He was perfectly happy, for He had said, “It is finished!” So His sufferings were over and He was already beginning to enjoy a taste of the sweets of victory. Yet, with all that clearness of mind, freshness of intellect and fluency of words that might have been possible to Him, He did not invent a new sentence, but He went to the Book of Psalms and took from the Holy Spirit this expression, “Into Your hands I commend My spirit.”

How instructive to us is this great Truth of God that the Incarnate Word lived on the Inspired Word! It was food to Him, as it is to us and, Brothers and Sisters, if Christ thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? He, in some respects, did not need this Book as much as we do. The Spirit of God rested upon Him without measure, yet He loved the Scripture and He went to it, studied it and used its expressions continually. Oh, that you and I might get into the very heart of the Word of God and get that Word into ourselves! As I have seen the silkworm eat into the leaf and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord—not crawl over its surface, but eat right into it till we have taken it into our inmost parts! It is idle to merely let the eyes glance over the Words, or to remember the poetical expressions, or the historic facts—but it is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language and your very style is fashioned upon Scripture models—and, what is still better, your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord!

I would quote John Bunyan as an instance of what I mean. Read anything of his and you will see that it is almost like reading the Bible itself. He had studied our Authorized Version, which will never be bettered, as I judge, till Christ shall come. He had read it till his very soul was saturated with Scripture and though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his *Pilgrim’s Progress*—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, “Why, this man is a living Bible!” Prick him anywhere—his blood is Biline—the very essence of the Bible flows from him! He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God. I commend His example to you, Beloved and, still more, the example of our Lord Jesus! If the Spirit of God is in you, He will make you love the Word of God and, if any of you imagine that the Spirit of God will lead you to dispense with the Bible, you are under the influence of another spirit which is not the Spirit of God at all! I trust that the Holy Spirit will endear to you every page of this Divine Record so that you will feed upon it and, afterwards, speak it out to others. I think it is well worthy of your constant remembrance that, even in death, our blessed Master showed the ruling passion of His spirit so that His last words were a quotation from Scripture.

Now notice, secondly, *that our Lord, in the moment of His death, recognized a personal God.* “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” God is to some men an unknown God. “There may be a God,” so they say, but they get no nearer the truth than that. “All things are God,” says another. “We cannot be sure that there is a God,” say others, “and, there-

fore, it is no use our pretending to believe in Him and so to be, possibly, influenced by a supposition." Some people say, "Oh, certainly, there is a God, but He is very far off! He does not come near to us and we cannot imagine that He will interfere in our affairs." Ah, but our blessed Lord Jesus Christ believed in no such impersonal, pantheistic, dreamy, far-off God, but in One to whom He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." His language shows that He realized the Personality of God as much as I would recognize the personality of a banker if I said to him, "Sir, I commit that money into your hands." I know that I should not say such a thing as that to a mere dummy, or to an abstract something or nothing—but I would say it to a living man and I would say it only to a living man.

So, Beloved, men do not commit their souls into the keeping of impalpable nothings! They do not, in death, smile as they resign themselves to the infinite unknown, the cloudy "Father of everything," who may be nothing or everything. No, no, we only trust what we know! And so Jesus knew the Father, and knew Him to be a real Person having hands—and into those hands He commended His departing spirit. I am not now speaking materially, mark you, as though God had hands like ours, but He is an actual Being, who has powers of action, who is able to deal with men as He pleases and who is willing to take possession of their spirits and to protect them forever and ever. Jesus speaks like one who believed that and I pray that, both in life and in death, you and I may always deal with God in the same way. We have far too much fiction in religion—and a religion of fiction will bring only fictitious comfort in the dying hour. Come to solid facts! Is God as real to you as you are to yourself? Come now, do you speak with Him, "as a man speaks unto his friend"? Can you trust Him and rely upon Him as you trust and rely upon the partner of your bosom? If your God is unreal, your religion is unreal! If your God is a dream, your hope will be a dream and woe be unto you when you shall wake up out of it!

It was not so that Jesus trusted. "Father," He said, "into Your hands I commend My spirit."

But, thirdly, here is a still better point. Observe how *Jesus Christ here brings out the Fatherhood of God*. The Psalm from which He quoted did not say, "Father." David did not get as far as that in words, though in *spirit* he often did. But Jesus had the right to alter the Psalmist's words. He can improve on Scripture, though you and I cannot. He did not say, "O God, into Your hands I commend My spirit." He said, "Father." Oh, that sweet word! That was the gem of our thought, this morning, that Jesus said, "Did you not know that I must be at My Father's—that I must be in My Father's house!" Oh, yes, the Holy Child knew that He was especially and, in a peculiar sense, the Son of the Highest, and therefore He said, "My Father." And, in dying, His expiring heart was buoyed up and comforted with the thought that God was His Father. It was because He said that God was His Father that they put Him to death, yet He still stood to it even in His dying hour and said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit"!

What a blessed thing it is for us, also, my Brothers and Sisters, to die conscious that we are children of God! Oh, how sweet, in life and in death, to feel in our soul the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father"! In such a case as that—

"It is not death to die."

Quoting the Savior's words, "It is finished," and relying upon His Father and our Father, we may go even into the jaws of death without the "quivering lips" of which we sang just now. Joyful, with all the strength we have, our lips may confidently sing, challenging death and the grave to silence our ever-rising and swelling music! O my Father, my Father, if I am in your hands, I may die without fear!

There is another thought, however, which is perhaps the best one of all. From this passage we learn that our *Divine Lord cheerfully rendered up His soul to His Father when the time had come for Him to die*. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." None of us can, with strict propriety, use these words. When we come to die, we may perhaps utter them and God will accept them—these were the very death-words of Polycarp, Bernard, Luther, Melancthon, Jerome of Prague, John Huss and an almost endless list of saints—"Into Your hands I commend my spirit." The Old Testament rendering of the passage, or else our Lord's version of it, has been turned into a Latin prayer and commonly used among Romanists almost as a *charm*—they have repeated the Latin words when dying, or, if they were unable to do so, the priest repeated the words for them, attaching a sort of magical power to that particular formula! But, in the sense in which our Savior uttered these words, we cannot, any of us, fully use them. We can commit or commend our spirit to God, but yet, Brothers and Sisters, remember that unless the Lord comes first, we *must die*—and dying is *not* an *act* on our part. We have to be passive in the process because it is no longer in our power to retain our life. I suppose that if a man could have such control of his life, it might be questionable when he would surrender it because suicide is a crime and no man can be required to kill himself. God does not demand such action as that at any man's hands and, in a certain sense, that is what would happen whenever a man yielded himself to death.

But there was no necessity for our blessed Lord and Master to die except the necessity which He had taken upon Himself in becoming the Substitute for His people! There was no necessity for His death even at the last moment upon the Cross, for, as I have reminded you, He cried with a loud voice when natural weakness would have compelled Him to whisper or to sigh. But His life was strong within Him—if He had willed to do so, He could have unloosed the nails and come down into the midst of the crowd that stood mocking Him! He died of His own free will, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." A man may righteously surrender his life for the good of his country and for the safety of others. There have frequently been opportunities for men to do this and there have been brave fellows who have worthily done it. But all those men would have had to die at some time or other. They were only slightly anticipating the payment of the debt of nature. But, in our Lord's case, He was rendering up to the Father the spirit which He might have kept if

He had chosen to do so. “No man takes it from Me,” He said concerning His life. “I lay it down of Myself.”

And there is here a cheerful *willingness* to yield up His spirit into His Father’s hands! It is rather remarkable that none of the Evangelists describe our Lord as *dying*. He did die, but they all speak of Him as giving up the ghost—surrendering to God His spirit. You and I passively die, but He actively yielded up His spirit to His Father. In His case, death *was an act* and He performed that act from the glorious motive of redeeming us from death and Hell! So, in this sense, Christ stands alone in His death.

But, oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot render up our spirit as He did, yet, when our life is taken from us, let us be perfectly ready to give it up! May God bring us into such a state of mind and heart that there shall be no struggling to keep our life, but a sweet willingness to let it be just as God would have it—a yielding up of everything into His hands, feeling sure that, in the world of spirits, our soul shall be quite safe in the Father’s hands and that, until the Resurrection Day, the life-germ of the body will be securely in His keeping, and certain that when the trumpet shall sound, spirit, soul and body—that trinity of our manhood—shall be reunited in the absolute perfection of our being to behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off! When God calls us to die, it will be a sweet way of dying if we can, like our Lord, pass away with a text of Scripture upon our lips, with a personal God ready to receive us, with that God recognized distinctly as our Father and so die joyously, resigning our will entirely to the sweet will of the ever-blessed One, and saying, “It is the Lord.” “My Father.” “Let Him do as seems good to Him.”

II. My second text is in the 31st Psalm, at the 5th verse. And it is evidently the passage which our Savior had in His mind just then “Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth.” It seems to me that **THESE ARE WORDS TO BE USED IN LIFE**, for this Psalm is not so much concerning the Believer’s death as concerning his life.

Is it not very amazing, dear Friends, that the words which Jesus uttered on the Cross you may still continue to use? You may catch up their echo and not only when you come to die, but tonight, tomorrow morning and as long as you are alive, you may still repeat the text the Master quoted, and say, “Into Your hands I commit my spirit.”

That is to say, first, *let us cheerfully entrust our souls to God* and feel that they are quite safe in His hands. Our spirit is the noblest part of our being; our body is only the husk, our spirit is the living kernel, so let us put it into God’s keeping. Some of you have never yet done that, so I invite you to do it now. It is the act of faith which saves the soul, that act which a man performs when he says, “I trust myself to God as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus. I cannot keep myself, but He can keep me and, by the precious blood of Christ He can cleanse me. So I just take my spirit and give it over into the great Father’s hands.” You never really live till you do that! All that comes before that act of full surrender is death! But when you have once trusted Christ, then you have truly begun to

live. And every day, as long as you live, take care that you repeat this process and cheerfully leave yourselves in God's hands without any reserve. That is to say, give yourself up to God—your body, to be healthy or to be sick, to be long-lived or to be suddenly cut off. Your soul and spirit, give them, also, up to God, to be made happy or to be made sad, just as He pleases. Give Your whole self up to Him and say to Him, "My Father, make me rich or make me poor, give me sight or make me blind. Let me have all my senses or take them away. Make me famous or leave me to be obscure. I give myself up to You—into Your hands I commit my spirit. I will no longer exercise my own choice, but You shall choose My inheritance for me. My times are in Your hands."

Now, dear children of God, are you always doing this? Have you *ever* done it? I am afraid that there are some, even among Christ's professing followers, who kick against God's will and even when they say to God, "Your will be done," they spoil it by adding, in their own mind, "and my will, too." They pray, "Lord, make my will Your will," instead of saying, "Make Your will my will." Let us each one pray this prayer every day, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." I like, at family prayer, to put myself and all that I have into God's hands in the morning—and then, at night, to just look between His hands and see how safe I have been. And then to say to Him, "Lord, shut me up again tonight! Take care of me all through the night watches. 'Into Your hands I commit my spirit.'"

Notice, dear Friends, that our second text has these words at the end of it—"You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." Is not that a good reason for giving yourself up entirely to God? Christ has redeemed you and, therefore, you belong to Him. If I am a redeemed man and I ask God to take care of me, I am but asking the King to take care of one of His own jewels—a jewel that cost Him the blood of His heart!

And I may still more especially expect that He will do so, because of the title which is here given to Him—"You have redeemed me, *O Lord God of Truth.*" Would He be the God of Truth if He began with redemption and ended with destruction—if He began by giving His Son to die for us and then kept back other mercies which we daily need to bring us to Heaven? No, the gift of His Son is the pledge that He will save His people from their sins and bring them home to Glory—and He will do it. So, every day, go to Him with this declaration, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." No, not only every day, but all through the day! Does a horse run away with you? Then you cannot do better than say, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." And if the horse does not run away with you, you cannot do better than say the same words! Have you to go into a house where there is fever? I mean, is it your *duty* to go there? Then go saying, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I would advise you to do this every time you walk down the street, or even while you sit in your own house.

Dr. Gill, my famous predecessor, spent very much time in his study and, one day, somebody said to him, "Well, at any rate, the studious man is safe from most of the accidents of life." It so happened that one morning, when the good man left his familiar armchair for a little while, there came a gale of wind that blew down a stack of chimneys which crashed

through the roof and fell right into the place where he would have been sitting if the Providence of God had not just then drawn him away! And he said, "I see that we need Divine Providence to care for us in our studies just as much as in the streets." "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I have often noticed that if any of our friends get into accidents and troubles, it is usually when they are away for a holiday. It is a curious thing, but I have often remarked about it. They go out for their health and come home sick! They leave us with all their limbs whole and return to us crippled! Therefore we must pray God to take special care of friends in the country or by the sea—and we must commit ourselves to His hands wherever we may be. If we had to go into a leper colony, we would certainly ask God to protect us from the deadly leprosy. But we ought to equally seek the Lord's protection while dwelling in the healthiest place or in our own homes!

David said to the Lord, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." But let me beg you to add that word which our Lord inserted—"Father." David is often a good guide for us, but David's Lord is far better. And if we follow Him, we shall improve upon David. So, let us each say, "Father, Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." That is a sweet way of living every day—committing everything to our Heavenly Father's hands, for those hands can do His child no unkindness. "Father, I might not be able to trust Your angels, but I can trust You." The Psalmist does not say, "Into the hand of Providence I commit my spirit." Do you notice how men try to get rid of God by saying, "Providence did this," and, "Providence did that," and, "Providence did the other"? If you ask them, "What is Providence?"—they will probably reply, "Well, Providence is Providence." That is all they can say.

There is many a man who talks very confidently about reverencing nature, obeying the laws of nature, noting the powers of nature and so on. Step up to that eloquent lecturer and say to him, "Will you kindly explain to me what nature is?" He answers, "Why, nature—well, it is—nature." Just so, Sir, but, what is nature? And he says, "Well—well—it is nature." And that is all you will get out of him. Now, I believe in nature and I believe in Providence, but at the back of everything, I believe in God, and in the God who has hands—not in an idol that has no hands and can do nothing—but in the God to whom I can say, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I rejoice that I am able to put myself there, for I feel absolutely safe in trusting myself to Your keeping." So live, Beloved, and you shall live safely, happily and you shall have hope in your life, and hope in your death!

III. My third text will not detain us many minutes. It is intended to explain to us THE USE OF OUR SAVIOR'S DYING WORDS FOR OURSELVES. Turn to the account of the death of Stephen, in the 7th chapter of Acts, at the 59th verse, and you will see, there, how far a man of God may dare to go in his last moments in quoting from David and from the Lord Jesus Christ. "And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." So here is a text for us to use when we come to die—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." I have explained to you that, strictly, we can hardly talk of yielding up our spirit,

but we may speak of Christ *receiving* it and say with Stephen, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

What does this prayer mean? I must just hurriedly give you two or three thoughts concerning it and so close my discourse. I think this prayer means that, *if we can die as Stephen did, we shall die with a certainty of immortality*. Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” He did not say, “I am afraid my poor spirit is going to die.” No, the spirit is something which still exists after death, something which Christ can receive and, therefore, Stephen asks Him to receive it! You and I are not going upstairs to die as if we were only like cats and dogs—we go up there to die like immortal beings who fall asleep on earth and open our eyes in Heaven! Then, at the sound of the archangel’s trumpet, our very body is to rise to dwell, again, with our spirit—we have not any question about this matter! I think I have told you what an infidel once said to a Christian man, “Some of you Christians have great fear in dying because you believe that there is another state to follow this one. I have not the slightest fear, for I believe that I shall be annihilated and, therefore, all fear of death is gone from me.” “Yes,” said the Christian, “and in that respect you seem to me to be on equal terms with that bull grazing over there, which, like yourself, is free from any fear of death. Pray, Sir, let me ask you a simple question. Have you any *hope*?” “Hope, Sir? *Hope*, Sir? No, I have no hope! Of course I have no hope, Sir.” “Ah, then!” replied the other, “despite the fears that sometimes come over feeble Believers, they have a hope which they would not and could not give up.” And that hope is that our spirit—even that spirit which we commit into Jesus Christ’s hands—shall be “forever with the Lord.”

The next thought is that, *to a man who can die as Stephen did, there is a certainty that Christ is near*—so near that the man speaks to Him and says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” In Stephen’s case, the Lord Jesus was so near that the martyr could see Him, for he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Many dying saints have borne a similar testimony. It is no strange thing for us to hear them say, before they die, that they could see within the pearly gates and they have told us this with such evident truthfulness, and with such rapture, or sometimes so calmly—in such a businesslike tone of voice—we were sure that they were neither deceived nor speaking falsehood. They spoke what they knew to be true, for Jesus was there with them! Yes, Beloved, before you can call your children around your deathbed, Jesus will already be there! And into His hands you may commit your spirit.

Moreover, *there is a certainty that we are quite safe in His hands*. Wherever else we are insecure, if we ask Him to receive our spirit, and He receives it, who can hurt us? Who can pluck us out of His hands? Awaken, Death and hail! Come forth, all you powers of darkness! What can you do when once a spirit is in the hands of the Omnipotent Redeemer? We will be safe there!

Then there is the other certainty, *that He is quite willing to take us into His hands*. Let us put ourselves into His hands now—and then we need not be ashamed to repeat the operation every day and we may be sure

that we shall not be rejected at the last. I have often told you of the good old woman who was dying and to whom someone said, "Are you not afraid to die?" "Oh, no," she replied, "there is nothing at all to fear. I have dipped my foot in the river of death every morning before I have had my breakfast, and I am not afraid to die now." You remember that dear saint who died in the night, and who had left written on a piece of paper by her bedside these lines which, before she fell asleep, she felt strong enough to pencil down?—

***"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these garments of clay—
To die in the Lord, is a Covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to Glory thro' death led the way."***

It was well that she could say it—and may we be able to say the same whenever the Master calls us to go up higher! I want, dear Friends, that we should, all of us, have as much willingness to depart as if it were a matter of will with us! Blessed be God it is not left to our choice—it is not left to our will when we shall die. God has appointed that day and ten thousand devils cannot consign us to the grave before our time! We shall not die till God decrees it—

***"Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He please I cannot die!
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."***

But let us be just as willing to depart as if it were really a matter of choice, for, wisely, carefully, coolly consider that if it were left to us, we should none of us be wise if we did not choose to go! Apart from the coming of our Lord, the most miserable thing that I know of would be a suspicion that we might not die. Do you know what quaint old Rowland Hill used to say when he found himself getting very old? He said, "Surely they must be forgetting me up there." And every now and then, when some dear old saint was dying, he would say, "When you get to Heaven, give my love to John Berridge, and John Bunyan and ever so many more of the good Johns, and tell them I hope they will see poor old Rowley up there before long." Well, there was common sense in that wishing to get Home, longing to be with God. To be with Christ is far better than to be here!

Sobriety itself would make us choose to die! Well, then, do not let us run back and become utterly unwilling and struggle and strive and fret and fume over it. When I hear of Believers who do not like to talk about death, I am afraid concerning them. It is greatly wise to be familiar with our resting place. When I went, recently, to the cemetery at Norwood, to lay the body of our dear Brother Perkins there for a little while, I felt that it was a healthy thing for me to stand at the grave's brink and to walk amid that forest of memorials of the dead, for this is where I, too, must go. You living men, come and view the ground where you must shortly lie and, as it must be so, let us who are Believers welcome it!

But, what if you are not Believers? Ah, that is another matter altogether! If you have not believed in Christ, you may well be afraid even to rest on the seat where you are sitting! I wonder that the earth itself does not say, "O God, I will not hold this wretched sinner up any longer! Let

me open my mouth and swallow him!" All nature must hate the man who hates God! Surely, all things must loathe to minister to the life of a man who does not live unto God. Oh that you would seek the Lord and trust Christ and find eternal life! If you have done so, do not be afraid to go forth to live, or to die, just as God pleases.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 15:1-8.**

Verse 1. *I am the true vine.* Now we know where to find the true Church. It is to be found only in Christ and in those who are joined to Him in mystical but real union. "I am the true vine."

1. *And My Father is the vinedresser.* Now we know who is the true Guardian of the Church. Not the so-called "holy father" at Rome, but that Father above, who is the true Guardian, Ruler, Keeper, Preserver, Purifier, Vinedresser of the one Church, the vine!

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* There are many such branches, in Christ's visible Church which are not fruit-bearing branches and, consequently, are not partakers of the sap of life and Grace which flows into the branches that are vitally joined to the central stem. These fruitless branches are to be taken away.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* There is some work, then, for the knife upon all the branches—cutting off for those that are fruitless—cutting for those that are bearing some fruit that they may bring forth yet more.

3. *Now you are clean [purged] through the word which I have spoken unto you.* The Word is often the knife with which the great Vinedresser prunes the vine. And, Brothers and Sisters, if we were more willing to feel the edge of the Word, and to let it cut away even something that may be very dear to us, we would not need so much pruning by affliction. It is because that first knife does not always produce the desired result that another sharp tool is used by which we are effectually pruned.

4. *Abide in Me, and I in you.* "Do not merely find a temporary shelter in Me, as a ship runs into harbor in stormy weather and then comes out again when the gale is over, but cast anchor in Me, as the vessel does when it reaches its desired haven. Be not as branches that are tied on and so can be taken off, but be livingly joined to Me. 'Abide in Me.'"

4. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.* You must bear fruit, or else be cast away, but you cannot bear any fruit except by real union and constant communion with Jesus Christ your Lord!

5. *I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing.* Not merely will you do very little, but you can do nothing at all if you are severed from Christ! You are absolutely and entirely dependent upon Christ, both for your life and for your fruit-bearing. Do we not wish to have it so, Beloved? It is the incipient principle of apostasy when a man wishes to be independent of Christ in any degree—when he says, "Give me the portion of goods that falls to me that I may have something in

hand, some spending money of my own.” No, you must, from day to day, from hour to hour and even from moment to moment, derive life, light, love, everything that is good from Christ! What a blessing that it is so!

6. *If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* There is a sad future in store for tares, according to another parable, but, somehow, there is a much sadder lot reserved for those that were, in some sense, branches of the vine—those who made a profession of faith in Christ, though they were never vitally united to Him. Those who, for a while, did run well, yet were hindered. What was it that hindered them that they should not obey the Truth of God? Oh, it is sad, indeed, that any should have had any sort of connection with that Divine Stem and yet should be cast into the fire!

7. *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.* Do not think that all men can pray alike effectually, for it is not so. There are some whom God will hear and some whom God will not hear. And there are some even of His own children whom He will hear in things absolutely vital and essential, to whom He never gave carte blanche after this fashion. “You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” No, if you will not hear God’s words, He will not hear yours! And if His words do not abide in you, your words shall not have power with Him. They may be directed to Heaven, but the Lord will not listen to them so as to have regard to them. Oh, it needs very tender walking for one who would be mighty in prayer! You shall find that those who have had their will at the Throne of Grace are men who have done God’s will in other places—it must be so. The greatest favorite at court will have a double portion of the jealousy of his monarch, and he must be especially careful that he orders his steps aright, or else the king will not continue to favor him as he was known to do. There is a sacred discipline in Christ’s house, a part of which consists in this, that, as our obedience to our God declines, so will our power in prayer decrease at the same time.

8. *Herein is My Father glorified, that he bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.* If we are His true disciples, we also shall bring forth much fruit.

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

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

THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST

NO. 3178

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1909,

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“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.”
Luke 3:21, 22.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”
Luke 6:12, 13.

“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.”
Luke 9:28, 29.

“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.”
Matthew 14:23-25.

“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me.”
John 11:41, 42.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.”
Luke 22:31, 32.

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.”
Luke 23:46.

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preach-

er, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spoke like this Man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to *preach*, but we are told that, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior's life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the *preparatory prayers of Christ*—the prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all times—and yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual service—we shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22—"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying," (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faith—about to take up the soldier's life under the great Captain of our salvation—about to start out as pilgrims to Zion's city—I say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is

about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, “the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.” There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore *audible testimony to Christ*. And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christ’s prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Father—and if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your life—you must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, “Behold, he prays,” before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.”

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, “in a bodily shape like a dove,” to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! “Draw near

to God, and He will draw near to you,” not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayer—more power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Savior’s preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication *on our part in similar circumstances*. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayer—and so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirit’s blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13—“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14—SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, “I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them.” He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of God—but being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutes—but His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest

in heart and holy in life—and that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap it—as long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Father's ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Father's authority and the Spirit's power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the session—or an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one another—but when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with God's blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Savior's example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination—

***“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”***

When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satan's long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 dis-

ciples did when they returned to Him with joy, “Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!”

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29—“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” You see that it was *as He prayed that He was transfigured.*

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayer—only there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabor’s top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grass—but when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pastures—and get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Life—but that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORD’S PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25—“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.” He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and

then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of God's blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, "He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a man's hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42—"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me." He did not cry, "Lazarus, come forth," so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until *first* He had prayed, "My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead," and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETER'S FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34—

PETER'S RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34—PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter *before he was tempted*. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mind—and He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may *not* fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

“But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purse-proud.” Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not be—and do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

“Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him.” Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel—we do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgments—and let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him right—go and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts' hearts—and that pens need sharpening every now and then—but even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than

before! Do so, dear Friends—do not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORD'S PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." [See Sermons #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His people's Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, "He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem" and, in due time, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of John's Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayer—an example well worthy of His people's imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physically—you will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourself—body, soul and spirit—into His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumption—pray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordan's swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Cross—and pray even as He did—"Not my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconverted—who have imagined that prayer is the way to Heaven—yet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that *a saved man does is to pray*—and the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write—

***“Prayer is the contrite sinner’s voice,
Returning from his ways
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, ‘Behold, he prays!’
Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air!
His watchword at the gates of death
He enters Heaven with prayer!”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:1-14.**

Verse 1. *And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43—WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] An old writer says that many of Christ’s parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by it—“that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” And this is the parable.

2. *Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man.* It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear God—where they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this land—God grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. *And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.* She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. *And he would not for a while.* He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.

4, 5. *But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.* She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kind—but the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon him—for he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God,

nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted it—and though he was but little troubled about it—he said, “that I may not be worried to death by this woman’s continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary.”

6, 7. *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?* [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6—PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He is no unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose His people from eternity! “Shall not God avenge His own elect?” Yes, that He will—only let them persevere in prayer and “cry day and night unto Him.”

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* [See Sermon #1963, Volume 33—THE SEARCH FOR FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find it—although if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. *And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* It seems as if these two things went together—as our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes down—the scales seem to work that way.

10. *Two men went up into the Temple to pray.* [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41—THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in *these days*—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. *The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.* It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocrite—and if what he said was true—there was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer—but what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Temple—“or even as this publican.” What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in God’s sight!

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off*—Just on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* [See Sermon #1949, Volume 33—A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That was *all* prayer—it was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, “a sinner.” He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publican’s prayer, it is, “God be propitious to me,” that is, “be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice.” And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayer—while the Pharisee’s boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. *I tell you, this man*—This publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee did—this man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, “this man”—

14. *Went down to his house justified rather than the other.* He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justification—he had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46—TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

14. *For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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

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

MOURNING AT THE SIGHT OF THE CRUCIFIED NO. 860

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 14, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things
which were done, smote their breasts and returned.”
Luke 23:48.***

MANY in that crowd came together to behold the crucifixion of Jesus, in a condition of the most furious malice. They had hounded the Savior as dogs pursue a stag and at last, all mad with rage, they hemmed Him in for death. Others, willing enough to spend an idle hour and to gaze upon a sensational spectacle, swelled the mob until a vast assembly congregated around the little hill upon which the three crosses were raised. There unanimously, whether of malice or of wantonness, they all joined in mockery of the Victim who hung upon the center Cross. Some thrust out their tongue. Some wagged their heads. Others scoffed and jeered—some taunted Him in words and others in signs—but all alike exulted over the defenseless man who was given as a prey to their teeth.

Earth never beheld a scene in which so much unrestrained derision and expressive contempt were poured upon one man so unanimously and for so long a time. It must have been hideous to the last degree to have seen so many grinning faces and mocking eyes and to have heard so many cruel words and scornful shouts. The spectacle was too detestable to be long endured of Heaven. Suddenly the sun, shocked at the scene, veiled his face and for three long hours the ribald crew sat shivering in midday midnight.

Meanwhile the earth trembled beneath their feet. The rocks were split and the temple, in superstitious defense of whose perpetuity they had committed the murder of the Just, had its holy veil torn as though by strong invisible hands. The news of this and the feeling of horror produced by the darkness and the earth tremor caused a revulsion of feelings. There were no more gibes and jests. No more thrusting out of tongues and cruel mockeries—they went their way solitary and alone to their homes, or in little silent groups, while each man after the manner of Orientals when struck with sudden urge, smote upon his breast.

Far different was the procession to the gates of Jerusalem from that march of madness which had come out. Observe the power which God has over human minds! See how He can tame the wildest and make the most malicious and proud to cower down at His feet when He does but manifest Himself in the wonders of Nature! How much more cowed and terrified will they be when He makes bare His arm and comes forth in the judgments of His wrath to deal with them according to their deeds! This

sudden and memorable change in so vast a multitude is the apt representative of two other remarkable mental changes. How like it is to the gracious transformation which a sight of the Cross has often worked most blessedly in the hearts of men!

Many have come under the sound of the Gospel resolved to scoff, but they have returned to pray. The most idle and even the basest motives have brought men under the preaching, but when Jesus has been lifted up, they have been savingly drawn to Him and as a consequence have struck upon their breasts in repentance and gone their way to serve the Savior whom they once blasphemed. Oh, the power, the melting, conquering, transforming power of that dear Cross of Christ! My Brethren, we have but to abide by the preaching of it. We have but constantly to tell abroad the matchless story and we may expect to see the most remarkable spiritual results!

We need despair of no man now that Jesus has died for sinners. With such a hammer as the doctrine of the Cross, the most flinty heart will be broken! And with such a fire as the sweet love of Christ, the most mighty iceberg will be melted! We need never despair for the heathenish or superstitious races of men. If we can but find occasion to bring the doctrine of Christ Crucified into contact with their natures, it will yet change them and Christ will be their king.

A second and most awful change is also foretold by the incident in our text, namely, the effect which a sight of Christ enthroned will have upon the proud and obstinate, who in this life rebelled against Him. Here they fearlessly jested concerning Him and insultingly demanded, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey Him?" Here they boldly united in a conspiracy to break His bands asunder and cast His cords from them. But when they wake up at the blast of the trumpet and see the Great White Throne, which, like a mirror, shall reflect their conduct upon them, what a change will be in their minds!

Where now your quibbles and your jests? Where now your malicious speeches and your persecuting words? What? Is there not one among you who can play the man and insult the Man of Nazareth to His face? No, not one! Like cowardly dogs they slink away! The infidel's bragging tongue is silent! The proud spirit of the atheist is broken—his blustering and his carping are hushed forever! With shrieks of dismay and clamorous cries of terror, they entreat the hills to cover them and the mountains to conceal them from the face of that very Man whose Cross was once the subject of their scorn! O take heed, you sinners, take heed, I pray you and be you changed this day by Divine Grace, lest you be changed by-and-by by terror, for the heart which will not be bent by the love of Christ shall be broken by the terror of His name!

If Jesus upon the Cross does not save you, Christ on the Throne shall damn you! If Christ dying is not your life, Christ living shall be your death! If Christ on earth is not your Heaven, Christ coming from Heaven shall be your Hell! O may God's Grace work a blessed turning of Grace in each of us, that we may not be turned into Hell in the dread day of reckoning!

We shall now draw nearer to the text and in the first place, *analyze the general mourning around the Cross*. Secondly, we shall, if God shall help us, *endeavor to join in the sorrowful chorus*. And then, before we conclude, *we shall remind you that at the foot of the Cross our sorrow must be mingled with joy*.

I. First, then, let us ANALYZE THE GENERAL MOURNING which this text describes. "All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned." They all smote their breasts, but not all from the same cause. They were all afraid, not all from the same reason. The outward manifestations were alike in the whole mass, but the grades of difference in feeling were as many as the minds in which they ruled. There were many, no doubt, who were merely moved with a transient emotion.

They had seen the death agonies of a remarkable Man, and the attendant wonders had persuaded them that He was something more than an ordinary being, and therefore they were afraid. With a kind of indefinite fear, grounded upon no very intelligent reasoning, they were alarmed because God was angry and had closed the eye of day upon them and made the rocks to split. Burdened with this indistinct fear, they went their way trembling and humbled to their homes. But perhaps before the next morning light had dawned they had forgotten it all and the next day found them greedy for another bloody spectacle and ready to nail another Christ to the cross, if there had been such another to be found in the land.

Their beating of the breast was not a breaking of the heart. It was an April shower, a dewdrop of the morning, a hoar-frost that dissolved when the sun had risen. Like a shadow the emotion crossed their minds and like a shadow it left no trace behind. How often, in the preaching of the Cross, has this been the only result in tens of thousands! In this house, where so many souls have been converted, many more have shed tears which have been wiped away and the reason of their tears has been forgotten. A handkerchief has dried up their emotions. Alas! Alas, that while it may be difficult to move men with the story of the Cross to *weeping*, it is even more difficult to make those emotions permanent.

"I have seen something amazing, this morning," said one who had listened to a faithful and earnest preacher, "I have seen a whole congregation in tears." "Alas!" said the preacher, "there is something more amazing still, for the most of them will go their way to forget that they ever shed a tear." Ah, my Hearers, shall it be always so—always so? Then, O you impenitent, there shall come to your eyes a tear which shall drip forever—a scalding drop which no mercy shall ever wipe away—a thirst that shall never be abated! There shall come to you a worm that shall never die and a fire that never shall be quenched! By the love you bear your souls, I pray you escape from the wrath to come!

Others among that great crowd exhibited emotion based upon more thoughtful reflection. They saw that they had shared in the murder of an innocent Person. "Alas," they said, "we see through it all now. That Man was no offender. In all that we have ever heard or seen of Him, He did good and only good! He always healed the sick, fed the hungry and raised

the dead. There is not a word of all His teaching that is really contrary to the Law of God. He was a pure and holy Man. We have all been duped. Those priests have egged us on to put to death One whom it were a thousand mercies if we could restore to life again at once. Our race has killed its Benefactor.”

“Yes,” says one, “I thrust out my tongue. I found it almost impossible to restrain myself when everybody else was laughing and mocking at His tortures. But I am afraid I have mocked at the innocent, and I tremble lest the darkness which God has sent was His reprobation of my wickedness in oppressing the innocent.” Such feelings would abide, but I can suppose that they might not bring men to sincere repentance—for while they might feel sorry that they had oppressed the innocent—yet, perceiving nothing more in Jesus than mere evil-treated virtue and suffering manhood, the natural emotion might soon pass away and the moral and spiritual result be of no great value.

How frequently have we seen in our hearers that same description of emotion! They have regretted that Christ should be put to death. They have felt like that old king of France, who said, “I wish I had been there with 10,000 of my soldiers—I would have cut their throats sooner than they should have touched Him.” But those very feelings have been evidence that they did not feel *their* share in the guilt as they ought to have done and that to them the Cross of Jesus was no more a *saving* spectacle than the death of a common martyr. Dear Hearers, beware of making the Cross to be a commonplace thing with you! Look beyond the sufferings of the innocent Manhood of Jesus and see upon the Cross the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, or else you look to the Cross in vain.

No doubt there were a few in the crowd who smote upon their breasts because they felt, “We have put to death a Prophet of God. As of old our nation slew Isaiah and put to death others of the Master’s servants, so today they have nailed to the Cross one of the last of the Prophets and His blood will be upon us and upon our children.” Perhaps some of them said, “This man claimed to be Messiah and the miracles which attended His death prove that He was so. His life betokens it and His death declares it. What will become of our nation if we have slain the Prince of Peace? How will God visit us if we have put His Prophet to death!”

Such mourning was in advance of other forms. It showed a deeper thought and a clearer knowledge and it may have been an admirable preparation for the later hearing of the Gospel—but it would not of itself suffice as evidence of Grace. I shall be glad if my hearers in this house today are persuaded by the Character of Christ that He must have been a Prophet sent of God and that He was the Messiah promised of old. And I shall be gratified if they, therefore, lament the shameful cruelties which He received from our apostate race. Such emotions of compunction and pity are most commendable and under God’s blessing they may prove to be the furrows of your heart in which the Gospel may take root. He who thus was cruelly put to death was God over all blessed forever, the world’s Redeemer and the Savior of such as put their trust in Him! May you accept Him today as your Deliverer and so be saved, for if not, the most vir-

tuous regrets concerning His death—however much they may indicate your enlightenment—will not manifest your true conversion.

In the motley company who all went home striking their breasts, let us hope that there were some who said, “Certainly this was the Son of God,” and mourned to think He should have suffered for their transgressions and been put to grief for their iniquities. Those who came to *that* point were saved! Blessed were the eyes that looked upon the slaughtered Lamb in such a way as that and happy were the hearts that then and there were broken because He was bruised and put to grief for their sakes. Beloved, aspire to this! May God’s Grace bring you to see in Jesus Christ no other than God made flesh, hanging upon the Cross in agony to die, the Just for the unjust, that we may be saved!

O come and repose your trust in Him and then strike upon your breasts at the thought that such a Victim should have been necessary for your redemption! Then may you cease to strike your breasts and begin to clap your hands for very joy—for they who thus bewail a Savior may rejoice in Him—for He is theirs and they are His!

II. We shall now ask you To JOIN IN THE LAMENTATION, each man according to his sincerity of heart, beholding the Cross and striking upon his breast. We will by faith put ourselves at the foot of the little knoll of Calvary. There we see in the center, between two thieves, the Son of God made flesh, nailed by His hands and feet and dying in an anguish which words cannot portray. Look well, I pray you. Look steadfastly and devoutly, gazing through your tears. ‘Tis He who was worshipped of angels who is now dying for the sons of men!

Sit down and watch the death of Death’s Destroyer! I shall ask you first to strike your breasts, as you remember that *you see in Him your own sins*. How great He is! That crown of thorns is on the head once crowned with all the royalties of Heaven and earth! He who dies there is no common man! King of kings and Lord of lords is He who hangs on yonder Cross. Then see the greatness of your sins which required so vast a Sacrifice. They must be infinite sins to require an infinite Person to lay down His life in order to their removal. You can never compass or comprehend the greatness of your Lord in His essential Character and dignity. Neither shall you ever be able to understand the blackness and heinousness of the sin which demanded His *life* as an Atonement.

Brothers and Sisters, strike your breast and say, “God be merciful to me, the greatest of sinners, for I am such.” Look well into the face of Jesus and see how vile they have made Him! They have stained those cheeks with spit! They have lashed those shoulders with a felon’s scourge! They have put Him to the death which was only awarded to the meanest Roman slave! They have hung Him up between Heaven and earth as though He were fit for neither! They have stripped Him naked and left Him not a rag to cover Him!

See here, then, O Believer, the shame of your sins! What a shameful thing your sins must have been. What a disgraceful and abominable thing, if Christ must be made such a shame for you! O be ashamed of yourself, to think your Lord should thus be scorned and made nothing of

for you! See how they aggravate His sorrows! It was not enough to crucify Him—they must insult Him! Nor that enough, they must mock His prayers and turn His dying cries into themes for jest while they offer Him vinegar to drink. See, Beloved, how aggravated were your sins and mine!

Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us all strike upon our breasts and say, “Oh, how our sins have piled up their guiltiness! It was not merely that we broke the Law, but we sinned against light and knowledge. We sinned against rebukes and warnings. As His griefs are aggravated, even so are our sins!” Look still into His dear face and see the lines of anguish which indicate the deeper inward sorrow which far transcends mere bodily pain and suffering. God, His Father, has forsaken Him! God has made Him a curse for *us*.

Then what must the curse of God have been against us? What must our sins have deserved? If when sin was only imputed to Christ and laid upon Him for awhile, His father turned His head away and made His Son cry out, “Lama Sabachthani!” Oh, what an accursed thing our sin must be and what a curse would have come upon us! What thunderbolts, what coals of fire, what indignation and wrath from the Most High must have been our portion had not Jesus interposed! If Jehovah did not spare His *Son*, how little would He have spared guilty, worthless men if He had dealt with us after our sins and rewarded us according to our iniquities!

As we still sit down and look at Jesus, we remember that His death was voluntary—He need not have died unless He had so willed. Here, then, is another striking feature of our sin, for our sin was voluntary, too. We did not sin as of compulsion, but we deliberately *chose* the evil way. O Sinner, let both of us sit down together and tell the Lord that we have no justification, or extenuation, or excuse to offer—we have sinned willfully against light and knowledge, against love and mercy. Let us strike upon our breasts, as we see Jesus willingly suffer and confess that we have willingly offended against the just and righteous Laws of a most good and gracious God.

I could gladly keep you looking into those five wounds and studying that marred face and counting every purple drop that flowed from hands and feet and side, but time would fail us. Only that one wound—let it abide with you—strike your breast because you see in Christ your *sin*. Looking again—changing, as it were, our standpoint, but still keeping our eye upon that same, dear Crucified One, let us see there *the neglected and despised remedy for our sin*. If sin itself, in its first condition, as rebellion, brings no tears to our eyes, it certainly ought, in its second manifestation, as ingratitude.

The sin of rebellion is vile. But the sin of slighting the Savior is viler still. He that hangs on the Cross in groans and griefs unutterable, is He whom some of you have never thought of—whom you do not love, to whom you never pray—in whom you place no confidence and whom you never serve. I will not accuse you. I will ask those dear wounds to do it, sweetly and tenderly. I will rather accuse myself, for, alas! Alas, there was a time when I heard of Him as with a deaf ear! There was a time when I was told of Him and understood the love He bore to sinners and yet my

heart was like a stone within me and would not be moved! I stopped my ears and would not be charmed, even with such a master fascination as the disinterested love of Jesus!

I think if I had been spared to live the life of an ungodly man for 30, 40, or 50 years and had been converted at last, I should never have been able to blame myself sufficiently for rejecting Jesus during all those years. Why, even those of us who were converted in our youth and almost in our childhood cannot help blaming ourselves to think that so dear a Friend who had done so much for us, was so long slighted by us! Who could have done more for us than He, since He gave Himself for our sins? Ah, how we did wrong Him while we withheld our hearts from Him! O Sinners, how can you keep the doors of your hearts shut against the Friend of Sinners? How can we close the door against Him who cries, "My head is wet with dew and My locks with the drops of the night: open to Me, my Beloved, open to Me"?

I am persuaded there are some here who are His elect—you were chosen by Him from before the foundation of the world and you shall be with Him in Heaven one day to sing His praises and yet, at this moment, though you hear His name, you do not love Him. And though you are told of what He did, you do not trust Him. What? Shall that iron bar always fast close the gate of your heart? Shall that door be always bolted? O Spirit of the living God, win an entrance for the blessed Christ this morning! If anything can do it, surely it must be a sight of the Crucified Christ—that matchless spectacle shall make a heart of stone relent and melt—subdued by Jesus' love! O may the Holy Spirit work this gracious melting, and *He* shall have all the honor!

Still keeping you at the foot of the Cross, dear Friends, every Believer here may well strike upon his breast this morning as he thinks of *who it was that smarted so upon the Cross*. Who was it? It was He who loved us before the world was made! It was He who is this day the Bridegroom of our souls, our Best-Beloved. He who has taken us into the banqueting house and waved His banner of love over us. It is He who has made us one with Himself, and has vowed to present us to His Father without spot. It is He, our Husband, our Ishi, who has called us His Hephzibah because His soul delights in us. It is He who suffered thus for us.

Suffering does not always excite the same degree of pity. You must know something of the individual before the innermost depths of the soul are stirred, and so it happens to us that the higher the character and the more able we are to appreciate it, the closer the relation and the more fondly we reciprocate the love—the more deeply does suffering strike the soul. You are coming to His Table, some of you, today, and you will partake of bread—I pray you remember that it *represents* the quivering flesh that was filled with pain on Calvary! You will sip of that cup—then be sure to remember that it betokens to you the blood of One who loves you better than you could be loved by mother, or by husband, or by friend!

O sit down and strike your breasts that He should grieve! That heaven's Sun should be eclipsed! That Heaven's Lily should be spotted with blood and Heaven's Rose should be whitened with a deadly pallor! Lament that

Perfection should be accused, Innocence struck and Love murdered—and that Christ, the happy and the holy, the ever blessed, who had been for ages the delight of angels—should now become the sorrowful, the acquaintance of grief, the bleeding and the dying! Smite upon your breasts, Believers and go your way! Beloved in the Lord, if such grief as this should be kindled in you, it will be well to pursue the subject and to reflect upon how unbelieving and how cruel we have been to Jesus since the day that we have known Him.

What? Does He bleed for me and have I doubted Him? Is He the Son of God and have I suspected His fidelity? Have I stood at the foot of the Cross unmoved? Have I spoken of my dying Lord in a cold, indifferent spirit? Have I ever preached Christ Crucified with a dry eye and a heart unmoved? Do I bow my knee in private prayer and are my thoughts wandering when they ought to be bound hand and foot to His dear bleeding self? Am I accustomed to turn over the pages of the Evangelists which record my Master's wondrous Sacrifice and have I never stained those pages with my tears? Have I never paused spellbound over the sacred sentence which recorded this miracle of miracles, this marvel of marvels?

Oh, shame upon you, hard Heart! Well may I strike you! May God strike you with the hammer of His Spirit and break you to shivers! O you stony Heart, you granite Soul, you flinty spirit—well may I strike the breast which harbors you, to think that I should be so doltish in the presence of love so amazing, so Divine! Brethren, you may strike upon your breasts as you look at the Cross and mourn that you should have done so little for your Lord. I think if anybody could have sketched my future life in the day of my conversion and have said, “You will be dull and cold in spiritual things and you will exhibit but little earnestness and little gratitude!” I should have said, like Hazael, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?”

I suppose I read your hearts when I say that the most of you are disappointed with your own conduct as compared with your too-flattering prophecies of yourselves! What? Am I really pardoned? Am I in very deed washed in that warm stream which gushed from the riven side of Jesus, and yet am I not wholly consecrated to Christ? What? In my body do I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus and can I live almost without a thought of Him? Am I plucked like a brand from the burning and have I small care to win others from the wrath to come? Has Jesus stooped to win me and do I not labor to win others for Him? Was He all in earnest about me and am I only half in earnest about Him? Dare I waste a minute, dare I trifle away an hour? Have I an evening to spend in vain gossip and idle frivolities?

O my Heart, well may I strike you, that at the sight of the death of the dear Lover of my soul, I should not be fired by the highest zeal and be impelled by the most ardent love to a perfect consecration of every power of my nature, every affection of my spirit, every faculty of my whole man! This mournful strain might be pursued to far greater lengths. We might follow up our confessions, still striking, still accusing, still regretting, still bewailing. We might continue upon the bass notes evermore and yet

might we not express sufficient contrition for the shameful manner in which we have treated our blessed Friend. We might say with one of our hymn writers—

**“Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but You.
And then I would—O that I might
A constant weeper be!”**

One might desire to become a Niobe and realize the desire of Jeremy, “O that my head were waters.” Even the holy extravagance of George Herbert does not surprise us, for we would even sing with him the song of GRIEF—

**“Oh, who will give me tears?
Come, all you springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes!
Come, clouds and rain!
My grief has need of all
The watery things
That nature has produced.
Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply my eyes,
My weary weeping eyes, too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies
To bear them out and with my state agree.
What are two shallow fords, two little spouts
Of a less world?
The greater is but small.
A narrow cupboard for my griefs and doubts,
Which need provision in the midst of all.
Verses, you are too fine a thing, too wise,
For my rough sorrows.
Cease! Be dumb and mute.
Give up your feet and running to my eyes,
And keep your measures for some lover’s lute,
Whose grief allows him music and a rhyme
For mine excludes both measure, tune and time,
Alas, my God!”**

III. Having, perhaps, said enough on this point—enough if God blesses it—*too much* if without His blessing—let me invite you, in the third place, to remember that AT CALVARY, DOLOROUS NOTES ARE NOT THE ONLY SUITABLE MUSIC. We admired our poet when, in the hymn which we have just sung, he appears to question with himself which would be the most fitting tune for Golgotha. “It is finished”—shall we raise songs of sorrow or of praise? Mourn to see the Savior die, or proclaim His victory?—

**“If of Calvary we tell,
How can songs of triumph swell!
If of man redeemed from woe,
How shall notes of mourning flow?”**

He shows that since our sin pierced the side of Jesus, there is cause for unlimited lamentation, but since the blood which flowed from the wound has cleansed our sin, there is ground for unbounded thanksgiving! And, therefore, the poet, after having balanced the matter in a few verses, concludes with—

“ ‘It is finished,’ let us raise

Songs of thankfulness and praise.

After all, you and I are not in the same condition as the multitude who had surrounded Calvary—for at that time our Lord was still dead—now He is risen, indeed! There were yet three days from that Thursday evening (for there is much reason to believe that our Lord was not crucified on Friday), in which Jesus must dwell in the regions of the dead. Our Lord, therefore, so far as human eyes could see Him, was a proper object of pity and mourning and not of thanksgiving.

But now, Beloved, He ever lives and gloriously reigns! No grave confines that blessed body! He saw no corruption, for the moment when the third day dawned, He could no longer be held with the bonds of death, but He manifested Himself alive unto His disciples! He tarried in this world for 40 days. Some of His time was spent with those who knew Him in the flesh. Perhaps a larger part of it was passed with those saints who came out of their graves after His Resurrection, but certain it is that He is gone up, as the first-fruit from the dead. He is gone up to the right hand of God, even the Father!

Do not bewail those wounds—they are lustrous with supernal splendor! Do not lament His death—He lives no more to die! Do not mourn that shame and spitting—

***“The head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crowned with glory now.”***

Look up and thank God that death has no more dominion over Him. He ever lives to make intercession for us and He shall shortly come with angelic bands surrounding Him to judge the quick and the dead. The argument for joy overshadows the reason for sorrow! Like as a woman when the child is born remembers no more her anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world, so, in the thought of the risen Savior who has taken possession of His crown, we will forget the lamentation of the Cross and the sorrows of the broken heart of Calvary.

Moreover, hear the shrill voice of the high sounding cymbals and let your hearts rejoice within you, for in His death our Redeemer conquered all the hosts of Hell. They came against Him furiously, yes, they came against Him to eat up His flesh, but they stumbled and fell. They compassed Him about, yes, they compassed Him about like bees, but in the name of the Lord did the Champion destroy them! Against the whole multitude of sins and all the battalions of the Pit, the Savior stood, a solitary soldier fighting against innumerable bands but He has slain them all! “Bruised is the dragon’s head.” Jesus has led captivity captive! He conquered when He fell! And let the notes of victory drown forever the cries of sorrow!

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, let it be remembered that men have been saved! Let there stream before your gladdened eyes this morning the innumerable company of the elect. Robed in white they come in long procession—they come from distant lands, from every clime. They were once scarlet with sin and black with iniquity—they are now all white and pure, and without spot before the Throne forever. They are beyond temptation, beatified and made like Jesus! And how? It was all through Calvary. There

was their sin put away! There was their everlasting righteousness brought in and consummated! Let the hosts that are before the Throne, as they wave their palms and touch their golden harps, excite you to a joy like their own and let that celestial music hush the gentler voices which mournfully exclaim—

***“Alas, and did my Savior bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?”***

Nor is that all. You yourself are saved! O Brother! This will always be one of your greatest joys, that others are converted through your instrumentality! This is occasion for much thanksgiving, but your Savior’s advice to you is, “Notwithstanding in this, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.” You, a spirit meet to be cast away! You whose portion must have been with devils—*you* are this day forgiven, adopted, saved, on the road to Heaven! Oh, while you think that you are saved from Hell, that you are lifted up to Glory, you cannot but rejoice that your sin is put away from you through the death of Jesus Christ, your Lord!

Lastly, there is one thing for which we ought always to remember with joy, Christ’s death, and that is that although the crucifixion of Jesus was intended to be a blow at the honor and glory of our God—though in the death of Christ the world did, so far as it was able, put God Himself to death and so earn for itself that hideous title, “a deicidal world,” yet never did God have such honor and glory as He obtained through the sufferings of Jesus! Oh, they thought to scorn Him, but they lifted His name on high!

They thought that God was dishonored when He was most glorified! The image of the Invisible, had they not marred it? The express image of the Father’s Person, had they not defiled it? Ah, so they said! But He that sits in the heavens may well laugh and have them in derision, for what did they do?! They did but break the alabaster box and all the blessed drops of infinite mercy streamed forth to perfume all worlds! They did but rend the veil and then the Glory which had been hidden between the cherubim shone forth upon all lands!

O Nature, adoring God with your ancient and priestly mountains, extolling Him with your trees which clap their hands, and worshipping with your seas which, in their fullness, roar out Jehovah’s praise! With all your tempests and flames of fire, your dragons and your deeps, your snow and your hail—you *cannot* glorify God as *Jesus* glorified Him when He became obedient unto death! O Heaven, with all your jubilant angels, your everchanting cherubim and seraphim, your thrice holy hymns, your streets of gold and endless harmonies—you cannot reveal the Deity as Jesus Christ revealed it on the Cross!

O Hell, with all your infinite horrors and flames unquenchable and pains and griefs and shrieks of tortured ghosts! Even you cannot reveal the Justice of God as Christ revealed it in His riven heart upon the bloody Cross! O earth and Heaven and Hell! O time and eternity, things present and things to come, visible and invisible—you are dim mirrors of the Godhead compared with the bleeding Lamb! O heart of God, I see you no-

where as at Golgotha, where the Word Incarnate reveals the justice and the love, the holiness and the tenderness of God in one blaze of Glory! If any created mind would gladly see the Glory of God, he need not gaze upon the starry skies, nor soar into the Heaven of heavens! He has but to bow at the foot of the Cross and watch the crimson streams which gush from Emmanuel's wounds!

If you would behold the Glory of God, you need not gaze between the gates of pearls! You have but to look beyond the gates of Jerusalem and see the Prince of Peace expire! If you would receive the most noble conception that ever filled the human mind of the loving kindness and the greatness and the pity, and yet the justice and the severity and the wrath of God, you need not lift up your eyes, nor cast them down, nor look to Paradise, nor gaze on Tophet—you have but to look into the heart of Christ all crushed and broken and bruised and you have seen it all!

Oh, the joy that springs from the fact that God has triumphed after all! Death is not the victor! Evil is not master! There are not two rival kingdoms, one governed by the God of good and the other by the god of evil—no, evil is bound, chained and led captive! Its sinews are cut, its head is broken! Its king is bound to the dread chariot of Jehovah-Jesus, and as the white horses of triumph drag the Conqueror up the everlasting hills in splendor of glory, the monsters of the Pit cringe at His chariot wheels!

Therefore, Beloved, we close this discourse with this sentence of humble yet joyful worship, "Glory be unto the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 23:27-56.

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

*“Why seek you the living among the dead”
Luke 24:5.*

This question was addressed to certain holy women who came early to the sepulcher, bringing with them the spices which they had prepared for embalming the body of our Lord. They were met by angels who reminded them that their Lord had promised to rise again, that He had so risen and that it was in vain for them to seek in the sepulcher the living, the Immortal Christ. “Why seek you the living among the dead?”

The mistake they made was that of seeking for the living Savior where He could not be found. We have, all of us, made the same mistake. Some of us are making it now. We are seeking good things in the midst of evil—hoping to find satisfaction where it was never yet discovered and never will be! Seeking, but seeking in the wrong place—seeking for the living among the dead.

To illustrate this, I shall first address myself to *the people of God who sometimes fall into this error*. And then I shall have to expostulate with the *unconverted, as well as with those who are somewhat awakened to spiritual Truth*. Say, now—

I. YOU CHILDREN OF GOD, CALLED OUT FROM THE WORLD, do you not sometimes set your affections upon things on the earth and seek for satisfaction here below? Have I not observed how some of you have tried *to find comfort in your wealth* and how others, in the midst of your successful efforts to extend your business, have thought to find solace on that bed of thorns, the cares of this world and the merchandise thereof? Ah, how grievous it is when the Christian becomes an idolater! Yet just as the Israelites of old—who, though they knew the true God, were found in an emergency setting up the golden calf and saying, “These are your gods, O Israel”—so, in one form or another, we may be making some created good the object of our search, setting our heart upon it and indulging expectations of solace from it—forgetting that comfort can only be found in our Lord Jesus Christ! “Why seek you”—why do you who know so much better—“why seek YOU the living among the dead?” Why do you come to the broken cistern which can hold no water, when the well springing up with crystal streams is always at your feet? Why will you go to drink of the muddy river, the Sihor, when the clear sparkling rill of the Water of Life is always accessible to you? You did once try to fill your belly with the husks which the swine eat, but you failed to appease

the hunger that consumed you. Why return to that unprofitable employment? Oh, Christian, you have sometimes said to your fellow man, "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not?" I may say the same to you, if you think an immortal mind can be satisfied with mortal joys, or imagine that one who has been born from on high can ever find contentment in this poor wilderness world! The pursuit itself is a folly which is sure to bring you a strong rebuke whenever you thus fall into the error of seeking the living among the dead. Your solid comfort, your real happiness and the only joy worth having—you must find in Christ Jesus, by the power of the Spirit—and not in the things of time.

It is sadder, still, and this sometimes occurs *when the professor tries to cheer his heart by the silly vanities of worldly amusement*. There are a thousand inlets to happiness which you may look upon as free to your use—you are as welcome to enjoy them as other men. Whatever it is that is pure and lovely and uncorrupted with sin is as much yours as it is the portion of any other people under the sun. Yours are the beauties of Nature, the wonders of God's handiwork and the vast domain of Creation wherein are things innumerable to please the eye, to charm the ear and make the heart to heave with joy! Learn to use without abusing the bounties which Providence has placed within your reach! And pray that the delights they are capable of yielding may be sanctified to your good. But there are sundry amusements, so frivolous and trifling, that if they are not, in themselves sinful, they verge upon that border where diversion is separated from dissipation by only a faint line. And as the border is always the most infested by thieves and robbers, it is well to beware of it. If the Christian wants to be clear from open transgression, let him eschew the place of temptation and avoid the appearance of evil—for whatever is not of faith is sin. What you cannot do with a clear conscience that it is right, let that alone with a wholesome fear of offense. You can peril no mistake by leaving it! You may cause yourself a thousand sorrows by entering upon it. Oh, shall you that have once leaned your heads upon the bosom of Christ profane your hearts with this wanton wicked world? Shall you that have once eaten angels' food hanker after the diet of fools and drink the intoxicating wine cup of their pleasures? Shall you be seen in the assembly where none congregate but the lightest of the light, and the gayest of the gay? Shame upon you, Christian! You have disgraced your profession. You have disgraced yourself. You are seeking the living, not only among the dead, but among the rotten and corrupt! Do you expect cheer for your passions? You shall find a scourge for your soul! If you are a child of God, you shall be driven back to the way you have strayed from with many a smarting sore and many a broken bone! If you are not a child of God, likely enough you will go from bad to worse, give up the profession which was but a vapor, and turn as a dog to his own vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire! Thus, Christian, while I say to you, do not seek lasting comfort in earthly things, I am compelled to say to some who bear the name and wear the

profession of Christians—do not seek your joy at all among the unprofitable sports and gambols in which some men delight! It is seeking the living among the dead!

Further, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, there is an evil very common to the most conscientious of those who avoid all forms of outward sin. It is the insidious evil of *seeking comfort when they are full of doubts and fears, by looking within yourselves*. I should think that experience might have cured us of this, for when we look into our own hearts—although I trust the Grace of God is there—so much of imperfection, of infirmity, yes, and what is worse, of real iniquity is apparent, that a sight of the inner man is anything but likely to inspire us with consolation. What a fool is he who tries to fetch fire out of ice! But he is not much more foolish than those who try to soothe their anxieties by parleying with their feelings. Brothers and Sisters, the Christian's comfort is on the Cross. There hangs his hope! His hope must not be based or bottomed on anything he feels. It is pleasant to know that Grace reigns in one's breast. Be thankful for it. But, alas, if that is your confidence, the next day you may doubt whether there is any Grace within! And where, then, is your confidence? It is gone! It flees as a shadow. If, however, you live depending upon the Cross of Jesus, you can walk with equable comfort at all times, for the Cross never shifts its place, the Atonement never fluctuates, it never rises or falls in value! Our union with Christ is not subject to degrees. We are always in Him accepted in the Beloved. Happy is the man who builds on that solid Rock and not upon the treacherous quicksands of his own personal emotions! If you endeavor to draw comfort from your fickle, changeable feelings, you seek for the living among the dead. You are looking for joy where it can never be found. You will gather the thorn, but not the rose. You will endure the labor, but not receive the reward. You will suffer the burning of the fire, but not be enlivened by its cheerful warmth. "Why seek you the living among the dead?"

When the Believer feels that Grace is at a very low ebb with him, let him take care that he does not resort to Sinai for the refreshment of his evidences. Have you not heard of some Believers whose mournful sonnet has been—

***"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought.
Do I love the Lord or no,
Am I His, or am I not?"***

And in order to get out of that state they have said, "Now I will make a Covenant with God. I will chasten myself with fasting and much prayer." Or they have had recourse to vows of their own devising, instead of going straight away to Christ as sinners—with some such language on their lips as our hymn suggests—

***"Just as I am, though tossed about,
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fighting within, and fears without,
Oh, Lamb of God. I come!"***

Instead of thus going to Christ, they set to work to be their own Savior! If Paul were here, he would say to them, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the Truth? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect in the flesh?" Beloved Brothers and Sisters, make your Covenant if you like, and fast if you please, and pray if you can without ceasing—the more you pray the better. But when a soul is hungry, it will not recover itself by bodily exercises, but by feeding! So what you need is not so much to give out something from yourselves as to get something into yourselves through Christ! And therefore, turn your eyes, as you did at the first, to the wounds, the glorious wounds, of your Substitute, and say to Him, "My Lord, if I am not a saint, I am a sinner. If I am not saved, yet will I trust in You, now, even though I never did before. I now cast myself on You." This will revive you, this will comfort you! You may set to work as you please after that, but do not seek for the living among the dead! Do not go to Moses, who is dead and was buried years ago! Do not bring yourself under the spirit of bondage, but come as a child who is not under the Law, but under Grace—and rest at the foot of the Cross! So shall you have your spiritual vigor restored and rejoice in the Lord your God!

Once more to the Believer. I do think, dear Friends, we seek for the living among the dead *when we look to our fellow men to find in them some succor or support* to depend upon, or when, as the case may vary, we look to our dear children or relatives and think to find a perpetuity of comfort there. Ah, and it is very easy for some of you to think too highly of the minister. It is possible when you have received spiritual quickening and have come to be fed under some godly pastor, that you may look no higher than the man, instead of looking to his Master! If so, if your faith stands in the wisdom of man, or in man's earnestness—you are looking for the living among the dead! Oh, beware of anything like that! Let us be held in respect by you for our office's sake, but nothing beyond this do we crave or counsel. To the Lord Jesus we bid you look, for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Christ's sake! A more common evil, however, is for the wife to feel as if her husband could never be taken from her side. But he is mortal. I would not distress you with dreary forebodings, but I would have you remember that the living God is the only living One on whom your trust can be fixed. And you, Mother, do you think that your child can never be removed? Know, then, that you are in the land of the dying, and who are you, and what are you, that they should be beyond the reach of the arrows that fly abroad, and the diseases that work insidiously, any more than the children and the friends of others? Oh, if you begin to build your nest in these trees, which have, every one of them, been marked by the woodman's axe—and must all come down—you are a silly bird, and your nest will be lost, and yourself suffer grievous damage! There is one Immortal Lover who shall never die! There is one Eternal Friend who shall never depart! There is a Father who always lives! There is a Brother who sticks close forever! Earthly kinships—value them, but hold them

loosely. Thank God for them, but think not that they are your freeholds. Your tenure is but on lease and a word shall suffice to terminate it! Walking through the fields, you might see most of them still yellow with the king-cups and blushing with all the flowers of this sweet summer month of June, but do not think these flowers shall long abide, for already I hear the sound of the sharpening scythe and I know the mowers will soon be at their task—the flowers will be cut down and the green grass shall be dry. Set not, then, your love on the fleeting bounties of kindly Providence as though you could embalm them and make them last for years! “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.” Fix your love on that which is constant—not on these transient things! I leave you, my Brothers and Sisters, with the general maxim—having applied it in various ways, you can apply it to many more in your meditations—take heed lest you seek for the living among the dead, and so spend your strength for nothing and reap the bitter fruits of weariness and disappointment! Are there not, however, among you, my Hearers, full many of—

II. THOSE WHO ARE NOT THE CHILDREN OF GOD? As the Apostle said in that 10th Chapter of Romans which we just now read to you, “They have not all obeyed the Gospel.” I do not know whether the reading of that Chapter touched any of your hearts. It did mine. I could scarcely help weeping as I thought of some of you. “They have not all obeyed the Gospel”—I mean not all those who sit in these seats regularly, to whom we preach that Gospel so frequently. Those who come into our classes are earnestly taught, but they have not all obeyed the Gospel. No, there is a very large proportion who have not. Oh, grievous fact—fact which some of you will have to grieve over with terrible remorse in the Day of Judgment, unless the mercy of God prevents it! It is with you I want to expostulate. Some of you are *seeking for joy in sin* and you are seeking for the living among the dead, indeed!

Be thoughtful for a moment. God who made you has made certain laws, the observance of which is essential to your well-being. Suppose God had ordained that the violation of His law should make men happy, would that be wise? It is too unwise a thought for us to entertain, much less for God to design! You are disobeying God’s command—then depend upon it that is the way of unhappiness! It must be so. “Oh,” you say, “but it gives me present gratification.” That may be. It is quite consistent with what I have said because the enchantment that allures you is the very snare that beguiles you—and then for every ounce of joy which sin can yield to a sinful spirit, there will be a ton of sorrow inflicted! I forbear in this place to mention the sins of the flesh but who does not know that for every snap of pleasure derived from indulgence of the passions, there are racks, tortures and agonies which the physician could better explain than myself. Such a measure of retribution is common in this life, but as for the life to come—could you lift for a moment the thick veil that hides the unseen world from our gaze, or could a sound pierce through the

partition that Infinite Mercy has made too stout for the wailing and gnashing of teeth to penetrate—I think the groans, the execrations, the shrieks of madness of those who lived as votaries and died as victims of the so-called pleasure of sin would fill you with horror and wild amazement! The transgressor who eats the fruit of his own ways, fruit that once tempted his appetite—and drinks the dregs of that wine cup, the first sip of which was so sweet to his taste—is an appalling spectacle! And this is merely the awakening of a man's conscience to his folly. The punishment of avenging Justice is in reserve! Disobedience of God must be punished by God with indignation that does not relent and pain that knows no abatement! Why seek you, then, the living among the dead?

A moment's reflection might convince a man that this final scene inevitably awaits the profligate. Who would think of making his child happy in the way of constant disobedience, or of encouraging his waywardness by rewarding it? You take care, as judicious parents, that your children shall know you govern the house. And if your laws are constantly broken, you exact the penalty and the rod is put into use—or at least the chastisement is not spared. And shall not God stand up for His Sovereign prerogative, enforce His own Law and make men feel that they cannot violate that Law without suffering the retribution He has threatened? You shall find it so to your cost if you will not credit it to your escape! I tell you that if you seek your pleasure in the theater, or in the saloon of gaiety, or in what is infinitely worse, though too often in close association—in the house of shame. If you go to the chamber of the strange woman, or spend your evenings in the tavern, inflaming yourselves with strong drink, you court misery while you try to avoid melancholy! You render yourselves incapable of happiness while you strive to be merry! But ah, you might as well deliberately make a pilgrimage to the depths of Hell in quest of the joys of Heaven as to seek true enjoyment in the haunts of vice! The Lord, the Lord of Hosts will make men see that beneath the fair skin of the world's pleasures there is a loathsome leprosy that would make them heart-sick were the latent corruption exposed! Oh, go not after such pleasures! Remember that God will require these things at your hands. Seek true pleasure, mental pleasure that never sours! Seek pure joy which will retain its fragrance, refresh others besides yourself, haunt you with no hideous ghosts, but bear sweet reflection when you come to die! Cheer your hearts with draughts from that goblet which will invigorate you when your soul's pulse is beating—the cup which flows clear to the last, whereof you may be grateful to sip when your immortal spirit is about to wing its flight to worlds unknown! Seek not for living pleasure amidst the graves and charnel houses of sin!

Let me change my tone again, for now I come to address a part of this company of people—

III. THOSE WHO ARE ANXIOUSLY CONCERNED TO BE FOUND RIGHT WITH GOD.

Some of you, dear Friends, have known the evil of sin and have turned from its evil ways. But though you are desirous of being saved from the

wrath to come, you are very likely seeking salvation where it is not to be obtained. A few counsels and cautions may, therefore, be welcome to you.

Do not seek salvation by rites and ceremonies, for if you do, you are seeking for the living among the dead! The old Jewish religion was full of types—hence the forms and ceremonials that abounded in its observance—but it did not save multitudes who in the wilderness perished in their sins! And hundreds of thousands more, who had seen it all their lifetime, but never seen through its externals the realities it prefigured, died rejecting the Lord Jesus, to whose mediation it bears witness. Outward pomp and ceremony are of no avail to save the soul! Would those who are as fond of vestments and rituals try the experiment of endeavoring to heal a man who was sick by such means, they would find their medicines have no effect upon the body to restore its health. And were they to bring in a man who was sick in soul, they would soon find that all their gaudy trappings and rhythmical intonations were incapable of supplying balm to a wounded conscience! They are dead, Sirs. They are dead, every one of them! The whole thing is death! It is nothing in all its beauty but the festering fungus that grows upon corruption. The whole system is trickery—a gewgaw to deceive. It is nothing but imposture, an artifice of Satan to lead the world astray! Were you baptized with water from the river Jordan, confirmed with never so much pomp and took the sacrament, or, as they say, “went to celebration” on every holy day and every unholy day likewise—and were you to expire with unction on your face and with the priest’s lying absolution in your ears—you would go down to Hell despite it all, if you had no truer faith, no brighter hope than these things could inspire! For other salvation is there none but that which you can find in Christ, without any priest to mediate, or any minister to intervene between you and Him. You are a priest, yourself, if you believe in Jesus. Christ is the one only Priest, the Great High Priest of our profession! Get pardon from Him and let other men buckle about their priesthood and vaunt their succession as they may. Beware of them! To resort to these men for help is to seek the living among the dead!

Or, perhaps, you will go about *to work out your own salvation apart from Christ*. You have got the idea that you must pass through so much experience, weep so many tears, get into such-and-such a state of heart—and then that you must reform this habit and perform that service—and after awhile you will be saved and obtain peace. The top and bottom of it is, you think you can save yourself! You would be your own Savior! Do you not know that every man, according to God’s own Word, every man is accursed who does not keep the whole Law, “Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” Now, as you have not kept all things, you must be accursed! And as long as you abide under the Law, you are accursed in all that you do! If you can be delivered from the Law through Christ, then, and only then, may you escape from the curse, for Christ was made a

curse for us by hanging upon the Cross for us—and so the curse is put away and so we are redeemed there from. But so long as you are trying to be saved by your own works, you are under the Law. And so long as you are under the Law, you are under the curse. To try to find a blessing where everything is under God's Law, is seeking for the living among the dead!

I know not to whom these remarks may pointedly apply, but I dare say I am speaking to some of you who pant for salvation and you would give anything to be assured of your soul's acceptance! You have been praying, it may be, night and day for mercy till your knees seem as though they would grow to the floor. In your earnest pleadings your heart has been vehement till the flesh has grown faint. I am glad that you are pleading and agonizing in prayer, but there is no necessity for these long delays and for these protracted prayers. Trust Christ, who hangs on yonder Cross, and you are saved! The moment you depend upon Jesus, past sin is blotted out, you are a new man as in the sight of God, your iniquity is forgiven, your transgression is covered and you are accepted in the Beloved! Hundreds of times have I tried to bring forward this theme till I sometimes fear lest it should sound flat and fail to awaken you! Yet some of you have not believed it or received it! Yet I bear you witness that if you receive not this cardinal Truth of God, you must perish in your sin! Our Lord did not mince matters. He offered no three courses, but He said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." What about those that believe not? He said, "He that believes not shall be damned." What if the man always goes to Church, or always comes to a meeting? There is no exemption—if he believe not, he shall be damned. But what if he always pays twenty shillings in the pound and is scrupulously honest? "He that believes not shall be damned." The gentle lips of the Savior spoke these words! They are not of my coining, they are not my construction. He said it and will prove it true. Oh, that you might trust Him, for if you trust Him, you cannot be condemned! But if you go about anywhere else to find hope and comfort for your soul, you are seeking for the living among the dead! Why continue this foolish search? Why persevere in this bootless toil?

Yet it is very possible you are *seeking for some good thing in yourself* by way of feeling and emotion. "If I felt a more broken heart," says one, "I could trust Christ." "If," says another, "I felt the terrors of the Law, I could trust Christ." If! Yes, indeed! Why multiply your useless "ifs"? They are vain excuses. Do you mean you cannot trust Christ? That is a sad, though, perhaps, it is an honest confession. Do you not believe Him to be true? "Ah," says one, "I do believe that." Is it difficult, then, to trust an honest man? But you do not believe in the integrity and faithfulness of Christ! "Oh," you say, "but I do." Well, then, trust Him as the necessary consequence! Jesus Christ says that He came into the world to save sinners. And God's witness is that if we trust Christ, we shall be saved. If you believe that to be true, trust Him! Commit your soul and your soul's salvation to Him! "Oh, but I am not fit." Is there a word about fitness in

the whole Gospel? As you may have come fresh from the commission of some new sin, the Gospel does not say to you, "Stand by a while, till you are prepared." But it says, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." I do not find the Gospel telling you that you must first be better, but it is said that you are *now* to turn to Him. "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Oh, I wish you could take my Master at His word! I wish, poor guilty One, you would have done with disputing, cling to the promises and just drop into the arms of the Promiser! Can you venture thus? You shall never chide yourself for temerity, or repent of your courage! It may seem a daring thing to do, but come, and welcome! Jesus casts out none that come!

When I came—and it seems fresh in my memory tonight as I mention it to you—I came all trembling in my sin. I knew I had not one good thing that could recommend me to Christ. I thought He would have said, "Go your way, I have not loved you, nor given Myself for you." But I did look to Him. I knew I had no other confidence. I did cast myself upon Him and He has not cast me away. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." I cannot lead you to Christ—oh, that I could! There is One far mightier who can and I hope that He will do it tonight! We spoke this morning about the Holy Spirit. Oh, that the Holy Spirit might prove His own power to you now! At any rate, this I can say and this I do say—Give up that seeking your own righteousness! Give up that struggling after emotions and feeling! It is all seeking the living among the dead! The idea of your helping Christ to save you is preposterous! What could you do? As well yoke a snail with a racehorse, that they might win a prize, as for you to help Christ! You, help Christ? You, with your rags and Christ with His white linen? You, with your pollution and Christ with His holiness? You, with your deep condemnation and Christ with His free forgiveness? He needs no help from you! He wants your emptiness, not your fullness—your weakness, not your power—your death, not your life! When a tree is loaded, it needs baskets, but it does not need full baskets—it needs empty baskets to hold the fruit. And Jesus Christ wants sinners—not sinners having merits—a foolish pretense—but sinners who are destitute! There is a full Christ for empty sinners, an all-bountiful Christ for you, famished Sinner, now!

Ah, some of you poor people drop in here, sometimes, on an evening, and I am glad to see you. Never be ashamed to come in your working clothes. I know you think I am not talking to you, but you are the very people I am speaking to! Jesus Christ always had a kind word for the laboring man—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now, it is likely enough some of you are no better than you should be, though you have stepped in here in the crowd to hear a word. Well, it is such as you are, Christ came to save. "Not the righteous. Sinners, Jesus came to save." Oh, you chief of sinners! Come

to Jesus Christ! This night He will receive every soul that comes to Him. Eternal Spirit draw them! Eternal Father, now call them by Your power and let us meet at Your right hand, everyone of us, to see Your face and rejoice in Your mighty love!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 9:1-5; ROMANS 10.**

Verses 1-3. *I tell the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit. That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I, myself, were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* The Apostle is evidently about to make an extraordinary statement—a statement which would probably not be believed and, therefore, he gives as a preface the most solemn assertions that are permitted to Christian men declaring that he is speaking the truth, and also that the Holy Spirit is bearing witness with his conscience that it is so—that he so loves the souls of his fellow countrymen that, though the thing could never be, yet in a sort of ecstasy of love, he could devote himself to anything so long as his countrymen might but be saved. “My kinsmen according to the flesh.”

4, 5. *Who are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises: Whose are the fathers and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God forever. Amen.* The Apostle never omits an opportunity of magnifying his Master! Though it did not seem to be called for by the immediate subject in hand, yet he must put in a doxology to the name of Jesus. “Who is over all the eternally blessed God forever. Amen.” How any Believers in Scripture ever get to be disbelievers in the Deity of Christ is altogether astounding! If there is *anything* taught in the Word of God, it is assuredly that Paul comforts himself, in a measure, by the Doctrine of Election which is fully spoken to in this Chapter. My subject leads me to read again at the 10th Chapter.

ROMANS 10.

Verse 1. *Brethren my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* The same thing over again—his deep concern for his countrymen.

2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.* Zeal is a good thing, but like the horse without a bit, it becomes useless and even dangerous. Knowledge is the bridle in the mouth of zeal. Zeal is like fire which may burn the house which it was intended to warm unless it is carefully governed. There must be knowledge in zeal.

3. *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* This is a great evil in the present day. There are many persons who are evidently zealous for God, but they make a mistake in supposing that they are to be saved by their own works, their

prayers, their Church attendance, their Chapel attendance, or something of the sort, instead of accepting the finished righteousness of Christ, which is the righteousness of God! They are insulting Christ. They are insulting God by thinking that He would have given His Son to be our Righteousness if we could have made a righteousness of our own, or given Him up to die, if we could save ourselves.

4. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes.* There is the point—to believe—to have faith. It is that which gives us the righteousness of which Christ is the sum total.

5. *For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law. That the man which does those things shall live by them.* And if any man did, or could keep the Law of God, he would live by it—but no man has ever done so, or ever will. There is no hope of life by the Law.

6-9. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not, in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach: That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.* What a wondrous way of salvation—so near—so close to us! What an expression that is—“in your mouth.” We must absolutely take it out of our mouths. God has put the Bread of Life so near to us that it is in our mouth! We must reject it as a man would reject food, if we perish! But, oh, for Grace to receive it, to live upon it, to believe Christ, to trust Him and so to be saved!

10, 11. *For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed.* If, then, I base my eternal salvation upon Christ, and am trusting in Him—not in my works, or prayers, or tears, or alms, or feelings, or even in my own repentance or faith—but wholly in Him, I shall never be ashamed!

12, 13. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* What a comforting text for some of you! You want salvation, but you are afraid you cannot find it. “Whoever”—what a grand word—“whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord”—that is to say in prayer, but that prayer the prayer of faith—he “shall be saved.”

14. *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* That is the point—the believing is the vital matter!

14, 15. *And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things.* You see all the machinery of salvation here. God provides a Gospel, He sends a preacher to proclaim it, men hear it—by the Holy Spirit they be-

lieve it and they are saved. It is all in a nutshell, but oh, how blessedly suited to poor, unworthy sinners like ourselves!

16, 17. *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel . For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* It does not ever come by seeing. Faith does not come by looking upon ceremonies—by gazing upon processions and pompous rituals! It come by the simple hearing of the Word of God. It is a matter of the understanding and the work of the Holy Spirit upon that understanding. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

18, 19. *But I say, have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? Were they not taught that God would reject them if they were disbelievers? And that He would call in the heathen? Yes, they knew it, for—*

19. *First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people and by a foolish nation I will anger you.* And the heathen thus, like ourselves, were accounted dogs by the Jews, but the Lord has brought us in and made us to believe in Christ because they rejected Him! What a wonderful passage that is about the great supper which the King made, when we read, because the invited guests did not come, the King, being angry, said unto His servants, “Go you out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.” Even the anger of God, you see, works good to some! He was angry with the guests that did not come, but then He called us in! His anger against the Jewish people has turned to the salvation of the Gentiles, for which may God be praised! But, may Israel be gathered, too!

20, 21 *But Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought Me not: I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

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

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

“THE LORD IS RISEN, INDEED”

NO. 1106

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1873,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Why seek you the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!
Remember how He spoke unto you when He was yet in Galilee.”
Luke 24:5, 6.*

THE first day of the week commemorates the Resurrection of Christ and, following Apostolic example, we have made the first day of the week to be our Sabbath. Does not this intimate to us that the rest of our souls is to be found in the resurrection of our Savior? Is it not true that a clear understanding of the rising again of our Lord is, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the very surest means of bringing our minds into peace? To have a part in the Resurrection of Christ is to enjoy that Sabbath which remains for the people of God. We who have believed in the risen Lord do enter into rest, even as He also, Himself, is resting at the right hand of the Father. In Him we rest because His work is finished, His Resurrection being the pledge that He has perfected all that is necessary for the salvation of His people and we are complete in Him.

I trust, this morning, that some restful thoughts may, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be sown in the minds of Believers while we make a pilgrimage to the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and see the place where the Lord lay.

I. And, first, this morning, I will speak to you upon certain INSTRUCTIVE MEMORIES which gather around the place where Jesus slept “with the rich in His death.” Though He is not there, He assuredly once was there, for “He was crucified, dead, and buried.” He was as dead as the dead now are and though He could see no corruption, nor could be held by the bands of death beyond the predestined time, yet He was in very deed most assuredly dead. No light remained in His eyes, no life in His heart. Thought had fled from His thorn-crowned brow and speech from His golden mouth. He was not, in mere appearance, but in *reality* dead—the spear-thrust decided that question once and for all.

Therefore in the sepulcher they laid Him, a dead Man, fit occupant of the silent tomb. Yet as He is not there now, but is risen, it is for us to search for memorials of His having been there. Not for the “holy sepulcher” will we contend with superstitious sectaries, but in spirit we will gather up the precious relics of the risen Redeemer. First, He has left in the grave the spices. When He rose He did not bring away the costly aromatics in which His body had been wrapped, but He left them there. Joseph brought about one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, and the odor remained. In the sweetest spiritual sense, our Lord Jesus has filled the grave with fragrance. It no longer smells of corruption and foul decay, but we can sing with the poet of the sanctuary—

**“Why should we tremble to convey
These bodies to the tomb?
There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a long perfume.”**

Yonder lowly bed in the earth is now perfumed with costly spices and decked with sweet flowers, for on its pillow the truest Friend we have once laid His holy head! We will not start back with horror from the chambers of the dead, for the Lord, Himself, has traversed them—and where He goes no terror abides. The Master also left His grave clothes behind Him. He did not come from the tomb wrapped about with a winding-sheet. He did not wear the burial clothes of the tomb as the garments of life, but when Peter went into the sepulcher he saw the grave clothes lying carefully folded by themselves. What if I say He left them to be the hangings of the royal bedchamber wherein His saints fall asleep?

See how He has curtained our last bed! Our dormitory is no longer bare and drear, like a prison cell, but hung around with fair white linen and comely tapestry—a chamber fit for the repose of princes of the blood! We will go to our last bedchamber in peace, because Christ has furnished it for us! Or if we change the metaphor, I may say that our Lord has left those grave clothes for us to look upon as pledges of His fellowship with us in our low estate and reminders that as *He* has cast aside the death garments, even so shall *we*. He has risen from His couch and left His sleeping robes behind Him in token that at our waking there are other vestures ready for us, also.

What if I again change the figure and say that as we have seen old tattered flags hung up in cathedrals and other national buildings as the memorials of defeated enemies and victories won, so in the crypt where Jesus vanquished death His grave clothes are hung up as the trophies of His victory over death, and as assurances to us that all His people shall be more than conquerors through Him that has loved them? “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?” Then, carefully folded up and laid by itself, our Lord left the napkin that was about His head. Yonder lies that napkin now. The Lord needed it not when He came forth to life.

You who mourn may use it as a handkerchief with which to dry your eyes. You widows and you fatherless children—you mourning brothers and you weeping sisters—and you, you Rachels, who will not be comforted because your children are not here, take this which wrapped your Savior’s face and wipe your tears away forever! The Lord is risen, indeed, and therefore thus says the Lord, “Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for they shall come again from the land of the enemy.” “Your dead men shall live.” O mourner—together with the Lord’s dead body shall they arise! Why, sorrow not as they that are without hope, for if you believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so they, also, which sleep in Jesus will the Lord bring with Him!

What else has the risen Savior left behind Him? Our faith has learned to gather up memorials sweet from the couch of our Lord’s tranquil slumber. Well, Beloved, He left *angels* behind Him, and thus made the grave—

“A cell where angels use

To come and go with heavenly news.”

Angels were not in the tomb before, but, at His Resurrection, they descended! One rolled away the stone and others sat where the Body of Jesus had lain. They were the personal attendants and bodyguard of the Great Prince and, therefore, they attended Him at His rising, keeping the doorway and answering the enquiries of His friends. Angels are full of life and vigor, but they did not hesitate to assemble at the grave, gracing the Resurrection even as flowers adorn the spring!

I read not that our Master has ever recalled the angels from the sepulchers of His saints. And now, if Believers die as poor as Lazarus and as sick and as despised as he, angels shall convey their souls into the bosom of their Lord and their bodies, too, shall be watched by guardian spirits, as surely as Michael kept the body of Moses and contended for it with the foe. Angels are both the servitors of living saints and the custodians of their dust. What else did our Well-Beloved leave behind Him? He left an open passage from the tomb, for the stone was rolled away—doorless is that house of death! We shall, in our turn, if the Master comes not speedily, descend into the prison of the grave. What did I say?—I called it a “prison,” but how can it be a prison—it has no bolts or bars!

How can it be a prison, that has not even a door to close upon its occupants? Our Samson has pulled up the posts and carried away the gates of the grave with all their bars! The key is taken from the belt of Death and is held in the hands of the Prince of Life! The broken signal and the fainting watchmen are tokens that the dungeons of death can no more confine their captives! As Peter, when he was visited by the angel, found his chains fall off him and iron gates opened to him of their own accord, so shall the saints find ready escape at the resurrection morning! They shall sleep awhile, each one in his resting place, but they shall rise readily, for the stone is rolled away!

A mighty angel rolled away the stone, for it was very great—and when he had done the deed he sat down upon the stone. His garment was white as snow and his face like lightning. And as he sat on the stone he seemed to say to Death and Hell, “Roll it back, again, if you can.” “Who shall rebuild for the tyrant his prison? The scepter lies broken that fell from his hands. His dominion is ended—the Lord is arisen! The helpless shall soon be released from their bands.” One thing else I venture to mention as left by my Lord in His forsaken tomb. I visited, some few months ago, several of the large grave vaults which are to be found outside the gates of Rome.

You enter a large square building, sunk in the earth, and descend by many steps. And as you descend you observe on the four walls of the great chamber, innumerable little pigeonholes in which are the ashes of tens of thousands of departed persons. Usually in front of each compartment prepared for the reception of the ashes stands a lamp. I have seen hundreds, if not thousands, of these lamps, but they are all *unlit* and, indeed, do not appear ever to have carried light. They shed no ray upon the darkness of death. But now our Lord has gone into the tomb and illuminated it with His Presence—“the lamp of His love is our guide through the gloom.”

Jesus has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel! And now in the dovecotes where Christians nestle, there is light—yes, in every cemetery there is a light which shall burn through the watches of earth’s night till the day breaks and the shadows flee away—and the resurrection morn shall dawn! So, then, the empty tomb of the Savior leaves us many sweet reflections which we will treasure up for our instruction.

II. Our text expressly speaks of VAIN SEARCHES—“Why seek you the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!” There are places where seekers after Jesus should not expect to find Him, however diligent may be their search, however sincere their desire. You cannot find a man where he is not, and there are some spots where Christ never will be discovered. At this present moment I see many searching for Christ among the monuments of ceremonialism, or what Paul called, “the weak and beggarly elements,” for they, “observe days and months and times and years.” Ever since our Lord arose, Judaism and every form of symbolic ceremony have become nothing better than sepulchers.

The types were of God’s own ordaining, but when the Substance had come, the types became empty sepulchers and nothing more. Since that time men have invented other symbols which have not the sanction of Divine authority and are only dead men’s graves. At this present period the world has gone mad after its idols, deluded and deceived by those who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Surely there never was a period, even when Rome was most dominant, in which men heaped unto themselves ceremonies at such a rate as at the present day! They have made Christianity to be a greater yoke of bondage than was Judaism, itself—but in vain shall any sincere and awakened soul hope to find Jesus among these vain performances!

You may stumble from one holy day to another, and from one holy place to another, and from one hocus-pocus to another, but you shall not find a Savior in any of them, for thus has He Himself declared, “Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father, but the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in *spirit* and in *truth*, for the Father seeks such to worship Him.” Jesus has torn the veil and abolished ceremonial worship and yet men seek to revive it, building up the sepulchers which the Lord has broken down. This day He repeats in our ears the warning, “Take you good heed unto yourselves, for you saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spoke unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest you corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female.”

Yet certain men among us go about to set up the altars which our godly forefathers broke down, and the work of Reformers and of Protestants must now be done over again! God send us a Knox or a Luther with a mighty hammer to break in pieces the idols which the priests of Baal are setting up! They seek the living among the dead! Jesus is not in their masses and processions! He is risen far above such carnal worship! If He were a dead Christ, such a worship might, perchance, be a suitable pag-

erant over His tomb. But to one who always lives, it must be insulting to present such materialistic services!

Alas, there are many others who are seeking Christ as their Savior among the tombs of moral reformation! Our Lord likened the Pharisees to whitewashed sepulchers—inwardly they were full of dead men’s bones, but outwardly they were fairly garnished. Oh, the way in which men, when they get uneasy about their souls, try to whitewash themselves! Some one gross sin is given up, not in heart, but only in appearance, and a certain virtue is cultivated, not in the soul, but only in the outward act—and thus they hope to be saved though they still remain enemies to God, lovers of sin and greedy seekers after the wages of unrighteousness! They hope that the clean outside of the cup and the platter will satisfy the Most High and that He will not be so severe as to look within and try their hearts.

O, Sirs, why do you seek the living among the dead? Many have sought peace for their consciences by their moral reforms—but if the Holy Spirit has truly convicted them of sin—they have soon found that they were looking for a living Christ amidst the tombs. He is not there, for He is risen! If Christ were dead, we might well say to you, “Go and do your best to be your own saviors,” but while Christ is alive, He needs no help of yours—He will save you from top to bottom, or not at all. He will be Alpha and Omega to you and if you put your hands upon His work and think in any way that you can help Him, you have dishonored His holy name—and He will have nothing to do with you! Seek not a living salvation among the sepulchers of outward formality.

Too many, also, are struggling to find the living Christ amidst the tombs which cluster so thickly at the foot of Sinai. They look for life by the Law, whose ministry is death. Men think that they are to be saved by keeping God’s Commandments. They are to do their best and they conceive that their sincere endeavors will be accepted—and they will thus save themselves. This self-righteous idea is diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of the Gospel! The Gospel is not for you who can save yourselves, but for those who are lost! If you can save yourselves, go and do it, but do not mock the Savior with your hypocritical prayers! Go and stumble among the tombs of ancient Israel and perish as they did in the wilderness, for Moses and the Law can never lead you into rest.

The Gospel is for sinners who cannot keep the Law for themselves—who have broken it and incurred its penalty! The Gospel is for those who know that they have done so and confess it. For such, a living Savior has come that He may blot out their transgressions. Seek not salvation by the works of the Law, for by them shall no flesh living be justified. By the Law is the *knowledge* of sin and nothing more! Righteousness, peace, life, salvation come by faith in the living Lord Jesus Christ and by no other means! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” but if you go about to establish your own righteousness, you shall surely perish because you have rejected the righteousness of Christ.

There are others who seek the living Jesus among the tombs by looking for something good in human nature—in their own natural hearts and

dispositions. I can see you now, for I have known you a long time and this has always been your folly—you will go into the morgue of your own nature and say, “Is Jesus here?” Beloved, you are sad and depressed and I do not wonder. Look at yonder dry bones and bleaching skeletons. See that heap of rottenness, that mass of corruption, that body of death—can you bear it? “Ah,” you say, “I am a wretched man, indeed, but I long to find some good thing in my flesh!”

O Beloved, you search in vain! You might as well rake Hell over to find Heaven in it as look into your own carnal nature to find consolation! Behold this day, God has abandoned the old nature and given it up to death. Under the old Law, circumcision was the putting away of the filth of the flesh, as though after this filth were gone the flesh might perhaps be bettered, but now, under the New Covenant, we have a far deeper symbol, for, “know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we, also, should walk in newness of life.” “The old man is buried as a dead thing out of which no good can come.” “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that from now on we should not serve sin.”

God does not attempt to renew the old carnal mind, but to make us new creatures in Christ Jesus. If any man continually practices introspection with a view to consolation, he might as well pile up blocks of Wenham ice with a view to burn down a city! If you are turning over your frames and feelings, your thoughts and imaginations, to discover comfort, you might far sooner hope to find precious diamonds in the sweepings of the roads. “He is not here,” says the whole of our old nature. He is not here, He is risen! And for consolation you must look alone to Him, as He is enthroned above the skies.

Yet again, too many have tried to find Christ amidst the gloomy catacombs of the world’s philosophy. For instance, on Sunday they like to have a sermon full of thought—thought being, in the modern meaning of it, something beyond, if not opposite to, the simple teaching of the Bible. If a man tells his people what he finds in the Scriptures he is said to “talk platitudes.” But if a man amuses his people with his own dreams, however opposed they may be to God’s thoughts, he is a “thinking man,” a “highly intellectual preacher.” There are some who love, above all things, the maundering of daydreamers and the crudities of skeptics. If they can hear what an infidel Professor has said against Inspiration—if they can be indulged with the last new blasphemy—some hearers feel that they are making advances in that higher culture which is so much vaunted nowadays!

But, believe me, the bat-haunted caves of false philosophy and pretended science have been searched again and again, and salvation dwells not in them! In Paul’s day there were Gnostics who tracked all the winding passages of vain-glorious learning, but they only discovered “another gospel which was not another.” The world by wisdom knew not God. After roaming amid the dreary catacombs of philosophy, we come back to

breathe the fresh air of the living Word and concerning the mazes of science, we gasp out the sentence—"He is not there." Reason has not found Him in her deepest mining, nor speculation in her highest soaring, though, indeed, He is not far from any one of us! Athens has her unknown God, but in the simple Gospel God is known in the Person of Jesus.

Socrates and Plato hold up their candles, but Jesus is the soul. Our moderns quibble and dispute and yet a living Christ is among us converting sinners, cheering saints and glorifying God! If the Lord were a dead question for debate, philosophy might help us. But as He is a living power, a grain of faith in Him is better than mountains of philosophy. O you who know not the inner life and the quickening Spirit, what have you to do with the risen Lord? As well might corruption's world become the judge of cherubim as you become the arbiters of the Truth of God concerning Jesus our Lord!

How anxiously do I wish that you who have been searching for salvation in any of these directions would give up the hopeless task and understand that Christ is near you—and if you, with the heart, believe on Him, and with the mouth confess Him, you shall be saved. "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside Me there is none else." This is His cry to you. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Jesus is still living and able to save to the uttermost! All you have to do is simply turn the glance of your faith towards Him—by that faith He becomes yours—and you are saved! But oh, seek not the living among the dead, for He is risen!

III. We will again change our strain and consider, in the third place, UNSUITABLE ABODES. The angels said to the women, "He is not here, but is risen!" As much as to say—since He is alive He does not abide here. The living Christ might have sat down in the tomb—He might have made the sepulcher His resting place—but it would not have been appropriate. And so He teaches us today that Christians should dwell in places appropriate to them. You are risen in Christ—you ought not to dwell in the grave!

I shall now speak to those who, to all intents and purposes, live in the sepulcher though they are risen from the dead. Some of these are excellent people, but their temperament, and perhaps their mistaken convictions of duty, lead them to be perpetually gloomy and desponding. They hope they have believed in Christ, but they are not sure. They trust that they are saved, but they would not be presumptuous enough to say so. They do not dare to be happy in the conviction that they are accepted in the Beloved! They love the mournful string of the harp. They mourn an absent God. They hope that the Divine promises will be fulfilled—they trust that, perhaps, one of these days they may come forth into light and see a little of the brightness of the Lord's love—but now they are ready to quit, they dwell in the valley of the shadow of death and their soul is sorely burdened.

Dear Friend, do you think this is a proper condition for a Christian to be in? I am not going to deny your Christianity for a moment, for I have

not half so much doubt about that as you have. I have a better opinion of you than you have of yourself! The most trembling Believer in Jesus is saved and your little faith will save you. But do you really think that Christ meant you to stay where you are, sitting in the cold and silent tomb amid the dust and ashes? Why keep underground? Why not come into the Master's garden where the flowers are breathing perfume? Why not enjoy the fresh light of full assurance and the sweet breath of the Spirit's comforting influences?

It was a madman who dwelt among the tombs—do not imitate him. Do not say I have been such a sinner that this is all I deserve to enjoy. If you talk of deserving, you have left the Gospel altogether. I know you believe in Jesus and you would not give up your hope for all the world. You feel, after all, that He is a precious Christ to you. Come, then, rejoice in Him though you cannot rejoice in yourself. Come, Beloved, come out of this dreary vault, leave it at once! Though you have lain among the pots, yet now you shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. Your Master comes to you now and says, “O My Dove, that are in the clefts of the rocks, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely.”

Members of the body of a risen Savior, will you still lie in the grave? Arise and come away! Doubt no longer! O Believer, what cause have you to doubt your God? Has He ever lied to you? Question no longer the power of the precious blood. Why should you doubt it? Is it not able to cleanse you from sin? No longer enquire as to whether you are saved or can be—if you believe, you are as safe as Christ is! You can no more perish than Christ can if you are resting in Him—His word has pledged it, His honor is involved in it—He will surely bring you unto the promised rest! Therefore be glad. Why, I have known a Brother live down in the catacombs and vaults so long that he has condemned his Brethren for living in the sunlight, and has said, “I cannot understand a man speaking so confidently, I cannot understand it.”

My dear Brother, because you cannot understand it, it is not, therefore, wrong. There is a great deal about eagles that owls do not understand. You that are always fretting and worrying in that way are sinning against God—you are grieving His Spirit! You are acting inconsistently with your Christian profession and yet you judge others who believe God to be true and take Him at His Word and therefore get joy and comfort out of His promise! Never do that—it would be wicked, indeed, for you to set yourselves up as judges. Instead, pray the Lord to lift up the light of His Countenance upon you, to give you joy and peace in believing, for this He says, “Rejoice in the Lord you righteous, and shout for joy all you that are upright in heart.” Come out of the tomb, dear Brothers and Sisters, for Jesus is not there and if He is not there why should *you* be? He is risen! O rise into comfort, too, in His Spirit's power!

Another sort of people seem to dwell among the tombs—I mean Christians—and I trust real Christians. They are very, very worldly. It is no sin for a man to be diligent in business, but it is a grievous fault when dili-

gence in business destroys fervency in spirit—and when there is no serving of God in daily life. A Christian man should be diligent so as to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but there are some who are not content with this. They have enough, but they covet more, and when they have more, they still stretch their arms like seas to grasp in all the shore. Their main thought is not God, but *gold*—not Christ, but *wealth*.

O Brothers and Sisters, Brothers and Sisters, permit me earnestly to rebuke you lest you receive a severe rebuke in Providence in your own souls. Christ is not here! He dwells not in piles of silver. You may be very rich and yet not find Christ in it at all—and you might be poor, and yet if Christ were with you, you would be happy as the angels. He is not here, He is risen! A marble tomb could not hold Him, nor could a golden tomb have contained Him. Let it not contain you! Unwrap the grave clothes of your heart—cast all your cares on God who cares for you. Let your conversation be in Heaven. Set not your affection on things on the earth, but set it upon things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

Once more on this point, a subject more grievous still—there are some professors who *live* in the house of sin. Yet they say that they are Christ’s people! No, I will not say they live in it, but they do what, perhaps, is worse—they go to sin to find their pleasures. I suppose we may judge of a man more by where he finds his pleasure than by almost anything else. A man may say, “I do not habitually frequent the gaities of the world. I am not *always* found where sin is mixed with mirth and where worldlings dance upon the verge of Hell—but I go there now and then for a special treat.” I cannot help quoting the remark of Rowland Hill, who, when he met with a professor who went to the theater—a member of his Church—said to him, “I understand you attend the theater.” “No,” he said, “I only go for a treat now and then.”

“Ah,” said Mr. Hill, “that makes it all the worse. Suppose that somebody said, ‘Mr. Hill is a strong being, he eats carrion,’ and I am asked, ‘Is it true, Mr. Hill, that you live on carrion?’ ‘No, I do not habitually eat carrion, but I have a dish of it now and then just for a treat.’ Why, you would think I was nastier than I should have been if I had eaten it ordinarily.” There is much force in the remark. If anything that verges on the unclean and lascivious is a treat to you, why then, your very heart is unclean and you are seeking your pleasure and comfort among the dead!

There are some things that men take pleasure in nowadays that are only fit to make idiots laugh, or else to cause angels to weep. Do be particular, Christian men and women, in your company. You are brothers to Christ—will you consort with the sons of Belial? You are heirs of perfection in Christ. You are, even now, arrayed in spotless linen, and you are fair and lovely in the sight of God—you are a royal priesthood, you are the elect of mankind—will you trail your garments in the mire and make yourselves the sport of the Philistines? Will you consort with the beggarly children of the world? No, act according to your pedigree and your newborn nature and never seek the living among the dead. Jesus was never there—go not there yourselves. He loved not the noise and turmoil of the

world’s pleasures. He had meat to eat of another kind. God grant you to feel the resurrection life strong within your spirits.

IV. But I pass on from that. In the fourth place, I want to warn you against UNREASONABLE SERVICES. Those good people to whom the angels said, “He is not here, but is risen!” were bearing a load, and what were they carrying? What is Joanna carrying, and her servants? And Mary, what is she carrying? Why, white linen—and what else? Pounds of spices, the most precious they could buy. What are they going to do? Ah, if an angel could laugh, I should think he must have smiled as he found they were coming to embalm Christ!

“Why He is not here and, what is more, He is not dead! He does not need any embalming, He is alive!” You might have seen all over England, on Good Friday, and also on this Easter Sunday, crowds of people—I have no doubt very sincere people—coming to embalm Christ. They tolled a bell because He was dead and they hung crepe over what they call their altars because He was dead, and they fasted and sung sad hymns over their dead Savior! I bless the Lord my Redeemer is not dead—and I have no bells to toll for Him, either! He is risen, He is not here! Here they come, crowds of them with their white linen and their precious spices to wrap a dead Christ up in!

Are they mad? But they say, “We were only acting it over again.” Oh, was that it? Practical charades, was it? Acting the glorious Atonement of Calvary as a play! Then I accuse the performers of blasphemy before the Throne of the eternal God who hears my words! I charge them with profanity in daring to rehearse in mimicry that which was once done and done forever and is never to be repeated! No, I cannot suppose they meant to mimic the great Sacrifice, and, therefore, I conclude that they thought their Savior to be dead. And so they said, “Toll the bells for Him! Kneel down and weep before His image on a cross.”

If I believed Jesus Christ died on Good Friday, I would feast all day long because His death is over! As He has ordained the high festival of the Lord’s Supper to be His commemoration, I would follow His bidding and keep no fast. Who would sit down and whine over a Friend once dead if you know Him to be restored to life and exalted in power? Why toll a bell for a living Friend? However, I condemn not the good people any more than the angels condemned those holy women, only they may take their spices home and their white linen, too, for Jesus is alive and does not need them!

In other ways a great many fussy people do the same thing. See how they come forward in defense of the Gospel. It has been discovered by geology and by arithmetic that Moses was wrong. Straightway many go out to defend Jesus Christ. They argue for the Gospel and apologize for it, as if it were now a little out of date and we must try to bring it round to suit modern discoveries and the philosophies of the present period. That seems to me exactly like coming up with your linen and precious spices to wrap Him in. Take them away! I question whether Butler and Paley have not, both of them, created more infidels than they ever cured—and whether most of the defenses of the Gospel are not sheer impertinences.

The Gospel does not need defending! If Jesus Christ is not alive and cannot fight His own battles, then Christianity is in an evil case.

But He is and we have only to preach His Gospel in all its naked simplicity, and the power that goes with it will be the evidence of its dignity. No other evidence will ever convince mankind. Apologies and defenses are well intended, no doubt—so was the embalming well intended by these good women—but they are of small value. Give Christ room, give His preachers space and opportunities to preach the Gospel and let the Truth of God be brought out in simple language! And you will soon hear the Master say, “Take away the spices, take away the linen! I am alive, I do not need these.” We see the same kind of thing in other good people who are sticklers for old-fashioned, stereotyped ways—they must have everything conducted exactly as it used to be conducted 100 or 200 years ago. Puritan order must be maintained and there must be no divergence.

The way of putting the Gospel must be exactly the same way in which it was put by good old Dr. So-and-So, and in the pulpit there must be the most awful dreariness that can possibly be compassed. And the preacher must be devoutly dull and all the worship must be serenely proper—lots of spices and fine linen to wrap a dead Christ up in! I delight to break down conventional proprieties. It is a grand thing to put one’s foot right through merely human regulations—life cannot be strapped down by regulations fit only for the dead! Death lies wrapped up like a mummy in the museum—it will always do the proper thing, or rather won’t do anything at all. But Life, reality, will show itself unexpected ways. Life will say what Death could not say. It will break out where it was not expected and break all your laws and regulations into a thousand pieces!

But still I see the good people holding up their hands in horror, and crying out, “Bring here the Arabian gum, the myrrh and the aloes. Bring here the linen—we must take care of our dear, dead Master.” Leave Him alone! Leave Him alone, Man, He is alive and does not need your wrapping up. I do not hesitate to say that a great deal of Church order among Dissenters and Episcopalians, Presbyterians and all sorts of denominations—and a great deal of propriety and decorum, and regulation, and, “As-it-was-in-the-beginning-is-now-and-ever-shall-be-isms”—are only so much spices and knell for a dead Christ. But Christ is alive and what is needed is to give Him room!

I do not say this for my own sake—am I not always proper?—but I say it for the sake of earnest Brother Evangelists who, in preaching to the poor, use extravagance of language and perhaps of action. Let them use it. Scoffers say they are histrionic. Was ever anybody ever half so histrionic as Ezekiel? Did not all the Prophets do strange things to get the attention of the people? Why, the same charge was brought against Whitfield and Wesley—“These people are breaking through all rules,” and so on. What a blessed thing it is when men can do it! Mr. Hill went to Scotland to preach the Gospel and they said he rode on the back of all order and decorum.

Then said *he*, “I will call my pair of horses by those names, and make it true.” It was true! No doubt he did ride on the back of order and decorum, but then he drew souls to Christ with those two strange steeds and his

breaking through rules enabled him to get at men and women who never would have been got at in any other way. Be ready to set Christ at liberty and give His servants liberty to serve Him as the Spirit of God shall guide them.

V. I wanted to speak, last of all, upon THE AMAZING NEWS which these good women received—“He is not here, but is risen!” This was amazing news to His enemies. They said, “We have killed Him—we have put Him in the tomb—it is all over with Him.” Aha! Scribe, Pharisee, Priest! What have you done? Your work is all undone, for He is risen! It was terrifying news for Satan. He, no doubt, dreamed that he had destroyed the Savior—but He is risen! What a thrill had gone through all the regions of Hell! What news it had been for the grave!

Now it was utterly destroyed and Death had lost his sting! What news it was for trembling saints. “He is risen, indeed.” They plucked up courage and they said, “The good cause is still the right one and it will conquer, for our Christ is still alive as its Head! It was good news for sinners! Yes, it is good news for every sinner here. Christ is alive! If you seek Him He will be found of you. He is not a dead Christ to whom I point you today. He is risen! And He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. There is no better news for sad men, for distressed, desponding and despairing men than this—the Savior lives—able, still, to save and willing to receive you to His tender heart!

This was glad news, Beloved, for all the angels and all the spirits in Heaven! Glad news, indeed, for them. And this day it shall be glad news to us, and we will live in the power of it by the help of His Spirit. And we will tell it to our Brethren that they may rejoice with us, and we will not despair any longer. We will give way no more to doubts and fears, but we will say to one another, “He is risen, indeed: therefore let our hearts be glad.” The Lord bless you, and in coming to His table, as I trust many of His people will come, let us meet our risen Master. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 24.

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

JESUS NEAR BUT UNRECOGNIZED

NO. 1180

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

***“But their eyes were restrained that they
should not know Him.”
Luke 24:16.***

THE Lord may be present with His people and yet they may not be conscious of it. They may be conscious of the *effect* produced thereby, but not of the fact itself. When the Lord visited Abraham in his tent on the plains of Mamre, at the first, at least, Abraham thought he was receiving a way-faring man and so he entertained the Angel of the Covenant unawares. When the Lord appeared unto Jacob he rose up from the vision and said, “Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not.” Afterwards at the brook Jabbok, when the Covenant Angel wrestled with him, Jacob was not aware of the exact Character of the mysterious personage, for he said, “Tell me Your name.” He did not understand who it was with whom he wept, made supplication and prevailed.

The same is true of Joshua. He saw a man standing with his sword drawn in his hand, and he challenged him, mistaking him for a warrior—he did not recognize the Person of his Lord until He said, “No, but as Captain of the Lord’s host am I come.” It is possible, then, for saints to be favored very remarkably with the Presence of their Master and yet for some cause or other they may not know that He is specially near them. So was it in the case before us, which let us consider.

I. We shall note, first, REASONS WHY, IN THE VERY PRESENCE OF THEIR MASTER, SAINTS MAY NOT KNOW THAT HE IS NEAR. The reason in this case was twofold—first, because *their eyes were restrained*. And secondly, because, as Mark tells us, *He appeared unto them in another form*. We must not suppose either of these reasons to be untrue, but that they are both true, and that the two evangelists have thus given us the *whole* of the Truth of God, one taking note of one part of it and the other of the other. The first reason, then, why these good men did not perceive the Presence of their Master was that, “*their eyes were restrained*.” There was a blinding cause *in them*. What was it? We cannot dare say—where Scripture does not strictly inform us, it is not for us to dogmatize.

By some mysterious operation, their eyes, which were able to see other things, were not able to detect the Presence of their Master. They thought Him to be some common traveler. Still, we are permitted to say that in their case, and in the case of a great many disciples, their eyes may have been restrained through *sorrow*. They were very grieved for they had lost their Master. He was gone they knew not where. They would have been

glad, even, if they could have found His body, but certain women had gone to the sepulcher, and though they told a wonderful story about a vision of angels, yet to these men it sounded like a knell in their ears, “for Him they found not.”

Ah, there is no sorrow to a Christian like the loss of his Master’s Presence! May you and I never be able to bear it with composure. “The days shall come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, then shall they fast.” Fast, indeed! There is no fast like that which sets in when those who have once seen the Bridegroom’s beauty and tasted of the love that is better than wine, have to cry out, “O that I knew where I might find Him!” That careless spouse who had slept and would not open to her Beloved for a while—when her heart was touched and moved for Him—rose up and searched through the streets of the city for Him. She could not rest until she found Him and she made every watchman on the walls hear her question—“Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?” Sorrow will unsettle the judgment. Even holy sorrow for sin and grief for the absence of the Master may, sometimes, put a mote into the eye and destroy its clear vision. Even tears of repentance have prevented men from seeing Truths of God which might have made their hearts glad.

Again, in their case, in addition to the mysterious operation which held their eyes, which we do not attempt to account for, we have no doubt their eyes were restrained with *unbelief*. Had they been expecting to see Jesus, I think they would have recognized Him. If they had gone to Emmaus fully persuaded that He was alive somewhere upon the earth, as soon as they had seen Him approach, they would at least have said, “Perhaps this is the Master! Perhaps even now He is coming to us.” They knew that His delights were with the sons of men, so that He would not long conceal Himself from His beloved while He was on earth. They knew, also, that He loved His own to the end and would love them still. They might, therefore, have felt sure that He would come to meet them—and had they been believing and expecting—they would, probably, have discovered Him at once.

Whether it is so or not, I am sure, dear Brothers and Sisters, that our unbelief has often hid the Lord from our eyes. What might we have known of our Lord by this time—what might we have tasted and handled of Him by this time if it had not been for our unbelief? He might say to some of us, “Have I been so long a time with you and yet have you not known Me?” By reason of our unbelief we have not dived into the mysteries of His heart! We have not understood the fullness of His love! Oh, for more faith! Faith has the eagle’s eyes—it can see where other eyes cannot penetrate. Oh, for the eyes of love—the dove’s eyes of love, by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set—for faith and love together make up a blessed pair of optics which can see the Lord even when clouds and darkness are roundabout Him!

Whatever may have been mysterious about the restraining of the disciples’ eyes, they were also somewhat restrained by *ignorance*. They had failed to see what is plain enough in Scripture, that the Messiah must suffer, bleed and die. They had their sacred books and yet were so little ac-

quainted with their real meaning that, albeit Christ is in every page of the Old Testament, yet they did not perceive Him there! And so, not knowing that all this must be as it had happened, and expecting something very different and more in accordance with the traditional views of their race—they did not recognize their Master. If it were not so with them, it is certainly so with many of God's people today. Some professors—I speak it with sorrow—do not know more than the most elementary doctrines of the Gospel. With the exception of knowing themselves sinners and Christ a Savior, they know nothing!

Justification, in the full glory of it, is hidden from their eyes. They do not consider the work of the Holy Spirit. The fullness of the union of the child of God with Christ and the Glory that is to come, which already casts a halo about the saints, they have not perceived. They do not study the Word so as to enter into its depths. They are afraid of some doctrines because they are said to be, "High Calvinism," and of other doctrines because they are denounced as, "Arminianism." They are frightened into joining a party, instead of taking the Truth as God has revealed it and beholding Jesus sitting upon the Truth like a king upon a throne of ivory. Beloved, the scales of ignorance have often restrained the eyes of the saints—it is well when the Holy Spirit opens our understandings to receive the Scriptures and enables us to see Jesus Christ as He truly is in the field of the Word of God—like a precious treasure hidden therein! Thus Jesus may be with His people, but they may not see Him because of something in themselves.

At other times they may not see Him because of something in the Master. Listen, as I have told you, Mark says He appeared unto them "*in another form.*" I suppose he means in a form in which they had not seen Him before. The Lord Jesus Christ has appeared at times in the Old Testament to His servants, but on each occasion in a different form. To Abraham, who was a stranger and a wayfaring man in the land, He appeared as a pilgrim. To Jacob, who was a wrestler with his brother, He appeared as a wrestler. To Joshua, who was a soldier, fighting to conquer Canaan, He appeared as a soldier. To the holy children who were in the furnace He appeared as one walking amidst the burning coals. He puts Himself into fellowship with His people. So here the two travelers were overtaken by a third *traveler*—He appeared to them in that form in which they themselves were!

As He is to make them like Himself, He begins by making Himself like they are. "As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, so He, also, Himself took part of the same." Jesus condescends to our condition and our circumstances. There is no position into which Providence may cast us but what Jesus can sympathize with us. We see Him best under certain characters when we, ourselves, are in that form of character. Beloved, it may be you are a beginner in Divine Grace and, up to now, the Lord Jesus has appeared to you with a smile upon His face—as a gentle Shepherd leading the lambs. But possibly for a while He has gone, or you think

so, for you feel His rebuke in your soul as if He were saying to you, “O fool and slow of heart.”

You conclude within yourself, “This cannot be Christ. I thought He was always a feeder of lambs.” Yes, so He is, but He sometimes comes with a scourge of small cords to chase out buyers and sellers from His Temple. He is the same Christ, only you have not seen Him in that Character. Perhaps you have only seen Jesus as your joy and consolation—under that aspect may you always see Him, but, remember—“He shall sit as a Refiner. He shall purify the sons of Levi.” When you are in the furnace, suffering affliction, trial and depression of spirit, the Refiner is Christ, the same loving Christ in a new Character. Up to then you have seen Christ as breaking the Bread of Life to you and giving you to drink of the Water of Life, but you must learn that His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge the floor of your heart. He is not another Christ, but He puts on another aspect and exercises another *office*.

At first, poor sinners are content to see Jesus as their Priest who cleanses them from sin. They must go on to see Him as their King who conquers them by the sacred arms of love—and they must also know Him as their Prophet—leading them into the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. They must not wonder if He appears unto them in another form while they are learning more of Him. This kind of sacred philosophy comes by *experience*, for how often do we find precious children of God distressed because they have not, today, the same sweets they used to have? At first we give little children such food as will be easily assimilated—they have nothing else but milk. By-and-by hard crusts are given them, for there are wisdom teeth to be cut. Suppose when we give them more solid food, they began crying out for the milk, again? Should we give it to them?

The Lord does not wish you always to be babes! He would have you grow into men in Christ Jesus. And though Christ is always your food whether He comes to you as milk or as meat, yet still He will not always be milk to you lest you should remain a babe. He means to be meat to you that your senses may be exercised, that you may be able to understand the stronger and deeper Truths of the Kingdom of God. Do not, therefore, be astonished! Or, if you are, let this always comfort you, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever,” and though He may change the form under which He manifests Himself, yet He is the immutable Lord of Love.

You have thus heard two reasons why saints may have Christ with them and yet may not discern Him. First, because of themselves—their eyes are restrained. And, next, because of Himself—He may appear in another form.

II. Secondly, let us speak of *the manners of the saints when they are in such a case*. When their Master is with them and they do not know Him, how do they conduct themselves? First, *they are sad* because the Presence of Christ, if Christ is unknown, is not comfortable, though it may be edifying. It may be for rebuke, as it was to them, but it certainly is not for

consolation. For joy, we must have a known Christ. Saints are always downcast when Jesus is not known to be present and, as I have said before, may we never be otherwise than unhappy if our Lord is hid from us. I can understand the child of God saying, "I am out of fellowship with Christ," but I cannot understand his saying that calmly and deliberately, without tears, without deep regret and intense repentance!

I can comprehend that the heir of Heaven may walk in darkness and see no light, but I cannot understand how he can be at home in darkness. Set a bird of the day flying by night and see how it flutters, and how uneasy it is. Go with a candle, if you will, to any place where a number of birds have made their nests, and see how strangely bewildered they are. The only bird that will be at home in the dark is the owl, the bird of the night—and if any one of you can be happy without your Master you are of the night. If you can be content without the sunlight of Jesus' Presence, depend upon it, you are one of the bats of the cavern—you are not one of the eagles of the day. God grant us to be like these disciples—sad, doubly sad, if we do not know our God to be with us.

Next, these disciples, though they did not know that their Master was there, *conversed together*—a good example for all Christians. Whether you are in the full joy of your faith or not, speak often to one another. He who is strong will help the weak Brother. If two walk together, if one shall trip, perhaps the other will not, and so he will have a hand to spare to support his friend. Even if both saints are unhappy, yet some good result will come from mutual sympathy. The one is saying, "I have lost my Master," and the other replies, "I have lost my Master, too," and they will both know that they are not the only persons in such a case—and that is some help to a man in sorrow. Sometimes even a gleam of light, such as will arise from the fact that another is in the same plight, may be useful.

Christian people, commune together, but let your communications always be like these which are recorded in this chapter. Speak of *Him*, talk of *Him*, what you know of *Him*, of your sorrows about *Him*, even of your neglects of *Him*, of your ill treatment of *Him*, your sins against *Him*. Talk of these things to one another, for so long as they are about *Him*, it will be good, even, to confess your faults to one another, for it will lead you to pray for one another and to join your prayers together, so that there will be greater strength in the petitions. For if two of you are agreed, you know what power that sweet agreement has with Heaven. "They that feared the Lord spoke often to one another."

A blessed practice, an ancient practice, an edifying practice, a God-honoring practice—one which so pleased God that He turned eavesdropper—came under the window to listen to what they said and took His notebook and recorded it—"a book of remembrance was written." And He has published it and given His blessing to "those that fear the Lord and that think upon His name." Beloved, even if you are out of fellowship with Jesus, do not forsake the assembly of God's people. Though you may feel unworthy to speak with them, yet get among them and perhaps, there, you will find your Master.

Note, next, that these disciples, in addition to communicating with one another, were *ready to be communed with by good men*. When this new Pilgrim on the road came up and asked them a question, they were not shy, they were ready to give an answer. They poured out their hearts to Him and He talked to them, and they were soon on the way to being instructed. It is well for Christians to be willing to receive the Truth of God, not merely through their own immediate companions, but from others who fear the Lord, who perhaps may have looked at things from a different point of view and who may have received clearer light. These two disciples were communicative. It is a pity that Christian people so often shut themselves up within themselves.

This is a particular fault of English people. You may travel all over the world in the same railway carriage with an Englishman and he will not say a word to you! I am sure Christian people would get much good from one another if they would not be so distant. Many precious children of God have sat side by side by the hour together and out of undue reserve, which they have thought most proper, they have failed to communicate—and have missed the opportunity of a sacred commerce of thought and experience which would have enriched them both. Be ready to communicate (not, of course, being indiscreet, for there is such a thing as casting pearls before swine). Using a heavenly prudence, be free to speak to those who are willing to converse concerning Christ.

John Bunyan in his, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” has a very witty and pithy piece about Mr. Talkative, who joined with the pilgrims. And, if you remember, he would soon have wearied them with his chat, had not Christian and Hopeful adopted a capital expedient for getting rid of him. They would talk of nothing else but their inward experience in the things of God. And after a while Mr. Talkative dropped behind—that was not the sort of talk he wanted! And you will not long be troubled with the company of a gentleman who does not love your Master if you keep to the grand theme. He will soon be sick of you and go where his trashy wares are saleable, which they do not appear to be in your market, for you have better goods on hand. These good people were communicative to those who could sympathize with them.

Note, again, that though they did not know their Master was there, yet *they avowed their hopes concerning Him*. I cannot commend all that they said, there was not much faith in it, but they did confess that they were followers of Jesus of Nazareth. “We trusted that it had been He which should deliver Israel. And, besides all this, today is the third day.” And they went on to let out the secret that they belonged to His disciples. “Certain women of our company made us astonished.” They were under a cloud and sad, but they were not so cowardly as to disown their connection with the Crucified. They were not so far gone in depression of spirit as to talk about the whole thing as though it were to be disavowed or concealed, lest anybody should say, “You were the foolish dupes of an impostor.”

They still avowed their hope. And oh, Beloved, when your comforts are at the lowest ebb, still cling to your Master! If I never get a smile from His face as long as I live, I must speak well of Him. If never again I see Him, yet is He the Chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. I like to see the strong retentiveness of many an almost despairing saint. I remember a minister who was talking to a poor bedridden woman who was under a grievous cloud, and she said, "Sir, I do not think I have any faith or any love for Christ whatever." He knew better, for he knew what her life had been, and so, walking up to the window, he wrote on a piece of paper, "I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ," and he brought it back with a pencil, and said, "Now, Sarah, sign that."

When she had read it, she said, "Oh, Sir, I would be torn to pieces before I would sign that." "Oh, but you said it just now." "Ah, Sir, but I could not put my hand to it." "Then I suspect, Sarah, that you do love Him." "Well, Sir, whether I do or not, I will never give Him up." I remember visiting a woman, years ago, whom I never could comfort till she died, and then she died triumphantly. I said to her, "What do you come to the Chapel for? What is the good of it if there is nothing there for you?" "No," she said, "still I like to be there. If I perish, I will perish listening to the precious Word of God." "Well, but why is it you remain a member of the Church, as you say you are not a saved soul?" "Well," she said, "I know I am not worthy, but unless you turn me out I will never go out, for I like to be with God's people. I desire to be numbered with them, too, though I know I am not worthy, for I have no hope."

I said, "Well, now, come, I will give you five pounds if you will give up your hope altogether." And I drew out my purse. "Five pounds!" she said, and she looked at me with utter horror. "Five pounds!" She would not give Christ up for 5,000 *worlds*. "But you have not got Him, you said." "No, Sir, I am afraid I have not got Him, but I will never give Him up." Ah, there came out the real truth. So was it with these two disciples—they talked as if they could not give Him up! Though they were afraid that He had not risen from the dead, yet they remained His disciples, and spoke of, "Certain women of our company." They were half-unconsciously clinging to the forlorn cause in its very worst estate. And, Beloved, so will we. We will say with Job—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."—

***"When our eye of hope is dim,
We'll trust in Jesus, sink or swim.
Still at His footstool bow the knee,
And Israel's God our help shall be."***

But, passing on—these poor people, though very sad, and without their Master as they thought, were very *willing to bear rebukes*. Although the word used by our Lord should not be rendered, "fools," yet it sounds somewhat hard, even, to call them inconsiderate and thoughtless—but we do not discover any resentment on their part because they were so severely chided. Souls that really love Jesus do not grow angry when faithfully rebuked. Beloved, do you approve the sermon which cuts you up root and branches? Are you thankful for the ministry which smites your

faults? Do you say to the Lord, as you bare your bosom to the sword of His Word, "Search me and try me"? Ah, then, there is something more in you than in the man of the world, for his proud heart rebels when his conscience is too roughly assailed.

I had, the other day, some such conversation as this reported to me—A man and his wife had come to the Tabernacle. The wife said she liked to go to Church—her husband said he preferred to come here. What do you think were the reasons for each choice? The woman said, "Spurgeon is too plain." "That is why I like him," said the husband. "He is too personal," said the wife, "I do not think people ought to be talked to in that way." "That is what we need," said the husband, "we need to have it brought home to us. What is the good of our going where there is nothing said that really belongs to us?" That is just so. We do not need a Gospel that belongs to the people on the moon, but to ourselves! Some admire a preacher who can send a stone so high that it never hits anything—but we need a preacher who can sling a stone to a hair's breadth and not miss the target of the conscience. Whatever deficiency there may be about them, those are right at bottom who can bear to be somewhat roughly rebuked by their Master.

And then, they were *willing to learn*. Never better pupils, never a better Teacher, never a better school book, never a better explanation! They were disciples, with Christ to teach them, with the Bible for a school book and Himself to be the exposition—so they listened while He went on to open up from Genesis right through the Old Testament—the things concerning Himself! Poor child of God, are you in doubt and trouble? Still be anxious to learn of Jesus! Pray the Lord to enlighten you! Ask Him to teach you His statutes and to open your eyes to behold wondrous things out of His Law, for whatever God's children may *not* be, they are a teachable people. They shall all sit down at His feet and all receive of His Words.

Again, dear Friends, notice that while the two were willing to learn, *they also wished to retain the teacher and His instruction, and to treat Him kindly, too*. They said, "Abide with us; the day is far spent." They had been benefited by Him and therefore they wished to show their gratitude to Him. Have you learned so much that you are willing to learn more? Are you of a teachable heart, ready to receive, with meekness, the engrafted Word of God? Now, I speak not of *myself*, for I have no cause to complain, but I have known true servants of Christ whom the people have driven forth from them because they were fickle and needed a change, for change's sake. They have not said, "Abide with us." Neither have they given them to eat, but though they have been worthy servants of God they have been thrust out not knowing where they should go—and their people not caring where.

I believe that God resents these things and that the unkind treatment of His servants will bring judgment upon the Church. If He sends ministers with His message, He expects them to be treated with respect and kindness. Just as Moses said to Hobab, so wise Believers say to God-sent ministers, "Come with us and we will do you good, and you shall be to us

instead of eyes, for you know where we should encamp in the wilderness; and as the Lord deals with us so we will deal with you." These two disciples entertained their instructor and would not let Him go.

And, once more, though they did not know that their Master was with them, *they were well prepared to join in worship*. Some have thought that the breaking of bread that night was only Christ's ordinary way of offering a blessing before meat. It does not seem so to me, because they had already eaten and were in the middle of the meal when He took the bread and blessed it. I think He did, then and there, set before them those dear tokens of His passion, which He bids us feast upon on the first day of the week, that we may show His death until He shall come. Whichever it was, whether the devotion proper to their own table, or the devotion proper to the *Lord's Table*, they joined in it.

Now, it is a strong temptation of Satan with children of God, when they are full of sorrow, to tempt them to stay away from the means of Grace. Because they are in the dark, the temptation is to keep them away from the light—but oh, children of God, do not "forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Do not be tempted to stay away from the place where God has met you and made the place of His feet glorious! Join, still, with the Lord's people—and if your faith trembles, yet, nevertheless, come humbly to the Table. Christ has not a Table for those without doubts, else you might not come—He has not made it a table for those without *sin*, else you might not come—but He bids *all* His disciples come, you among them!

III. Lastly, let us try to set forth THE ACTIONS OF BELIEVERS WHEN THEY DISCOVER THEIR LORD. "Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." What then? Well, first, *they discovered that there had been, all along in their hearts, evidences of His Presence*. "Did not our hearts burn within us while He spoke with us by the way?" This heavenly heartburn never comes to any but through the Presence of the Lord Jesus. They began to look at one another, and say, "Ought we not to have known that it was none other than our great Teacher by the very fact that when we did not see Him our hearts were burning for Him?"

Now let me turn this text around a little. There is a poor sinner here who says, "Oh, how I wish that I could find the Savior, but I cannot find Him." Why? Your heart is burning after Him! Who is it that makes you long after Him? Those strong desires are kindled by His Sovereign Grace. He is near you. "But I feel so much of the evil of sin! Oh, that it were rolled away. My heart cries, 'Give me Christ, or else I die.'" Do you think that humanity unrenewed by Grace cries in that way? Surely the Master is near you! There is already, if not a summer in your soul, at least a spring-tide. The ice is breaking up, the buds are beginning to swell, the sun is coming and you are beginning to feel His glow! The Lord is not far from you and one of these days when you come to look back upon it you will say, "I did not know it, but He was close to me. I said, 'Where shall I find Him?' and all the while He was close upon me!"

I now turn to the child of God. You, perhaps, have said, "I have lost communion with my Lord in that happy form I once enjoyed. But I can never be satisfied without Him. I could sit down and cry my eyes out to think—

***"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed—
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."***

Where does this kind of heartburn come from? From the devil? Then he has undertaken a new business! Does it come from yourself? Is that a sheep calling the shepherd? To me it looks like the Shepherd seeking the sheep! But you say, "Oh, how I wish I could return to walking with God, in Christ, and sitting under His shadow with great delight." Do you desire it vehemently, passionately, as they that wait for the morning? Who made you desire it, do you think? Is He so far away where those strong desires are present? I know it is not so!

"Ah," you say, "I feel in my soul that I love Him. Yet I am afraid I have no fellowship with Him. But when I hear His name extolled, I say in my heart, 'That is the sweetest music under Heaven.' When I hear my Master spoken well of, I wish I had the tongue of men and angels that I might speak of Him, too. He cannot be too greatly extolled for me. I find tears in my eyes when I hear of His true love for sinners. Sometimes I am afraid I deceive myself, and am not a partaker in it, but still He is a precious Christ, and glory be to His name." Do you think you would have your heart burning like that if He had quite gone? I think not!

You feel your heart burning for the conversion of others! You say, "Oh that we had a revival of religion everywhere, that the kingdom would come unto Christ and the crown were set upon His head over ten thousand times ten thousand human hearts!" Your heart breaks for the longing that Christ may be glorified among men, and yet you say, "I am afraid He is not with me"? One of these days you will say, "Did not my heart burn within me? He must have been near." You are blindfolded and cannot see the fire, yet, if on a cold day you get very hot, I should think there must be a fire near you! If you cannot see Jesus to your soul's comfort, yet still, if there is such glowing and burning as these, He is very near you!

Sometimes on the Sabbath do you not know what it is to say, "Oh, my Lord and Master, the days are weary in which I do not see You—when shall I behold You face to face?" You have heard of the glories of Christ in Heaven and you have longed to peep through the keyhole, if that were all, that you might see the King in His beauty! And you have cried, "Why is His chariot so long in coming?" You have often wished you could—

***"Sit and sing yourself away
To everlasting bliss."***

Well, you may be sure the lodestone is not far off when the needle is so much moved. When your eyes are opened you will say, "Why, He was *with* me! He was with *me*! Did not my heart burn within me while He spoke

with me by the way? My doubts and fears and trembling heart forbade my understanding how near the precious Christ was to me.”

The next thing they did was to compare joys. The one said to the other, “Did not our hearts burn within us?” It is always a good thing for Believers to communicate their returning enjoyment. Somehow we are rather shy as to speaking of our joys. Ought we to be so? One does not mind speaking of his faults to his Brother, for there does not seem to be any assumption in that. But if the Lord is very gracious I have known Believers feel as if they could not speak of it lest they should seem to exalt themselves. We must studiously avoid everything like self-exaltation, but we must not rob our Master of a particle of His Glory. If we have seen the Lord, let us tell our Brothers and Sisters so, and say to one another, “Did not our hearts burn within us?”

If you had a very dull and dry discourse you would get together and say, “Oh dear, dear! Our Sundays are dreadfully wasted. We do not profit. The good man is so dull and dead,” and so on. You would be sure to say that, would you not? Well, when the Lord refreshes you, say to one another, “It was good to be there this morning. We had a feast of fat things. The Lord was with us.” Do not leave the table of spiritual bread till, like a good child, you have thanked your Father. Once again. These disciples, when they saw the Master, *hastened to tell others about it*. It was the dead of the night, I suppose, by the time they knew their Lord.

Our Lord Jesus had none of the prejudices of the High Church fraternity against breaking bread in the evening. That has always seemed to me to be the oddest of their freaks—that they will persist in contending that the Lord’s *Supper* ought to take place early in the morning! They ought not to call it a, “supper”—they should call it a breakfast. I never could understand a certain class of Christians, great sticklers, too, for Scripture, who always will have the Lord’s Supper in the morning of the day, without any precedent, that I know of, for turning an evening meal into a morning one. I grant there is no importance whatever in the time—the only importance that I speak of is putting an importance on a *wrong* time—which those do who say it ought to be in the early part of the day. We say that whenever Believers meet together they may break bread in remembrance of their Lord! If, however, there is one time more like the first occasion, it certainly is the evening of the day.

Though it was late, the two disciples set off on a seven-and-a-half mile journey, in the dead of night, to tell others that they had seen the Lord! If ever you find Christ to the joy of your heart, go and tell His people about it. Yes, and tell sinners, too, and put yourself to inconvenience to do it. Nowadays we are willing to testify if we can do it very comfortably—but I love to hear of those good Brethren who will walk many miles on Sunday to preach the Gospel—who are willing to sacrifice ease and comfort so that they may do good to others, just as these did. Oh, for more enthusiasm in telling of the Savior’s love and hearing of it! We need nice cushions and very comfortable pews, don’t we, nowadays? When we were first converted

we would stand *anywhere* in the crowd if we could but hear the Savior's name!

I remember when I would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear about my Master, or to preach about Him, too. May our earnest love to Him never grow cold and our enthusiasm never depart. May a midnight's walk be nothing to us if we may but declare even to unbelieving brethren what we have seen of our blessed Lord! It is a good message, and it is a good errand to go upon, when we go to tell of Jesus—and it will bring good to our own souls.

I notice that while they told of their Lord's appearing, *they made mention of the ordinance which had been blest to them*, for they especially said that He had been known to them in the breaking of bread. I like to see them mention that, for, though ordinances are nothing in themselves, and are not to be depended upon, they are blest to us. There is a tendency among us, because others make too much of ordinances, to make too *little* of them. Do not treat Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or the reading of the Word of God, or the hearing of it, in a slighting manner. If these are blest to you, bless God for them! And if God speaks to you through them, do not forget to say that they have been valuable channels of communication.

And now, dear child of God, I pray for you and for myself that we may always have our Master with us—and may know it! But, if we lose His recognized Presence, may we act as these two disciples did, or better. May the Lord lead us on from strength to strength and glorify Himself in us. If there is any poor sinner here who needs Jesus Christ, let him remember that his desire after Christ is an indication of the nearness of the Savior to Him. Christ is always within eye-shot. He cries, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." He is close at hand to every seeking soul. "If you seek Him He will be found of you." "Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near." Trust Him and He is yours. May Jesus abide with you. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 24:1-35.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—766, 776, 785.**

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FOLLY OF UNBELIEF

NO. 1980

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 28, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*Then He said unto them, O foolish men and slow of heart
to believe all that the Prophets have spoken.”
Luke 24:25.*

THE two disciples who walked to Emmaus and conversed together and were sad, were true Believers. We may not judge men by their occasional feelings. The possession of gladness is no clear evidence of Grace and the existence of depression is no sure sign of insincerity. The brightest eyes that look for Heaven have sometimes been so that they could not see their heart's true joy. Be not cast down, my Brothers and Sisters, if occasionally the tears of sadness bathe your cheeks. Jesus may be drawing near to you and yet you may be troubled by mysteries of grief.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to the two disciples and took a walk of some seven miles with them to remove their sadness, for it is not the will of our Lord that His people should be cast down. The Savior does, Himself, that which He commanded the ancient Prophet to do. "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem." Thus He spoke and thus He acts. He was pleased when He went away to send us another Comforter, because He wishes us to abound in comfort. But that promise proves that He was and is, Himself, a Comforter. Do not dream, when in sadness, that your Lord has deserted you—rather reckon that for this very reason He will come to you! As her babe's cry quickens the mother's footsteps to come to it more speedily, so shall your griefs hasten the visits of your Lord. He hears your groans, He sees your tears—are they not in His bottle? He will come to you as the God of All Consolation.

Observe that when the Savior did come to these mourning ones, He acted very wisely towards them. He did not at once begin by saying, "I know why you are sad." No, He waited for them to speak and, in His patience, drew forth from them the items and particulars of their trouble. You that deal with mourners, learn here the way of wisdom! Do not talk too much, yourselves. Let the swelling heart relieve itself. Jeremiah derives a measure of help from his own lamentations—even Job feels a little the better from pouring out his complaint. Those griefs which are silent run very deep and drown the soul in misery. It is good to let sorrow have a tongue where sympathy has an ear. Allow those who are seeking the Lord to tell you their difficulties—do not discourse much with them till they have done so. You will be the better able to deal with them and they will be the better prepared to receive your words of cheer. Often, by facing the

disease of sorrow, the cure is half effected, for many doubts and fears vanish when described. Mystery gives a tooth to misery and when that mystery is extracted by a clear description, the sharpness of the woe is over. Learn, then, you who would be comforters, to let mourners hold forth their wound before you pour in the oil and wine!

Learn also a sacred lesson, O you mourners! It is well for you, when you are pouring out your griefs, that you do so before the Lord. These two troubled wayfarers, though they knew it not, were telling their sorrow to Him who best of all could help them to bear it. You may tell your friends, if you will, and it will be some relief to you, but if you seek the Throne of Grace and make the Redeemer your chief Confidant, your relief will be sure! Get alone; shut the door; bow there, apart from the disciples, and say, "Jesus, Master, I would tell You that which saddens me! O great High Priest, who was compassed with infirmities, You will understand me better than my nearest friend and I would place myself beneath Your care!" How great the privilege that we have access with boldness to the ear and heart of Jesus our Lord!

Again, learn another point of wisdom. When our Lord had heard their statement of distress He might immediately have comforted them—a word would have done it. Did He not say, "Mary," and did she not at once turn and say, "Rabboni," with ecstatic delight? He went more wisely to work than to administer hurried consolation—He rather rebuked than encouraged them. He began by saying, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the Prophets have spoken!" Observe that I quote the Revised Version, for the Authorized is too harsh. Our Lord did not call them fools, but *foolish persons*. The difference is rather in the manner than in the sense. He chided them gently, but still wisely. He let them know that their unbelief was blameworthy and He called them foolish for indulging it. O beloved Brother, if your Master chide you, do not doubt His love! If, when you go to Him in grief, He answers you roughly, it is His love scarcely disguised, which thus seeks your truest welfare. If you believe in your Lord, you will reply, "Master, say on." If He calls you foolish, you will wonder that He does not say something worse of you—and in any case you will trust Him after the manner of Job when He said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Especially observe that our Savior's rebuke was aimed at their unbelief. Unbelief, which we so often excuse, and for which we almost claim pity, is not treated by our Lord as a trifle. It is for this that He calls them foolish. It is about this that He chides the slowness of their hearts. Do not let us readily excuse ourselves for mistrust of God. If we ever doubt our gracious Lord, let us feel ourselves to be verily guilty. Regard unbelief as a fault rather than a weakness. Brace yourselves to seek a braver and more constant faith than you have reached as yet. Why should we go on blundering and misjudging and, therefore, fretting when a little consideration will set us right and, at the same time, cause us to honor our Lord and to be, ourselves, filled with joy and peace through believing?

I am going to handle this rebuke as God the Holy Spirit shall help me—first addressing it *to the true Believer* and, secondly, *to the seeker*. I shall have to bring forth some bitter things which will act as a tonic, but by giv-

ing tone to your system, they will, in the end, remove your fears better than sweeter matters would have done. Hear, then, our Lord say, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the Prophets have spoken!”

In speaking to Believers, I would have them observe that our Lord rebuked their unbelief under two heads. First, *as being folly* and secondly, *as arising from slowness of heart*.

I. First, then, UNBELIEF IS FOLLY. Not to believe all that the Prophets have spoken and not to draw comfort out of it, is great folly. Folly! Note the word. “O fools! O foolish men!” It is folly such as makes the tender Jesus cry out!

It is folly because it arises from lack of thought and consideration. Not to think is folly. To give way to sadness, when a little thought would prevent it, is foolishness, is it not? If these two disciples had sat down and said, “Now the Prophets have said concerning the Messiah that He shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter and thus was it with our Master,” they would have been confirmed in their confidence that Jesus was the Messiah. If they had said, “The Prophet David wrote, ‘They pierced My hands and My feet,’” they would have recognized in this their crucified Lord. And if then they had turned to the other passages of the Prophets in which they speak of Messiah’s future Glory, they would have been refreshed with hope.

In the Scriptures they would have found types, figures and plain words in which the death and the rising again—the shame and the Glory of Christ are linked together—and His Cross is made the road to His Throne. Had they compared the testimony of the holy women with the prophecies of the Old Testament, they would have obtained ground of hope. The women reported that the body was no longer in the tomb and that they had seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. Two Apostles went to the sepulcher and gave a similar report—and this tallied with the Lord’s own words in which He made Jonah His type—because he came up from the deep on the third day. But they forgot the Scriptures! They did not think of that great source of hope. Their eyes were dimmed with tears so that they did not see what was plain before them. How many a precious text have you and I read again and again without perceiving its joyful meaning because our minds have been clouded with despondency! We take the telescope and try to look into heavenly things—and we breathe upon the glass with the hot breath of our anxiety till we cannot see *anything*—and then we conclude that there is nothing to be seen!

Do you not think, Beloved, you that are depressed and sorrowing today, that if you thought more of the promises revealed in God’s Word, you would soon see things differently and would rise out of your downcast condition? You put your Bibles away and read nothing but the roll of your troubles! There are no handkerchiefs for the tears of saints like those which are folded up within the golden box of God’s Word. He who inspired this volume is “The Comforter”—will you not apply to Him in your dark hours? O you whose melancholy arises from forgetfulness of the Words of your heavenly Father, of the tender Savior and of the Divine Spirit, I beseech you be more considerate! Think of God’s Providence, His unchanging love, His power, His faithfulness, His mercy. Think of the promises and, as you handle them by thought, they will exhale a sweet perfume

which will delight you! Holy thought will charm you out of your griefs. But what folly it is that, for lack of thought, we should bow our heads like the bulrush, when, like the sunflower, we might look at the light till we became little suns ourselves!

Unbelief is folly *because it is inconsistent with our own professions*. The two disciples professed that they believed in the Prophets and I have no doubt that they did. They were devout Jews who accepted the Holy Books as Divinely Inspired and, therefore, Infallible. And yet now they were acting as if they did not believe in the Prophets at all! Are we not often found guilty of the same inconsistency? O Brothers and Sisters, it is one thing to say, "I believe the Bible," but it is quite another thing to act upon that belief! We have more of *seeming* faith than of real faith! That Book is true and every promise in it is true—and I know and believe that it is so—and yet, when I come to the test, how much of faith evaporates and how sadly my fluttering heart proves that my belief was more in fancy than in fact? There is more infidelity in the best Believer than he dreams of. We think we believe in the whole and yet, when it comes to the *detail* and we have to deal with this promise and with that as a matter of fact in everyday life, we have to light a candle and sweep the house to find our faith. What folly this is!

If the Word of the Lord is true, it is true and we ought to act upon it. If it is not true, why do we profess to believe it? That which is unquestionably true will bear all the strain and pressure which life and its trials may put upon it and it is for us to *act* upon this belief. Brethren, it ill becomes us to *play* at believing—let us have our wits about us and make serious business of that which is not sent to delude us, but soundly to instruct us! The Word of the Lord is in harmony with His Providence and as we believe Him as to the one, we must trust Him as to the other! We may safely rest the weight of our body and soul—our present and future—upon the sure promise of a faithful God. And we are bound by our profession to do so. It is folly to call ourselves believers in the Bible and then to doubt and distrust.

Folly, again, is clearly seen in unbelieving sadness because *the evidence which should cheer us is so clear*. In the case of the Brothers going to Emmaus, they had solid ground for hope. They speak, to my mind, a little cavalierly of the holy women as, "certain women." Yet there were no better disciples in the world than those women. They were surely the best of the chosen company—Mary and the Magdalene. Even the testimonies of Peter and John, the very chief of the Apostles, are not sufficiently valued, for they speak of, "certain of them which were with us." I say not they speak disrespectfully, but there is a slurring of their witness by casting a doubt upon it. Concerning these godly women, they leave an impression on my mind as if they had said, "Women will talk and these women said that they had seen a vision of angels which said that He was alive." It is rehearsed as hearsay of a hearsay—they said that they had seen those who had said. If they had been pushed to the point, the two disciples would not have allowed that the Magdalene and the other women, or Peter, or John, were unworthy of credence! And yet they were, by their sadness, acting as if the witnesses were mistaken. If those who were at the empty

sepulcher were to be believed, why did they doubt? The evidence which they, themselves, detail, though we have it only in brief in this place, was conclusive evidence that Christ had left the tomb—and yet they doubted it!

Now, dear Friends, you and I have had superabundant evidence of the faithfulness of God and if we are unbelieving, we are unreasonable and foolish! At least I stand here to confess that whenever I doubt my God it is, on my part, a superfluity of naughtiness. I have never had any reason to distrust Him! These many years that I have trusted in Him, He has never failed me once! Experienced Christians, how can you waver in your confidence? If we disbelieve, is it not folly? If the Savior does not call us fools, we are forced to call ourselves so!

We could not suppose that the promise, Covenant and oath of God could fail. The supposition cannot be tolerated for an instant! Thousands of souls are resting everything upon the faithfulness of God and desire no other security. But if God is unfaithful, what will become of them? If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do? Then they that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, or, even if they are in Heaven, what security have they there if God can change? I feel quite safe on board the ship of the Covenant, for all the saints are floating in this one vessel. If God fails, then we all fail together and that is the end of faith, hope and all things! Therefore, let us not be so foolish as to sin against the light of clear Truths of God. Let us believe what we have known, tasted and handled. Let past experience anchor us firmly as to future circumstances.

Unbelief is folly because *it very often arises out of our being in such a hurry*. They said, “Beside all this, this is the third day.” I know that they had expected great things on that third day and were justified in expecting them. But still, the day was not yet over and they were in as great a fever as if it were past a month ago! Although the Savior had said that He would rise on the third day, He had not said that He would *appear* to them all on the third day. He told them to go into Galilee and there they should see Him—but that meeting had not yet come. “He that believes shall not make haste,” but they that do not believe are always restless! Well is it written, “You have need of patience.” God’s promises will be kept to the moment, but they will not all be fulfilled today. Divine promises are, some of them, bills which are payable so many days after sight—and because they are not paid at sight we doubt whether they are good bills—is this reasonable? Are we not foolish to doubt the sure handwriting of a God that cannot lie? Because the Lord has not carried out *your* interpretation of His promise in the way of your own dictation, therefore you question His truthfulness? If the vision tarries, will you not wait for it? It will come in its own appointed time. Would you have it hurried on for you? What next? Shall the sun and moon be quickened in their pace to suit your rashness? Must God, Himself, alter His purposes at *your* bidding? Truly, things have come to a pretty pass! Are you a man, or God? If you are a man, wait God’s time and in your patience possess your soul. If you do not, but, like a fretful child, must have everything now, or else cry and fight, you deserves the rod and well may the Lord say to you, “O foolish one!”

Yet, again, I think we may well be accused of folly whenever we doubt, because *we make ourselves suffer needlessly*. There are enough bitter wells in this wilderness without our digging more. There are enough real causes of sorrow without our inventing imaginary ones. I believe that the sharpest griefs in the world are those that men make for themselves. No asp ever stung Cleopatra so terribly as that which she held to her breast, herself. Certain of our friends spend all their days in stitching away to make themselves garments of sackcloth. I have seen the cobbler with his lap stone cobbling up a trouble and he has done his work so well that the shoe has pinched his feet for many a day. It seems a pity, does it not? Yet, Brothers and Sisters, we have those about us who are great at self-worrying. When you were boys, I do not suppose you ever went into the woods to find a stick for your father to beat you with—but you have done so, again and again, since you have been men—and the more is the pity that you should be so foolish. If these two travelers had considered and believed, they would have known that Christ was risen from the dead! And as they walked along to Emmaus, if, indeed, they had ever taken that walk at all, their faces would have brightened at the prospect of soon seeing Him whom they loved so well.

I want you to notice yet further that it was folly, but *it was nothing more*. I feel so thankful to our Lord for using that word. Though we ought to condemn our own unbelief with all our hearts, yet our Savior is full of tenderness and so freely forgives that He looks upon our fault as folly and not as willful wickedness. He does not take our doubt as an affront, but He calls it folly. He knows that it is true of His children, as it is of ours, that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. He puts that down to childish folly which He might have called by a harsher name. I am sure that any dear, obedient child, will feel thankful if his father calls his fault by the lighter name of, folly—because it will prove that he loves him and will endeavor to teach him better. It was not wicked rebellion—there was no enmity in it. They loved their Lord, though they feared He had not risen from the dead.

I do not want you to draw undue comfort from this gentle word, but yet I would have you lose none of the cheer it is meant to convey. You that are vexed at your own doubts are not to come to the conclusion that the Lord utterly rejects you. He discriminates between the folly of a child and the wickedness of a rebel—He knows what is in your heart and knows that you are His. You are like a ship that is well anchored and though the tide is rushing in and makes your vessel roll from side to side, so that you stagger, yet the vessel is not loosed from its moorings—neither are you in any danger! Your faith is fixed on Christ and this Anchor holds you. Though you are tossed about a little, you will suffer no shipwreck because of sin, but much sea-sickness because of folly! So much concerning unbelieving sadness as folly.

II. In the second place, our Lord rebuked them for SLOWNESS OF HEART TO BELIEVE.

This is an evil greatly to be fought against, but it is by no means a rare sin among the people of God. Let me try and bring home the charge made by our Lord against the two disciples, since I fear it applies to us as much

as to them. Our hearts are full often sluggish in believing—at least, mine is so—and I suppose we are much alike.

First, we are slow in heart to believe our God, for *we are much more ready to believe others than to believe Him*. I am often amazed with the credulity of good people whom I had credited with more sense. Credulity towards man and incredulity towards God are amazing things to find in the same person! We cannot help seeing in the daily papers how easily people are duped. Get up a prospectus and a list of names as directors, including a titled pauper, and you can bring in money by the wagonload! The confidence trick can still be successfully performed. One impostor lived for months by calling at the door of guileless old people in almshouses and telling them that a cousin in America had died and left them a fortune—but it was essential that fees should be paid at the government offices—and *then* the legacy would at once be handed over. Times after times the money has been scraped together; the rogue has gone his way and no more has been heard of the cousin in America!

There are so many simpletons about that rogues reap harvests all the months of the year. And yet the God of Truth is doubted! Yet the incorruptible Word is mistrusted! This makes our slowness of heart in believing God all the more sad a sign of our inward depravity of nature. We *can* believe, for we believe in man! In the course of our lives we are fools enough to believe in men to our cost. In fact, it is not easy to rise out of this snare, and yet we are slow at heart to believe our God! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, can we excuse ourselves? The Lord forgive and cleanse us! Let us henceforth accept every syllable of God's Word as Infallible while we turn our unbelief towards man and his philosophies and infidelities!

Is it not clear that we are slow of heart to believe since *we judge this of others when they are mistrustful*? When we see our Brethren in trial desponding and distrusting, we are very apt to think them needlessly dull and sinfully slow to grasp the promise. And yet, if we come into the same case, we are by no means better than they! That which we censure, we commit. The beam is in our own eye as well as the mote in our brother's eye. You have come home from visiting a friend who was distressed at heart and you have said, "I cannot make her out, I have put the promises before her, but she is so foolish that she refuses to be comforted." Yes, and from this learn what you may be! Within a month's time, you may be sinking in the same mire! An evil heart of unbelief is to be found in many a breast where its existence is least suspected.

But if we see the folly of others, will we not confess our own? Dare we commit what we condemn? Did you ever say of Job, "It was a pity that after all his patience, he spoke so bitterly and cursed the day of his birth"? I wonder how many of us would have been any better than Job? I dare not hope that I should have been worthy to unloose the laces of his shoes. If I had been bereaved as he was—and tortured with the same burning boils and, worst of all, irritated by critics with their cruel candor and malignant sympathy—I could not have behaved so grandly as he did. Let us not severely judge others. They ought to believe, of course. They ought to be more cheerful. They ought not to let their burdens crush them so completely—but when we, also, are tempted, shall we be so very much supe-

rior? I fear not! Let us see ourselves in the weakness of our Brothers and Sisters and confess that the Savior's Words are true—we are “slow of heart to believe.”

There is another point in which we are very slow of heart to believe, namely, that *we believe and yet do not believe*. We must be very slow of heart when we say “Yes, I believe that promise,” and yet we do not expect it to be fulfilled! We are quick of mind to believe *mentally*, but we are slow of heart to believe *practically*. The very heart of our believing is slow. Our dear Friend, Mr. George Mueller, whom may God long preserve, says that one of his objectives in journeying about, at his advanced age, from Church to Church, is to try and lead God's people to real faith in the promises of God. He says, “As for 57 years I have seen how very little real trust in the living God there is, (generally speaking), even among true Christians, I have sought, in these, my missionary tours, particularly to strengthen their faith, because in the course of my pastoral labors, the blessed results of real confidence in God, on the one hand, have come to my knowledge, and the misery of distrusting Him, on the other.”

Mr. Mueller's objective is a very desirable one, but what fools we must be that this should be necessary! There are plenty of people who believe God after a superfine kind of fashion up there on the edge of the moon, or, “at the back of the north wind.” But they do not believe the Lord in their shops, or on their beds, or in their kitchen—they cannot believe as to bread, cheese, house rent and clothes. They talk about believing in the Lord for eternity, but for this day and next week they are full of fear! True faith is everyday faith! The faith of the Patriarchs was a faith which dwelt in tents and fed sheep. We need a faith which will endure the wear and tear of life—a practical, realizing faith which trusts in God from hour to hour! Oh, to be delivered from shams and windbags—and to believe God as a woman believes her husband, or a child believes its father! I hear of writers of “the realistic school”—we need Believers of the realistic order! We need faith in which there is backbone and grit. We are sham Believers and so we lead sham lives. The promises of God speak to us as Jesus spoke to His disciples when He rose from the dead—each one cries, “Handle Me and see.” God's Words are not chaff, but wheat! Not wind, but bread! We are slow of heart because, while we think we are believing all that God says to us, it often turns out that our believing is all a puff.

These two disciples must have been slow of heart to believe, again, because *they had enjoyed so much excellent teaching* and they ought to have been solid Believers. They had been for years with Jesus Christ, Himself, as a Tutor, but they had not learned the elements of simple faith. “Oh,” you say, “they were very slow!” Are not you the same? How many years have you been with Jesus? Perhaps for even 30 years, He has, Himself, taught you, has He not? Let me remind some of you of the remarkable events of your lives. What wonderful Providences you have seen! What singular deliverances you have experienced! What Divine upholding you have enjoyed! What heavenly consolations you have received! If you doubt the Savior, you may well be called, “slow of heart to believe.” After what you have experienced, my Brothers and Sisters, the shadow of a doubt should never fall upon you! Have you not said many times, in the flush of

your gratitude for some signal favor, “There, I can never doubt my Lord again”? You were foolish when you made that boastful observation, but you are more foolish, still, for running back from it! You have passed through the Red Sea and with your timbrel in your hand you have sung unto the Lord—and yet, perhaps, after a short march—you have tasted the bitter waters of Marah and opened your mouth in murmuring! Only God is wise—and we are fools! He alone has understanding—and we are “slow of heart.”

Once more, these two disciples were very slow of heart to believe because *there is so much in the Word which ought to have convinced them*. See how the Savior puts it—“Slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken.” What a mighty, “all,” that is! Brethren, are you half aware of the treasure hidden in the field of Scripture? Are you as familiar with your Bibles as you should be? If so, you will join with me in speaking of Scripture as having almost a redundancy of confirmatory testimony! There is rock enough here for us to build upon. We have here not only precept upon precept, but promise upon promise—and all these confirmed by pledge, oath, and Covenant of the Lord God Almighty! The teaching of Scripture is so full, so varied, so convincing, that we are, indeed, slow of heart if our faith is not firm and immovable.

Brothers and Sisters, a lack of familiarity with the Word of God is very often the seed-plot of our doubts! Half our fears arise from neglect of the Bible. Our spirits sink for lack of the heavenly food stored up in the Inspired Volume. God forbid that you should fly to light literature to awaken your mind! Go to the solid literature of the promises and be established with food more suitable for an immortal soul. Like Luther, say, “Come, let us sing a Psalm and drive away the devil.” There is no enchantment for the casting out of evil spirits like a resort to the Divine Word. When you see more of what God has revealed, you will rise out of your doubts and fears—and your slowness of heart to believe will depart from you.

Before I leave this point, I beg you to notice that the Savior does not say that they were “hard of heart,” but, “slow of heart.” I like to notice that. When He is most severe, He is still tenderly discriminating. “Slow of heart” we are, but there is no enmity in our heart towards Him. It is slowness and that is bad enough, but our Lord graciously helps our pace. Our face is in the right direction and our feet are going the right way—but we are slow in heart and lame in faith. As David spared Mephibosheth and admitted him to his table, though lame in both his feet, so the Lord loves us and communes with us, slow of heart though we are! It is bad to have a slow heart, very bad. But it would be much worse to have an unrenewed heart. With all our doubts and fears, we have no longer a heart of stone, but a heart of flesh which mourns because of its sinful unbelief. The Lord knows the difference between the sin of hating the Truth of God and the folly of doubting it. Strive against this slowness of heart, but still, let not Satan come in as an accuser and condemn you as though you were not a child of God at all.

So there I leave it. There is the Master’s gentle rebuke not meant to discourage you, but to encourage you. He calls you foolish in order that you may be so no longer. Believe—and this shall be your wisdom.

III. Will the Lord's people kindly pray for me while I now speak *to the unconverted*? Ask that I may have God-speed while I try and speak to those who are seeking the Lord and have not yet believed in Him. I want to say to them just this—"O foolish men and slow of heart to believe!" Some of you are really seeking the Lord, but you say that you cannot believe though you long to. You are not like the spider, whose motto is, "I get everything out of myself." You do not hope to spin salvation out of your own heart—you admit that salvation must be through faith in Christ. So far so good! But how is it that you do not at once believe? You say you cannot! How is it that you cannot believe in Jesus? He *commands* you to believe in Him and promises that you shall be saved! Trust Him and you shall live as surely as His Word is true.

Listen! This unbelief proves you to be foolish and slow of heart, for *there are other parts of His Word which you easily believe*. If there is a threat or a condemnation, you believe it. If there is a text that speaks of judgment to come, you believe it. You have a quick eye for anything which reads hard and looks dismal. Have I not seen you reading the Word and stopping at a passage and saying, "Alas, this makes my case hopeless. I have sinned the sin that is unto death"? You believe in more than God has said, for you read your own thoughts into God's Word and make it say more than it means! You are ready enough to take in the hard things, but the gracious promises of the loving Christ you will not believe. How can you justify this? How foolish you are! The promises are in the same Book as the threats—and if you believe the one, believe the other! Certainly the cheering Words come from the same Inspiration as the depressing ones—if you believe that which looks dark, believe that which looks bright!

Next, you are very foolish because *your objections against believing are altogether poor and puerile*. I think I have heard hundreds of them in my time, but out of all the objections raised by troubled souls against believing in Jesus, there is not one worthy of serious discussion. One man cannot believe in Jesus because he does not feel humble enough—as if that affected Christ's power to save! If he felt more humbled, *then* he could believe in Jesus. Would not that be just believing in *himself* and trusting in his own *humility* instead of trusting in Christ? One man cannot believe in Christ because he is not like a certain great saint. Does he expect that he is to be like a great saint when he first comes to Christ? Has not Christ come to save *sinners*?

Another says he cannot believe because he has not felt the terrors of the Law and the dread of Hell. Does he think that his *terrors* are to save him? Would his dreads and horrors help Christ to save him? Would he not be trusting his terrors and not Christ? The Lord Jesus says, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." The Gospel is to be preached to every creature—and every creature that believes it shall be saved! But these people back out of it and begin hammering out reasons for their own destruction! A sadly suicidal business this! Let the devil invent reasons for my not being saved—it is not a business which can bring me any form of good. Nothing can stand against the promise of God—He commands me to believe on His Son, Jesus, and I do believe—and I am

saved and shall be saved—despite all the objections which may be raised by carnal reason.

Though you find it so hard to believe Christ, *you have found it very easy to believe in yourself*. Not long ago you were everybody and now you cannot believe that Christ is everybody. You thought you were very good. You were wonderfully easy in your own mind when you ought to have been afraid. What? Was it easy to believe your poor self and can you not believe the faithful Word of a good and gracious Savior who says that if you trust Him you shall be saved?

Moreover, *you are very apt, now, to believe Satan* if he comes and says that the Bible is not true, or that Jesus will not accept you, or that you have sinned beyond hope, or that the Grace of God cannot save you. Of course you believe the Father of Lies—and you go mourning and moping—when you might at once go singing and dancing if you would believe your Savior! Jesus bids you trust and live! Satan says it is of no use your trusting—you believe Satan—and treat your Lord as if He had intended to deceive you! “O fools and slow of heart!”

Then you know *how ready you are, you seekers, to stop short of Christ*. If you hear a sermon and get a little melted and go home and pray a bit, you get quite easy and say, “Now I am on the road.” Why, your melting and your praying are not the road to Heaven! Jesus says, “I am the way.” You are *not* on the way till you get to *Him*. You have been in gracious company and singing holy hymns. You feel quite good and are highly pleased with yourselves. What right have you to be restless even for a moment? How dare you linger till you have reached the City of Refuge, which is Jesus Christ? Till you believe in *Christ* you have no right to a single moment’s peace, or hope, or joy! And yet you do get a sort of peace and a kind of hope which are only sparks of your own kindling which will die out in blackness. Because you are content to trust in something short of Christ, I say to you—Why not rest in Jesus? O fools and slow of heart! Refuges of lies you fly to, but the true refuge of the finished work of Jesus Christ you do not accept? Why is this?

And then some of you are foolish and slow of heart because *you make such foolish demands upon God*. You would believe if you could hear a voice! If you could dream a dream! If some strange thing were to happen in your family. What? Is God to be tied to your fancies, that you will not believe Him unless He does this and that extravagant thing? If He chooses to bring some to Himself by extraordinary means, must He do the same with you, or else you prefer to be cast into Hell? Surely you are mad! Who are you that you are to dictate to the Lord and say He *shall do this, or that*, or else you will refuse to believe Him? And so you will trample on the blood of Jesus and turn our back upon the Kingdom of Heaven unless an angel is sent to you, or you hear a voice from Heaven? O fools and slow of heart, to make these irrational demands upon the ever-blessed God!

You are foolish and slow of heart because, to a great extent, *you ignore the Word of God and its suitability to your case*. If a soul in distress will take down the Bible and turn it over, he need not look long before he will light upon a passage which describes himself as the object of mercy. “The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I am not come to call

the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Does not that fit you? “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake His way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Does not that fit you? “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Does not that apply to you? Why, if you will but look through the Word, you shall find passages so pertinent to your condition that, as a key fits a lock, they will seem *made* for you! Those two disciples did not, for a while, see how the Prophets met the case of the crucified and risen Christ. But as they did see it, their hearts burned within them. As you also see how God has provided for your condition in His Word, in His Covenant, in His Son, your sadness will flee away.

I close with this one word of warning to those of you who are distressed in heart and are falling into the habit of looking for reasons why you should not believe in Christ. I do pray you to leave off this silly practice. Before this evil becomes chronic with you, quit it as a deadly thing. People can reason themselves down, but they cannot reason themselves up again. If you see a door open, in God’s name hasten in, for one of these days you may be so blind as never to see an open door again! Seize this opportunity—and while Christ stands and says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden”—come along with you! If you sit down to argue against Christ, He may allow your conclusions to stand to your own destruction. Those who are so foolish as to find 20 unhallowed reasons today, will be foolish enough to find 200 such reasons next year! A man may act the cripple till he grows hopelessly lame. Mind what you are doing! You may lock a door and open it again for many a year—but one of these days you may so hamper the lock that it will not open again. Oh, that you may at once believe in Jesus Christ unto eternal life!

I have come to this pass myself—if I perish, I will perish believing in Jesus! If I must be lost, I will be lost clinging to His Cross! Can any man be lost there? No, “fools and slow of heart” though we may be, we know that none shall perish who come to Christ, for that would greatly dishonor the Savior’s name. God bless you! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 24:13-35.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—676, PSALM 42 (VER. I),
191.**

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

THE BLESSED GUEST DETAINED

NO. 1655

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 23, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Then they drew near unto the village where they were going, and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to stay with them.”
Luke 24:28, 29.***

WHAT a blessed walk was that from Jerusalem to Emmaus! Were they not highly favored men to have such a companion as the Lord Jesus, to hear Him converse upon such a subject and to feel their hearts burning within them with so Divine a flame? Brothers and Sisters, these are not the only men who have walked with the Lord Jesus. I trust I look into the eyes of full many who can say, “We, too, have communed with the Son of the Highest. The eyes of our faith have seen Him and our ears have heard His voice. We have known that Jesus, Himself, drew near, and we have heard the Words of Holy Scripture as though they fell fresh from His lips, and thus they have, by the power of the Holy Spirit, burned in our hearts and made our hearts to burn like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame.”

Thank God, our Divine Master is still the familiar Friend of His disciples and our walk is with Him. In one sense, “He is not here, for He is risen.” But in another sense He is more peculiarly here because He *has* risen and, whereas, unrisen He could only have been in one place at a time, now that He is risen He is, by His Spirit, present with thousands of His people at the same moment and He walks not only from Jerusalem to Emmaus, but to many a village, through many a garden, along many a street! Jesus delights to manifest Himself to His people—He is not strange unto His own flesh. We are bound to bear witness to the fact that He is not ashamed to call us Brothers and Sisters and to be found walking with us.

Yes, even to those who are not His people, Jesus comes very near at times. And though they know Him not, He walks at their side and this not in silence, for He instructs them by His Word and makes their hearts warm by His sacred influence. I pray that any remark, this morning, which shall be made to Believers may also lay hold of those attentive hearers to whom the kingdom has come very near, for some of you have often been moved in this House of Prayer as you have heard Jesus speak, and speak to you! And if you have not been able to call Him, Friend, yet you have heartily wished you could do so. You have been more than half inclined to cast in your lot with His disciples because their Master has

warmed your hearts, if He has not made them burn—and if there has not been the glow of life, yet there have been many flickering desires. I pray that Jesus may never leave you, but that your intimacy with Him may be growing till at last you shall know Him and He shall know you—and there shall be a union formed between you which never shall be broken.

To return to that walk to Emmaus. How short it must have seemed! By far too short for hearts so sad, who at every step found solace. I forget how many miles it was, just now. It does not matter. I should think it seemed as if it had scarcely begun when it ended—with such light feet they tripped over that pathway that they thought Emmaus had been attracted nearer to the city! It was so short because it was so sweet. The conversation was such as good men prize more than dainties. The intonations of that Voice must often have awakened memories within them which half compelled them to recognize their Lord!

His sweet voice must have charmed them and the words He uttered, the wondrous words of exposition and consolation, how much they enriched them! Nor was that walk more sweet than solemn, for it is no mean thing to walk with the risen Son of God! Kings might fling their crowns away to enjoy five minutes of such honor—it was nothing less than sublime! Those Brothers must have often, during the rest of their lives, looked at each other and said, “We walked with Jesus!” I should think whenever they met, their conversation would have in it fresh recollections of that walk and each one would say to his fellow, “Brother, I have just remembered a point whereon the Lord spoke to us. Do you not recollect the significant hint which He gave us as to the meaning of the Prophet?”

If you and I had ever actually walked with Jesus, I am half afraid we might have grown proud of it. At any rate, if we were helped not to be proud, yet it would always be a sublime memory. How sublime a thing to have kept pace with Incarnate Deity and marched foot to foot with Him who is God over all, blessed forever! No angel has ever walked with Jesus—they cast their crowns before Him and fly upon His errands—but He has not given unto angels the privilege of such familiar conversation. How solemn to those who all unwittingly had enjoyed it! I think when they knew Him, they must have been overwhelmed with the thought that they had been so near!

And they must have feared, in the silence of their souls, that possibly they had been rashly familiar. Surely they said, each one to Himself, “Did we say anything improper? Was it this which made Him call us fools? When we were expressing our doubts, did we not grieve Him? Alas, that we should have so misbehaved ourselves!” They must have looked back upon that high honor with great awe, even as Jacob did after he had communed with God at Bethel and said, “Surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and the very gate of Heaven.”

Brothers and Sisters, it is a great thing to come near to Christ! And you who have not yet believed in Him, I should like you to feel in what a solemn position you have sometimes been placed, when, “He has been evidently set forth, crucified, among you!” And you have felt somewhat of

that Presence. Jesus does not draw near to a man for nothing. He has an influence upon all whom He visits. Your sense of His Presence has left upon you a deep responsibility, especially if you have remained chill under the influence of His holy love and have refused to believe in Him. Oh, that you would think of this! Before our Lord passes on and leaves you to your own devices, I would have you know that the King of Heaven has been very near to you! Oh that you would cry out to Him, nor cease the cry till He comes and abides with you!

I. This must suffice for an introduction. Oh that the Spirit of God may give the sermon! My subject runs thus—First, observe in the text, COMPANIONS LIKELY TO PART. The walk had come to an end, for they had reached Emmaus where they were going and now the Master made as though He would have gone further. And so the holy talk was likely to end. Jesus is going on and they may never see Him again. The choicest of all conversations now draws to a close unless the Speaker can be induced to stop with the two favored travelers. We are told that our Lord Jesus would have gone further. He did not *pretend* that He would have gone, but He was actually going. It is the way of Him not to stay anywhere unless He is invited and pressed. I know not where He would have gone, but with that glorified body of His, He was under no necessity of finding shelter!

He could have gone further and lodged elsewhere, or He could have suddenly returned to Jerusalem and in a moment have entered into the Apostles' meeting room though the doors were shut. It would not have been the first night that—

***“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”***

Certainly He would have gone further. He says not where, but He knew right well. Under the circumstances, He and His companions seemed likely to part. Now, observe the reason of parting. They were not about to separate because of any ill-will on the part of those who had walked with Him. No anger had broken out—nothing that He had said had awakened any animosity—very, very far from it! They felt an intense reverence for the unknown Stranger and sincere gratitude to Him for the charming words which He had addressed them. He was likely to have gone further, but not because of any argument between them.

Nor would they have parted because of any weariness of Him on their part. He had not talked away and tired them out so that they would be glad to see the back of Him. The rest of the narrative shows that they were in a very different condition of heart from that. If Jesus had gone further, they would have lost His delightful society through forgetfulness. Turning into his house—for I suppose one of them lived there and there does not appear to have been anybody else in the house—one of them spread the simple repast for his friend. And what if in his care about the evening meal he had forgotten to invite the wonderful Stranger? If Jesus had gone further, it would have been entirely because they forgot to invite Him, or failed to urge Him to stay! They could not have felt an utter indifference to Him, but they might have forgotten to press their hospitality upon Him.

Many have short memories when hospitality is concerned. Sometimes we have failed to invite a friend when he needed our kindness—and we have felt sorry for it afterwards. They might have supposed that if He went further, so important a Person was too great to tarry with them and, perhaps, so wise a Person had an errand further on which required immediate dispatch and, therefore, He could not remain with them. Thus they might have let Him go. Had they lost Him it would have been simply through forgetfulness and inadvertence. Brothers and Sisters, I hope there are very few of us, who love the Lord, who are likely ever to lose communion with Him through any weariness of Him, or distaste of Him.

Oh no—the happiest moments we have ever had have been spent in Jesus' company—and we are never so blessed as when He opens the Scriptures to us and opens our hearts to receive them. But we are in danger lest in the press of worldly cares; lest in our frequent conversations with our fellow men; lest, even, in our attendances upon the domestic concerns of our own little home, we may forget to invite Jesus to abide with us! Communion with the Lord is more often broken by lack of thought than by lack of heart, though, alas, when the lack of thought has let Him, “go further,” then it has cooled down into that rock of ice which we have called a lack of heart. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, let us charge our hearts that we never forget to entertain the Savior.

Let this be our first thought—that we give Jesus a lodging in our souls. Be this our morning prayer, “Abide with us.” Be this our evening petition, “Abide with us.” Be this the prayer all day long, “Abide with us.” May we resolve that under no circumstances will we permit our souls to be at rest unless we rest in Him, or to be happy except He shall be our joy! You see, if the two disciples had lost our Lord's company, it would have been simply through neglect. And if you and I lose Him, it may be through a neglect which we think excusable because we were so very busy and so intensely occupied. But this will not alter the fact, nor bring back our Lord. Oh do not let us treat Him so badly! Are there other objects beneath the sun or above the sun, on earth or in Heaven, that are worthy to come between us and Christ for a single moment? Will a wife treat her loving husband with coldness and then excuse herself that she had other matters on her hands? It may be so, but never, never let the Lord's redeemed treat their Redeemer as though He might be left in any hole or corner till a more convenient time!

The point at which they were at all likely to part company with Christ is worth noting, for it may give us timely warning. It was, first, a point of *change*. They had been walking with Him and the journey was over. They had been out of doors, but now they have come to their house and are about to enter. Always there is a danger to us of missing fellowship with Christ at points of change—and especially at seasons of greatly altered circumstances. I do not wish, Brethren, that you and I should be often transplanted—trees do not flourish well when this happens to them. I knew a friend who appeared to be wedded to the Gospel and was zealous in promoting it when he was persecuted very severely by his father. His father died and he inherited the old man's property—and from that hour he

was not seen in his former place—nor did he manifest any love to the Lord. This is sad.

I would hardly dare to pray for some men that they might have a change from persecution to prosperity—plants that flourish amid ice and snow are burned up when placed beneath a tropical sun. I have known those who appeared to love their Master right heartily when they were poor! They have become rich and now where is their ardor? I hope they have not altogether cast off affection for the sacred name, but certainly the people with whom they once associated know nothing of them, now, and they are not engaged in those holy works in which they formerly delighted. How dare I pray for the temporal prosperity of those who would degenerate beneath its influence?

On the other hand, I have known many who once were in comfortable circumstances and when prosperous they appeared to walk with God. As far as we could judge, they were patterns of godliness. But they fell upon hard times and they grew poorer and poorer till they tasted the bitterness of need—and now they say they do not like to be seen by those who knew them and, therefore, they stay away from the House of God. They have lost the comforts of religion when they most need them! They have lost worldly substance and, alas, lost fellowship with Christ as well! This is equally sad, for whether Jesus leaves us at the golden gate, or at the broken-down door of poverty, His departure is equally a calamity! I am mentioning *facts*. I give no names, but I have seen these things many times and, therefore, I have drawn this deduction, that at points of change there is danger. I suppose there is upon the railway a measure of peril at the switches where the train is turned upon another line—and it is certainly so on the main line to Glory. At all times it is well to watch, but especially when we are entering upon new duties, new trials, new temptations. Lord, let not the novelty of our position fascinate us even for a moment, but evermore You abide with us!

It was a point, too, where something had been accomplished. They had finished their journey and reached their homes. Oh, we are such poor things that we can hardly complete anything without being self-satisfied. As little a thing as a finished walk will exalt little minds. But if it is some greater work, the peril is increased. When Christ said, "It is finished," He opened a river of comfort. But when we exclaim, "I have finished it," we too often set our minds on fire with pride! Certain men have undertaken a work for Jesus and they have done it by the Holy Spirit's blessing—and now they feel so pleased with themselves and so satisfied that they are likely to spoil all and give their Lord occasion for grief! The lowly Jesus does not seek self-exalting companions! I have known Him go many a mile to speak with the contrite, and it is His delight to dwell with the broken-hearted—but with those who have done something and, therefore, feel that they do not further need His Presence, He soon parts company. Nothing drives Christ and holy angels out of a room like the foul odor of pride!

Then, dear Friends, they were now about to rest for a time. They had reached home and they looked for repose after the excitements of the week. They had been detained at Jerusalem by grand, yet terrible events,

and one of them was glad, that day, to lodge in his own house. As for the other, he was glad to get out of the city and retire with his friend, for a little till good news should come from the Apostles. They both hoped for a little peace. Just then the Master made as though He would have gone further—and when you and I are promising ourselves repose, such as we have known little of upon earth—it is especially well, at such times, to ask the Master to abide with us!

When we are in the battle we are sure to beg Him to abide with us because He covers our head and we cannot live without Him. And when we are proceeding in a weary walk we are likely to pray Him to remain with us, for we are then leaning on our Beloved. But when we sit down upon the seat of ease, sleep too often creeps over us. Having put off our traveling sandals and stretched ourselves at ease—ah, then there is the possibility, the sad possibility—of the Master’s going further while we take our rest. He is always going further and when we resolve to go no further, but to consider ourselves to have attained, then our Lord will soon be gone! We must not take the slogan of the famous statesman who has been so often laughed at for his finality—we must not say, “Rest and be thankful”—or we shall soon come to grief. If we fall into that vein, it is well to remember that just at such a point Jesus and the disciple are apt to break fellowship. I mention this that we may be wise in the hour of trial.

Now, had they parted company, the act would have been most blameworthy on their part. To have lost the society of such a Friend, how foolish! Here was One who had instructed them with tenderness and skill—One who spoke as never man spoke—would they let Him go? Here was One who evidently could explain their mysterious sorrows and take the sting out of their grief—would they let Him pass on? They had been fools, indeed, if they had done so! It would have shown that they did not appreciate His teaching, nor feel grateful for His opening to them the Scriptures. It would have been gross folly!

And yet there is another thought. It was toward evening, and night was lowering and, therefore, they said, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening.” It would have been very cruel to have allowed Him to journey on in the dark and the dews. Would we thus treat *any* friend of ours? Could we allow a beloved one to abide abroad all night? Was not that His own argument in the Golden Canticle, when He knocked and said, “Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled: for My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night”? It would have been inhospitable on their part—inhuman for them to leave Him to continue His journey in the darkness of the gathering night when they had a home in which they could entertain Him!

And so I charge it upon my own soul to never let Jesus be left unhoused; a Stranger who has not where to lay His head! All hearts are cold in every place towards the Well-Beloved! It is a cold world for Jesus, today, even as at the time of His life below. Then, “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” Let not that be said over, again, and said of us who are, in a more special sense, His own than were His brothers and sisters according to the flesh. “Be you not forgetful to entertain strangers” is

a Gospel command—but be you *especially* eager to entertain your Lord! Shall your Lord ever say to any of you who are called Christians, “I was a stranger, and you took Me not in”? Oh, no! Let us invite Him, *beg* Him, entreat Him, constrain Him to abide with us for His own dear sake—and let us give Him, in our warm hearts, the best entertainment that we can!

Surely we never received such a guest, before, and another such we shall never see again! Men are willing to give up their estates and houses for a time to entertain royalty—they reckon them to be increased in value when once a monarch has sojourned in them—and shall not we be more than willing to open wide our hearts, minds and homes, that Jesus may enter and be entertained by us as the King of kings? There is something, then, to be learned from companions likely to part. May the Holy Spirit sweetly teach us!

II. Now, I change the scene, and notice, next—THE GUEST NEEDING TO BE PRESSED. The guest is Jesus and He is about to go further. And He *will* go further unless they invite Him, yes, unless, according to the 29th verse, they *constrain* Him. It is a very strong word that, “they constrained Him.” It is akin to the one which Jesus used when He said, “The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence.” They not only invited Him, but they held Him, they grasped His hand, they tugged at His clothes—they said He should not go. They would not have it—the cold night should not accuse them of being churls. He should not go another yard along that dangerous road—they must have Him for a guest—and they would not take no for an answer!

Let us remember why this Guest needs constraining, and the first thought is, He could not very well have tarried, otherwise. If I were a stranger and walked along the road with two persons who did not know me—if I were able to talk to them ever so instructively—I should not think of intruding into their house when the conversation was over! You never see anything in Jesus approaching roughness or want of delicacy—He exhibits the manners of the noblest Man that ever lived! He does not force His acquaintance upon any, but He goes where He is constrained. Besides, what pleasure could it have been for Him or for them for Him to have lodged in their house if He had not been wanted? Without a welcome, few of us would care to accept a lodging. Jesus, therefore, naturally, because the other thing was scarcely feasible, waited till He was asked and even pressed. And had they not constrained Him, He would have gone further.

Remark that this is a characteristic of the Son of God at all times. I have not time, this morning, otherwise I could show you that all through the Old Testament as well as the New, when the Lord reveals Himself in any visible form, He has to be pressed before He will abide with any. The Lord came to Abraham and Abraham said, “My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, pass not away, I pray You, from Your servant: let a little water, I pray You, be fetched, and wash Your feet, and rest Yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort Your hearts; after that You shall pass on: for therefore are You come to your

servant” (Gen. 18:3-5). Abraham constrains these wondrous guests, or otherwise they will pass on!

Look at chapter 19 and see what Lot did when two angels came to him. Even supposing these were nothing more than angels, they show the manners of the court of Heaven, so that it is an equally good illustration for me. He said, “Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant’s house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and you shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, No; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house” (vs. 2, 3). Joseph was, in this, a type of Jesus, for you know how slow he seemed to reveal himself to his brothers, though all the while he was full of love to them. To Moses the Lord said, “Let Me alone,” and only by mighty pleading could the man of God prevail!

When an angel came to Manoah and his wife, to tell them about Samson, we find that He had to be detained, or else He would have departed speedily. “And Manoah said unto the Angel of the Lord, I pray You, let us detain You, until we shall have made ready a kid for You.” (Judges 13:15, 16). You see, the heavenly messenger needed to be detained, or He would have gone at once. And then comes in that instance of which you have already thought, when the angel said to Jacob, “Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me.” It is clear that the Lord will be entreated of by the house of Israel to do good things for them. We shall have to cry—

***“In vain You struggle to get free,
I never will unloose my hold!
Are You the Man that died for me?
The secret of Your love unfold:
Wrestling, I will not let You go,
Till I Your name, Your nature know.
I know You, Savior, who You are,
Jesus, the feeble sinner’s Friend;
Nor will You with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end;
Your mercies never shall remove
Your nature and Your name is Love.”***

We know that our Lord had a shy habit—He often withdrew Himself—and the multitude sought after Him. He walked upon the sea and they in the vessel saw Him and He would have gone by them, but they cried out to Him. The Syro-Phoenician woman, who sought for the healing of her daughter, found Him, at first, very cold to her, and only by the greatest faith did she win her desire! He needed earnest pressure before He yielded to her request.

The blind men cried unto Him for sight, but He passed on till louder and louder went up their piteous cries, and they held Him, for Jesus stood still. The nobleman, when he came about his son, pleaded with tears till he cried, “Lord, come down before my child dies.” It has been often so with our gracious Lord. He would not come until He saw that the desire for Him was intense. He gives us two parables—one tells us of the man in bed who must be awakened with many a knock and many a call before he

would rise to give bread to his friend who sought it. The other parable is that of the unjust judge who must be wearied by the woman's importunate entreaties before he will vindicate her cause. From all this you see it is the Master's habit to hold back till He is pressed and constrained.

If we must give a reason for this I would remind you of the jealousy of His Character. He is jealous of our love! He says, "Give Me your heart," and so He pauses a while that He may see that we love Him and prize His benefits. Of old the Father said, "The Lord your God is a jealous God," and Jesus, the Incarnation of the Divine Love, has told us that, "love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave" and, therefore, it is that He will not give His company to those who have no heart for it. You shall not have His smiles if the smiles of the world will do as well. If union with worldlings will please you as much as union with Him, you shall have none of His company! It is only when you languish for Him, sigh for Him and cry for Him that He will abide with you!

He has another reason and that is, His anxiety to do us good! He wisely wishes that we should value the mercy which He gives by being led to consider what a case we should be in if He did *not* give it. He stirs up our prayers and then answers them—and so we get a double blessing—the prayers, themselves, being of much service to us, and then the answer being all the more a blessing! It was good to these two disciples to be allowed to be hospitable. It was good for them to rouse themselves to entreat Him. They valued the company of Jesus all the more when they had diligently persuaded Him to sit at their table and partake of their simple meal.

Now, Beloved, let us look at Jesus in this light, and say within ourselves, "I am fearful lest I should do anything to excite His jealousy. And I am anxious to show my eager longing for His Presence lest He should think me unkind. I would not make Him 'go further' and leave me, but I would hold Him fast, constraining Him to abide with me."

III. I have said that here was a Guest who needed pressing—there will be no necessity to enlarge upon the remark that here was A GUEST WORTH PRESSING. He was, indeed, worth pressing when we consider what He had done for them. He had given them comfort and instruction and He was worth detaining if only for that. Had they known Him they would have felt still more that they could not let Him go. Would they not have borne Him on their shoulders into the house and said, "Good Master, we cannot think of letting You go, for You are He whom our souls love—our Master and our Lord—over whom we have been mourning as one dead, and lo, You are alive"? So much were they indebted to Him that they could not fail to make Him their guest!

They must press Him again, for how comfortless the house would have been without Him! I think I see those two disciples sitting down to their meal, supposing the Master had gone on. Suddenly, one would have remembered, and said, "My heart feels heavy, now that He is gone." And the other would have said, "How came it that we let Him go? Why did we not entreat Him to stay the night with us?" Their meal would have half choked them! They would have gone to their beds and tossed about throughout a sleepless night if they had failed in hospitality to Him. This is what has

happened to some of us when we have carelessly let our Lord slip away—we have been like widows who have newly lost their husbands—sore in heart and desolate.

“Should the children of the bridegroom fast?” Not while the bridegroom is with them! But if he is taken from them, *then* shall they fast. Better to have been outside in the open air, or to have gone further with the unknown Traveler, than to have been comfortably housed and to have treated Him ill. He was a Guest worth constraining to remain when we think of the vacuum there would have been if He had gone further! Besides, *we* know what they did *not* then know, that this unknown One would make Himself known to them, as He has done to us. Knowing Him, now, as they knew Him afterwards in the breaking of the bread, we ought to feel, we *must* feel, we *do* feel, that we cannot, *will not* let Him go, but will detain Him, for He is Christ our Lord!

I spoke at the beginning to some here who have never known our Lord and yet He has been very close to them frequently, in hearing sermons and the like. Dear Friends, I earnestly beseech you to receive Christ as a Stranger, and you shall soon know Him as a Friend! You only know of my Lord, that He makes you have the heartburn every now and then. And when we talk about Him, you go home very uncomfortable. How I wish that you knew Him better! Oh, that you would entertain Him, for then you would know His excellence! Bid Him come into your heart and He will be infinitely more to you than He is now.

You have no idea what He is. He seems a well-spoken Friend, but He will prove to be a Brother! He promises to instruct you, but He will *love* you, *enrich* you, and *glorify* you. Oh dear child of God, not yet well-instructed, your eyes are weak and you see not Jesus as you *shall* see Him! Still, I pray you heartily entertain the Savior, even if your eyes are *blind*. Take Him in and let Him lodge with you, and you will know more and yet more of Him! You will know most of Him as you break your bread to the hungry, and so break it to Him. You will know more as you break the bread at the Communion Table and so commune with Him. Only remember, He is a Guest worth pressing, and be sure you do your best humbly, but earnestly, to detain Him!

IV. I close by telling you of AN ARGUMENT WITH WHICH TO HOLD HIM. Here it is in the text. “They constrained Him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” My first way of using this text does not commend itself to my judgment, but yet it is necessary. All the commentators and preachers I have ever met with suppose that these disciples meant, by this argument, that it was dreary for themselves to be alone and, therefore, for their *own* comfort and protection, they begged the stranger to remain. I do not believe it for a moment! Still, that would have been a good argument with the tender-hearted Savior and if you and I cannot attain to anything else, let us use that plea.

It is toward evening with many of you. You are in affliction and the shadows thicken. Your light has departed and you are afraid. Sorrows come on like the darkness of night. You know not what approaches—you are heavy of heart. Ah, then that is a blessed prayer—

***“Fast falls the eventide!
The darkness thickens:
Lord, abide with me.”***

You can bear any trouble with Christ. No adversities shall hurt you, no afflictions shall grieve your spirit if He is with you. Pray, therefore, this prayer, and no longer fear as you enter into the cloud. Or it may be that some of you are falling into depression of spirit through the loss of the Light of God’s Countenance. You are not as joyful a Christian as you used to be. The high felicities of your spirit have burned down and all is dim. Now is the time to say, “Lord, abide with me. If I have no joy, still let me have Yourself.” It is a blessed thing when a Believer does not set his affection so much upon the joy of the Lord as upon the Lord of his joy—when he says not only, “Lord, I will rejoice in You while You smile,” but cries with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Better to have to do with a killing God than to have God gone!

So, cry, “Lord, if I never get a smile from You; if I am never again cheered and comforted by You; if I never sing a hymn of gladness, yet still abide with me! Be near, even if I know it not.” It was a beautiful expression of David, who often asked the Lord to shine upon him, when he said, “In the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.” As much as to say—If I have no light from God’s face, I will be glad to be hidden beneath His wings. Abide with me, then, even if my reason almost fails me, and my darkened soul dreads a yet more tremendous night. Abide with me, O Lord, even should my sorrow seal my eyes in death. “Abide with me” is a blessed prayer for those Believers who are getting aged. With them it is toward evening and the day is far spent. Now should they cry, “Abide with me.” Then will you sweetly go to your chamber and fall into your last, most blessed sleep, and obtain the fulfillment of yours prayer that you may be forever with the Lord.

I have used the text in this way because everybody has used it so, but I believe that these disciples meant it in quite another sense. They used the argument to detain Christ because it was evening, for His sake—because the night was coming on and they could not think of His being out in it. They knew how heavy the Eastern dews are and so they pressed Him with this—“Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” Let each one of us use that argument with our Lord even now—Lord, the world has no entertainment for You! Unbelieving hearts give You no shelter. The self-righteous repel You from their doors. The worldly see no beauty in You; carnal hearts refuse You; every house is locked against You! Therefore come in and abide with *me*. Here is lodging for You! Come in, Blessed One, and stay with me. If You lack shelter in king’s palaces, abide with me! If there is no room for You in the inn, yet come in here and find Yourself at home, for I shall count myself greatly honored by receiving You. Therefore, dear Master, abide with me.

How we ought to long to cheer the Blessed One with our love because He is still so despised and rejected everywhere else. Everywhere else they treat Him ill. O do not let Him be wounded in the house of His friends! If He had 50 houses to go to, I might say, “Lord, they can give You better en-

ertainment than lies in my power.” But when it is “toward evening” and no other door is open, Lord come into my poor cottage! I will set all that I have before You and be Your willing servant. That is the plea!

Another form of the plea is this. The ages are growing old and dark. What a plea that is for the Church to put up now, for the coming of her Lord. “O Lord, it is toward evening, the world’s sun is setting. It is nearly 1,900 years since you ascended and still, the world lies in the Wicked One! Lord, come to Your Church! Come and abide with her, for as the world grows old, good Master, a chill night comes on and the love of many waxes cold—and there are some that turn aside who once ran well. Dire evils walk abroad in the dark and blasphemy and rebuke are rife! Good Master, come unto Your Church and dwell in her, and find, there, Your home!

“And the night of *all* nights is coming on, even the end of the world. We know not when, but we know we are getting nearer to it every day. Earth’s day is far spent. Her day of mercy comes toward its eventide and the night draws on, therefore, Master, come and abide with us, that we may win the world for you. Come, come that we may convert the heathen to Your Cross and that You may have them for Your inheritance. It is with Your Church that You will do this! Come, then, and abide with her ministers and her missionaries, and all her living membership, that yet the prophecies may be accomplished and Your purpose may be fulfilled! And Your reward may be the salvation of Your own.”

Is not that a good missionary text, after all, a blessed prayer with which to begin this missionary week—“Abide with us for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent”? In the Romish church there is a chant which they use from Easter to the day of Ascension, and though I care nothing for liturgies or anything of the sort, yet it is certainly a suggestive canticle. The first line of the chant is—

“Abide with us. Hallelujah.”

And the next is—

***“For it is toward evening,
And the day is far spent. Hallelujah.”***

With that I close. May we use that argument well, until our Lord shall, in very deed, abide with us!

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

EYES OPENED

NO. 681

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 18, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.”
Genesis 21:19.***

***“And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.”
Luke 24:31.***

The Fall of man was most disastrous in its results to our entire being. “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die,” was no idle threat, for Adam did die the moment that he transgressed the command—he died the great spiritual death by which all his spiritual powers became then and evermore, until God should restore them, absolutely dead. I said all the *spiritual* powers, and if I divide them after the analogy of the senses of the body, my meaning will be still more clear.

Through the Fall the spiritual taste of man became perverted so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. He chooses the poison of Hell and loathes the bread of Heaven. He licks the dust of the serpent and rejects the food of angels. The spiritual hearing became grievously injured, for man naturally no longer hears God’s Word but stops his ears at his Maker’s voice. Let the Gospel minister charm ever so wisely, yet the unconverted soul, like the deaf adder, hears not the charmer’s voice. The spiritual feeling by virtue of our depravity is fearfully deadened. That which would once have filled the man with alarm and terror no longer excites emotion.

Even the spiritual smell with which man should discern between that which is pure and holy and that which is unsavory to the most High has become defiled. Now man’s spiritual nostrils, while unrenewed, derive no enjoyment from the sweet savor which is in Christ Jesus but seeks after the putrid joys of sin. As with other senses so is it with man’s sight. He is so spiritually blind that things most plain and clear he cannot and will not see. The understanding, which is the soul’s eye, is covered with scales of ignorance and when these are removed by the finger of instruction, the visual orb is still so affected that it only sees men as trees walking.

Our condition is thus most terrible, but at the same time it affords ample room for a display of the splendors of Divine Grace. We are so naturally and entirely ruined, that if saved, the whole work must be of God, and the whole Glory must form the head of the Triune Jehovah. There must not only be a Christ lifted up of whom it can be said, “There is life in

a look at the crucified One,” but that very look, itself, must be *given* to us or else in vain should Christ hang upon the Cross!

I. Taking Hagar’s case first, I shall address myself this morning to certain unconverted ones who are in a hopeful condition.

1. Taking Hagar’s case as the model to work upon, we may see in her and in many like her a preparedness for mercy. In many respects she was in a fit state to become an object of mercy’s help. She had a strong sense of need. The water was spent in the bottle, she herself was ready to faint and her child lay at death’s door. This sense of need was attended by vehement desires. It is a very hard thing to bring a sinner to long after Christ—so hard that if a sinner does really long and thirst after Jesus—the Spirit of God must have been secretly at work in his soul, begetting and fostering those desires.

When the invitation is given, “Ho, every one that thirsts,” you can honestly say, “That means *me*.” That precious Gospel invitation, “Whoever will, let him come,” is evidently yours, for you will it eagerly and vehemently. The Searcher of all hearts knows that there is no objection in your heart either to be saved or to the way of being saved—no, rather you sometimes lift your hands to Heaven and say, “O God, would that I might say, ‘Christ for me!’ ” You know that the water of life is desirable—you know more than that—you pine with an inward desire to drink of it. Your soul is now in such a state that if you do not find Jesus you never will be happy without Him. God has brought you into such a condition that you are like the magnetized needle which has been turned away from the pole by the finger of some passerby, and it cannot rest until it gets back to its place.

Your constant cry is, “Give me Christ! Give me Christ, or else I die!” This is hopeful, but let me remind you that it, alone, will not save you. The discovery of a leak in a vessel may be preparatory to the pumping of the ship, and to the repair of the leak—but the *discovery* of the leak will not of itself keep the boat afloat. The fact that you have a fever is well for you to know, but to groan under that fever will not restore you to health. To *desire* after Christ is a very blessed symptom, but mere desires will not bring you to Heaven! You may be hungering and thirsting after Christ, but hungering and thirsting will not save you! You must have *Christ!* Your salvation does not lie in your hungering and thirsting, nor in your humbling, nor in your praying—salvation is in Him who died upon the Cross—and not *anything* in *you*.

Like Hagar you are humbled, and brought to despair. There was a time when you did not admit your need of a Savior. You found comfort enough in ceremonies, and in your own prayers, repentances, and so on. But now the water is spent in your bottle and you are sitting down with Hagar wringing your hands and weeping in despair—a blessed despair! God bring you all to it! Despair is next door to confidence in Christ! Rest as-

sured, until we are empty Jesus will never fill us! Until we are stripped He will never clothe us! Until self is dead Christ will not live in us!

It is quite certain that in Hagar's case the will was right enough with reference to the water. It would have been preposterous, indeed, to say to Hagar, "If there is water are you willing to drink?" "Willing?" she would say, "look at my parched lips, hear my dolorous cries, look at my poor panting, dying child! How can you ask a mother if she is willing to have water while her babe is perishing for thirst?" And so with you. If I were to propose to you the question, "Are you willing to be saved?" you might look me in the face and say, "Willing? Oh Sir, I have long passed beyond that stage! I am panting, groaning, thirsting, fainting, dying to find Christ! If He would come to me this morning I would not only open both the gates of my heart and say, 'Come in,' but the gates are opened now before He comes. And my soul is saying, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might even come to His seat!'"

All this is hopeful, but I must again remind you that to will to be rich does not make a man rich, and that to will to be saved cannot in itself save you. Panting after health does not restore the sick man though it may set him upon using the means, and so he may be healed. And with you, your panting after salvation cannot save you—you must get beyond all this to the great Physician Himself.

2. In the second place, mercy was prepared for Hagar, and is prepared for those in a like state. There was water. She thought it was a wilderness without a drop for her to drink, but there was water. Troubled Conscience, there is pardon! You think it is all *judgment*, thunder and thunderbolts, curses and wrath, but it is not so. There is mercy! Jesus died. God is able justly to forgive sinners. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. He is a God ready to pardon, ready to forgive! There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared. There is water, there is mercy. What is more, there is mercy for *you*! There is not only that general mercy which we are bound to preach to every creature, but for many of you whom I have described I am persuaded that there is *special* mercy.

Your names are in His Book. He has chosen you from before the foundation of the world, though you do not know it. You shall be His—you ARE His! The hour is not far distant, when, washed in the fountain and made clean, you shall cast yourselves at the Savior's feet and be His captives in the bonds of love forever. There is mercy for you now if you trust Jesus!

The water was not created as a new thing to supply Hagar's thirst—it was there already. If she could have seen it she might have had it before, but she could not see it. There is mercy, there is mercy for you. All that is wanted is that you should see it, poor troubled Conscience, and if you could have seen it there would have been no necessity whatever that you

should have been so long a time as you have been in despair, and doubt, and fear. The water was near to Hagar, and so is Christ near to you. The mercy of God is not a thing to be sought for up yonder among the stars, nor to be discovered in the depths—it is *near* you, it is even in your mouth and in your heart!

The Savior who walked along the streets of Jerusalem is in these aisles and in these pews—a God ready to forgive, waiting to be gracious. Do not think of my Master as though He had gone up to Heaven out of your reach and had left no mercy behind Him. Let Him tell you that He is as near in spirit now as He was to the disciples when He spoke to them at Emmaus. Oh that you could see Him! He is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” He is passing by! Cry to Him, you blind man, and you shall receive your sight! Call to Him, you deaf! Speak, even you whose lips are dumb—His ears can hear your *soul’s* desires! He is near—only believe in His Presence and trust His Grace—and you shall see Him.

It is a notion abroad that the act of faith is very mysterious. Now faith, so far as it is an act of man, (and an act of man it most certainly is, as well as the gift of God, for “with the heart men believe”), is one of the simplest acts of the human intellect. To trust Jesus, to lean with the soul upon Him—just as with my body I am leaning on this rail—to make Him all my confidence and all my rest needs no learning, no previous education. It needs no straining or mental effort. It is such an action that the babe and the suckling may glorify God by it!

The faith of Sir Isaac Newton, with all his learning, is not a whit more saving or less simple than the faith of the child of three years old, if brought to rest on Christ alone. The moment the dying thief looked to the Crucified and said, “Lord remember me,” he was as saved as Paul, when he could say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.” I am very anxious to be understood, and therefore I am trying to speak very simply, and to talk right home to those whom I am driving at.

My own case is to the point. I was for some few years, as a child, secretly seeking Jesus. If ever heart knew what the bitter anguish of sin was, I did. And when I came to understand the plan of salvation by the simple teaching of a plain, illiterate man, the next thought I had after joy that I was saved, was this—“What a fool I was not to trust Jesus Christ before!” I concluded that I never could have heard the Gospel, but I think I was mistaken. I think I must have heard the Gospel thousands of times, but did not understand it. I was like Hagar with my eyes closed. We are bound to tell you every Sunday that trusting Jesus Christ is the way of salvation, but after you have heard that 50,000 times, you really will not even understand what we mean by it till the Spirit of God reveals the secret.

But when you do but know it and trust in Jesus, simply as a child would trust his father’s word, you will say of yourself, “How could it be? I

was thirsty with the water rippling at my feet! I was famishing and perishing for hunger, and the bread was on the table! I was fretting as though there were no entrance into Heaven, but there stood the door wide open right before me, if I could but have seen it!" "Trust Christ, and He must save you." I will improve upon it: "Trust Him, you are saved." The moment you begin to live by faith in His dear Son, there is not a sin left in God's book against you!

3. We pass on, then, in the third place, to notice that although Hagar was prepared and mercy was prepared, yet there was an impediment in the way for she could not *see* the water. There is also an impediment in *your* way. Hagar had a pair of bright beaming eyes, I will be bound to say, and yet she could not see the water. And men may have first-rate understandings, but not understand that simple thing—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You do not suffer so much from lack of power to understand faith as from a kind of haze which hovers over your eyes to prevent their looking into the right place. You continue to imagine that there must be something very singular for us to *feel* in order to have eternal life.

Now this is all a mistake! Simple trust in Jesus has this difficulty in it—it is *not difficult*—and therefore the human mind refuses to believe that God can intend to save us by so simple a plan. What blindness is this! So foolish and so fatal! Is not this ignorance partly caused by legal terrors? Master Bunyan, who had a keen insight into spiritual experience, says that Christian was so troubled with the burden on his back that in running he did not look well enough to his steps. Therefore, being much tumbled up and down in his own mind, as he says, he also tumbled into the Slough of Despond. You may have heard the thunder of God's Law so long that you cannot hear anything so soft and sweet as the invitation of the loving Jesus. "Come and welcome! Come and welcome!" is unheard because of the din of your sins.

The main reason I think why some do not attain early to peace is because they are looking for more than they will get and thus their eyes are dazzled with fancies. You who dare not take Christ because you are not a full-grown Christian, be content to be a babe first! Be satisfied to go through the seed state, and the blade state, and the ear state, and then you will get to be the full corn in the ear! Be content to begin with Christ and with Christ, alone. I verily believe some of you expect that you will experience a galvanic shock, or a superhuman delirium of horror. You have an idea that to be born-again is something to make the flesh creep or the bones shiver—an indescribable sensation, quite out of the compass of human feeling.

Now believe, that to be born-again involves the ending of superstition and living by feeling, and brings you into the world of plain and simple truth where fools need not err. "Whoever believe in Him is not condemned." If you can understand that and claim it as your own, you are

born-again. But though you should understand all human mysteries, if you are *not* born-again you could not truly understand that simplest of all teachings, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

Again, I am afraid some persons with the water at their feet do not drink it because of the bad directions that are given by ministers. When a minister closes up an address to the unconverted with this exhortation—“Now, my dear Friends, go home and pray,” that is a very right exhortation—but it is given to the wrong people, and in the wrong place. I do not say to you this morning, I *dare* not say to you, as though it were the Gospel message, “Go home and pray.” I hope you will pray! But there is another matter to come before prayer, namely, *faith* in Jesus!

When Christ told His disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, He did not say to them, “He that prays shall be saved,” though that would be true if he prayed aright. But Christ said, “he that *believes* shall be saved.” Your present duty is not praying, but *believing*. You are to look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross just as the poor serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the bronze serpent and lived. Your praying will not do you a farthing’s worth of good if you refuse to trust Jesus Christ. When you have trusted Jesus Christ prayer will become your breath, your native air—you will not be able to live without it! But prayer, if put in the place of a child-like trust in Jesus, becomes an antichrist.

It is not going to places of worship, or Bible reading which saves. I am not depreciating these duties but I *am* putting them in their proper position. It is depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone which is the true vital act by which the soul is quickened into spiritual life. If you, trusting in Christ, do not find peace and pardon, the Gospel which I preach is a lie and I will renounce it! But then the Bible would be false, also, for it is from that Book my message comes. This is the Gospel which we have received and which Christ has sent us to preach—that whoever believes in Him is not condemned.

Now why do you hurry about after this and that? Why follow this man’s and that man’s directions? Why look to your baptism and confirmation? Why do you go about to your Church-goings and your Chapel-goings, your Bible-readings and your praying, your good works about this and about the other—they are all but dross and dung if you put them in the place of Christ! But Christ Jesus, if you rest on Him, is precious, and after you receive Him, your works and your prayers shall become precious, too, because they will be performed through faith in Him. But until you come to Him, they are all nothing and vanity—unacceptable in the sight of God—because you put them into the place which should be occupied by the Savior.

4. I feel certain that there are some here upon whom the Lord intends to work this morning—so we will speak, in the fourth place, upon *the Divine removal of the impediment*. Hagar’s blindness was removed by God.

No one else could have removed it. God must open a man's eyes to understand practically what he believes in Jesus Christ. That simple Truth of God—salvation by trust in Jesus Christ—still remains a point too hard to be seen. Until the whole power of Omnipotence is made to bear upon the intellect man does not really comprehend it!

But while this was Divinely removed, it *was removed instrumentally*. An angel spoke out of Heaven to Hagar. It matters little whether it is an angel or a man—it is *the Word of God* which removes the difficulty. Dear Friend, I pray that the Word of God may remove your unbelief. May you see today the light of Jesus Christ by simply trusting Him! I believe there are some who are saved who still are afraid they will be lost. I have heard of a butcher who, at his work, was accustomed to put his candle in a little candlestick which was tied by a belt around his forehead. One day he needed his candle in his hand and he looked all around his slaughterhouse for it by the light of the candle on his forehead. He looked about everywhere to find it and, of course, he could not have looked at all if he had not had the light which he looked for already! Many a man is looking within himself to see the evidence of Divine Grace when his anxiety and the very light by which he looks ought to be sufficient evidence. I hope there are many of you who are just on the verge of salvation without knowing it.

I looked last Friday night at a very remarkable sight—the burning of a huge rug factory. I was returning home from my Master's work, when I saw a little blaze, and in an incredibly short time a volume of fire rolled up in great masses to the skies! Why did it blaze so suddenly? Why, because for months before many men had been busily employed in hanging up the rugs and saturating the building in combustible materials. I do not mean with the intention of starting a fire, but in the ordinary course of their work. And in due time, when the first spark came it immediately grew into a great sheet of flames.

So, sometimes, when the Gospel is faithfully preached, a sinner gets present peace and pardon and he is so full of joy that his friends cannot make him out, his progress is so rapid. But remember that God has been mysteriously at work months before in that man's heart—preparing his soul to catch the heavenly flame so that there was only a spark needed and then up rolled the flames to Heaven! Oh that I could be that spark to some heart in whom God has been working this morning—by HE alone can make me so! I noticed when that factory was on fire from top to bottom that it seemed to glow like pure gold, or like transparent glass, and then I expected to see it fall and, by-and-by, fall it did, for after about half-an-hour, all of a sudden, one timber went over and the whole mass fell with a tremendous crash!

I venture to compare that final crash with the actual salvation of a soul long prepared, by God's Grace, to receive it. The heart has been glowing

with a Divine desire, a heavenly flame for even months and years, and then, at last, and in a moment, the final movement is made—and doubts and fears and sins fall to the ground—and there is room to build a Temple for the living God. May it be so with you this morning!

There has been much preparatory work in you, for you are brought to long after a Savior and you are desirous to be saved by Him. There He is! Take Him! Take Him! The cup of water is put before you. Drink it! No need to wash your mouth first, or to change your garments. Drink it at once! Come to Jesus as you are!—

“Come and welcome, sinner, come!”

II. Oh that the Spirit of God would give me power from on high while I try to talk to the saints from the second case—that of the disciples in Luke 24:31. This is no Hagar, but “Cleopas and another disciples.” And yet these two suffered under the same spiritual blindness as Hagar, though not, of course, in the same phase of it. Carefully observe the case of these disciples, for I believe it is often our own. *They ought to have known Jesus* for these reasons. *They were acquainted with Him.* They had been with Him for years in public and in private. They had heard His voice so often that they ought to have remembered its tones. They had gazed upon that marred face so frequently that they ought to have distinguished its features. They had been admitted into His privacy and they ought to have known His habits. That Savior walking there ought not to have been *incognito* to them though He was to the rest of men.

So it is with us. Perhaps you have not found Jesus Christ lately. You have been to His table and you have not met Him there. You are in a dark trouble this morning, and though He says, “It is I, be not afraid,” yet you cannot see Him there. Brothers and Sisters, we ought to know Christ! We ought to discover Him at once. We know His voice. We have heard Him say, “Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away.” We have looked into His face. We have understood the mystery of His grief. We have leaned our head upon His bosom. Some of you have had an experience of fifteen or twenty years, some of forty or fifty years—and yet, though Christ is near, you do not know Him this morning—and you are saying, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!”

They ought to have known Him because *He was close to them.* He was walking with them along the same road. He was not up on a mountain at a distance. Even then they ought to have known Him—but He was there in the same way with them! And at this hour Jesus is very near to us, sympathizing with all our griefs.

***“In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows has His part.”***

He bears and endures with us still, though now exalted in Glory’s Throne in Heaven. If He is here, we ought to know Him. If He is close to His people every day and in all their affliction is afflicted, we ought to perceive Him. Oh, what poor vision is this, that Christ should be near, our own

well-beloved Redeemer, and yet we should not be able to detect His Presence!

They ought to have seen Him because *they had the Scriptures to reflect His Image*, and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious Book and turn over page after page of it and not see Christ. They talked concerning Christ from Moses to the end of the Prophets, and yet they did not see Jesus. Dear Child of God, are you in that state? He feeds among the lilies of the Word and you are among those lilies, and yet you do not see Him? He is accustomed to walk through the glades of Scripture and to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day, and yet you are in the garden of Scripture but cannot see your Lord though He is there and is never absent?

What is more, these disciples ought to have seen Jesus, *for they had the Scriptures opened to them*. They not only heard the Word, but they *understood* it. I am sure they understood it, *for their hearts burned within them* while He spoke with them by the way. I have known what it is, and so have you, to feel our hearts burn when we have been thinking of the precious Truth of God, and yet we have said, "Oh that I could get at Him!" You have heard of election, and you have wondered to yourself whether you should ever see again the face of God's first elect One. You have heard of the Atonement, and the mournful story of the Cross has ravished you. You have gone from page to page of Scripture doctrine and have received it and felt its influence, and yet that best of all enjoyments, communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, you have not comfortably possessed.

There was another reason why the disciples ought to have seen Him, namely that *they had received testimonies from others about Him*. "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women of our company, which were early at the sepulcher, made us astonished. For when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive." There He was close to them. Oh, it is so strange that in the ordinances of God's house Jesus should be there, and yet in sad intervals our hearts should get so cold and so worldly that we cannot see Him!

It is a blessed thing to want to see Him, but oh, it is better still to see Him. To those who *seek* Him He is sweet. But to those who *find* Him, He is dear beyond expression! In the Prayer Meeting you have heard some say, "If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now," and your hearts burned within you as they thus spoke, and yet you could not say the same yourself. You have been up in the sick-chamber, and you have heard the dying saint sing—

***"I will love You in life, I will love You in death,
And praise You as long as You lend me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."***

You have envied that dying saint because you could not just then feel the same confident love.

Well this is strange, passing strange—it is amazing—a present Savior, present with His own disciples who have long known Him and who long to see Him—and yet their eyes are shut so that they cannot discover Him. Why do we not see Him? I think it must be ascribed in our case to the same as in theirs, namely, our unbelief. They evidently did not expect to see Him, and therefore they did not discover Him. Brethren, to a great extent in spiritual things we shall get what we expect. The ordinary preacher of the Gospel does not expect to see present conversions and he does not! But there are certain Brethren I have known who have preached with the full faith that God would convert souls and souls have been converted!

Some saints do not expect to see Christ. They read the life of Madame Guyon and her soul-enchancing hymns, and they say, “Ah, this was a blessed woman.” They take down the letters of Samuel Rutherford, and when they read them through, they say, “Enchanting epistles! A strange, marvelously good man was this.” It does not enter into their heads that they may be as Madam Guyon and that they may have as much nearness to Christ, and as much enjoyment as Samuel Rutherford! We have got into the habit of thinking the saints gone by stand up in elevated niches for us to stare at them with solemn awe, and fancy that we can never attain to their elevation.

Brothers and Sisters, they are elevated, certainly, but they beckon us to follow them, and point to a something beyond! They invite us to outstrip them, to get greater nearness to Christ, a clearer sense of His love, and a more ravishing enjoyment of His Presence. You do not expect to see Christ, and therefore you do not see Him. Not because He is not there to be seen—but because your eyes are shut through your unbelief! I do not know any reason why we should not be full of joy this morning—every believing soul among us.

Why hang those harps on the willows, Beloved? You have a trial, you say. Yes, but Jesus is in it! He says, “When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you.” Why not rejoice then, since the dear Shepherd is with you? What matters it though there are clouds? They are full of rain when He is there, and they shall empty themselves upon the earth. Up, my Brothers and Sisters, up! With everything that may discourage and cast you down, you have 10 times as much to encourage and life you up! He love you and gave Himself for you. His blood has cleansed you. His righteousness has clothed you. His Grace has decked you with jewels. This world and the world to come are yours—and Christ who is better than both worlds—is yours forever and ever! Take down those harps and strike the strings with glad fingers—and wake them into melodies of joy!

Now, dear Friends, I am sure it is the duty of every Christian, as well as his privilege, to walk in the conscious enjoyment of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be that you came here on purpose that you might begin such a walk. The disciples had walked a long way without knowing Christ, but when they sat at His table it was the breaking of bread that broke the evil charm, and they saw Jesus clearly at once. Do not neglect that precious ordinance of the breaking of bread! There is much more in it than some suppose. Sometimes when the preaching of the Word affords no joy, the breaking of bread might—and when reading the Word does not yield consolation—a resort to the Lord's Table might be the means of comfort.

It may even happen that some other neglected means may be that which God intends to bless to your soul. I am afraid many of God's servants are in darkness because they have neglected known duties. The windows of Christ's palace are many, and He would not have one of them blocked up. And if you block up one window, it may be that He will say, "I will never show My face at any but that. I will make My servants take down that shutter, that the Light of God may shine through." There is nothing in any ordinance of itself, but there may be much sin in your neglecting it. There is nothing, for instance, in the ordinance of Believers' Baptism, and yet, knowing it to be a prescribed duty in God's Word, it may be that the Lord will never give you a comfortable sense of His Presence till you yield to your conscience in that matter. But, waiving all that point, what you want is to see Him! Faith alone can bring you to see Him. Make it your prayer this morning, "Lord, open my eyes that I may see my Savior present with me. And after once seeing Him may I never let Him go. From this day forth may I begin, like Enoch, to walk with You, and may I continue walking with You till I die, that I may then dwell with You forever."

I find it very easy to get near to God compared with what it is to *keep* near. Enoch walked with God 400 years! What a long walk that was! What a splendid journey through life! Why should you not begin, dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, today, if you have not begun, and walk with God through the few years which remain? What if God should spare you for 40 years? I do not see that there is any necessity that your communion with God should be broken from now till death or the Lord's coming. "Yes," you say, "you talk in a Utopian fashion!" Perhaps I do, but I believe that high-toned Christian experience is, to a great extent, what common Christians think to be out of their reach.

Oh to get up above yon mists which dim the valley! Oh to climb the mountain's top which laughs in the sunlight! Oh to get away from the heavy atmosphere of worldliness and doubt, of fear, of care, of fretfulness—to soar away from the worldlings who are always earth-hunting, digging into its mines and prying after its treasures—and to get up there

where God dwells in the innermost circle of heavenly seclusion—to get where none can live but men who have been quickened from among the dead! Where none can walk but men who are crucified with Christ, and who live only in Him! Oh to get up there where no more question concerning our security can molest us! Where no carking care can disturb because all is cast upon the Lord and rests wholly with Him! Oh to live in such an entireness of confidence and child-like faith that we will have nothing to do with anything except with serving Him and showing forth the gratitude we owe to Him who has done so much for us!

Get up, Believers! Get up to your high mountain! Leave your dunghills and assume your thrones! Cast off your sackcloth! Throw away your ashes and put on your scarlet apparel! Christ has called you to fellowship with Himself, and He is no longer in the grave—He is risen! Rise! He is ascended! Ascend with Him and learn what this means, “He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!

I know you will say you cannot see this. However, it is there—most surely there! It is just the same as in Hagar’s case, with you—the same but with a difference. The fullness of fellowship with Christ is attainable! It is close to you and if you have your eyes opened to see it, as it has been given you to see Jesus as your Savior, you may rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory! God do so to you and more, also, according to His Covenant goodness in Christ Jesus. Amen and Amen.

**PORTIONS SOF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
GENESIS 21:9-19; LIKE 24:13-31**

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“PEACE BE UNTO YOU”

NO. 3456

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 1915.**

***DELIVERED BY C H. SPURGEON,*
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 2, 1878.**

***“And as they thus spoke. . .Peace be unto you.”
Luke 24:36.***

WE like to know how a person used to act, for we think we can infer from that how he will act. That is not always correct, however, for men change. But in our Savior's case, if we study His life, we may very well infer from what He did, what He will do, because He never changes! And this is a comfortable reflection for us at this time, that in the days of His flesh, while He was yet on earth, He loved the company of His people! If He changes not, then He still loves the company of His people. He did reveal Himself, then, to one. He will still speak comfortable words to His people when they are alone. One by one will He reveal Himself to them. He did speak graciously to two. Where Christians converse on holy things, they may still expect that Jesus will Himself draw near. But more frequently He lingered longest and revealed Himself most in the assembly of His people. Where the eleven were met, where many were gathered together, there the Savior came, not once, but twice and often. Learn, then, that we may expect Him here tonight! Peter, and James, and John are representatively here. Here, too, we have some of the goodly women—the Marys and Marthas are here. They are waiting for Him. Their hearts are longing for Him. He is the same now as always. Brothers and Sisters, we may expect Him! He will come to His old haunts. He will come and deal with His people as He did before. Twice, at least, we have it on record that our Savior came to His disciples when they were met on the first day of the week—from which I gather another comfortable thought, that as this is the first day of the week, we may for another reason expect Him to be here, to put honor on what now is the Lord's Day. He, at least twice, for so it is on record, came to His disciples and, standing in their midst, said, “Peace be unto you.” On this first day of the week, this Lord's-Day, at eventide I trust—I hope, no, I *expect*, that you will feel Him here, and I pray that to each one of His people those soft words may come with Divine Power, “Peace be unto you.”

Without further preface than these words, let us draw your attention first, to *what He said*. Secondly, *when He appeared to say it*. And thirdly, of *what came of His appearance at the saying of it*.

I. OUR LORD'S GRACIOUS SPEECH.

What did He say? He said, "Peace be unto you"—four words, each full of meaning. May I not view those words in four lights? Was it not first *a salutation and benediction*? Thus He introduced Himself, "Peace be unto you." It was His good wish—more, it was His fervent prayer! He breathed peace upon them expressive of His goodwill, His love, His intense desire for their highest good. Peace is the highest gift He can impart. Said the Apostle, "Grace, mercy, and peace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ." He had given them Grace and mercy—He now gives them the highest benediction, peace! Did He not mean more than that? In a second light it was a benediction. "Peace be unto you." He had been into the invisible world and He had returned from it—and He tells them that there was peace reserved for them. He had passed the veil with His own blood. He had offered up His Sacrifice. He had said, "It is finished." He had received the token that it was finished by His being raised from the dead. And now He comes to them with the marks of His Crucifixion still upon Him, and He tells them there is peace—it is done—"The war is over, the conflict is concluded—My bloody Sacrifice and glorious Resurrection have made peace between you and God." "Peace be unto you." It is the declaration of what He had seen and heard of the Father as the result of His death. A benediction and a declaration.

Was it not also a *fiat*? By a fiat I mean that kind of word which God spoke to the darkness when He said, "Light be," and light was. Here they were in trouble and Jesus said, "Peace be," and before long peace was. It is always with Jesus to speak the Word of Power, for He is, Himself, the Word of Power. He is God's Word—the Word that built the heavens, the word that establishes the pillars of the universe, and when He speaks thus, it is not a mere wish, it is not a mere prayer, it is not a mere declaration, even, of a fact—it is the fulfillment of wish and prayer, and the application of the fact! "Peace be unto you." Before long they did receive the peace which He thus authoritatively gave them.

But may I not view it in another light, namely, *as an absolution*? Think a minute, and you will see it is so. These were they who had forsaken Him—there was one who had denied Him! Out of them all, there was no faithful spirit there at all who proved to be faithful in the hour of danger. Like cowards, each one had cared for himself and deserted his Lord. They had slept while He agonized. They had retreated while He advanced. They had, every man, left their Master to seek each man his own. And now what does He say to them? Do they stand as culprits? Is He about to accuse them? Do they stand as deserters? Is He, as a captain, about to condemn them? No, that one word seems to say, "It is forgotten. It is forgiven." My only word to you is, peace, peace, peace. I know your weaknesses. I know your deep regret. I know how you lament that you served Me thus—regret no more, at least be not depressed with such regrets, for lo, My only return to you is this, I give you My, "Salem," My salutation—My word of goodwill, My sweet word of love. I have not revoked My legacy, though I might well have destroyed My last will and testament. I said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you." I confirm that will

now, risen from the dead. You shall see I have not cut you off from My affectionate regard. I, risen from the dead, declare what I declared when your love was warm and your resolution was rather to die with me than to desert me. I give you the same as I gave you then, "Peace be unto you."

Now I think there are some sweet things rolled up in those brief thoughts which I have given you. The text itself has richness in it. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, the second thing, and briefly, is—

II. WHEN DID JESUS STAND IN THE MIDST OF HIS DISCIPLES, and say thus, "Peace be unto you"? When? Perhaps in considering the time, we may get some comfort and be led to hope that He will say the same tonight. Well, when did He come? Well, first, *He came when they were quite unworthy of His coming.* We have already told you how they had served Him. Cowardly—they had deserted Him! But though there was no one there that could have even thought, much less said, "I deserve the Master's company," yet He came. Oh, I think we are, many of us, in the same plight. Looking back upon the past, we cannot feel that we deserve any love visits from the Savior. We dare not put up a plea on that ground. We are very unworthy—we are very unworthy—but that is no reason why He should not come. They were unworthy, but He stood in their midst and said, "Peace."

Now note, next, that *they were very unprepared.* They were not looking for Him! They had not come together that night with any expectation of seeing Him—I am sure they were not, for when He did come, they were afraid and thought they saw a spirit! They were least of all expecting Him to come. Well, and my Sister, you came in here unprepared. Do not excuse yourself, but yet do not despair about seeing your Lord! Brother, you came here perturbed, troubled. Your soul is not like the lake when it is still, which, like a molten mirror, reflects the stars above. But Jesus Christ can come and mirror Himself in your heart, first smoothing it with the word of peace. Yes, yes, it is wrong to be unprepared for Christ's manifestation, but it is a thousand blessings that our unpreparedness does not keep Him away! I may expect to see Him, though unfit and unworthy. Come Savior, come, I beseech You, pass not by me. I might have feared You would if I had not seen that, in the case of the eleven, their unpreparedness did not bar the door. Oh, let not my unpreparedness keep You away!

Note, further, that our Lord came to them when *they greatly needed Him.* They had got into a disorganized, demoralized state as a group and they were, every one of them, almost ready to give up their faith. The third day had passed, and they had not yet believed in His Resurrection, though it had been witnessed to them. They were foolish and slow of heart, and I do not know what they might have done the next day, for he that is slow of heart and unbelieving today may go to something worse, if worse may be, tomorrow! And they needed Him—they needed Him and there He was in the midst of them! Courage, then, my Brother! You need Him—you may expect Him! Sister, you need Him—oh, how much! How

much do I need Him—how would a visit from His love kill many of my sins and quicken all my Graces! The physician comes not only when he is sent for, but when he knows he is needed. The Good Physician does so especially! It is not so much our sense of need as our need, itself, that often brings Him. We frequently do not know our need until He comes, and we see our need in contrast with the supply. Well, then, unworthy and unprepared, yet needing Him, we may expect Him! He will come if we cry out for Him. In our very midst He will stand tonight and reveal Himself!

Moreover, it was a time when *they were exercising what spiritual light they had*—let that be remembered. They were in a low state, but they had met together. They had loved together. They were showing that like a flock of frightened sheep, they were running together, hardly knowing what else to do. They did at last get near one another. There is something that Christ loves in that. That was good—there was something hopeful there. Well, we, at least, have got together in the same way. I know you said, “Well, I don’t know that I can do much in praising Christ, but I will go where His people are. Perhaps if I cannot praise, I shall still get a blessing, for all that.” I know you often do so on the Sabbath. You say on the Saturday, “I am glad it is the last day of the week, that I may go where my Brothers and Sisters are, and while I come, to get a blessing. I especially feel when I come to Prayer Meeting:”—

**“There my best friends, my kinsmen, dwell.
There God, my Savior, reigns.”**

Well, the Lord Jesus loves to come where we love to be in His name! That helps to bring Him. So I have another good hope, that as we have come together, come together with no other end but that of stirring up what life we have, and of pouring out before Him what Grace He has given, and of seeking more, that we may expect to see Him!

More than that—on that occasion when He came, there were *some of them who were testifying of what they knew*. Two of them were telling how they saw Him in the breaking of bread at Emmaus. And while the two spoke, Jesus came! Now here stands one Witness who can bear testimony that there is a living Savior, and a real one, and that His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit! And as you hear that testimony, and many of you are recording in your souls your, “Amen,” to it, I hope He will stand in our midst and again say in spiritual language, “Peace be unto you.”

Once more, though, I say they were in a low state—*they were all lamenting their Master’s absence*. I do not think, of all that company, there was one but what had a heavy heart and was sad because Jesus was not there. If you had turned to Peter and said, “Peter, would you like to see Him?” He would have said, “Oh, for another look on those dear eyes, even though it broke my heart again.” And John would have said, “Oh, for another leaning of my head upon that bosom, if I might be permitted such a favor.” And everyone, by dear remembrances of the past, would have said, “Alas, we have lost everything in losing Him! Take away the sun out of the skies, rather than take Christ out of the circle of our fel-

lowship.” Now, dear Friends, have you, you lovers of the Savior—have you missed Him and are you now saying, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him”? Well, our mingled notes shall reach Him and He will come and stand tonight in the midst of us, and we, again, shall rejoicingly honor and worship while the King sits at His Table with His people. But time flies, and, therefore, I give you but the bare outline of the rest of my sermon.

III. WHAT CAME OF IT?

What came of His appearance and of His speaking of peace? If you will look at the Chapter when you are at home, you will see that, first of all, when Jesus came *He banished all their doubts*—He said to them, “Why are you troubled? Why do thoughts arise in your hearts?” Now, if He comes here tonight, in the midst of this assembly, that is just what He will say to you troubled ones. He will say, “Why are you troubled?” You, perhaps, might answer, “Perhaps there is cause enough for it,” but He will reply to it, “All things work together for your good.” “When you pass through the river, I will be with you; the floods shall not overflow you.” “Cast your care upon Me.” “Why are you troubled?” And He would then ask you the very question, “Why do those thoughts arise in your hearts?” You would have to guiltily, perhaps, confess what those thoughts were. You thought He was too hard! You thought He had forgotten you! You thought He was not true, after all—that He did not love you. You thought He would fail you. I will not tell you all your thoughts, but they have been evil thoughts—and if He is here tonight, the blush will mantle on your cheeks while you will say, “I will never have such thoughts, again, but I will from now on say, ‘Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.’” There is one cure for evil thoughts like this—the vanished Savior manifested to the eyes of faith!

Then our Lord next proceeded *to reveal Himself*. Being present—which He might have been, you know, and yet they might not have known Him—He now went to reveal Himself and make them see Him. This is what He did. “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.” Then He proves His kinship with earth, His real Manhood, for He took a piece of broiled fish and of a honeycomb, and did eat before them all. Now even so will He do tonight. If He were here tonight, it were no use to you if these scales were upon your eyes—He will take them off! Those harder scales on an earthbound heart, He will take them off. Oh, I have been amazed, my Brothers and Sisters, I bear witness I have sometimes been amazed when the Lord has taken away the stone out of my heart, to feel my own sudden tenderness! I have even sat at that Table, sometimes, and dealt out the bread and wine to you, and longed to be but a dog beneath the table, to eat but a crumb that fell from it—and all of a sudden I have felt His nearness and rejoiced with unspeakable joy! And oftentimes in preaching, when my spirit has felt like a frozen brook, His Grace has thawed my heart! Is not this what the Spouse meant when she said, “Or

ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib"? Now it is the Presence of Christ that quickens us. Let the prayer be put by each one, "Quicken You me, O Lord, according to Your Word. Yourself, the Word, draw near to me and I shall be quick to perceive You, to embrace You, to rejoice in You this night."

Then the next act of our Savior was to proceed *to inform their understanding*. You observe He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. Nearness to Christ is an education. Get near to Jesus and you will find that the Corpus Christi is the true college! He who knows the body of Christ has got the body of theology, the body of divinity—the true theology of the Word of God. He that knows Him has understanding. With all your getting, get understanding! And from Him you shall get it, for He is Wisdom. And is He not the Truth of God? And is He not the Incarnate Wisdom? With Him God took counsel before the earth was. There is no studying the Scriptures that becomes so useful as when we study them with Christ to turn over the leaves for us.

Then the next thing was *He refreshed their memories*. Perhaps I ought to have mentioned this before because it occurs first. He said to them, "These are the words I spoke to you." Tonight, perhaps, if Jesus is here, you will remember those other times when you have seen Him—

***"His former visits we recount,
When with Him on the holy mount."***

Yes, you will say as Jesus is here, "I do remember You and the love of Your espousals. I do remember other sweet seasons when I was with Your people, and my heart glowed at Your love." You will look back, some of you gray-headed Brothers and Sisters in Christ—you will look back, perhaps, 50 years, and remember when Jesus first looked in at your soul. Dear memories! Perish all else but the relics of Christ, the traditions of His Presence in my spirit—these will I hand down from year to year and record them forevermore! Nothing like this to set the memory right, the immediate, actual Presence of Christ, even at this moment.

And then, Beloved, in addition to all this, the Savior's thus appearing *showed them their true position*, for He told them that they were His witness of these things. When they saw Him, they felt they were something more than mere lookers on, they were to be tellers and testifiers to others. I hope we shall feel this, tonight, that we shall go out from our seats and from the Communion Table, saying, "I have seen the Lord, and I will be a witness in my own family—I will be His witness in the court, or the street, or the city where I dwell. I have seen Him and shall I close my mouth concerning Him? No! His Presence has opened my mouth, that I may show forth His praise. I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of His righteousness, even of His only."

And last of all, that blessed presence *created intense joy*, though there was a wonderment about the joy that mingled it with unbelief, and we read, "While they yet believed not for joy." They were very, very glad. If you had seen them go into that house, and seen them come out, you would not have known they were the same men! Yet they were no richer,

no healthier, no more favored, *but they had seen the Lord*, and they were glad! It is especially recorded by John, “Then were the disciples glad when they had seen the Lord.” Oh, there will be singing here! There will be music in your hearts! You will trip home with merry feet if Jesus Christ does come! Come, then, dear Master! You have bled for us. You have loved us with an everlasting love—‘tis but a little thing comparatively that we ask! Your relationship to us binds You to grant it! You will not be a stranger to Your own flesh! You will not hide Yourself from those who are members of Your body, of Your flesh and of Your bones! Your delights were with the sons of men and You have not changed. Oh, if ever You did reveal Yourself, reveal Yourself to us tonight! Melt us down under the Glory of Your Presence! Dissolve us with the superlative majesty of Your love and we will worship and bless You forever and ever!

Now I have said nothing to those of you who know Him not, but I will say these words and have done. His worth—

***“His worth if all the nations knew,
Surely all the world would love Him too.”***

God bless you. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 32; JOHN 17.**

PSALM 32

“A Psalm of David, Maschil”—that is to say, an instructive Psalm—“Maschil.” I suppose that David wrote it after he had been forgiven and restored to Divine favor. I think we may read it as a part of our own experience, either of conversion or when restored after backsliding.

Verses 1, 2. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* Twice he says, “blessed.” He had felt the weight of sin. He had been sorely troubled, but now that Nathan is sent to him with the word of pardon, “The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die,” he counts himself doubly blessed—blessed, not the man who has never sinned! Blessed is he who, having sinned, is forgiven. Not the man who has no sin, but whose sin is covered. Wonderful word! Both in English and Hebrew, it sounds very much alike. The sacred, “Kophah,” the cover which covers sin so that sin is hidden, even from the eyes of God Himself! A wondrous deed! Blessed is the man who knows that Divine covering! “Blessed,” he says “is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” All along, after David’s sin, he became very crafty and very cunning, full of guile. You know the dodges that he had resorted to, to cover up his sin—he tried to play some of his tricks on God, Himself, but he felt it was a mischievous and foolish thing to do. He was uneasy, he was unhappy. We have sometimes heard it said that after David sinned, he remained insensible for nine months—until he received the Divine rebuke—but it was not so. He remained very sensitive, very depressed, very unhappy, and he was try-

ing this way and that to cover up his sin and guile. He could not do it. He ought to make a clean breast of it and confess it before God. He ought to give up his crooked ways, his ideas of excusing himself—and when he had done that, when he had given up his guile and his guilt, too—then he got the double blessing. "Blessed, blessed!" If there are any of you who are treading crooked ways with God and man, give them up! I know of nothing that will make you give them up like knowing free, full, perfect pardon through the precious blood of Christ and the Free Grace of God! The two things go together, guilt and guile! The two things go out of us together—when guilt is pardoned, guile is killed. Now hear how David felt while he was conscious of his sin, and yet was not right with God.

3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.* A wanton glance and the sin with Bathsheba. Where was the pleasure of it when it cost him all this? Such groaning that his very bones grew old, as if they were rotten, and his heart was heavy as if he wished to die. "For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me." God was dealing with him! God with His hand pressing him heavily, forcing his sin home upon him, making him say, "My sin is always before me." Oh, the misery of sinning to a child of God! Do not dream that we can ever have any pleasure in sin! The worldling may, but the Believer never can. To him it is a deadly viper that will fill his veins with burning poison.

4. *For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* When he tried to pray, it was a dried-up prayer. He tried to make a Psalm, but it was a dried-up song. He tried to do some good, for he was still a good man, but it was all withered without the Spirit of God. His moisture was gone out of him, turned into the drought of summer, and summer, in David's country, was a very droughty thing, indeed. Every human thing despaired, the grass seemed to turn to dust—it was so with him. If you go into sin, this is what will happen to you. If you are a true child of God, you will have all the joy of God taken from you, all the moisture of your heart dried up—and you will be like a parched, withered thing. "Selah"—time to stop, time to have a pause in the music—he was on so bass a key, he now had need to tighten the harp strings and rise to something a little sweeter.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD: and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* He must come to confession—full, spontaneous, unreserved—there must be a resolution. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord"—a firm determination to hide nothing, to see the sin, yourself, and to tell the Lord that you see it, and to confess it with great grief and sorrow. What a wonderful word that is, "I said, I will confess, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." God took away the sin! Yes, the very pith and marrow of it, "the iniquity of my sin." Take the bone away and the marrow of the bone, too! "You forgave the iniquity of my sin"—it has all gone, wholly gone—by one stroke of God's Divine Grace the sinner was pardoned! Selah again

6. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.* “For this” (because of this and for this blessing) “shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found.” The pardoning God must be sought. There is an attraction in the greatness of His mercy. They that are godly, even though they have offended and gone astray, must come back and seek for pardon in a time when You may be found. “Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.” The godly man is safe when the floods are out. There are times when great waters prevailed in David’s country—the brooks sometimes turned to rivers and came down with a rush when they were least expected. And here he says that when such a thing as that shall happen, yet God’s people shall be saved. They shall come, but they shall not come near unto them. Let me read those words again. If you have gone to God in the day of your sin, and have found pardon, He that took away the sin will take away the sorrow. “Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.”

7. *You are my hiding place: You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* “You are my hiding place”—precious words! “You are my hiding place”—not, “You are a hiding place,” but, “You are MY hiding place.” A man who is beset by foes does not stand still and say, “Yes, I can see there is a hiding place there,” but he runs to it! Beloved, run to your hiding place this morning, each one of you who can have a claim and interest in Christ! Run to Him and say, “You shall preserve me from trouble.” David has come up out of the roaring to the Singing. All day long he roared, and now all day long he sings! He hears songs everywhere! He lives in a circle of music, his heart is so glad! Well may he put another, “Selah,” for he has struck the strings very joyfully and they need tuning again.

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eye.* And here the speaker changes—“I will instruct you.” I have forgiven you. “I will instruct you, and teach you in the way which you shall go.” I have restored you back to the way. Now I will teach you in the way you shall go. “I will guide you with My eye.” Your own might lead you astray. “I will guide you with My eye.” I will be on the path, I will fix My eye upon you. “I will guide you with My eye.”

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* “Be you not as the horse,” not only David, but all of you! If God will guide you, be guided! If He will teach you, be teachable! If He will be gracious to you, be gracious towards Him!

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” David had found that out—his sin had brought him a transient pleasure, but a lasting misery! He shall have a bodyguard of mercy. God

will be gracious to him, tender to him and will not leave him if he is trusting in the Lord.

11. *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous." Be glad. Well, but you cannot always be glad, says one. "Be glad in the Lord"—you may always be glad in Him! Here is an unchanging source of joy! "Rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy." Here is the man that was silent, but now has gone as far as shouting! Is it not enough to make him rejoice? Twice he was blessed, in the first and second verses, and now he has been pardoned, he has been delivered, he has been compassed about with mercy—why, he must be glad! "Shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart." God bless you in the reading of his Word.

JOHN 17.

Verses 1, 2. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You. As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* Here we have the two Doctrines of a General and a Particular Redemption. Through His death, Christ has power given Him over all flesh, but the distinct, special objective is the salvation of His own—"that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* To know God in the sense of being acquainted with Him—loving Him—abiding in fellowship with Him—this is life eternal! To know God in Christ Jesus is to be saved, indeed!

4. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.* Which no other man could ever have said—not even Adam in his perfection, for his work was not finished—and, alas, how marred it was before it came near to finishing! And the most gracious man that ever died could not, in his last moments, say, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do," for it was still imperfect. There were many things which he would wish to have done, and many errors which he would wish to have rectified. But our Lord is more than man, and rises to this point—"I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

5. *And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was.* "I have disrobed Myself to be Your Servant. Clothe Me again with the garments of My majesty. Let me come back to the palace when I shall have passed through the stream of death." So far is the prayer for Himself. Now He prays for His people.

6, 7. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word. Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You.* "They have not accepted Me as a human teacher on My own account, unsent and uncommissioned, but they perfectly understand that there is a union between the Father and the Son. The things that You have given Me are of You."

8. *For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me.* There are great depths in these words. One of the greatest of German divines always refused to preach from this chapter, for he said he felt that few of God’s people had a sufficient measure of faith to understand it. And when he came to die, he had this read to him three times before he fell asleep. There is a world of wonderful mystery! Though the words are short and plain, yet the sense is fathomless.

9. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours.* There is an intercession of Christ which is for all the world, but His choicest intercession—His effectual prayer—is for His own. Nothing, perhaps, makes men so angry as this statement! They cannot endure that God should dispense His gifts according to His own will—but so it stands true!. There is an intercession in which none have a part but His own. “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me, for they are Yours.”

10, 11. *And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You.* They, therefore, will be left. The Shepherd will be gone. They will seem to be like orphans with their best Friend departed.

11-13. *Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to You; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.* He asks not only that they may be kept and so unharmed, but that they may be comforted, and so made glad. O sad hearts, hear your Redeemer’s prayer for you—and do not doubt that it is answered—“that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”

14. *I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* If nobody hates you for being a Christian, are you a Christian? If you find that you run with the general herd, and swim with the current, can you be a follower of that Christ who was despised and rejected of men?

15. *I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.* Not that they should shut themselves up in monasteries and convents. That is not the prayer of Christ. “I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.”

16-19. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth. As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes, I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the Truth.* Sanctify Myself—consecrate Myself—set Myself apart—for their

salvation that they also might be sanctified, consecrated, set apart through the Truth of God. Now comes a third part of the prayer, in which He pleads for the whole Church—for that part of it at that time not saved—for the unborn ones—for us.

20-21. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word. That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* Our Savior knew how apt we would be to split up into sects, and to be divided into parties, and so He prays again and again that we may be one! Cultivate the spirit of Christian affection. If there are divisions, let them not come through you. Contend earnestly for the faith, but also let us love one another.

22, 23. *And the glory which You gave Me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me.* Surely the passage seems to culminate here. These words rise like the peak of a mighty Alp almost out of our sight into the clear brightness of Heaven—“have loved them as You have loved Me.” Now, Believer, you cannot fully comprehend this, but believe it—that as surely as the Father loves the Son, as and after the same manner He also loves you—without beginning, without measure, without change, without end! “You have loved them as You have loved Me.”

24-26. *Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them.* Let us read that wonderful passage again—“that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them.”

26. *And I in them.* Sacred, mystical union! May our souls enjoy it day by day!

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

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

THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE RISEN LORD TO THE ELEVEN NO. 1958

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And as they thus spoke, Jesus, Himself, stood in the midst of them and said unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself: handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have you any food here? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me.”
Luke 24:36-44.

THIS, beloved Friends, is one of the most memorable of our Lord's many visits to His disciples after He had risen from the dead. Each one of these appearances had its own peculiarity. I cannot, at this time, give you even an outline of the special colorings which distinguished each of the many manifestations of our risen Lord. The instance now before us may be considered to be the fullest and most deliberate of all the manifestations, abounding beyond every other in “infallible proofs.” Remember that it occurred on the same day in which our Lord had risen from the dead and it was the close of a long day of gracious appearings. It was the summing up of a series of interviews, all of which were proofs of the Lord's Resurrection. There was the empty tomb and the grave clothes left there—the place where the Lord lay was accessible to all who chose to inspect it—for the great stone which had been sealed and guarded was rolled away. This, in itself, was most impressive evidence. Moreover, the holy women had been there and had seen a vision of angels who said that Jesus was alive. Magdalene had enjoyed a special interview. Peter and John had been into the empty tomb and had seen for themselves. The report was current that “the Lord was risen, indeed, and had appeared unto Simon.” It was a special thing that He should appear unto Simon for the disciples painfully knew how Simon had denied his Master and His appearance unto Simon seemed to have struck them as peculiarly characteristic—it was so like the manner of our Lord.

They met together in their bewilderment—the 11 of them gathered, as I suppose, for a social meal, for Mark tells us that the Lord appeared unto them “as they sat at meat.” It must have been very late in the day, but they were loath to part and so kept together till midnight. While they were sitting at meat, two Brothers came in who, even after the sun had set, had hastened back from Emmaus. These newcomers related how One who seemed a stranger had joined Himself to them as they were walking from Jerusalem, had talked with them in such a way that their hearts had been made to burn and had made Himself known unto them in the breaking of bread at the journey’s end. They declared that it was the Lord who had thus appeared to them and, though they had intended to spend the night at Emmaus, they had hurried back to tell the marvelous news to the eleven! Hence the witnesses accumulated with great rapidity—it became more and more clear that Jesus had really risen from the dead! But as yet the doubters were not convinced, for Mark says, “After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.”

Everything was working up to one point—the most unbelieving of them were being driven into a corner! They must doubt the truthfulness of Magdalene and the other saintly women. They must question the veracity of Simon. They must reject the two newly-arrived Brothers and charge them with telling idle tales—or else they must believe that Jesus was still alive, though they had seen Him die upon the Cross! At that moment the chief confirmation of all presented itself—“for Jesus, Himself, stood in the midst of them.” The doors were shut, but, despite every obstacle, their Lord was present in the center of the assembly! In the Presence of One whose loving smile warmed their hearts, their unbelief was destined to thaw and disappear! Jesus revealed Himself in all the warmth of His vitality and love—and made them understand that it was none other than Himself and that the Scriptures had told them it should be so. They were slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets had spoken concerning Him, but He brought them to it by His familiar communion with them. Oh, that in a like way He would put an end to all *our* doubts and fears!

Brothers and Sisters, though you and I were not at that interview, yet we may derive much profit from it while we look at it in detail, anxiously desiring that we may in spirit see, look upon and handle the Word of Life manifested in the flesh! Oh, to learn all that Jesus would teach us as we now, in spirit, take our places at that midnight meeting of the chosen ones!

In this wonderful manifestation of our Lord to His Apostles, I notice three things worthy of our careful observation this morning. This incident teaches us *the certainty of the Resurrection of our Lord*. Secondly, it shows us a little of *the Character of our risen Master*. And, thirdly, it gives us certain hints as to *the nature of our own resurrection*, when it shall be granted us. Oh, that we may be counted worthy to attain to the resurrection from among the dead!

I. First, then, let us see here THE CERTAINTY OF OUR LORD’S RESURRECTION. We have often asserted and we affirm it yet again, that no

fact in history is better attested than the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! The common mass of facts accepted by all men as historical are not one-tenth as certainly assured to us as this fact is! It must not be denied by any who are willing to pay the slightest respect to the testimony of their fellow men, that Jesus, who died upon the Cross and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, did literally rise again from the dead!

Observe, that when this Person appeared in the room, the first token that it was Jesus was His speech—*they were to have the evidence of hearing*—He used the same speech. No sooner did He appear than He *spoke*. He was never dumb and it was natural that the great Teacher and Friend should at once salute His followers, from whom He had been so painfully parted. His first words must have called to their minds those cheering notes with which He had closed His last address. They must have recognized that charming voice. I suppose its tone and rhythm to have been rich with a music most sweet and heavenly. A perfect voice would naturally be given to a perfect Man. The very sound of it would, through their ears, have charmed conviction into their minds with a glow of joy had they not been frozen up in unbelief. “Never man spoke like this Man.”

They might have known Him by His speech, alone. There were tones of voice as well as forms of language which were peculiar to Jesus of Nazareth. What our Lord said was just like He—it was all of a piece with His former discourse. Among the last sounds which lingered in their ears was that word, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you”—and now it must surely be the same Person who introduces Himself with the cheering salutation, “Peace be unto you.” About the Lord there were the air and style of one who had peace, Himself, and loved to communicate it to others. The tone in which He spoke peace tended to create it! He was a peacemaker and a peace giver—and by this sign they were driven to discern their Leader.

Do you not think that they were almost persuaded to believe that it was Jesus when He proceeded to chide them in a manner more tender than any other chiding could have been? How gentle the words when He said, “Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?” Our Lord’s chidings were comforts in disguise! His upbraiding was consolation in an unusual shape. Did not His upbraiding on this occasion bring to their minds His question upon the sea of Galilee when He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Did they not also remember when He came to them walking on the water and they were afraid that He was a spirit and cried out for fear—and He said to them, “It is I. Be not afraid”? Surely they remembered enough of these things to have made sure that it was their Lord had not their spirits been sunken in sorrow! Our Lord had never been unwisely silent as to their faults. He had never passed over their errors with that false and indulgent affection which gratifies its own ease by tolerating sin. No, He had pointed out their faults with the fidelity of true love. And now that He thus admonished them, they ought to have perceived that it was none other than He. Alas, unbelief is slow to die!

When Jesus came at last to talk to them about Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms, He was upon a favorite topic. Then the 11 might have nudged each other and whispered, "It is the Lord!" Jesus had, in His latter hours, been continually pointing out the Scriptures which were being fulfilled in Himself and, at this interview, He repeated His former teaching. This is assuredly none other than He who always spoke His Father's mind and will—and constantly did honor to the Holy Spirit by whom the sacred Books were inspired! Thus in His tones and topics our Lord gave clear indications that it was He who had suddenly appeared in that little assembly.

I want you to notice that this evidence was all the better because they, themselves, evidently remained the same men as they had been. "They were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." And thus they did exactly what they had done long before when He came to them walking on the waters! In the interval between His death and His appearing, no change had come over them! Nothing had happened to them to elevate them, as yet, out of their littleness of mind. The Holy Spirit was not yet given and, therefore, all that they had heard at the Last Supper and seen in Gethsemane and at the Cross had not yet exercised its full influence upon them. They were still childish and unbelieving! The same men, then, are looking at the same Person and they are in their ordinary condition—this argues strongly for the correctness of their identification of their well-beloved Lord. They are not carried away by enthusiasm, nor wafted aloft by fanaticism—they are not even, as yet, borne up by the Holy Spirit into an unusual state of mind—they are as slow of heart and as fearful as ever they were. If *they* are convinced that Jesus has risen from the dead, depend upon it, it must be so! If they go forth to tell the tidings of His Resurrection and to yield up their lives for it, you may be sure that their witness is true, for they are not the sort of men to be deceived!

In our day there has been a buzz about certain miracles of faith, but the statements usually come from persons whose impartiality is questionable—credulous persons who saw what they evidently *wished* to see. I know several good people who would not willfully deceive who, nevertheless, upon some points are exceedingly unreliable because their enthusiasm is prepared to be imposed upon. Any hawker of wonders would expect them to be buyers—they have a taste for the marvelous! As witnesses, the evidence of such people has no value in it as compared with that of these 11 men who evidently were the reverse of credulous or excitable. In the Apostles' case, the facts were tested to the utmost and the truth was not admitted till it was forced upon them! I am not excusing the unbelief of the disciples, but I claim that their witness has all the more weight in it because it was the result of such cool investigation. These Apostles were, in a special manner, to be witnesses of the Resurrection and it makes assurance *doubly sure* to us when we see them arrive at their conclusion with such deliberate steps. These were men like ourselves, only perhaps a little less likely to be deceived—they needed to be convinced by overwhelming witness and they were so! And afterwards they

always declared boldly that their crucified Lord had, indeed, risen from the dead!

Thus far in the narrative they had received the evidence of their ears and that is by no means weak evidence. But now *they are to have the evidence of sight*, for the Savior said to them, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself." "And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet." John says, "His side," also, which *he* especially noted because he had seen the piercing of that side and the blood and water flow out. They were to see and identify that blessed body which had suffered death! The nail prints were visible, both in His hands which were open before them, and also in His feet which their condescending Lord deigned to expose to their deliberate gaze. There was the mark of the gash in His side—and this the Lord Jesus graciously bared to them, as afterwards He did more fully to Thomas, when He said, "Reach here your hand and thrust it into My side." These were the marks of the Lord Jesus by which His identity could be verified.

Beyond this, there was the general contour of His Countenance and the fashion of the whole Man by which they could discern Him. His body, though it was now, in a sense, glorified, was so far veiled as to its new condition that it retained its former likeness. They must have perceived that the Lord was no longer subject to the pains and infirmities of our ordinary mortality—otherwise His wounds had not been healed so soon—but there remained sure marks by which they knew that it was Jesus and no other. He looked like a lamb that had been slain—the signs of the Son of Man were in His hands and feet and side. Their sight of the Lord was not a hasty glimpse, but a steady inspection, for John, in his first Epistle writes, "Which we have seen and looked upon." This implies a lengthened looking and such the Lord Jesus invited His friends to take. They could not have been mistaken when they were afforded such a view of those marks by which His identity was established. The same Christ that died, had risen from the dead! The same Jesus that had hung upon the Cross, now stood in the midst of those who knew Him best! It was the same body and they identified it—although a great change had doubtless come over it since it was taken down from the tree.

Furthermore, that they might be quite sure, *the Lord invited them to receive the evidence of touch or feeling*. He called them to a form of examination from which, I doubt not, many of them shrank. He said, "Handle Me. Handle Me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." Writers have remarked upon the use of the word, "bones," instead of, "blood," in this case. But I do not think that any inference can be safely drawn from there. It would have been barely possible for the disciples to have discovered, by handling, that the Lord had *blood*, but they could, by handling, perceive that He had bones and, therefore, the expression is natural enough, without our imputing to it a meaning which it may never have been intended to convey! The Savior had a reason, no doubt, other than some have imagined, for the use of the terms, "a spirit has not flesh *and bones* as you see I have." The Savior had not assumed a phantom body—there were bones in it as well as flesh—it was, to the fullest, as substantial as ever. He had not put on an appearance, as angels do when

they visit the sons of men. No, His body was solid substance which could be handled. "Handle Me and see that it is I." He bade them see that it was flesh and bone, such as no spirit has. There were the substantial elements of a human frame in that body of Christ which stood in the midst of the eleven. Jesus cried, "Handle Me and see."

Thus our Lord was establishing to the Apostles, not only His identity, but also His substantial corporeal existence—He would make them see that He was a Man of flesh and bones—not a ghost, airy and unsubstantial. This should correct a certain form of teaching upon the Resurrection which is all too common. I was present some years ago at the funeral of a man of God for whom I had much respect. In the chapel a certain excellent Doctor of Divinity gave us an address, before the interment, in which he informed us as to the condition of his departed friend. He said that he was not in the coffin—indeed, there was nothing of him there. This I was sorry to hear, for if so, I was ignorantly mourning over a body which had no relation to my friend. The preacher went on to describe the way in which the man of God had ascended to Heaven at the moment of death—his spirit fashioning for itself a body as it passed through the air!

I believed in my friend's being in Heaven, but not in his being there in a *body*. I knew that my friend's body was in the coffin and I believed that it would be laid in the tomb—and I expected that it would rise again from the grave at the coming of the Lord. I did not believe that my friend would weave for himself a filmy frame, making a second body, nor do I believe it now, though I heard it so affirmed. I believe in the resurrection of the dead! I look to see the very body which was buried, raised again! It is true that as the seed develops into the flower, so the buried body is merely the germ out of which will come the spiritual body—but, still, it will not be a second body, but the *same* body, as to identity. I shall enter into no dispute about the atoms of the body, nor deny that the particles of our flesh, in the process of their decay, may be taken up by plants and absorbed into the bodies of animals and all that! I do not care one jot about identity of atoms! There may not be a solitary ounce of the same matter, but yet identity can be preserved—and it must be preserved if I read my Bible right!

My body today is the same as that which I inhabited 20 years ago and yet all its particles are different! Even so, the body put into the grave and the body that rises from it are not two bodies, but one body. The saints are not, at the coming of their Lord, to remain disembodied spirits, nor to wear freshly created bodies, but their entire manhood is to be restored and to enjoy endless bliss! Well said the Patriarch of old, "in my flesh shall I see God." "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us, also, by Jesus." I cannot see how the doctrine of Christ goes beyond the doctrine of Plato and others if it is not a doctrine which respects this body! The immortality of the soul was accepted and known as a Truth of God before the faith of Christ was preached, for it is dimly discoverable by the light of nature. But the *resurrection* of the body is a Revelation peculiar to the Christian dispensation—at which the wise men of the world very naturally mocked—but which it ill becomes Christian men to spirit away!

The body which is buried shall rise again! It is true it is sown a natural body and shall be raised a spiritual body, but it will be truly a *body* and the same *it* which was sown shall be raised! It is true it is sown in weakness and raised in power, but the same *it* is thus raised. It is true that it is sown in weakness to be raised in power and sown a corruptible body, to be raised in incorruption, but in each case it is the *same body*, though so gloriously changed.

It will be of a material substance, also, for our Savior's body was material, since He said, "Handle Me and see that it is I, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." Still further to confirm the faith of the disciples and to show them that their Lord had a real body—and not the mere form of one—*He gave them evidence which appealed to their common sense*. He said "Have you any food here? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence." This was an exceedingly convincing proof of His unquestionable Resurrection! In very deed and fact, and not in vision and phantom, the Man who had died upon the Cross stood among them!

Let us just think of this and rejoice! This Resurrection of our Lord Jesus is a matter of certainty, for, if you spirit this away, you have done away with the Gospel altogether! If He is not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain! You are yet in your sins! Justification receives its seal in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—not in His appearing as a phantom, but in His being loosed from death and raised to a glorious life! This is God's mark of the acceptance of the work of the great Substitute and of the justification of all for whom His atoning work was performed.

Note well that this is also our grand hope concerning those who are asleep. You have buried them forever if Christ was not raised from the dead! They have passed out of your sight and they shall never again have fellowship with you unless Jesus rose again from the dead! The Apostle makes the resurrection of all who are in Christ to hinge upon the Resurrection of Christ. I do not feel it necessary, when I talk with the bereaved, to comfort them at all concerning those that are asleep in Christ, as to their souls—we know that they are forever with the Lord and are supremely blessed and, therefore, we need no further comfort. The only matter upon which we need consolation is that poor body which once we loved so well, but which now we must leave in the cold clay. The resurrection comes in as a final undoing of all that death has done. "They shall come again from the land of the enemy." Jesus says, "Your dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise." If we question the Resurrection of Christ, then is the whole of our faith questioned and those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished! And we are left just where others were before Christ brought this Divine Truth of God to light. Only as we are sure of the Resurrection of Jesus can we cry, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"

II. Secondly, will you follow me while I very briefly set forth OUR LORD'S CHARACTER WHEN RISEN FROM THE DEAD?

What is He, now that He has conquered death and all that belongs to it? What is He, now that He shall hunger no more, neither thirst any-

more? He is much the same as He used to be! Indeed, He is altogether what He was, for He is “the same yesterday, today and forever.”

Notice, first, that in this appearance of Christ we are taught that *He is still anxious to create peace in the hearts of His people*. No sooner did He make Himself visible than He said, “Peace be unto you.” Beloved, your risen Lord wants you to be happy! When He was here on earth, He said, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” He says the same to you today. He takes no delight in the distresses of His people. He would have His joy to be in them, that their joy may be full. He bids you rejoice in Him always. He whispers to you, this morning, as you sit in the pew, “Peace be unto you.” He has not lost His tender care over the least of the flock—He would have each one led by the still waters and made to lie down in green pastures.

Note, again, that *He has not lost His habit of chiding unbelief and encouraging faith*, for as soon as He has risen and speaks with His disciples, He asks them, “Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?” He loves you to believe in Him and be at rest. Find if you can, Beloved, one occasion in which Jesus inculcated doubt, or bade men dwell in uncertainty! The apostles of unbelief are everywhere, today, and they imagine that they are doing God a service by spreading what they call, “honest doubt.” This is death to all joy! Poison to all peace! The Savior did not do so! He would have them take extraordinary measures to get rid of their doubt. “Handle Me,” He says. It was going a long way to say that, but He would sooner be handled than His people should doubt! Ordinarily it might not be proper for them to touch Him. Had He not said to the women, “Touch Me not”? But what may not be allowable, ordinarily, becomes proper when necessity demands it. The removal of their doubt as to our Lord’s Resurrection necessitated that they should handle Him and, therefore, He bids them do so.

O Beloved, you that are troubled and vexed with thoughts and, therefore, get no comfort out of your religion because of your mistrust—your Lord would have you come very near to Him—and put His Gospel to any test which will satisfy you. He cannot bear you to doubt! He appeals tenderly, saying, “O you of little faith, why do you doubt?” He would at this moment still encourage you to taste and see that the Lord is good. He would have you believe in the substantial reality of His religion and handle Him and see! Trust Him largely and simply, as a child trusts its mother and knows no fear!

Notice, next, that when the Savior had risen from the dead and a measure of His Glory was upon Him, *He was still most condescendingly familiar with His people*. He showed them His hands and His feet and He said, “Handle Me and see.” When He was on earth, before His passion, He was most free with His disciples—no pretense of dignity kept Him apart from them. He was their Master and Lord—and yet He washed their feet! He was the Son of the Highest, but He was among them as One who *serves*! He said, “Suffer little children to come unto Me.” He is the same today—

***“His sacred name a common word
On earth He loves to hear;
There is no majesty in Him***

Which love may not come near.

Though He reigns in the highest heavens, His delights are still with the sons of men! He will still permit us to sit at His feet, or even to lean our head upon His bosom. Jesus will listen as we pour out our griefs. He will regard our cry when we are not pleading about a sword in our bones, but only concerning a thorn in our flesh. Jesus is still the Brother born for adversity. He still manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. Is not this clear and also very pleasant to see, as we study this interview?

The next thing is that *the risen Lord was still wonderfully patient*, even as He had always been. He bore with their folly and infirmity, for, “while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered,” He did not chide them. He discerned between one unbelief and another and He judged that the unbelief which grew out of wonder was not so blamable as that former unbelief which denied credible evidence. Instead of rebuke, He gives confirmation. He says, “Have you any food here?” And He takes a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb and eats it. Not that He needed food. His body could receive food, but it did not require it. Eating was His own sweet way of showing them that if He could, He would solve all their questions. He would do *anything* in His great patience that they might be cured of their mistrust! Just so today, Beloved, Jesus does not chide you, but He invites you to believe Him. He invites you, therefore, to sup with Him and eat bread at His table. “He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever,” but in His great mercy He will use another tone and encourage you to trust Him. Can you hold back? Oh, please, do not do so!

Observe that our Savior, though He was risen from the dead and, therefore, in a measure, in His Glory, *entered into the fullest fellowship with His own*. Peter tells us that they did eat and drink with Him. I do not notice, in this narrative, that He drank with them, but He certainly ate of such food as they had, and this was a clear token of His fellowship with them. In all ages eating and drinking with one another has been the most expressive token of communion and so the Savior seems to say to us, today, “I have eaten with you, My people, since I have quit the grave. I have eaten with you through the 11 who represented you. I have eaten and I will still eat with you, till we sit down together at the marriage supper of the Lamb. If any man opens unto Me, I will come into Him and will sup with Him and he with Me.” Yes, the Lord Jesus is still wonderfully near to us and He waits to grant us the highest forms of fellowship which can be known this side the gate of pearl! In this let our spirits quietly rejoice.

Let me call your attention to the fact that when Jesus had risen from the dead, *He was just as tender of Scripture as He was before His decease*. I have dwelt for two Sunday mornings [Sermons #1955—*Jesus Declining the Legions* and #1956—*On the Cross After Death*] upon the wonderful way in which our Lord always magnified the Scriptures. And here, as if to crown all, He told them that, “all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. And He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead.” Find Jesus where you may, He is the antagonist of those who would lessen the authority of Holy Scripture!

“It is written” is His weapon against Satan, His argument against wicked men! The learned at this hour scoff at the Book and accuse of Bibliolatry those of us who reverence the Divine Word! But in this they derive no assistance from the teaching or example of Jesus. Not a word derogatory of Scripture ever fell from the lips of Jesus Christ—He always manifested the most reverent regard for every jot and tittle of the Inspired Volume. Since our Savior, not only before His death, but after it, took care, thus, to commend the Scriptures to us, let us avoid with all our hearts all teaching in which Holy Scripture is put into the background! Still the Bible and the Bible, alone, should be and shall be the religion of Protestants—and we will not budge an inch from that standpoint, God helping us!

Once again, our Savior, after He had risen from the dead, *showed that He was anxious for the salvation of men*, for it was at this interview that He breathed upon the Apostles and bade them receive the Holy Spirit, to fit them to go forth and preach the Gospel to every creature! The missionary spirit is the spirit of Christ—not only the spirit of Him that died to save, but the spirit of Him who has finished His work and has gone to His rest. Let us cultivate that spirit, if we would be like the Jesus who has risen from the dead!

III. I can stay no longer, because I would draw your attention, in the third place, to the light which is thrown by this incident upon THE NATURE OF OUR OWN RESURRECTION.

First, I gather from this text that our nature, *our whole humanity, will be perfected at the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, when the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we that may then be alive shall be changed. Jesus has redeemed not only our souls, but our bodies! “Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?” When the Lord shall deliver His captive people out of the land of the enemy, He will not leave a bone of one of them in the adversary’s power. The dominion of death shall be utterly broken. Our entire nature shall be redeemed unto the living God in the day of our resurrection! After death, until that day, we shall be disembodied spirits, but in the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body, we shall attain our full inheritance! We are looking forward to a complete restoration. At this time the body is dead because of sin and, therefore, it suffers pain and tends to decay, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. In our resurrection, however, the body shall also be quickened and the resurrection shall be to the body what regeneration has been to the soul! Thus shall our humanity be completely delivered from the consequences of the Fall. Perfect manhood is that which Jesus restores from sin and the grave—and this shall be ours in the day of His appearing.

I gather next that in our resurrection *our nature will be full of peace*. Jesus Christ would not have said, “Peace be unto you,” if there had not been a deep peace within Himself. He was calm and undisturbed. There was much peace about His whole life, but after His Resurrection, His peace becomes very conspicuous. There is no striving with scribes and Pharisees; there is no battling with anybody after our Lord is risen! A French author has written of our Lord’s Forty Days on earth after the

Resurrection under the title of, "The Life of Jesus Christ in Glory." Though rather misleading at first, the title is not so inaccurate as it appears, for His work was done and His warfare was accomplished—and our Lord's life here was the beginning of His Glory. Such shall be *our* life—we shall be flooded with eternal peace and shall never again be tossed about with trouble, sorrow, distress or persecution! An infinite serenity shall keep our body, soul and spirit throughout eternity.

When we rise again *our nature will find its home amid the communion of saints*. When the Lord Jesus Christ had risen again, His first resort was the room where His disciples were gathered. His first evening was spent among the objects of His love. Even so, wherever we are, we shall seek and find communion with the saints. I joyfully expect to meet many of you in Heaven—to know you and commune with you. I would not like to float about in the future state without a personality in the midst of a company of undefined and unknown beings. That would be no Heaven to me! No, Brothers and Sisters, we shall soon perceive who our comrades are and we shall rejoice in them and in our Lord. There could be no communion among unknown entities. You cannot have fellowship with people whom you do not recognize and, therefore, it seems to me most clear that we shall, in the future state, have fellowship through *recognition*—and our heavenly resurrection bodies shall help the recognition and share in the fellowship. As the risen Christ wends His way to the upper room of the eleven, so will you, by force of holy gravitation, find your way to the place where all the servants of God shall gather at the last. Then shall we be truly at home and go no more out forever.

Furthermore, I see that in that day *our bodies will admirably serve our spirits*. For look at our Lord's body. Now that He is risen from the dead, He desires to convince His disciples and His body becomes at once the means of His argument, the evidence of His statement! His flesh and bones were text and sermon for Him. "Handle Me," He says, "and see." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, whatever we may have to do in eternity, we shall not be hindered by our bodies as we now are! Flesh and blood hamper us, but "flesh and bones" shall help us! I need to speak, sometimes, but my head aches, or my throat is choked, or my legs refuse to bear me up—but it is not so in the resurrection from the dead! A thousand infirmities in this earthly life compass us about, but our risen body shall be helpful to our regenerated nature! It is only a natural body now, fit for our soul, but hereafter it shall be a *spiritual body*, adapted to all the desires and wishes of the Heaven-born spirit—and no longer shall we have to cry out, "The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." We shall find in the risen body a power such as the spirit shall wish to employ for the noblest purposes. Will not this be wonderful?

In that day, Beloved, when we shall rise again from the dead, *we shall remember the past*. Do you not notice how the risen Savior says, "These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you." He had not forgotten His former state. I think Dr. Watts is right when he says that we shall, "with transporting joys recount the labors of our feet." It is rather a small subject and probably we shall far more delight to dwell on the labors of our Redeemer's hands and feet—but still, we shall remember

all the ways whereby the Lord our God led us—and we shall talk to one another concerning them. In Heaven we shall remember our happy Sabbaths here below, when our hearts burned within us while Jesus, Himself, drew near. Since Jesus speaks after He has risen of the things that He said while He was with His disciples, we perceive that the river of death is not like the fabled Lethe, which caused all who drank thereof to forget their past. We shall arise with a multitude of hallowed memories enriching our minds! Death will not be oblivion to us, for it was not so to Jesus. Rather shall we meditate on mercies experienced and, by discoursing on them, we shall make known to principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God!

Observe that our Lord, after He had risen from the dead, *was still full of the spirit of service* and, therefore, He called others out to go and preach the Gospel—and He gave them the Spirit of God to help them. When you and I are risen from the dead, we shall rise full of the spirit of service! What engagements we may have throughout eternity we are not told because we have enough to do to fulfill our engagements now, but assuredly we shall be honored with errands of mercy and tasks of love fitted for our heavenly being. and I doubt not it shall be one of our greatest delights, while seeing the Lord's face, to serve Him with all our perfected powers! He will use us in the grand economy of future manifestations of His Divine Glory. Possibly we may be to other dispensations what the angels have been to this. Be that as it may, we shall find a part of our bliss and joy in constantly serving Him who has raised us from the dead!

There I leave the subject, wishing that I could have handled it much better. Think it over when you are quiet at home and add this thought to it, that you have a share in all that is contained in resurrection. May the Holy Spirit give you a personal grip of this vital Truth of God! You, *yourself*, shall rise from the dead—therefore, be not afraid to die!

If any of my Hearers have no share in our Lord's Resurrection, I am truly sorry for them. O my Friend, what you are losing! If you have no share in the living Lord, may God have mercy upon you! If you have no share in Christ's rising from the dead, then you will not be raised up in the likeness of His glorified body! If you do not attain to that resurrection from among the dead, then you must abide in death, with no prospect but that of a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. Oh, look to Jesus, the Savior! Only as you look to Him can there be a happy future for you. God help you to do so at once, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 16:1-14;
Luke 24:33-48; 1 John 1.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—909, 309, 306.**

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CHRIST THE CURE FOR TROUBLED HEARTS NO. 2408

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 14, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 10, 1887.

*“And He said unto them, Why are you troubled and why
do doubts arise in your hearts.”*

Luke 24:38.

IT seems, from these questions of our Lord, that true Believers may come into a troubled state of mind. The eleven were truly Christ's disciples and even His Apostles, yet, when their faith failed them and they refused to believe the testimony that Christ was risen from the dead, they were troubled in their minds and tossed to and fro, as on a stormy sea. Unbelief is a great troubler. Our peace comes to us by faith and if our faith grows weak, our peace of mind is apt to decline and we are likely to become much disturbed in spirit. If those who are Believers, who have passed from death unto life, are sometimes troubled, you may be sure that others are! It is no wonder that they are troubled who have never experienced the Grace of God in conversion and have never felt the joy which Jesus brings to those whom He saves. If every unconverted man could see his true state, he would not dare to give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, until he had been brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ. If you who are living without a Savior realized your lost condition, your pillows would be stuffed with thorns instead of with feathers. I scarcely think that your bread would be sweet to your taste, or that light would be pleasant to your eyes, if you really knew your present condition and the jeopardy in which your souls are found. I tremble for you and I shall be glad if you learn to tremble for yourselves—and to flee from the wrath to come!

I want, at this time, to speak more particularly to some who are, in a measure, awakened and awakened to their real position before God, and have been so for a long while. They are not happy. They never will be happy until a very great change comes over them, yet I do not see why they should not, at once, have done with doubts, fears and troubled thoughts, and enter immediately into rest and peace. I say that I do not see why they should not receive this great blessing, but I see a great many reasons why they should! I can truly say that when I preach to you, I labor with all my heart and soul to bring you to the Cross of Christ. And I have sometimes thought, when I am going home, “That was a poor sermon if it is judged merely by the rules of rhetoric, yet it was such a sermon that if I could have heard it, myself, when I was in de-

spair—when I was longing for salvation—it would have been worth a Jew’s eye to me, for it would have been the very thing I needed to show me the road to Heaven. It would have been a key to unlock my dungeon door and to set me at liberty.”

And I am praying that it may be so now—every word I speak is steeped in prayer that some of my truly anxious hearers, who would be right if they could, may now end their wanderings at the Cross—have done with their uneasiness and restlessness—and find peace in Jesus Christ the Savior! So, with that objective in view, I am going to take the question out of its context and, though Jesus put it to His eleven Apostles, I shall venture to address it to you who are very far from being Apostles—who are not yet even *disciples*, but who, at least, *wish* that you were numbered, even, among the least of God’s people! To you I say, in the words of the text, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?”

I. And, first, THIS QUESTION IS WORTH CONSIDERING—“Why are you troubled?”

Many of you are troubled. Some of you are very greatly troubled, though not always to the same extent. You shake off your anxiety, sometimes. Unhappy men that you are, that you should be able to shake off a trouble which is driving you to the Savior! You get out into company. You become immersed in business and you forget this great sorrow, this sad perplexity. But, after a while, it comes back to you. A little sickness, or a death in the family, or even the east wind and the fogs, with the dullness that often accompanies them, will bring back to you those sorrowful thoughts and you are again troubled!

And you have many questions in your heart—you cannot get rid of them. It has been so with you for months! I know some with whom it has been so for *years*—they have been attending my ministry, perhaps, or the ministry of some other preacher of the Word, and, after a sermon which has been pressing and personal, they feel dreadfully uneasy. They cannot tell what to make of themselves and, sometimes, they have said, “This state of things must come to an end. We cannot any longer endure to have this indefinable something, this mysterious fear which haunts us, and takes away the very joy of life.”

It will be a good thing to ask this question, “Why are we so troubled?” because *it would be a great pity to be troubled for nothing*. If there is no cause for the anxiety, let us get rid of it! Count it one of the wisest actions to *battle* with despondency. I do not suppose there is any man in this place who is naturally more inclined to despondency than I am, but when I feel this pressure upon my spirit, I seek to overcome it by hoping in God. I say to myself, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” When I press the question home and find that there is nothing, really, to disquiet me, I am not disquieted any longer! And I suppose that you are of much the same make as I am and, if you look your trouble fairly in the face, and you find that there is nothing in it, then you will shake yourself loose from it and come to a cheery state of heart once more!

But suppose that there should be something that *ought* to cause you anxiety—is it not best, at once, to make a full investigation of the matter? *It may be that the cure of the evil lies in the search for it.* Here is a man who is half afraid that he has contracted a disease, but, if so, at present it is only in its early stages. Now, if he is a foolish man, he will say, “I shall not trouble about it. If it gets to be much worse, then I will see to it.” But if he is a wise, intelligent man, he says, “I must know the ins and outs of this affair. I will go to the best physician I can find and he shall thoroughly examine me, and I will know what these symptoms mean, for, even if there is disease, perhaps it may be nipped in the bud and my life may yet be saved. If I go to the doctor at once, he may be able to battle with this mischief before it takes a greater hold upon me.” I think that he is a very sensible man to say to himself, “Suppose that my health is all wrong? Possibly there is a cure for my malady—I will go and see if I can have this cure.”

Remember that the first thing you ought to see to is your *soul*. Sirs, by all means, attend to your health! Look well to the title deeds of your property, make your wills, and so forth, but, first of all, see to the well-being of your immortal nature, for what will you do if you should pass into another world and find yourselves forever shut out from hope? What an awful thing that would be! Therefore, first and foremost, look to that which is to last forever and make your calling and election sure! God help you, by His Grace, to see to this matter this very hour! If there is a cure to be had *anywhere*, there will be no particular reason for fearing and being troubled if we resolve to go and obtain it. If it is, indeed, put within our reach, let us stretch out our hand and take it at once—and so end our troubles and questions in the best manner possible—by getting the cure for our disease, the heal-all for our soul-sickness! The disciples, at the time mentioned in our text, were troubled, because, when Jesus stood in their midst, they supposed that it was a spirit, a ghost—yet it was no ghost, it was the real living Lord Jesus, whom they afterwards handled, who was there, but, “they supposed that they had seen a spirit,” and therefore, “they were terrified and frightened.”

I wonder whether *your present troubles arise out of a supposition*. I have known some who have said to me, “I am afraid, Sir, and this is my daily trouble, that God has never chosen me to eternal salvation. Suppose that, after all, I should not be one of His elect?” Now, listen—suppose that you *should be* one of His elect? Is there not as much sense in supposing the one thing as the other? And suppose that you were to leave off supposing—that would be a very sensible thing to do! There is not much good that ever comes by indulging suppositions of that kind! Neither you nor I can climb to Heaven and unfold that roll. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.” Leave that secret thing with Him. I will tell you something in which there is *no supposition*. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Under no supposable circumstance will Jesus Christ ever cast away a sinner who comes to Him! Therefore, kindly leave the supposing alone and just take the certainty that whoever comes to Christ, He will in no wise cast out.

I hear another one say, "But suppose I have committed the unpardonable sin?" To which I answer, "But suppose you have not?" And there is just as much reason for supposing one way as supposing the other. And again I say, suppose you are wise enough to leave off supposing altogether? If you *have* committed the unpardonable sin, I should really like to know what it is, for, after reading, I think, as much of sound divinity as anybody, I have never yet been able to discover what it is! Nor have I ever met with any divine who has even seemed to me to approximate to any sure and certain description of what the unpardonable sin may be. This much I do know about it—it is called a sin that is unto death. And as soon as a man commits it, a *spiritual death* steals over him, so that he *never* desires mercy, *never* is conscious of his guilt and *never* wishes to find salvation by Jesus Christ. He becomes dead! So dead that it is not merely the sin which is, itself, unpardonable, but the *condition of heart* into which it throws the man, so that he never seeks pardon, or even *wishes* for it. Now, my dear Friends, you know that you have not come to that terrible state because *you are always restless about your soul's salvation* and always wishing that by some means you might be saved!

Whatever supposition you bring, I believe that I can sweep your supposition away, or that it deserves to be swept away. Therefore, do not be in doubt or fear because of a supposition. I could bother you with suppositions if I liked to do so. Suppose there were to be an earthquake. Suppose that top gallery were to come tumbling down. Why, I could go on supposing till I had frightened every nervous soul in the place! But what a fool I would be and what fools you would be to be frightened thereby! I pray you, believe me, that there is enough in the black facts of your case to trouble you without your vexing yourself unnecessarily by suppositions! It used to be thought to be a mark of sanctity for a man to wear a hair shirt and an iron belt round his waist which covered him with sores. We know better than that, now! Therefore, why make a hair shirt of suppositions and an iron belt of pure inventions of your own imagination? Get rid of them all, I beseech you!

But suppose that you have done with suppositions, yet *it may be possible that you are troubled with doubts*. "Why do doubts arise in your hearts?" You are unable to get peace because you have certain doubts in your hearts. Well, what are your doubts?

"I have been thinking," says one, "perhaps the Bible is not true." Now, when these disciples thought that Jesus, Himself, was not really there, but that it was only a vision, our Savior said to them, "Handle Me, and see." And the best way to prove whether the Bible is true is not to stand and listen to the evil suggestions of skeptics against it, but to hear its own challenge, "Handle Me, and see." There is something wonderfully substantial in the religion of Jesus Christ!

To me, it is life, joy, comfort, strength—everything! I handle it and I have tried and proved it for myself, these many years, but I do not expect my experience to stand in the place of your own experience of it. Go to Christ with prayer, yourself. Go to God with repentance, yourself, and see whether He does not pardon you, bless you, change you and make a new creature of you! And when He has done that, believe me, you will

never again doubt whether the Bible is true, for when it shall have saved you from your fears, rescued you from your sins and brought you into life and light and liberty, you will be absolutely certain that it is true because you have tried and tested it yourself!

“Oh, but I have a different thought from that!” says another friend, “I think that I cannot be saved because I do not feel all that I ought to feel. I have not had sufficient horror of sin. I have not felt myself to be the worst sinner who ever lived. In fact, I do not think I can ever drag myself down to that state of despair which I have read of as the experience of a great many who have been saved.” Now that is another of your foolish thoughts which you had better give up thinking! Who told you that you must weep a certain quantity of tears? Who told you that you must feel a certain degree of anguish? That Book has not told you so, nor has God’s preacher! But we are continually telling you that the suffering on account of sin was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Atonement for human guilt is in His precious blood and that you may come to Him just as you are! Have we not often tried to draw a line of distinction between repentance, which is the *fruit of the Spirit*, and despair, which is a *temptation of the devil*? Many, no doubt, come to Christ in black despair, but why should you not come with great hopefulness expecting that He will bless you? And if you do so come, depend upon it that He will not send you away empty. Get rid of that foolish thought, I pray you, and believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord. May the Holy Spirit help you to do so!

Perhaps a third troubled one says, “My thought is, Sir, that, if I professed to be a Christian, I should not live up to it.” I heard a good reply to that remark from one who came to see me last week. One said to her, “You know, if you make a profession of religion, you must live up to it.” “Oh,” she answered, “all the profession I make is that I put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ—and I put my trust in Him to help me to live up to it—I dare trust Him as far as that.” Mind that you do the same and get rid, altogether, of the thought that it is you, by yourself, who has to live up to your profession. Salvation is of the Lord, alone! You have to accept Grace from Christ for nothing and He will delight to give it to you. And He will also delight to continue to give you all the Grace you need till He brings you safely home to Glory!

Our Lord asked His disciples, “Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts?” There are some who say, “*It is the feelings that we have in our heart that causes us anxiety.*” Well now, what are your feelings? As a rule, I care much more about *faith* than about feelings, but for once, tell me what your feelings are, you who are troubled and vexed with anxious thoughts.

“Well, Sir,” says one, “I am afraid that I shall not be saved.” But why not? “Oh, I do not know why, but I am afraid I will not!” Well, do you not think that you are very foolish? If you will think of it a little, you will be sure that you are. Because, when a person says, “I am so fearful,” and you ask, “What are you afraid of?” and he says, “Oh, I do not know, but I am so fearful!” you would say to him, “My dear fellow, if you do not know what it is that you fear, then give up being fearful!” If you have nothing to be afraid of, do not be afraid, for what can be the reason of it?

“Oh, but, Sir,” says another, “I feel—well, to make short work of it, I feel that it is too good to be true.” What is too good to be true? “Why, that I may have my sins forgiven simply upon my believing and may now, at once, become a child of God!” Too good to be true, is it? Well, it would be too good to be true if it came from you—but as it comes from God, nothing is too good to be true of the good and gracious God! He is willing to blot out all your sins if you will but trust to the Lord Jesus Christ. However much you may have transgressed against His Laws, He is prepared to pass an act of amnesty and oblivion and to blot out all your transgressions! Your wanderings, your blasphemies, even, He is ready to forgive—more ready to forgive than you are to be forgiven—and He puts it simply thus, “Believe in My Son. Trust that He whom I have appointed to save you will save you and, upon your so trusting, your transgressions are forgiven and you are saved.”

It is a great message that we have to deliver. Would you have a little Gospel from a great God? Would you have a little Gospel from that great Savior who was the Son of God and yet died upon the Cross? If it had been less than it is, you would have begun to quibble about its littleness! But now that it is so great, I pray you, do not quarrel with great mercy, but receive it, believe it, believe it at once and let your doubts and fears end from this time forth, through the effectual working of God’s gracious Spirit!

I have lingered too long over this first division, yet I hope I have convinced you that the question is worth considering.

II. The question we have now to consider is this—HAS YOUR TROUBLE ANYTHING TO DO WITH JESUS? This is what our Lord meant by enquiring of His disciples, “Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts?” Their trouble had to do with Jesus, but they had made a great mistake concerning Him.

“Well,” you say, “this subject of Jesus and His salvation, it is all a supernatural business.” *Do all supernatural matters frighten you?* “Yes, Sir, they do. I am afraid of that which goes beyond the verge of things that can be seen.” You will be there, yourself, before long—whether you are afraid of it or not, you will die. As surely as you are in this Tabernacle, you will have to do with that which is supernatural! You may live a considerable time, perhaps, if you are a young man, but it will seem a very short while when you come to the end of it. And then death, Heaven, Hell, angels, God, the Judgement Seat and eternity will have to be dealt with by you! Oh, it would be a great mercy if you could now get to be familiar with these things! Think where you wish to live forever—you had better learn the language of the country! It would be well for you to begin to understand something of the world to come, for come it will, and there is no putting it off. The strongest man in this place will have to die and it is a reflection which often forces itself upon me that poor, weak, sickly people keep on living when you thought that they would have been dead years ago—but your fine, strong, healthy men—these are they of whom we hear, “Such an one died at the railway station.” Or, “Such an one was taken all of a sudden, and is gone.” Therefore, see to this matter, Sir! See

to it at once! You will have to deal with the supernatural sooner or later, so had you not better begin now?

“Oh,” you say, “but *this Lord Jesus Christ, in whom you tell me to trust, seems so unreal*. I cannot see Him and handle Him, as those Apostles did. He is so unreal to me.” Yes, so the Apostles thought, you know. They thought that they saw a ghost—yet there is nothing more real in all the world than our Lord Jesus Christ! I wish that you would seek Him tonight. I wish that you would get to that little room of yours and kneel at your bedside, and cry, “Savior, if You are, indeed, a Savior, here is a sinner who longs to be saved! Come and save me.” If you do so, you shall soon find that though not gripped with the hands, or seen with the eyes, yet there is no brighter, truer, or more living reality than Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

“But, Sir,” you cry, “*this believing seems so vague and indistinct*. If you told me something that I had to *do*, I would try to do it. If I had to go barefoot from here to John O’Groat’s House, for instance, I would know what *that* meant and I would start tomorrow morning, or, if necessary tonight.” Yes, I daresay you would, but, after all, there is nothing more vague in your being told to believe in Jesus than there would be in bidding you to walk barefoot to John O’Groat’s House. To believe in Jesus is a most simple matter, easily understood, even by a child—it is just to trust Him, that is all. To believe that what is written concerning Him is true and then to trust yourself entirely to Him—that will save you. Look, I have thrown my whole weight upon this platform rail. If that should go down, I shall go down. Do just that with the Lord Jesus—throw your whole weight on Him. If He cannot save you, be lost. I must be lost, I am sure, if He cannot save me. My whole and only hope hangs on those dear hands that were nailed to the Cross. My only trust is in that precious blood which flowed from His pierced side. I risk my eternal destiny with Him and feel that there is no risk whatever in doing so! Now, tell me, is that vague? It seems to me to be very distinct and clear.

“Well,” says one, “but, somehow, *Christ seems so unapproachable*. I cannot get at Him.” Now, that is the last thing that you ought to say, for He will receive you if you breathe only a silent prayer to Him. In the pew down there, sitting on your seat, or standing in the aisle, or away up in the gallery, just speak to Him in your heart and He will hear you in a moment. Unapproachable? Why, beloved Friends, there is nobody so *approachable* as Christ! A wish will reach Him, a tear has already found Him—He is everywhere present wherever there is any heart that longs to obtain salvation through Him!

Then I fancy that I hear one of you say, “*I feel that He is so holy that I, so guilty, cannot come to Him*.” Would you have Him to be unholy, then? If He were so, how could He save you? But, being holy, yet He bids you come to Him. Then why do you not come? Why do you make a barrier out of such a glorious fact as this, that Christ is good, just and true? Remember that this, also, is true, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. If He does not save sinners, then He came into this world to mock us! He came into this world for nothing and if you, being a sinner, will come to Christ and Christ rejects you, He has forgotten His

commission, He has belied His Character! He must give up His name, for He is no longer Jesus if He does not save sinners that come to Him, yes, and if He does not save sinners that do not come to Him, too, for He has come to seek and to save—both to seek and to save—that which was lost.

“But,” says yet another, “*I cannot think that the Lord Jesus Christ would take any notice of me.*” Oh, that I could nail your wretched, miserable thoughts of my great Lord up on His Cross! “Oh, but I am nobody, Sir!” Christ died for nobodies! “But I am poor.” “The poor have the Gospel preached to them.” “But I am quite illiterate.” Yes, and it is to such that a *plain Gospel* is sent by our gracious Savior. “But I am altogether obscure and unknown.” Oh, no, you are not! The Lord Jesus knows all about you! Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not suppose that if you were rich, Christ would think any more of you than He does now! You know how it is among men—if a man wears a good coat and a diamond ring, people give him a seat as soon as he comes into the aisle!

Yes, but that is not the spirit of Jesus Christ! He does not care about your diamond rings and your satin dresses. My Lord Himself wore a smock frock, woven from the top, throughout, a garment without seam. He was dressed as the most plain and humble of peasants dressed, and He delighted to associate with the poorest of the poor. Therefore, do not tell me that He will not condescend to look at you! My Lord would leave off listening to the songs of angels to hear a poor sinner cry! If it were some grand review day in Heaven, when cherubim and mailed seraphim marched before His august eye, He would leave the camp of angels to come and listen to a beggar’s prayer, for, remember, He is a Man as truly as He is God, and everything that is human touches that true heart of His that was pierced for men. Therefore, cry to Him, ask Him to have mercy upon you and He will stand still, as He did when blind Bartimaeus cried to Him! And He will command you to be brought before Him—and then He will say to you, “What will you that I should do for you?” And He will give you spiritual sight and spiritual health in answer to your prayer. Come to Him, however poor, weak and insignificant you may be, and you shall soon prove that it is even as I say.

If you have made any mistakes about my Lord and Master, I hope that what I have said may help to remove them.

III. Now, lastly, and may God bless this word to you, dear troubled Friend, to bring you to the Savior! JESUS RIGHTLY KNOWN WILL MEET EVERY TROUBLE OF EVERY SEEKING SOUL.

If you did but know Him, you would find an end to your trouble at once! Those lines are quite true—

***“His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too.”***

If men did but know what a Savior He is, they would never rest till they had proved Him to be their Savior!

Let me tell you a few things that may help to end all your troubles. First, *Jesus Christ is alive.* He died, but He rose again. He is alive and living among men. Spiritually, He is still on earth. His bodily Presence is in Heaven, but His spiritual Presence is everywhere—

“Wherever we seek Him, He is found.”

He is alive, active, living, present with us here, giving us His benedictions, working out His Divine projects—a living present force among the myriads of this city—a living present Person in this House of Prayer.

Next, *Jesus Christ lives as One who has made a full Atonement for sin.* Do you know what that means? This is what I understand by Atonement. We were guilty. We had sinned and the Law of God has bound punishment to sin with iron clamps. I am sure that the only way in which the world is to be governed is by this Law of God, that the consequences of evil must be evil. If men will do wrong, they must be punished. With all reverence, we may say that God Himself cannot reverse that Law, for it is a right and proper Law. Well, then, Jesus Christ came and bore the consequences of human sin in His own body on the tree and those who believe in Jesus Christ, by the very act of believing, accept Him to be their Substitute, bearing their guilt and punishment, and being unto God a Sacrifice instead of them. Therefore, as many as have believed in Jesus Christ may know for sure that He died in their place.

I remember talking, one day, to a poor man, an Irishman, and trying to make this point very plain to him. I said, “Now suppose you had committed a murder and you were to be hanged for it.” “Yes,” he replied, “and I should deserve it.” “But suppose I should go to the Queen and say to her, ‘I am willing to be hanged, instead of this man. Such is my love for him that, to set him free and yet to honor the law, I will consent to die in his place’?” The man said, “That would be very kind of you, Sir.” “Well, suppose that the Queen had the ability to consent to it and I could be accepted as your substitute—and I were hanged instead of you—would the policeman take you up for that murder?” “Oh, no!” he exclaimed, “I would say, ‘You can’t touch me. Why, the gentleman was hanged instead of me! Therefore, I am free.’”

That is exactly the way of salvation. Jesus Christ suffered in the place of all of you who trust in Him and you are clear before the bar of Divine Justice. Every man who believes in Jesus Christ, that is, *trusts* Him, may know without doubt that Christ was, for him, a certain and effectual Substitute by which his sin was put away on the Cross. “Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” Now, if you understand that great Truth of God, I think that your doubts and fears ought to come to an end at once.

Remember, also, that *Jesus Christ lives to give repentance and remission of sins.* In this very chapter we read that He bade His Apostles go and preach repentance and remission of sins in His name among all nations! He says to you, “Turn from your sin and I will turn from My anger. Quit your sin and your sin is forgiven. Leave it. Loathe it and I will grant you immediate pardon for the sake of the great atoning Sacrifice.” This Truth, also, if it is fully believed, should bring peace and joy to your heart and mind!

Please remember, also, that *the Lord Jesus Christ lives to pray for sinners.* He lives to make intercession for the transgressors! He lives to give to sinners the Holy Spirit to work in them true belief and true repentance! He lives mighty to save, to do for you what you cannot do for your-

self, to bear you up and bear you through, and bring you, at last, to His own right hand!

Brothers and Sisters, as I trust my Lord Jesus Christ, myself, with all my heart, with all my future, my past, my present, with, indeed, *everything*, and as I feel perfect peace in doing so, I would to God that you would do the same, that you might feel the same peace, and get strength within to bear the troubles of this mortal life. Did you ever hear what good John Hyatt, who used to preach to the sailors, said when he was dying? Someone asked him, "Mr. Hyatt, can you trust Jesus with your soul, now?" "Trust Jesus with my soul!" he exclaimed, "if I had ten thousand souls, I could trust them all with Him!" We are not ten thousand here, tonight—we are somewhat under that number—but oh, that we might all come and trust our souls with Jesus! Then, in that Last Great Day, with sweet clamor of praise, with united tempests of song, we will bless that dear crucified but now exalted Savior who will not fail one of us, but will bring us to see His face in Glory!

Will you not trust Him tonight? Dear Friend, you might go down those stairs, you know, with a firm foot, saying, "I am a saved man." Yes, out of this area many a troubled heart may make its way and go home with all the bells ringing out sweet hallelujahs—"I have believed! I am forgiven! I am the chief of sinners, but I am forgiven, for I have trusted where God bids me trust. And now, because I am forgiven and am a child of God, I will live a new life, and I will serve the Lord with all my heart."

You good soldiers who are here, tonight, I hope you are already good soldiers of Jesus Christ. But if you are not, I would like to be the recruiting sergeant and enlist you beneath the standard of the Cross. Only trust my Lord and you shall be saved in the day of battle, and saved in the hour of death—yes, and saved amidst the temptations of this wicked city. He shall cover you! He, Himself, shall cover you and you shall be perfectly safe beneath that Divine Shelter! Who will trust Christ and be saved? Lord, give us many souls, tonight, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 16:1-14; LUKE 24:32-44.**

Mark 16:1, 2. *And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. Their love made them prompt. Their affection was about to attempt a needless and, indeed, impossible thing. Yet I do not doubt that it was acceptable before God. Oh, that we had such love that even the dead body of the Christ should be so dear to us that we would be ready, at great expense, to anoint it! I fear that, nowadays, even His living Word is not valued as it should be. How few, therefore, should we be likely to find who would have cared for His *dead* body? These holy women had had cause enough to love their Lord and they showed that their hearts were full of affection for Him even after He had been taken from them.*

3. *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?* A question that has puzzled many other people concerning many other things perplexed these holy women, yet there was no reason for the question to be raised at all. Perhaps some of you are, at this time, distressed when there is no cause for distress, and in fear where no fear is. It was so with these women who said, one to another, “Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?”

4. *And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.* And, therefore, hard to roll away and, therefore, the more easily seen when it was rolled away! And, therefore, the greater cause for joy that it was rolled away! In the greatness of our troubles there may often be space for the greater display of the goodness of God! A great trial may be nothing more than the prelude of a great joy. Do not dread the foaming billows, for they may wash you ashore—it is the worst that they can do—and it is also the best. The stone at the door of the sepulcher was very great, but it was rolled away, so that it mattered not to the women how great it was.

5. *And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were frightened.* An angel had been allowed to assume the appearance of a man—that usually seems to be the way in which angels appear to men. I suppose there is, after all, a great kinship between angels and men, otherwise angelic beings would not so constantly assume that form when they appear to men. At the sight of the young man clothed in a long white garment, these good women were frightened.

6, 7. *And he said to them, Be not frightened: You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you.* Make sure, Beloved, that you know the Truth of God for yourselves and then hasten to tell it to others. I pray you, run not without knowing what your errand is to be, but I also pray you, when you have an errand for the Lord, do not tarry, but, “Go your way, tell His disciples.” It was very thoughtful of this angel to say, “and Peter,” thus linking with the disciples the name of him who had most glaringly transgressed and denied his Master,

8. *And they went out quickly and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid.* But, after this, they summoned up courage and did tell the story of their Lord’s resurrection.

9-13. *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the rest: neither believed they them.* Unbelief is very hard to kill, even in hearts that are right with God. So we need not wonder

that Divine Grace is required to expel unbelief from the hearts of the unregenerate!

14. *Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.* The story of our Lord's appearance to the disciples is more fully told by Luke in the 24th Chapter of his Gospel, to which let us turn.

Luke 24:32-35. *And they said, one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread.* These were the two disciples who had recognized their Lord in the breaking of bread, though they did not know Him during their walk with Him to Emmaus.

36. *And as they thus spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.* This was the common Jewish salutation, but, from then on it would be sanctified most Divinely and it would be a Christian greeting to say, "Peace be unto you."

37-44. *But they were terrified and frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me.* Notice the seals which our Lord continually set upon the Old Testament, the manner in which He always treated the Scripture, the reverent way in which He confessed its Infallibility—and His determination that in every item, every jot and tittle—it should be fulfilled by Himself. This was often manifested before His death and, on His return from the grave, He had not changed His mind! He here speaks of the three great parts into which the Old Testament was divided by the Jews and He expressly sets the seal of His royal assent upon "the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms." May we, in like manner, prize the whole Inspired Word!

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

THE WOUNDS OF JESUS

NO. 254

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JANUARY 30, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“He showed them His hands and His feet.”
Luke 24:40.***

I HAVE selected this sentence as the text, although I shall not strictly adhere to it. What was to be seen on Christ's hands and feet? We are taught that the prints of the nails were visible and that in His side there was still the gash of the spear. For did He not say to Thomas? “Reach here your finger and behold My hands and reach here your hand and thrust it into My side and be not faithless, but believing”? I wish to draw your attention to the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ, when He rose again from the dead, had in His body the marks of His passion. If He had pleased He could readily have removed them. He rose again from the dead and He might have erased from His body everything which could be an indication of what He had suffered and endured before He descended into the tomb. But, no, instead, there were the pierced hands and feet and there was the open side. What was the reason for this? There was no absolute necessity for it—it could easily have been dispensed with. What, then, were the reasons? I shall endeavor to enter into this subject and I hope we may draw some profitable instructions from there.

First, what influence did the exhibition of the hands and feet have upon the disciples? Secondly, why is it that Jesus Christ, now in Heaven, bears with Him the scars in His flesh? And, then, thirdly, is there any lesson for us in the fact that Jesus Christ still wears His wounds? I think there is.

I. First, then, OF WHAT USE WAS THE EXHIBITION OF THOSE WOUNDS TO THE DISCIPLES? I reply at once that they were infallible proofs that He was the same Person. He said, “Behold My hands and feet, that it is, I, Myself.” It was to establish His identity, that He was the very same Jesus whom they had followed, whom at last they had deserted, whom they had beheld afar off crucified and slain and whom they had carried to the tomb in the gloom of the evening. It was the very same Christ who was now before them and they might know it—for there was the seal of His sufferings upon Him. He was the same Person. The hands and feet could testify to that. You know, Beloved, had not some such evidence been visible upon our Savior, it is probable that His disciples would

have been unbelieving enough to doubt the identity of His Person. Have you ever seen men changed, extremely changed in their external appearance? I have known a man, perhaps, five or six years ago. He has passed through a world of suffering and pain and when I have seen him again, I have declared, "I should not have known you if I had met you in the street."

Now, when the disciples parted with Jesus it was at the Lord's Supper. They then walked with Him into the garden. There did the Savior sweat, "as it were great drops of blood." Do you not imagine that such a wrestling, such a bloody sweat as that, must have had some effect upon His visage? It had surely had enough to mar it before. But now the plowshares of grief were sharpened and anguish made deep furrows upon Him. There must have been lines of grief upon His brow, deeper than they had ever seen before. This would have produced a change great enough to make them forget His countenance. Nor was this all. You know he had to undergo the flagellation at the pillar of the Praetorian and then to die. Can you imagine that a man could pass through the process of death, through such astonishing agony as that which the Savior endured and yet that there should be no change in his visible appearance? I can conceive that in passing through such a furnace as this, the very lineaments of Christ's face would seem to have been melted and would have need to be restruck before the disciples could discern that He was the same. Besides that, when Jesus rose, He rose, you know, as He now sits in Heaven. His body was flesh and bone, but, nevertheless, it had miraculous powers. It was capable of entering into a room without the ordinary modes of access. We find our Savior standing in the midst of His disciples, the doors being shut.

I believe that Jesus had a body such as we are to have in the next world. Jesus Christ was not a phantom or spectra. His body was not a spirit. It was a real body. And so in Heaven imagine not that we are to be spirits. We are to be spirits until the great resurrection day. But, then, our spirit is afterwards to receive a spiritual body. It is to be clothed upon. It is not forever to be a naked, bodiless spirit. That body will be to all intents and purposes the same body which shall be laid in the tomb. It is sown in dishonor and the same it is raised in Glory—it is sown in weakness and the same it is raised in power. Mark, Jesus was still flesh! All flesh is not the same flesh—all bodies have not the same qualities. So our Savior's flesh was flesh that could not suffer—flesh that had extraordinary powers about it—flesh however, that could eat, although it was under no necessity to do so. And such may be the body, the glorified body, which shall be given to *us* when we shall rise at the first resurrection and shall be made like unto our Head.

But, now, think! If Christ had to undergo in His countenance those matchless transformations, that must have been, first of all, connected with His bloody sweat, then, with His agony and after that, with the transforming, or, if I may use such a word, the transmutation of His body into a spiritual body, can you not conceive that His likeness would be changed—that the disciples would scarcely know Him if there had not been some deeply graven marks whereby they would be able to recognize Him? The disciples looked upon the very face, but, even then they doubted. There was a majesty about Him which most of them had not seen. Peter, James and John, had seen Him transfigured, when His garments were whiter than any fuller could make them. But the rest of the disciples had only seen Him as a Man of Sorrows. They had not seen Him as the glorious Lord and, therefore, they would be apt to doubt whether He was the same. But these nail-prints, this pierced side—these were marks which they could not dispute—which unbelief itself could not doubt. And they all were convinced and confessed that He was the Lord. And even faithless Thomas, was constrained to cry, “ My Lord and my God!”

II. Let us turn to the second question—Why SHOULD CHRIST WEAR THESE WOUNDS IN HEAVEN AND OF WHAT AVAIL ARE THEY? Let me give you some thoughts upon the matter.

I can conceive, first, that the wounds of Christ in Heaven will be a theme of eternal wonder to the angels. An old writer represents the angels as saying, “Oh, Lord of Glory, what are these wounds in Your hands?” They had seen Him depart from Heaven and they had gone with Him as far as they might go, singing, ‘Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth.’” Some of them had watched Him through His pilgrimage, for “He was seen of angels.” But when He returned, I doubt not that they crowded round Him, bowed before Him in adoration and then put the holy question, “What are these wounds in Your hands?” At any rate they were enabled to behold for themselves in Heaven the man who suffered and they could see the wounds which were produced in His body by His sufferings. And I can readily imagine that this would cause them to lift their songs higher, would prolong their shouts of triumph and would cause them to adore Him with a rapture of wonderment such as they had never felt before. And I doubt not that every time they look upon His hands and behold the crucified Man exalted by His Father’s side, they are afresh wrapped in wonder and again they strike their harps with more joyous fingers at the thought of what he must have suffered who thus bears the sears of His hard-fought battles.

Again—Christ wears these scars in His body in Heaven as His ornaments. The wounds of Christ are His glories, they are His jewels and His

precious things. To the eye of the Believer Christ is never so glorious, never so passing fair, as when we can say of Him, "My Beloved is white and ruddy," white with innocence and ruddy with His own blood. He never seems so beautiful as when we can see Him as the rose and the lily. As the lily, matchless purity and as the rose, crimsoned with His own gore. We may talk of Christ in His beauty, in many places raising the dead and stilling the tempest, but oh, there never was such a matchless Christ as He that did hang upon the Cross. There I behold all His beauties, all His attributes developed, all His love drawn out, all His character expressed in letters so legible that even my poor stammering heart can read those lines and speak them out again—as I see them written in crimson upon the bloody tree.

Beloved, these are to Jesus what they are to us. They are His ornaments, His royal jewels, His fair array. He does not care for the splendor and pomp of kings. The thorny crown is His diadem—a diadem such as no monarch ever wore. It is true that He bears not now the scepter of reed, but there is a glory in it that there never flashed from scepter of gold. It is true He is not now buffeted and spit upon—His face is not now marred more than that of any other man by grief and sorrow, for He is glorified and full of blessedness. But He never seems so lovely as when we see Him buffeted of men for our sakes, enduring all manner of grief, bearing our iniquities and carrying our sorrows. Jesus Christ finds such beauties in His wounds that He will not renounce them. He will wear the court dress in which He wooed our souls and He will wear the royal purple of His atonement throughout eternity.

Nor are these the only ornaments of Christ—they are His trophies—the trophies of His love. Have you never seen a soldier with a gash across his forehead or in his cheek? Why every soldier will tell you the wound in battle is no disfigurement—it is his honor. "If" said he, "I received a wound when I was retreating, a wound in the back, that were to my disgrace. If I have received a wound in a victory, then it is an honorable thing to be wounded." Now Jesus Christ has scars of honor in His flesh and glory in His eyes. He has other trophies—He has divided the spoil with the strong—He has taken the captive away from his tyrant master. He has redeemed for Himself a host that no man can number, who are all the trophies of His victories—but these scars—these are the memorials of the fight and these the trophies, too.

Do you not know it was from the side of Jesus that Death sucked its death? Jesus did hang upon the Cross and Death thought to get the victory. Yes, but in its victory it destroyed itself. There are three things in Christ that Death never met with before, all of which are fatal to it. There was in Christ innocence. Now, as long as man was innocent, he could not

die. Adam lived as long as he was innocent. Now Christ was about to die. But Death sucked in innocent blood. He sucked in his own poison and he died. Again, blessedness is that which takes away the sting of death. Now Christ, even when He was dying, was “God over all, blessed forever.” All that Death had ever killed before was under the curse. But this man was never by nature under the curse—because for our sakes He was not born into this world a cursed man. He was the seed of woman, it is true, but still not of carnal generation. He did come under the curse when He took upon Himself our sins, but not for His own sins. He was in Himself blessed. Death sucked in blessed blood—he had never done that before—all others have been under the curse—and that slew Death. It was innocence combined with blessedness that was the destruction of Death.

Yet another thing. Death had never met before with any man who had life in himself. But when Death drunk Christ’s blood it drunk life. For His blood is the life of the soul and is the seed of life eternal. Where ever it goes, does it not give life to the dead? And Death, finding that it had drunk into its own veins life in the form of Jesus’ blood gave up the ghost. And Death itself is dead, for Christ has destroyed it, by the sacrifice of Himself. He has put it away. He has said, “Oh death, where is your sting? Oh grave, where is your victory?” But now, since it was from these very wounds that Death sucked in its own death and that Hell was destroyed—since these were the only weapons of a weaponless Redeemer, He wears and bears them as His trophies in Heaven. David laid up Goliath’s sword before the Lord forever. Jesus lays up His wounds before the Lord, for His wounds were His weapons and this is why He wears them still.

I was thinking while coming here of Jesus Christ in Heaven with His wounds and another thought struck me. Another reason why Jesus wears His wounds is that when He intercedes He may employ them as powerful advocates. When He rises up to pray for His people, He needs not speak a word. He lifts His hands before His Father’s face. He makes bare His side and points to His feet. These are the orators with which He pleads with God—these wounds. Oh, He must prevail! Do you not see that Christ without His wounds in Heaven might be potent enough, but there would not be that glorious simplicity of intercession which now you see. He has nothing to do but to show His hands. Him the Father hears always. His blood cries and is heard, His wounds plead and prevail.

Let us think again. Jesus Christ appears in Heaven as the Wounded One, this shows again that He has not laid aside His priesthood. You know how Watts paraphrases the idea. He says—

***“Looks like a lamb that has been slain,
And wears His priesthood still.”***

If the wounds had been removed we might have forgotten that there was a sacrifice. And, perhaps, next we might have forgotten that there was a priest. But the wounds are there—then there *is* a sacrifice and there is a priest, also, for He who is wounded is both Himself, the sacrifice and the priest. The priesthood of Melchisedec is a glorious subject. He who reads that with the eye of faith and is blessed with the Spirit, will find much cause for joy when he contrasts the priesthood of Christ with that of Aaron.

The priesthood of Aaron began and it finished. But the priesthood of Melchisedec had no beginning and it had no end. He was, we are told, “Without beginning of days and without end of years”—without father, without mother, without descent. Such is the priesthood of Christ! It shall never end. He Himself is without beginning and His priesthood is without end. When the last ransomed soul is brought in, when there shall be no more prayers to offer, Christ shall still be a priest. Though he has no sacrifice now to slay, for He is the sacrifice Himself, “once and for all,” yet still He is a Priest and when all His people as the result of that sacrifice shall be assembled around His glorious Throne, He shall still be the Priest. “For You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” I take it that this is a further reason why He still bears His wounds in Heaven.

There is another and a terrible reason why Christ wears His wounds still. It is this. Christ is coming to judge the world. Christ has with himself today the accusers of His enemies. Every time that Christ lifts His hands to Heaven, the men that hate Him, or despise Him, are accused. The Jewish nation is brought in guilty every day. The cry is remembered, “His blood be on us and on our children.” And the sin of casting Christ away and rejecting Him, is brought before the mind of the Most High. And when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world in righteousness, seated on the great white throne, that hand of His shall be the terror of the universe. “They shall look on Him whom they have pierced,” and they shall mourn for their sins. They would not mourn with hopeful penitence in time—they shall mourn with sorrowful remorse throughout eternity. When the multitude are gathered together, when in the valley of Jehoshaphat Christ shall judge the nations, what need He to summon accusers? His own wounds are His witnesses. Why need He summon any to convict men of sin? His own side bears their handiwork. You murderers, did you not do this? You sons of an evil generation did you not pierce the Savior? Did you not nail Him to the tree? Behold these holes in My hand and this stab in My side. These are swift witnesses against you to condemn you!

There is a terrible side, then to this question. A crucified Christ with His wounds still open will be a terrible sight for an assembled universe.

“Well,” says one of my congregation, “What is that to us? We have not crucified the Savior.” No, but let me assure you that His blood shall be on you. If you die unbelievers His blood shall be required at your hand. The death of Christ was worked by the hand of manhood, of all and entire manhood. Others did it for you and though you gave no consent verbally, yet you do assent in your heart every day. As long as you hate Christ you give an assent to His death. As long as you reject His sacrifice and despise His love, you give evidence in your hearts that you would have crucified the Lord of Glory had you been there. No, and you do yourself, so far as you can, crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame. When you laugh at His people, when you despise His Word and mock at His ordinances, you are driving nails into His hands and thrusting the spear into His side. Therefore those open hands and that pierced side shall be witnesses against you, even against you, if you die rejecting Him and enter into eternity enemies to Christ by wicked works.

I think I have thus supplied severe excellent reasons. But now there is one more which I shall offer to your consideration before I come to the lesson which you shall learn. Christ bears those marks in His hands that, as Believers, you may never forget that He has died. We shall need, perhaps, nothing to refresh our memories in Heaven. But still, even if we should, we have it here. When we shall have been in Heaven many a thousand years we shall still have the death of Christ before us—we shall see Him reigning—but can you not conceive that the presence of the wounded Christ will often stir up the holy hearts of the celestial beings to a fresh outpouring of their grateful songs? They begin the song thus, “Unto Him that lives.” Jesus looks upon them and shows His hands and they add, “and was dead and is alive forever more and has the keys of Hell and death.” They would not forget that He died. But certainly that part of the song where it said, “and was dead,” will have all the more sweetness, because there He sits with the very marks of His passion—with the nail-prints of His crucifixion.

If we shall be in Heaven at all constituted as we are on earth, we shall need some visible token to keep us continually in remembrance. Here, you know, the most spiritual saint needs the bread and wine—sweet emblems of the Savior’s body. There we shall have nothing to do with emblems, for we shall have the sight of Him. And, I say, if we are in Heaven anything like what we are here, I can imagine that the presence of Jesus may be highly beneficial, may be gloriously precious to the saints in reviving their love continually and causing their hearts, which are like fountains of love, to bubble up afresh and send out again the living water of gratitude and thanksgiving.

At any rate, I know this thought is very delightful to me, that I shall see the Man that did hang on Calvary's Cross and that I shall see Him as He did hang there. I delight to see my Savior in all the glories of His Father, but I long to go back and see Him as He was, as well as He is. I think I should sometimes envy Peter and the rest of them that they should have seen Him crucified. Yes, I should say, I see Him glorified, but you saw the most marvelous sight. To see a God is an everyday sight with glorified beings, but to see a God covered with His blood, this is an extraordinary thing. To see Christ glorified, that we may see each day, but to have seen Him on that special occasion, made obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross, that was an extraordinary sight which even angels themselves could see but once. You and I cannot see that. But those wounds are there still manifest and visible and we shall be delighted with the rapturous sight of the Lord in Glory, with His wounds still fresh upon Him. May the Lord grant that we may all be there to see it. May we refresh ourselves with that glorious sight. I can say that I would part with all the joys of sense to view His face. Everything that is good on earth I would give away without a wish, without one single lingering thought, if I might but behold His face and lie in His bosom and see the dear pierced hands and the wide-open side. We must wait His pleasure. A few more rolling suns shall do it. The moon shall rise and wane for us a few more times and then, "We shall see His face and never, never sin. But from the rivers of His Grace, drink endless pleasures in."

III. This brings me now to the third point. WHAT DOES CHRIST MEAN BY SHOWING TO US HIS HANDS AND FEET? He means this—that suffering is absolutely necessary. Christ is the Head and His people are the members. If suffering could have been avoided, surely our glorious Head ought to have escaped. But inasmuch as He shows us His wounds, it is to tell us that we shall have wounds, too. Innocence ought to escape suffering. Did not Pilate mean as much when he said, "I find no fault in Him, therefore let Him go"? But innocence did not escape suffering. Even the Captain of our salvation must be made perfect through suffering. Therefore, we who are guilty, we who are far from being perfect, must not wonder that we have to be wounded, too. Shall the Head be crowned with thorns and do you imagine that the other members of the body are to be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Jesus Christ swim through seas of His own blood to win the crown and are you and I to walk to Heaven dry shod in silver slippers?

No, the wounds of Christ are to teach us that suffering is necessary. In fact, that doctrine was taught upon Mount Calvary. There are only three sorts of men that have ever lived—a good man, a bad man and the God-man. Now, on Calvary's Cross, I see three characters, I see the thief, the

representative of the bad. I see the penitent thief, the representative of the righteous, and I see the God-man in the midst. All three must suffer. Do not imagine for a moment that wicked men get through this world without suffering. Oh, no. The path to Hell is very rough, though it seems smooth. When men will damn themselves, they will not find it a very pleasurable task. The cutting the throat of one's soul is not such a pleasant operation. The drinking the poison of damnation is not, after all, an enviable task. The path of the sinner may *seem* to be happy, but it is not. It is a gilded deceit. He knows there is bitterness in his heart, even here on earth. Even the wicked must suffer.

But, mark, if any out of the world would have escaped it would be the God-man. But the God-man did not escape. He shows us His wounds. And do you think that you shall remain unwounded? Not if you are His, at any rate. Men sometimes escape on earth. But the true-born child of God must not and would not, if he might, for if he did, he would then give himself cause to say, "I am no part of the body. If I were a part of the body, my Head suffered and so must I suffer, for I am part of His living body." That is the first lesson He teaches us—the necessity of suffering.

But next He teaches us His sympathy with us in our suffering. "There," says He, "see this hand! I am not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. I have suffered, too. I was tempted in all ways like as you are. Look here!—there are the marks—there are the marks. They are not only tokens of My love, they are not only sweet forget-me-nots that bind Me to love you forever—besides that, they are the evidence of My sympathy.

"I can feel for you. Look what I have suffered. Have you a heartache? Ah, look here, what a heartache I had when this heart was pierced. Do you suffer, even unto blood wrestling against sin? So did I. I have sympathy with you." It was this that sustained the early martyrs. One of them declared that while he was suffering he fixed his eyes on Christ. And when they were pinching his flesh—dragging it off with the hot harrows, when they were putting him to agonies so extraordinary that I could not dare to mention them here, lest some of you should faint even under the very narrative—he said, "My soul is not insensible, but it loves." What a glorious speech was that! It loves—it loves Christ. It was not insensible, but love gave it power to overcome suffering, a power as potent as insensibility. "For," said he, "my eyes are fixed on Him that suffered for me and I can suffer for Him. For my soul is in His body. I have sent my heart up to Him. He is my Brother and there my heart is. Plow my flesh and break my bones—smash them with your irons, I can bear it all, for Jesus suffered and He suffers in me now. He sympathizes with me and this makes me strong."

Yes, Beloved, lay hold on this in all times of your agony. When you are sweating, think of his bloody sweat. When you are bruised, think of the whips that tore His flesh. And when you are aging, think of His death. And when God hides His face for a little from you, think of, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!” This is why He wears His wounds in His hands, that He may show that He sympathizes with you.

Another thing—Christ wears these wounds to show that suffering is an honorable thing. To suffer for Christ is glory. Men will say, “It is glorious to make *others* suffer.” When Alexander rides over the necks of princes and treads nations beneath his feet, that is glorious. The Christian religion teaches us it is glorious to be trod on, glorious to be crushed, glorious to suffer. This is hard to learn. There we see it in our glorified Master. He makes His wounds His glory and His sufferings are part of the drapery of His regal attire in Paradise. Now, then, it is an honorable thing to suffer. Oh, Christian, when you are overtaken by strange troubles, be not afraid. God is near you. It was Christ’s honor to suffer and it is yours, too. The only degree that God gives to His people is the degree of, “Masters in tribulation.” If you would be one of God’s nobles you must be knighted. Men are knighted with a blow of the sword. The Lord knights us with the sword of affliction. And when we fight hard in many a battle, He makes us barons of the kingdom of Heaven—He makes us dukes and lords in the kingdom of sorrowful honor—not through honor of man, but through *dis-honor* of man—not through joy, but through suffering and grief and agony and death.

The highest honor that God can confer upon His children is the blood-red crown of martyrdom. When I read, as I have been reading lately, the story of the catacombs of Rome and those short, but very pithy inscriptions that are written over the graves of the martyrs, I felt sometimes as if I could envy them. I do not envy them their racks, their hot irons, their being dragged at the heels of horses. But I do envy them when I see them arrayed in the blood-red robe of martyrdom. Who are they that stand nearest to the eternal Throne, foremost of the saints in light? Why, the noble army of martyrs. And just as God shall give us grace to suffer *for* Christ, to suffer *with* Christ and to suffer *as* Christ, just so much does He honor us. The jewels of a Christian are his afflictions. The regalia of the kings, that God has made, are their troubles, their sorrows and their griefs. Let us not, therefore, shun being honored. Let us not turn aside from being exalted. Griefs exalt us and troubles lift us.

Lastly, there is one sweet thought connected with the wounds of Christ that has charmed my soul and made my heart run over with delight. It is this—I have sometimes thought that if I am a part of Christ’s body I am a poor wounded part. If I do belong to that all-glorious whole, the Church,

which is His fullness, the fullness of Him that fills all in all, yet have I said within me, "I am a poor maimed part, wounded, full of putrefying sores." But Christ did not leave even His wounds behind Him, even those he took to Heaven. "Not a bone of Him shall be broken," and the flesh, when wounded, shall not be discarded—shall not be left. He shall carry that with Him to Heaven and He shall glorify even the wounded member. Is not this sweet, is not this precious to the troubled child of God? This, indeed, is a thought from which one may suck honey. Poor, weak and wounded though I am, He will not discard me. His wounds are healed wounds—mark—they are not running sores.

And so, though we be the wounded parts of Christ, we shall be healed. Though we shall seem to ourselves in looking back upon what we were upon earth only as wounds, only parts of a wounded body, still we shall rejoice that He has healed those wounds and that He has not cast us away. Precious, precious Truth of God! The whole body He will present before His Father's face and wounded though He is, He shall not cast His own wounds away. Let us take comfort, then, in this. Let us rejoice therein. We shall be presented at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Mark, Christ's wounds are no spots to Him, no wrinkles—they are ornaments. And even those parts of His Church on earth that despair of themselves, thinking themselves to be as wounds, shall be no spots, no wrinkles in the complete Church above, but even they shall be the ornaments and the glory of Christ. Let us now look up by faith and see Jesus, the wounded Jesus, sitting on His Throne. Will not this help us to gird up our loins to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God"?

I cannot send you away without this last remark. Poor Sinner, you are troubled on account of sin. There is a sweet thought for you. Men are afraid to go to Christ, or else they say, "My Sins are so many I cannot go to Him. He will be angry with me." Do you see His hands outstretched to you tonight? He is in Heaven and He still says, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Are you afraid to come? Then, look at His hands—look at His hands—will not that induce you? "Oh," but you say, "I cannot think that Christ can have it in His heart to remember such a worm as I." Look at His side, there is easy access to His heart. His side is open and even your poor prayers may be thrust into that side and they shall reach His heart, holy though it is. Only look to His wounds and you shall certainly find peace through the blood of Jesus.

There were two monks of late years in different cells in their convent. They were reading the Bible. One of them found Christ while reading the Scriptures and he believed with a true evangelical faith. The other one was timid and could scarcely think it true. The scheme of salvation seemed so great to him he could scarcely lay hold upon it. But, at last, he lay upon the point to die and he sent for the other to come and sit by him and to shut the door, because if the superior had heard of that of which they were about to speak, he might have condemned them both.

When the monk had sat down, the sick man began to tell how his sins lay heavy on him. The other reminded him of Jesus. "If you would be saved, Brother, you must look to Jesus who did hang upon the Cross. His wounds must save." The poor man heard and he believed. Almost immediately afterwards came in the superior, with the Brethren and the priests. And they began to grease him in extreme unction. This poor man tried to push them away. He could not bear the ceremony and as well as he could, he expressed his dissent. At last his lips were opened and he said in Latin, "Tu vulnera Jesu!"—Your wounds, oh Jesus! Your wounds, oh Jesus!—clasped his hands, lifted them to Heaven, fell back and died.

Oh, I would that many a Protestant would die with these words on his lips! There was the fullness of the Gospel in them. Your wounds, oh Jesus! Your wounds! These are my refuge in my trouble. Oh sinner, may you be helped to believe in His wounds! They cannot fail. Christ's wounds must heal those that put their trust in Him.

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TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE! A PARADOX!

NO. 425

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 15, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“They yet believed not for joy.”
Luke 24:41.***

THIS is a very strange sentence, but the Christian is a singularly complex being. He is a compound of the fallen and of the perfect. He detects in himself continually an alternation between the almost diabolical and the Divine. Man himself is a contradiction, but the Christian is that contradiction made more paradoxical. He cannot comprehend himself and only those who are like he can understand him. When he would do good he finds evil present with him. How to will he often finds, but how to perform he finds not. He is the greatest riddle in the universe. He can say with Ralph Erskine—

***“I’m in my own and others’ eyes,
A labyrinth of mysteries.”***

In the case before us the disciples saw Christ manifestly before their eyes. To a certain extent they believed in His resurrection. That belief gave them joy and at once that very joy made them unbelieving. They looked again—they believed once more! Anon, a wave of joy rolled right over the head of their faith and then afresh their doubts returned. What palpitations, what heaving of the heart they had! “It is too good to be true,” they said. This is the summing up of the mental process which was going on within—“It is true, how blessed it is. It cannot be true because it is so blessed.”

Tonight I shall endeavor to address that timid but hopeful tribe of persons who have heard of the greatness and preciousness of the salvation of Christ and have so far believed, that they have been filled with happiness on account of it, but that very enjoyment has made them doubt and they have exclaimed—“It can not be. It is not possible. This exceeds all my expectations. It is, in fact, too good to be true.” I remember to have been myself the subject of this temptation. Overjoyed to possess the treasure which I had found hidden in the field, delighted beyond all measure with the hope that I had an interest in Christ I feared that the gold might be counterfeit—the pearl a cheat, my hope a delusion—my confidence a dream.

Newly delivered from the thick darkness, the overwhelming brightness of grace threatened to blind my eyes. Laden with the new favors of a young spiritual life the excessive weight of the mercy staggered my early strength and I was for some time troubled with the thought that these things must be too great a good to be true. If God had been half as merciful or a tithe as kind as He was I could have believed it, but such exceeding riches of His grace were too much. Such out-doings of Himself in goodness, such giving exceeding abundantly above what one could ask or even think seemed too much to believe.

We will at once attempt to deal with this temptation. First of all, I will try to account for it. Secondly, to recount the reasons which forbid us long to indulge it. And then, thirdly, turn the very temptation itself into a reason why we should be more earnest in seeking these good things.

I. To begin, LET ME ACCOUNT FOR IT.

It is little marvel that the spirit is amazed even to astonishment and doubt *when you think of the greatness of the things themselves*. The man black with sin says—“My iniquity is great. I deserve the wrath of God. The Gospel presents me with a pardon, full and complete. I have labored to wash out these stains but they will not disappear. The Gospel tells me that the precious blood of Jesus cleans from all sin. Year after year have I revolted and gone astray. The Gospel tells me that He is able to forgive all my sins and to cast my iniquities behind my back.” Bowed down with a sense of the greatness of his guilt you may excuse the sinner if he thinks it must be impossible that ever the offenses he has committed could be condoned, or his iniquity could be put away.

“No,” he says, “a condemned sinner I am and the promise of a free pardon is too much for me to believe—

**“*Depths of mercy can there be,
Pardon yet reserved for me?*”**

“No, more,” says the poor soul, “I am told that God is prepared to *justify* me. To give me a perfect righteousness. To look upon me as though I had always been a faithful servant. To regard me to all intents and purposes as though I had kept all His Laws without any offense and had obeyed all His statutes without any exception. According to the Scriptures I am to be robed about with the finished *righteousness* of Christ, clothed in that garment which He spent His life to work and I am in that garment to stand *accepted* in the Beloved.

“It is too good to be true,” says the soul. “It cannot be. I, the condemned one, accepted? I, who never kept God’s Law received as though I had kept it wholly? I, who have broken it, pressed to His bosom as though I were perfect in innocence?” It does startle the soul and well it may. And when

the Gospel goes on to add—“Yes, and not only will I *justify* you but I will *adopt* you. You shall be no more a servant but a *son*, no more a bond-slave but an *heir* of God and a joint-heir with Christ”—the mind cannot grasp the whole of that thought. “Adopted! Received into His family! Alas,” it cries, “I am not worthy to be called God’s son.”

And as the sinner looks upon its former abject and lost estate and looks upward to the brightness of the inheritance which adoption secures to it, it says—“It is impossible,” and like Sarah he laughs saying, “How can this be? How can it be possible that I should attain to these things!” And then the Gospel *adds*—“Soul, I will not only adopt you but having sanctified you entirely—your whole spirit, soul and body—I will *crown* you. I will bring you to the mansions of the blessed in the land of the happy. I will put a new song into your mouth and the palm of victory in your hand. The harp of triumph you shall play.

“Your soul will be deluged with delight and your spirit shall bathe itself in everlasting and unbroken peace. Heaven is yours though you deserve Hell. God’s glory yours though you deserve wrath.” It is little marvel that these things, being so excessively great, the poor broken heart should be like the captives who returned from Babylon, who were “like men that dream”—

**“When God restored our captive state,
Joy was our song and grace our theme;
The grace beyond our hopes so great,
That joy appeared a painted dream.”**

Another reason for incredulity may be found in our sense of unworthiness. Note the person that receive these mercies and you will not wonder that he believes not for joy. “Ah,” says he, “if these things were given to the righteous I could believe it—but to me, an old offender—to me, a hard-hearted despiser of the overflowing love of God? To me who has looked on the slaughtered body of the Savior without a tear and viewed the precious blood of redemption without delight? To me, who has blasphemed, who has done despite to the Spirit of His grace and trod underfoot His Truth—oh,” says this poor heart, “I could believe it for anyone. I could believe it for the whole world sooner than for myself!”

For you must know that the repenting sinner always has a deeper view of his own sin than of the sin of others and in this he differs from the impenitent—who have very keen eyes to see offenses in other men—but are blind to their own. He verily esteems himself the chief of sinners. He thinks that if anyone could have had the hottest place in Hell that must surely have been *his* proper portion. And it is so wonderful to him that *he* should be saved, that his spirit laughs with a kind of incredulity. “What? *I*, the man who sat in the pot house and could sing a lascivious song?

Shall I sit at the *right hand of God* and be *glorified with Christ*? What? *I*, whose heart blasphemed its Creator—whose soul has been a very den of thieves—can *I* be accepted, washed and saved?”

Brethren, when any of us look back upon our past lives we can find enough ground for astonishment if God has been pleased to choose us. Hence, I say, it is not a strange or a singular thing that the poor heart, from very excess of joy, should be unable to believe. Add to these the strange terms upon which God presents these thing to poor sinners—and the miracle of the manner equals the marvel of the matter. God comes to the sinner and He says not to him, “Do penance. Pass through years of weariness. Renounce every pleasure—become a monk—live in the woods. Make yourself a hermit—torture your body—cut yourself with knives. Starve yourself. Cover yourself with a shirt of hair, or wear a girdle of chain about your loins.” No, if He did it would not appear as wonderful.

But He comes to the sinner and He says, “Sinner, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” No *works* are asked of you—no ceremonies does He demand but simply trust your soul with Christ. Oh, simple words! Oh, easy terms! They are not terms at all for these He *gives* us—His Spirit enables us to trust in Jesus. If He had demanded us do some great thing we should have been very willing to attempt it, but when it is simply, “wash and be clean”—“Oh,” we say, “that *simple* thing? That *easy* plan? That scheme which is as well-fitted to the *beggar* as to the *king*? As suitable to the poor abandoned *prostitute* as to the most moral of the Pharisees? That scheme which adapts itself to the *ignorant* and the *rude* as well as to the *learned* and *polite*?” Our spirit says, “Ah, ‘tis a joyous plan,” and yet from very joy, it is unable to believe.

And add to this one more thought—the *method* by which God proposes to work all this. That is to say He proposes to pardon and to justify the sinner *instantaneously*. The plan of salvation requires not months nor weeks in which his sin may be put away. It is finished. An instant is enough to receive it and in that instant the man is saved. The moment a man believes in Christ, not *some* of his sins, but *all* his sins are forgiven. Just as when God blew with His wind the Egyptians were all drowned at once in the waters of the Red Sea and Moses said, “You shall see them no more forever,”

So, when once we believe in Christ the breath of God’s pardoning love blows upon the waters and our sins sink into the bottom like a stone. There is not *one*, not *one* of them left. It is as when a man takes a bond—you are his debtor. He can imprison you, but he holds the bond over the candle flame and he says, “See here!” And when it is burned, your whole debt, though it were ten or twenty thousand pounds is gone in a moment!

So does faith—it sees the handwriting of the ordinances that was against us taken away and nailed to Christ’s Cross. Now this does seem a surprising thing. It is so surprising that when men have heard it for the first time they have been willing to run anywhere to listen to it again.

This was the secret of Whitfield’s popularity. The Gospel was a *new thing* in his age to the mass of the people. They were like blind men who, having had their eyes opened and being suddenly taken out at night to view the stars could not refrain from clapping their hands for joy! The first sight of land is always blessed to the sailor’s eyes. And the men of those days felt that they saw Heaven in the distance and the port of peace. It is no wonder that they rejoiced even to tears. It was glad tidings to their spirits and there were some then, as there are now who could not believe by reason of their excessive joy.

Possibly John Bunyan alludes to this singular unbelief in his sweet picture of Mercy’s dream wherein, like Sarai, she laughed. Let me tell it to you in his own words—“In the morning, when they were awake, Christiana said to Mercy, What was the matter that you did laugh in your sleep tonight? I suppose you were in a dream. MERCY—So I was and a sweet dream it was; but are you sure I laughed? CHRISTIANA—Yes you laughed heartily; but please, Mercy, tell me your dream. MERCY—I was dreaming that I sat all alone in a solitary place and was bemoaning of the hardness of my heart. Now I had not sat there long, but I thought many were gathered about me to see me and to hear what it was that I said. So they hearkened and I went on bemoaning the hardness of my heart.

“At this, some of them laughed at me. Some called me fool and some began to thrust me about. With that, I thought I looked up and saw one coming with wings towards me. So he came directly to me and said, ‘Mercy, what ails you?’ Now, when he had heard me make my complaint, he said, ‘Peace be to you! He also wiped mine eyes with his handkerchief and clad me in silver and gold. He put a chain about my neck and earrings in my ears and a beautiful crown upon my head. Then he took me by the hand and said, ‘Mercy, come after me!’ So he went up and I followed till we came to a golden gate. Then he knocked. And, when they within had opened, the man went in and I followed him up to a Throne, upon which One sat. And He said to me, ‘Welcome, Daughter!’ The place looked bright and twinkling, like the stars, or rather like the sun. And I thought that I saw your husband there; so I awoke from my dream. But did I laugh?”

Well might her mouth be filled with laughter to see herself so favored!

II. Having thus tried to account for this state of the heart may I have the help of God while I try to DO BATTLE WITH THE EVIL THAT IS IN IT— THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST!

Troubled Heart, let me remind you, first of all that you have no need to doubt the Truth of the precious Revelation because of its greatness—for *He is a great God who makes it to you*. Did you expect that He, the King of Heaven, rich in mercy and abundant in long-suffering, would send *little* grace, *little* love and *little* pity to the sons of men? What says the Scripture of Araunah the Jebusite?—“All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king.” But what shall we say of God? Shall He give like a king? Yes, He is King of kings and He gives as kings can never give. When Alexander bade his officer demand what reward he pleased, he asked so much that he nearly emptied the treasury—and when the treasurer refused to pay it and came to Alexander and said, “This man is unreasonable. He asks too much.” “No,” said the conqueror, “he asks of Alexander and he measures what he asks by my dignity.”

So be it your remembrance that God will not give meanly and stingily, for that were unworthy of Him. But He will give splendidly and magnificently for this is after His own nature. Expect, therefore, that He will save great sinners in a great and glorious way and give them great mercies for the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods. The riches of His grace are inexhaustible. He is the Father of mercies and He begets mercies by thousands and by millions to supply his people’s needs.

You meet a poor man and you are hungry. If he were hospitable he might say, “Come in, Sir and you may have a part of my crust.” You go in and you find a scanty meal upon the table and you say, “What you have given me is all you had to give. I thank you for it.” But what would you think if you waited at the royal door and received a royal invitation and, when you went in, were fed with dry crusts and drops of water? You would think this not becoming a *king*. Now if your friend has been offended and he is willing to forgive, you are grateful to him—for he does perhaps his best—but God stands at His gate with His tables laden with a rich hospitality. “My oxen and My fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come you to the supper.” Let no low thought of God come in to make you doubt His power to save you. Have *high* thoughts of God and this snare of the fowler will be broken.

Again—let me remind you that the greatness of God’s mercy should *encourage you to believe that it comes from God*. If I could take you suddenly, blindfold you and carry you away you knew not where and then, loosing the bandage from your eyes, should say, “Look here. It is all gold on every side, thick slabs of gold and there is a pick-axe—take it and use it.” You begin and turn up blocks of ore—would you have any idea at the time that this was put there by men? “No,” you say, “this is God’s mine, the infinite bounty of the Creator. Not the scanty contrivance of nature.” The abun-

dance of the treasure proves to you that it cannot be the treasure house of man.

Now, you open your eyes in this building tonight and you see a gas light. "Well," you say, "it is very good—a very good light in its way, but I can see it is man's light." Go out and see the moon's light—did you ever think that man made that? Or wait till tomorrow morning and look up at the sun—wait till noonday when he is shedding down his brightness and gilding the fields with tints of glory and I think you will say, "Ah, I shall never mistake *this* for man's work. It is so exceeding bright that nothing that man can ever achieve in the way of illumination can be at all comparable to it."

Thus the greatness of the light makes you believe in the Divinity that ordained it. If you should see tomorrow a heavy shower of rain, you would not believe, I suppose, that it was made with a watering-pot. And if you saw the Thames swollen to its banks from a great flood, you would not believe that the London waterworks had filled it to its brim. "No," you say, "this is God at work in nature. The greatness of the work proves that God is here." If you were ever in Cambridge, you might have seen a little mountain which is so small that nobody knows who made it. Some say it is artificial. Some say it is natural. Now I have never heard any dispute about the *Alps*—nobody ever said that they were artificial.

I never heard of any disputation about the Himalayas—no one ever conjectured that human hands piled them up to the skies and clothed them with their hoary snows. So when I read of the mercies of God in Christ—reaching up like mountains to Heaven—I am sure they must be Divine. I am certain the Revelation must come from God—it must be true. It is self-evident. I might enlarge this argument by showing that God's works in creation are very great and therefore it were idle to think that there would be no great works in grace. Two works which have been made by the same artist always have some characteristics which enable you to see that the same artist made them.

In like manner, to us there is one God. Creation and redemption have but one Author. The same eternal power and Godhead are legibly inscribed on both. Now when I look at the sea and hear it roaring in the fullness thereof I see a great Artist there. And when my soul assays the ocean of grace and listens to the echoes of its motion as the sound of many waters, I see the same Almighty Artist. When I see a great sinner saved, then I think I see the same Master-hand which first formed man and curiously wrought his substance, endowing him with powers so great that they baffle our understanding. But if I only met with little specimens of grace, with narrow gifts and stumped benedictions, I might say—"These *may* be of man, for man can do many things and possibly as he has done

little things in *creation*, he can do little things in *grace*.” But when we meet with astounding conversions, with marvelous forgiveness, we are sure this must be God because it is so great and so far beyond all human comprehension.

Let me remind you again that you may get another argument to put an end to your fears about the greatness of God’s mercy *from the greatness of His Providence*. Did you ever think how much food God gives to His creatures every year? How much fine wheat He lays upon the earth that we may feed thereon! Have you remembered the vast machinery with which He feeds the thousand millions of men that are upon the face of the globe? When Xerxes led his millions from Persia to Greece there was a very great and cumbrous system to carry on the commissary so that all the host might be fed. And even as it were, many of them were starved.

But here are millions upon millions and God feeds them. No, enlarge the thought. There are the fowls of Heaven that are countless—did you ever pick up a dead sparrow that had been starved to death? I never did. Think of the sharp winters and the birds, somehow or other, without barn or granary, find their food. Look at the millions and millions of fish in the sea, swimming tonight and searching for their food and your heavenly Father feeds all these. Look at the innumerable insects creeping upon the earth, or dancing in the summer sunbeam—all supplied. Look at the behemoth who makes the deep to be hoary with roaring. Look at huge leviathan, the elephant, the crocodile and those other mighty creatures of God’s strength to go through the deep or through the forests. These He supplies in Providence.

And if He is so lavish here, do you think that in the *masterpiece* of His hand—His grace—He is stinted and narrowed? God forbid! ’Twere hard to believe in littleness of special love when we see greatness of common goodness towards the sons of man. “Oh,” says one, “but I am thinking of my unworthiness and that this does not meet it.” Well, this will meet it—there is a country where there had been a drought and the land is all parched and chapped. That field of corn there belongs to a good man. That field over yonder belongs to an infidel. That one over there belongs to a blasphemer. That one is cultivated by a drunkard. That other one belongs to a man who lives in every known vice.

Here comes a cloud! Blessed be God here comes a cloud which sails along through the sky. Where will it go? It is big with rain. It will make the poor dried-up germ revive. There will be a harvest yet—which way will it go? “Of course,” you say, “It will only go in the corner where the godly man has his field.” No, not so. It spreads its rich mangle over the entire sky and the shower of mercy falls upon the just and the unjust, upon the thankful

and upon the unthankful. It falls just as plenteously where the blasphemer is the possessor as where the gracious man lifts up his heart in prayer. Now what does this show us? God blesses ungodly men, unthankful men!

And I hold that as *grace* is always in analogy with nature, God is ready tonight to bless blasphemers, graceless men, careless men, drunken men, men who ask not His favor but who, nevertheless, if God wills to save them, shall certainly receive His salvation! He shall have His mercy brought into their souls and they shall live. To turn the point a moment and argue again. "Soul," you say, "I cannot believe, because the mercy is so great." Would anything but great mercy suit *your* case at all? Say, would little gains serve *your* case? Must you not say with Baxter, "Lord, give me great mercy or no mercy, for nothing short of great mercy can answer my desire?" You need a great Christ. You want One that can wash away foul offenses. He is just such an One as you need.

Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him now! Besides, what have you to do with asking questions at all? What God gives you to do, is it not yours to do? He tells you, "Trust My Son and I will save you through His blood." Sinner, ask no questions. Be it right or wrong, the responsibility will not rest with you if you will do as God bids you do. If the Spirit of God should now constrain you to trust Christ, should you perish, then you can say, "I perished doing as God bade me." That can never be. You will be the first that ever did perish so. May God enable you at this very moment to take Him at His word and to trust your soul in Jesus' hands!

III. I close by USING YOUR VERY FEARS AS AN ENTICEMENT TO BELIEVE.

If it is so joyous only to *think* of these things, what must it be to *possess* them? If it gives such a weight to your spirit only to think of being pardoned, adopted, accepted and saved—what must it be really to be washed? You can not make a guess. But this I can tell you—the first moment I believed in Christ, I had more real happiness in one tick of the clock than in all the years before. Oh, to be *forgiven*! It is enough to make a man leap! Yes, to leap three times as John Bunyan puts it and go on his way rejoicing.

Forgiven! Why, a rack becomes a bed of down! The flames become our friends when we are forgiven. Justified! No more condemnation! Oh, the joy of that! The happiness of the slave when he lands on freedom's shore is *nothing* compared with the delight of the believer when he gets out of the land of the enemy. Speak we of the joy of the poor captive who has been chained to the oar by the corsair and who at last is delivered? The breaking of his chain is not one-half such melodious music to him as the breaking of our chains to us.

“He took me out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a Rock and put a new song into my mouth and established my goings” —

***“I will praise You every day,
Now Your anger’s passed away;
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice.
Jesus is become at length
My salvation and my strength;
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.”***

Talk not of the joys of the dance, or of the flush of wine. Speak not of the mirth of the merry, or of the flashes of the ambitious and successful. There is a mirth more deep than these. A joy more intense. A bliss more enduring than anything the *world* can give.

It is the bliss of being *forgiven*. The bliss of having God’s favor and God’s love in one’s soul. The bliss of feeling that God is our Father. That Christ is married to our souls. And that the Holy Spirit *dwells in us* and will abide with us forever. Let the sweetness of the mercy draw you, poor soul! Let the sweetness of the mercy, I say, entice you! But you say, “May I have it?” Come and welcome, come and welcome, sinner, come! When you get outside of this place you will see opposite to the Elephant and Castle a fountain. If you are thirsty, go and drink. There is nobody there to say, “You must *not* come. You are not fit.” It is put there on purpose for the thirsty.

And if tonight you want Christ—if you feel in your souls a desire to be partakers of His salvation, He stands there in the highway of the Gospel and He is *free to every thirsty soul*. No need to bring your silver cups or your golden vases. You may come with your *poverty*. No need, my poor Friend, that you should wait until you have learned to read well or have studied the classics. You may come in your ignorance just as you are. No need, my poor erring Brother, that you should wait till you should thoroughly reform. You may come and do your reformation *afterwards*. Come to Jesus as you are, just as you are! He will wash the filthy, clothe the naked, heal the sick, give sight to the blind, enrich the penniless and raise to glory those who seem to be sinking down to Hell!

Oh, may God draw some tonight, some who have come in here out of curiosity to hear the strange preacher. Some who only hope to see the strange man seeking to win souls by telling them earnestly God’s simple Truth! May the Master lay hold of some tonight, yes, tonight! Had I the power to plead as Paul did—could I utter impassioned words like those of the seraphic Whitfield—O could I plead with you as a man pleads for his

life, as a mother pleads for her child—so would I say to you and beseech you that you be reconciled to God! My strength fails. The Truth has been uttered. Hear it! May you receive it!

“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—thus spoke our Lord and Master—“He that believes not shall be damned.” Believe and make profession of your faith for whosoever with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession, shall be saved. May the Lord bless the joy of the tidings to the rejoicing of our heart, for His dear name’s sake. Amen.

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JOY HINDERING FAITH

NO. 2279

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. And He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.”
Luke 24:41-45.

THE disciples were gathered together with the doors of the house fast closed, for they were afraid of the Jewish mob. Suddenly HE came, HE who was chief in their thoughts, the Christ whom they had seen dead upon the Cross, whom some of them had helped to bury! There He stood before them and, “they were terrified and frightened.” As on a former occasion, on the Sea of Galilee, so now they said, “It is a spirit,” and they cried out for fear. The Savior did His best to correct their minds of their mistake. He said to them, “Handle Me, and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet.” He went as far as He well could go to prove that He was a real Man, composed of real flesh and bones.

Then they believed, for it was perfectly clear that He had risen from the dead and was in their midst. They had hardly begun to believe that their Lord was really with them before it seemed too good to be true! A wave of joy came rolling up and then appeared to be sucked back, again, and they seemed to be sucked back by it. They *believed not for joy*—they were astounded—they were full of wonder. They did believe, otherwise they would have had no joy, but the very joy swallowed up the thing of which it was born and they did not believe because of the excess of joy! This is an experience which has been very common and I merely take this text, tonight, that I may deal with some persons who have found Christ, and are saved, but who are now troubled because it seems too good to be true.

First, then, tonight, I shall speak, if I have the strength to do so, upon the difficulty under which they labored—“They yet believed not for joy.” Secondly, I shall speak upon the manner in which our Lord helped them to get over the difficulty. He first ate a piece of fish and a portion of a hon-

eycomb in their presence—and then opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.

I. First, then, THE DIFFICULTY UNDER WHICH THEY LABORED. “They believed not for joy.”

This is not the only instance in which joy has seemed to stop the flow of faith. It has occurred on other occasions. You have an early instance of it in the Book of Genesis. Will you kindly turn to Genesis 45:25, 26? Jacob had lost his beloved Joseph. He believed him to be dead. He had been shown a bloody coat which he knew was his son's. But now the brothers come back from Egypt with news that Joseph is yet alive and is governor over all the land of Egypt! “And they went up out of Egypt and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.” It was too good to be true and his heart sank within him! “You must be deceiving me,” he said. He knew that his sons had been liars before. Indeed, if this report were true, they had been liars before, and now he cannot believe their news—it is too much for him—and the old man swoons away. So have I met with many who had been told that Christ had saved them and they believed it—but after believing it, it seemed as if it was presumption to believe any such thing—and they were thrown back into doubt and despondency.

Job was once in a similar condition, for he says in his Book, (9:16)—“If I had called, and He had answered me; yet would I not believe that He had hearkened unto my voice.” He had such a fear of God. He saw so much of his own unworthiness and of God's greatness, that he says that if he had prayed, and God had heard him, he could not have believed it to be true! This is a more spiritual case than that of Jacob, but it makes a very good parallel instance as to the fact that joy, itself, may cause unbelief.

The same idea comes up in Psalm 126. You remember the words, “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like they that dream.” They seemed to say, “We could not believe it! We thought it was all imagination, a freak of fancy, the high play of spirits in dreamland—surely it cannot be true.”

If you need another case, you have that of Peter as recorded in the 12th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. When Peter had been brought out of prison, the angel led him into the street and he found that he was free, but he “knew not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.” He could not believe that every barrier to his escape had been removed and that he was really out of prison! There is a young woman mentioned in the same chapter, who was very much of the same mind as Peter. Read the 13th and 14th verses—“And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate.” Why did she not let him in? Ah, she was too joyful to do that!

As the woman at the well left her waterpot when she found Christ, so did Rhoda leave Peter standing outside the door—she was too joyful to let him in! A hungry man, when he at last finds bread, may be too joyful to eat. A thirsty man may come to the fountain and, for a moment, be too

joyful to stoop down and drink of its cooling stream. Men and women are strange paradoxes. We are made up of paradoxes—we are the most curious creatures in all the world! We believe and get joyful, and then we *disbelieve because we are joyful*, for we think that it cannot be true joy, or true faith! I do not understand you, my Brothers and Sisters, because I do not understand myself! And I do not believe that you understand yourselves, either! The mercy is that *you do not need to understand yourselves*—you are in the hands of a Great Physician who knows all about you and who will prescribe for you when you cannot even tell what is the matter with yourself!

I have given you these instances out of the Scriptures, but such cases are common enough in our experience. Here is one who has heard preached the doctrine of immediate salvation by faith. He understands that—

***“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through His blood.”***

He has believed and he has received! Redemption in full and now he says to himself, “Can it really be true? What? All my sins forgiven? Am I whiter than snow? That great sin of mine that seemed to turn all my being to crimson and scarlet—is that washed out?” It seems too good to be true and the man’s doubts come thick upon him by reason of the very greatness of the pardon which he has grasped!

Suppose, further, that it is whispered in his ear, “You are redeemed from among men by a special redemption, for Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep and you are a part of His Church—you are one of His sheep and, therefore, specially and peculiarly redeemed out of mankind.” As he turns it over, he believes in a *general redemption for all sinners*—but he cannot believe in this special, peculiar, effective Substitution—and he says to himself, “It is too wonderful to be mine. For me to have a special part in what Christ did, how can that be?” You first rejoice because you believe it and then you begin to doubt it because you rejoice! Perhaps it is whispered in your ear still further, “You were chosen from before the foundation of the world! You are espoused to Christ, married to Him in an everlasting wedlock. You are a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. And because He lives, you shall also live—you shall be with Him where He is and shall behold His Glory.” You feel so full of delight that you can hardly bear yourself—but you have scarcely begun to be delighted before the whisper comes, “It is too good to be true. It must all be a mistake.” And so you believe not for joy.

Suppose that you should sometimes have those high enjoyments, those love feasts, those banquets in the Hall of Love with Christ? Suppose that you should come to lean your head, with holy John, upon His bosom and not only know His love, but be caught up, as it were, into the third Heaven of immediate fellowship with Him? Now you feel as if you could die for very joy, until there comes this cold, shivering doubt, “You are altogether mistaken! You are a mere fanatic! You are an enthusiast, for God

could not have admitted a man such as you, into such close fellowship." Often have I met with persons troubled in this manner—and it is to them that I speak.

Now, let me ask, what is the occasion of this difficulty? Why do we get these doubts about the great mercy of God? I answer, first, because of a deep sense of unworthiness. If any man here could see himself as he is, and then could see the fullness of God's love to him, I believe that it would make every individual hair of his head stand upright with astonishment and, next to that, it would carry him right away with a ravishment of adoring wonder. "Such a wretch, such a beast, such an almost devil as I was and yet loved of God!" It would startle him. Hear how David puts it, "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before You. Nevertheless, I am continually with You; You have held me by my right hand." The sense of our own unworthiness makes it seem too good to be true that we should really be saved.

Next, the custom of fear in which some of us were found creates this difficulty. We were accustomed to think despairingly of our sin. Month after month some of us could see no hope—no, not a ray of light—so that when the Light of God did come, it was too much for our poor eyes. Have you never gone suddenly into the light and found yourself less able to see than you were when you were in the dark?—

***"When God revealed His gracious name
And changed my mournful state,
My rapture seemed a pleasing dream,
The Grace appeared so great,"***

because of the mournful state in which I had been before.

Then, perhaps, most of all, it seems hard to believe because of the intensity of our former anxiety. These disciples had been intensely thoughtful about Christ and anxious about Him—and that was why they could not, in a moment, believe that He was really risen from the dead. And when a man has been thinking long about his soul. When he has felt his sin like lead. When he has looked into the awful burnings of Infinite Justice. When he has heard, as it were, the sentence, "Depart, you cursed," ringing in his ears, do you wonder that he needs to be quite sure that he is really forgiven? He cannot take that for granted. He looks, and looks, and looks, and looks again—and he cannot rest till he is certain that his sin is all blotted out and that he is "accepted in the Beloved." Hence, even the very delightfulness of the idea of being justified by faith in Christ causes a doubt to enter the heart.

Further, I do not wonder that the doubt comes in when you think of the simplicity of the way of salvation. Look! I have been for *years* trying to save myself. I have gone to Abana and Pharpar and washed, and washed, and washed, and I am still a leper. And then, one day, I do but believe, I do but go and wash in Jordan and at once my leprosy is gone! I should think that if the woman, whose issue of blood was staunched when she touched the hem of Christ's garment and felt in her body that she was healed of that plague, she must also have had, a moment after, the fear, "But surely it will come back again! I cannot have been cured in so simple a way! I have been to all the doctors and have spent all my money and

only grew worse. Am I really healed?” So, when a sinner sees himself saved by nothing but *believing*—by simply *trusting* Christ—do you wonder that an early thought with him is, “This must be too good to be true—to be saved so simply”?

Add to this the immediateness of Divine Grace and you understand where the difficulty arises. If it took a month to save a man. If it took seven years to put sin away, I could understand that by degrees we should come to believe in the process, though I do not know but what we might very likely get fresh doubts out of *that* process! But to be saved in a moment—to pass from death to life in less than the twinkling of an eye! To have all sin forgiven more quickly than a watch can tick—this is the work of salvation! This is the giving of the new birth, the passing of the act of indemnity and oblivion—and this takes no time whatever!—

***“Tis done! The great transaction’s done;
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.”***

And then the saved soul turns around and says, “Can it be true that I am *really* saved—I who was, just now, in the very depths of despair?”

Now, I am only going to deal with this difficulty in the following few words to show you that it has no solid basis. You say, “Can this be true?” because it is so good. My answer is—You *need* something good, do you not? You need something *greatly* good! Could anything save you but a great act of Grace? Tell me. Are you not of Richard Baxter’s mind when he prayed, “Lord, give me great mercy, or no mercy; for little mercy will not serve my purpose”? If anybody says, “It is too good to be true,” say, “It is no better than I need. I need perfect pardon! I need complete renewal! I need to be made a child of God. I need to be saved.” It is *not* too good to be true, for it is not too good to be what you need!

Do you not think, also, that great things belong to God? Do you expect God to be little in His mercy, little in His gifts, little in His Grace? You make a great mistake if you do, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than man’s ways. The greatness of the goodness which you receive should be to you a letter of commendation. If it were little, it might come from man. If it is too great to come from man, that proves that it comes from God! Let the greatness rather reassure you than cause you to doubt. When a doubt arises from the simple way of salvation, let me put this to you—What other way would save you? I know that I shall never get to Heaven by any way but the way of *faith*. I have not even a fragment of confidence in anything that I have ever done, or ever designed to do—

***“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All in All.”***

O my dear Hearer, you may surely be content with a way that suits you—the way of believing! “It is very easy,” you say. It is not too easy for you—you could not go a harder way. To faint away into the arms of Christ and throw your whole weight upon Him, let it not seem too simple for you, for this is all that you *can* do. Yes, and more than you ever *will* do unless the Grace of God leads you to do it! Do not, therefore, doubt the way because it is so simple. What other way would you have?

Once more, do not say that the gift of God's Grace is too good to be true, for those of us who live in the daily enjoyment of it are, by nature, no better than you and yet it has come to us! Why should it not come to you? I never saw the man yet whom I would have put behind myself in the matter of salvation. If I had had to guess which man in this congregation would not be saved, I would not have guessed any man but myself. I stood in the rear rank—not that I had openly sinned worse than others, but there were certain elements of character that caused me to despair. Yet I was fetched in by God's Grace and why should not you, also, be brought in? "Ah," you say, "I am a very odd person." So am I—you are not odder than I am! "Oh!" says one, "but I am such a strange body." So am I. I am a lot out of all the catalogs. Whoever you are, be you who you may, come along to Christ! He cannot cast you away for He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Come to Christ, dear Friend, and He will not cast you out! This Truth of God is *not* too good to be true! If I have not found it too good to be true, *you* will not find it too good to be true. Lay hold of it and believe it.

Thus I have tried to set before you the difficulty that the disciples were in when they believed not for joy.

II. Now, in the second place, I shall only be able to speak briefly upon THE MANNER IN WHICH OUR LORD HELPED THEM TO GET OVER THE DIFFICULTY.

Of course, their main point was that they could not believe that Jesus was risen from the dead—it seemed too good to be true.

The Lord helped them out, first, by a fuller view of what He could do. They had handled Him. They had seen and felt that He was real substantial materialism, composed of flesh and blood, which spirits have not. He takes a piece of fish and eats it. He takes a piece of honeycomb, dripping with honey, and eats it and, as I think, He gave them a part of the same food. If they were not satisfied with looking at Him and handling Him, they would have a further evidence that He was in the body, for He could eat and drink like any other individual.

Now, I pray the Lord to give to any here who say, "It is too good to be true," a clearer view of Himself. If you will think more of Him who brings you this great salvation, you will not be less astonished, but you will be less doubtful. Think of who He was, God, in the bosom of the Father, and the Father, in giving Him, gave Himself! It is no trifling salvation, depend upon it, that God comes to work out. If it had been a small salvation, He might have sent Gabriel and said to him, "Go and save those sinners." But as God Himself comes to do the work, you may depend upon it that it is a great salvation!

And when our Lord came here, He not only lived and labored, but He suffered. He was "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was mocked, spit upon, scourged, crucified. He died. He who only has Immortality, *died!* Does that Cross over yonder mean a *little* salvation? Do the groans of Christ mean little gifts for men? Do those gory shoulders, plowed by the lash, mean trifles for trifling sinners? Do the five wounds and the cruel scorn, and the great passion all mean a small salvation for sinners? Oh, no, Beloved, they mean great salvation for giant sinners, the

sons of Anak, a great salvation for the biggest sinners that ever lived! Think of the Cross of Calvary and Christ on it and you will never say that the great salvation He worked out is too good to be true!

But He is alive, again, and He has gone up yonder, through the shining ranks of cherubim and seraphim, to the Throne of God. And what is He doing? Pleading for sinners, making intercession for the transgressors! Is that a little thing for which the Christ prays? He might have made one of His saints to be the intercessor if it had been some trifling thing, but it is a great, priceless, infinite blessing for which Christ prays before the Father!

Listen, once more. Christ has joined the Glory of His name with the work of salvation. He cares more to be a Savior than to be a King! His highest Glory comes from His rescuing men from going down into the Pit. Creation glorifies God. The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy when the world was made, but God did not think that was a work to rejoice over—He merely said that it was good. He could have made 50 more worlds, yes, fifty *million* worlds, if He had pleased! But when Jesus saves men by laying down His life for His chosen, it is written, “He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” Think of Jehovah, the Triune God, bursting into song! He sings—for all His Glory is wrapped up in the salvation of men! Is it, then, a trifle? No! I rejoice in the greatness of salvation and believe in it all the more because it is so great and so worthy of the Glory of God! I hope that neither you nor I will fall into the difficulty of the disciples when they believed not for joy.

But now our Savior did another thing. After thus manifesting Himself, He began to open up to them the Scriptures. Ah, that is what we all need for the removal of our doubts! The least read Book in the world, in proportion to its circulation, is the Bible. I believe that “Jack the Giant Killer” is more read than the Bible in proportion to the number of persons who have the books. It is sad that it should be so. There is the daily paper and there is the weekly religious paper, as it is called, and these two, together, put on the table—hide the Bible! We need to read our Bibles more—we *must* read our Bibles more! If we do, what shall we read there?

Well, we shall read of a great Fall that took place in the Garden of Eden. You know, they tell us, now, that when Adam fell, he broke his little finger—and it was fixed up—and he recovered. But that is not what the Bible says. He broke his neck and a great deal more than his neck! Oh, what a fall was there, my Brothers and Sisters! You and I and *all of us* fell down. It was a fall which dislocated man altogether. Well, now, for a great fall, you must have a great salvation. Therefore do not be astonished when you read of a great salvation! It is involved in the meaning of the great disaster of the Fall.

Then, the Fall brought on great depravity. Although they make it out, now, that man, through the Fall, has only suffered very slightly, just a little toothache, or something of that sort, yet the Scripture does not tell us so. His whole head is sick and his whole heart faint, and from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head he is nothing but wounds, bruises and putrefying sores! “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Now you must have a great salvation to meet this great depravity!

There must be a great work of Grace to turn this ship right-about, to lay a mighty hand upon the helm and reverse its course!

Next, Beloved, if you read the Bible carefully, you will find that there is such a thing as great sin. Ah, you do not need to read your Bible for that! Reading your own heart, by the light of the Bible, and remembering that every evil thought as well as every evil word, yes, and every evil *imagination*, is sin before God, you will see what a mass of sin one single human being is defiled with! You need a great salvation because of great sin!

Further, if you read your Bibles, you will find that there is a great Hell. Everything in the Bible is according to scale. When men talk of a *little* Hell, it is because they think they have only a *little sin* and believe in a *little Savior*—it is all little together! But when you get a great sense of sin, you need a great Savior, and feel that if you do not have Him, you will fall into a great destruction and suffer a great punishment at the hands of the Great God! As you would escape a great Hell, believe in a great salvation and never be staggered because it is great.

And then there is a great Heaven. Oh, what a Heaven! Have any of us any idea of what it will be like? We sit and meditate upon it. We sing about it and we sometimes half think that we are there—but we are not by a very long way. When we once get inside the gates, we shall say, with the Queen of Sheba, “The half was not told me.”—

**“Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below!
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy.”**

To get you there, you must have a great salvation. Therefore, do not begin to say, “It is too good to be true.” Come, now, surely you are not going to be a fool and have the world and give up your hope of going to Heaven! I am often wonderstruck at the way in which God, in His infinite love, makes some men go the way that they never thought of going.

There are persons in this house, tonight, with whom I have conversed lately, children of ungodly parents, brought up in the midst of worldly amusements. Suddenly, softness fell upon their hearts and they began to think! The things that they loved, they began to loathe. They could not tell why. They sought the House of Prayer, they learned the way of salvation and laid hold on Christ. When they go home tonight, there is not one of the family that will welcome them, and they, themselves, strove hard to get away when God began to work upon their heart. But the harpooner in this pulpit, by God’s Grace, sent a harpoon in so deep that, whales as they were, they could never get it out! They dived deep into the sea of greater sin—but that harpoon held them. The next time that they came up to breathe, they got another harpoon, and they were, at last, wounded to such an extent that they had to yield! And now they are yielding, with the full concurrence of their will, to the Lord who has mastered them and led them captive—and now leads them in triumph! Glory be to God for this! You have to go to Heaven, my Friend—you are bound for Glory—and you will go there. There is a tug, just in front of you, that will draw you there, and you shall not be lost on the way. Why, if such is your grand destiny,

do not wonder that, on the voyage, you have great things from God almost too great, at times, to be believed!

I have done when I have said one thing more. If even joy, sometimes, hinders our believing, do not let us think much about joy, or much about sorrow. The man who always thinks about being comfortable is generally the most uncomfortable being in the world! And the man who is always thinking about being happy goes the right way to work to be always unhappy! If we are to be saved by our *feelings*, we shall get saved and lost every other day, for we are just like the weather-glass. They said to me, yesterday, "The glass is going back." Very likely it was, but it does not rain, for all that. Another day they say, "The glass is going up," and then I find it generally *does* rain, so I give up the glasses and begin to wonder whether there is any truth in them at all!

Sometimes my feelings say to me, "You are no child of God," and then I begin to pray, and so I know that my feelings have deceived me. Another time they say to me, "Oh, you are a child of God, that is certain!" And then I get as proud as Lucifer—and *that* a child of God should *never* be! What is the good of looking to your feelings at all? Walk by faith! Believe the Gospel! Cling to God's promises! If they fail you, all is lost. But they *cannot* fail you! Rest in the finished work of Christ, but as for joys and sorrows—

***"Let them come, and let them go,
Fickle as the winds that blow."***

You need place no reliance upon them. Hold on to this—"Christ died for the ungodly." "He that believes in Him is justified from all things." "He that believes in Him is not condemned." Hold you to that and then come what will, sink or swim, all will be well with your souls!

The Lord bring us all to that blessed condition, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON LUKE 24:13-48.

Verses 13-15. *And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus, Himself, drew near, and went with them.* When two saints are talking together, Jesus is very likely to come and make the third one in the company! Talk of Him and you will soon talk *with* Him. I would that Believers more often spoke, the one to the other, about the things of God! It has been said that in the olden time, God's people spoke often, one to another, but now we have altered that, and God's people speak often one *against* another. It is an alteration, but it certainly is not an improvement. May we get together, again, and, like these two disciples, talk of all the things that happened in Jerusalem 18 centuries ago! If we have less of reasoning than they had, let us have more of communion.

16. *But their eyes were restrained that they should not know Him.* Christ was there, but they did not perceive Him. Our eyes may be very easily shut so that we do not see Christ even when He is close to us. We see a thousand things, but we miss the Master.

17. *And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that you have, one to another, as you walk, and are sad?* Christian people, why are you sad? It should not be so! And when you talk, why do you increase each other's sadness? Is that wisdom? Surely the Master might say to some here present, "Why are you sad?" I hope that He will enable you to shake off the sadness and to rejoice in Him.

18-20. *And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto Him, Are you only a stranger in Jerusalem, and have not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him.* These were sad things to talk about. They thought that they had lost all when they had lost Christ—and yet there is no theme in all the world that is more full of joy than talk about the crucified Christ! This is strange, is it not? If we look beneath the surface, we shall see that the darkest deed that was ever perpetrated has turned out to be the greatest blessing to mankind—and that the cruelest crime ever committed by mortal man has been made the channel of the greatest benediction of God!

21-23. *But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive.* How innocently they tell the story! How they convict themselves of stark unbelief! And the Master hears it all patiently and quietly. What a strange sensation it must have been for Him to hear them talking about Him in this amazing way when, all the while, they did not know who the "stranger" was to whom they were speaking! Have you ever thought of what the Savior must think of many things that we say? We think them wise, but they must be very foolish to the eyes of His infinite wisdom, and very shallow to Him who sees everything to the bottom.

24, 25. *And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not. He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken.* He loved them tenderly, but He rebuked them strongly—I had almost said sternly—"O fools, and slow of heart!" I am afraid that is our name—"fools." I am afraid that it may be said of us that we are "slow of heart to believe." We need so many proofs. We very readily disbelieve, but we very slowly believe! If you had a piano in your house and you left it for months—and when you came back, you found it all in beautiful tune, you would be sure that *somebody* must have been there to keep it in tune! But if, on the other hand, you left it to itself and it got out of tune, you would say that such a condition was only what was to be expected. So it is

natural for us to get out of tune! Sometimes we ring out glad music on the high sounding cymbals and we lift up the loud hallelujahs of exultant joy! But soon we are down, again, in the deeps and strike a minor key. Grace, alone, can raise us! Nature, alas, sinks if left to itself!

26, 27. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His Glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* The best Book, with the best Teacher, descanting upon the best of Subjects! Everywhere this Book speaks about Christ—and when Christ explains it, He only brings Himself more clearly before our minds!

28. *And they drew near unto the village, where they went.* They were sorry to be nearing their destination. They would have liked to walk to the ends of the earth in such company and listening to such conversation!

28. *And He made as though He would have gone further.* Christ intended to go further unless the two disciples constrained Him to tarry with them.

29. *But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.* That is our prayer to the Lord Jesus tonight, “Abide with us, dear Master! We had Your blessed company this morning and now the sun is almost down—abide with us!” Let each one of us pray the prayer that we often sing, for, morning, noon, and night, this is a suitable supplication—

**“Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without You I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without You I dare not die.”**

29-31. *And He went in to stay with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, He took bread and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.* In the breaking of bread, Christ is often known. It is a wonderful emblem. Even if this breaking of bread were not the observance of the Lord’s Supper, it was something very like it. Christ’s blessing and breaking of bread anywhere are the true token of Himself.

31-33. *And He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem.* It was getting late, but it is never too late to tell of Christ’s appearing, and never too early! Such a secret ought not to be kept an hour and, therefore, “they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem.”

33-36. *And found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in the breaking of bread. And as they thus spoke, Jesus, Himself, stood in the midst of them.* You see that, while they were talking about Christ, He came and stood in their midst! Speak of your Master and He will appear! Oh, happy people who have but to talk of Jesus, and lo, He comes to them!

37-40. *But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet.* They knew those signs, the marks of His Crucifixion. They ought to have been convinced at once that it was even He.

41. *And while they yet believed not for joy.* Does joy stop faith? Beloved, *anything* stops faith if we will let it! Faith is a Divine miracle. Wherever it exists, God creates it and God sustains it—but without God, anything can hinder it—“while they yet believed not for joy.”

41. *And wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any meat? That is, “anything eatable.”*

42. *And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish.* Which, as fishermen, they were pretty sure always to have.

42. *And of an honeycomb.* As a second course, to complete the meal.

43. *And He took it, and did eat before them.* Some of the old versions add, “and gave the rest to them,” which I think is very likely to have been the case. It would be all the more convincing to them if He really ate before them, and then that they also partook of the same food of which He had taken part.

44, 45. *And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.* Good Master, do the same with us tonight!

46, 47. *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* This Gospel message was to be proclaimed among all nations, “beginning at Jerusalem,” but not ending there! It has been preached to us—let us see to it that we pass it on to those who have never heard it.

48. *And you are witnesses of these things.* We also are called to be “witnesses of these things.” May the Lord make us to be faithful and true witnesses, for His name’s sake! Amen.

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

BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM

NO. 1729

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 14, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached
in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
Luke 24:47.*

The servants of God were not left to originate a Gospel for themselves, as certain modern teachers appear to do, nor were they even left to map out their mode of procedure in the spreading of the glad tidings. They were told by their great Master *what* to preach, *where* to preach it, *how* to preach it and even where to *begin* to preach it. There is ample room for the exercise of our thought in obeying Christ's commands, but the worldly wise in these days call no one a thoughtful person who is content to be a docile follower of Jesus. They call themselves “thoughtful and cultured” simply because they set up their own thoughts in opposition to the thoughts of God. It were well if they would remember the old proverb—“Let another praise you and not your own lips.”

As a rule, those who call themselves, “intellectuals,” are by no means persons of great intellect. Great minds seldom proclaim their own greatness! These boasters are not satisfied to be “followers of God, as dear children,” but must strike out a path for themselves—this reveals their folly rather than their culture. We shall find use for every faculty which we possess, even if we are endowed with 10 talents, in doing just as we are bid to do by our Lord. Implicit obedience is not thoughtless—on the contrary, it is necessary to its completeness that heart and mind should be active in it.

I. You that would faithfully serve Christ note carefully how He taught His disciples **WHAT THEY WERE TO PREACH**. We find different descriptions of the subject of our preaching, but on this occasion it is comprised in two things—repentance and remission of sins. I am glad to find in this verse that old-fashioned virtue called repentance. It used to be preached, but is now out of fashion. Indeed, we are told that we always misunderstood the meaning of the word, “repentance”—it simply means a “change of mind” and nothing more. I wish that those who are so wise in their Greek knew a little more of that language, for then they would not be so ready with their infallible statements!

True, the word does signify a change of mind, but in its *Scriptural* connection it indicates a change of mind of an unusual character. It is not such a fitful thing as men mean when they speak of changing their minds, as some people do fifty times a day, but it is a change of mind of a deeper kind. Gospel repentance is a change of mind of the most radical sort—such a change as never was worked in any man except by the Spirit of God. We mean to teach repentance, the old-fashioned repentance, too! And I do not know a better description of it than the child's verse—

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

Let every man understand that he will never have remission of sin while he is in love with sin—and that if he lives in sin he cannot obtain the pardon of sin. There must be a hatred of sin, a loathing of it and a turning from it, or it is not blotted out.

We are to preach repentance as a duty. “The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” He that has sinned is bound to repent of having sinned—it is the least that he can do. How can any man ask God for mercy while he lives in his sin? We are to preach the acceptableness of repentance. In itself considered, there is nothing in repentance deserving of the favor of God. But, the Lord Jesus Christ having come, we read, “He that confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy.” God accepts repentance for the sake of His dear Son. He smiles upon the penitent sinner and puts away his iniquities. This we are to make known on all sides.

We are also to preach the motives of repentance—that men may not repent from mere fear of Hell, but they must repent of sin, itself. Every thief is sorry when he has to go to prison—every murderer is sorry when the noose is about his neck—the sinner must repent, not because of the punishment of sin—but because his sin is sin against a pardoning God, sin against a bleeding Savior, sin against a holy Law, sin against a tender Gospel. The true penitent repents of sin against God and he would do so even if there were no punishment. When he is forgiven, he repents of sin more than ever, for he sees more clearly than ever the wickedness of offending so gracious a God.

We are to preach repentance in its perpetuity. Repentance is not a Grace which is only to be exercised by us for a week or so at the beginning of our Christian career—it is to attend us all the way to Heaven. Faith and repentance are to be inseparable companions throughout our pilgrimage to Heaven. Repenting of our sin and trusting in the great Sin Bearer is to be the tenor of our lives and we are to preach to men that it must be so. We are to tell them of the source of repentance, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Repentance is a plant that never grows on nature’s dunghill—the nature must be changed and repentance must be implanted by the Holy Spirit or it will never flourish in our hearts. We preach repentance as a fruit of the Spirit or else we greatly err.

Our second theme is to be remission of sins. What a blessed subject is this! To preach the full pardon of sin—that it is blotted out once and for all! To preach the free pardon of sin, that God forgives voluntarily of His own Grace—free forgiveness for the very chief of sinners for all their sins, however black they may be—is not this a grand subject? We are to preach a final and irreversible remission—not a pardon which is given and taken back again—so that a man may have his sins forgiven and yet be punished for them.

I loathe such a Gospel as that and could not preach it! It would come with an ill grace from these lips. But the pardon of God once given stands forever! If He has cast our sins into the depths of the sea, they will never be washed up. If He has removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west, how can they return to condemn us? Once washed in the blood of the Lamb, we are clean! The deed is done! The one offering has put away, forever, all the guilt of Believers. Now this is what we are to preach—free, full, irreversible pardon for all that repent of sin and lay hold on Christ by faith. O servants of the Lord, be not ashamed to declare it, for this is your message!

II. Next to this, we are told WHERE IT IS TO BE PREACHED. The text says that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among *all nations*. Here, then, we have the Divine warrant for *missions*. They are no speculations, or enthusiastic dreams—they are matters of Divine *command*. I daresay you have heard of what the Duke of Wellington said to a missionary in India who was questioning whether it was of any use to preach the Gospel to the Hindus. “What are your marching orders?” said this man of discipline and obedience. “What are your marching orders?” *That* is the deciding question! Now the marching orders are, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” What a wonder it is that the Church did not see this long before! After her first days she seems to have fallen asleep and it is scarcely a 100 years ago since, in the Providence and Grace of God, the Church began to awaken to her high enterprise. We are to preach the Gospel everywhere—missions are to be universal!

All nations need the preaching of the Word of God. The Gospel is a remedy for every human ill among all the races that live upon the face of the earth. Some out of all nations shall receive it, for there shall be gathered before the Eternal Throne men out of every kindred, nation and tongue. No nation will utterly refuse it—there will be found a remnant according to the Election of Grace even among the most perverse of the tribes of men! We ought to preach it to every creature, for it is written that it behooved Christ to be so. Read the 46th verse—“Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. . . and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations.”

Brothers and Sisters, there was a Divine necessity that Christ should die—and an equally imperative must that He should arise again from the dead! But there is an equally absolute necessity that Jesus should be preached to every creature under Heaven. It behooves Him to be so. Who, then, will linger? Let us, each one, according to his ability and opportunity, tell to all around us the story of the forgiveness of sin through the Mediator’s Sacrifice to as many as confess their sin and forsake it! We are bid to preach repentance of sin and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ—let us not be slow to do so.

III. But this is not all. We are actually told HOW TO PREACH IT. Repentance and remission are to be preached in Christ’s name. What does this mean? Ought we not to learn from this that we are to tell the Gospel to others because Christ orders us to do so? In Christ’s name we must do

it! Silence is sin when salvation is the theme. If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out against them. My Brothers, you must proclaim the Gospel according to your ability—it is not a thing which you *may* do or may *not* do at your own discretion. You must do it if you have any respect for your Savior's name. If you dare *pray* in that name; if you dare *hope* in that name; if you hear the music of joy in that name—then in the name of Jesus Christ preach the Gospel in every land!

But it means more than that. Not only preach it under His orders, but preach it on His authority. The true servant of Christ has His Master to back Him up! The Lord Jesus will seal by threats or by Grace, the Word of God preached by His faithful messengers. If we threaten the ungodly, the threat shall be fulfilled! If we announce God's promise to the penitent, that promise shall be surely kept! The Lord Jesus will not let the words of His own ambassadors fall to the ground. "Lo, I am with you always," He says, "even to the end of the world. Go you, therefore and teach all nations." You have Christ with you—teach the nations by His authority!

But does it not mean, also, that the repentance and the remission which are so bound together come to men by virtue of His name? Oh, Sinner, there would be no acceptance of your repentance if it were not for that dear name! Oh, guilty Conscience, there would be no ease for you through the remission of sin if it were not that the blessed name of Jesus is sweet to the Lord God of Hosts! We dare preach pardon to you in His name! The blood has been shed and sprinkled on the burning throne—the Christ has gone in within the veil and stands there, "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them." There is assuredly Salvation in His name and this is our glory—but—"there is none other name given under Heaven among men whereby we must be saved."

That name has a fullness of saving efficacy and if you will but rest in it, you shall find salvation, and find it now! Thus you see we are not bid to go forth and say—We preach you the Gospel in the name of our own reason. Or, we preach you the Gospel in the name of the Church to which we belong, or by the authority of a synod, or a bishop, or a creed, or a whole Church. No, we declare the Truth of God in the name of Christ! Christ has set His honor to guarantee the Truth of the Gospel. He will lose His glory if sinners that believe and repent are not saved! Dishonor will come to the Son of God if any man repenting of sin is not accepted before God!

For His name's sake, He will not cast away one that comes to Him. O chief of sinners! He will receive you if you will come! He cannot reject you—that were to be false to His own promise, untrue to His own Nature! Be sure, then, that you preach in Christ's name. If you preach in your own name, it is poor work. A man says to me, "I cannot tell a dead sinner to live. I cannot tell a blind sinner to see. I cannot invite an insensible sinner—it is absurd, for the sinner is altogether without strength." No, dear Sir, I do not suppose you can do so while you speak according to carnal reason. Does the good man say that God has not sent him to bid the dead arise? Then let him not do it! Pray let him not try to do what God never sent him to do! Let him go home and go to bed—he will probably do as much good, asleep, as awake!

But as for me, I am sent to preach in Jesus' name, "Believe and live!" And, therefore, I am not slow to do so. I am sent on purpose to say, "You dry bones, live," and I dare not do otherwise! No faithful minister who knows what faith means looks to the *sinner* for power to believe, or looks to *himself* for power—he looks to the Master that sent him for power! And in the name of Christ he says to the withered hand, "Be stretched out!" And he says to the dead, "Come forth!" And he does not speak in vain. Oh, yes, it is in Christ's name that we fulfill our office! We are miracle-workers! He endows us with His power if in faith we proclaim His Gospel.

All of you who try to speak the Gospel may do it without fear of failure, for the power lies in the Gospel and in the Spirit who goes with it—not in the *preacher* or in the *sinner*. Blessed be the name of God, we have this treasure in earthen vessels but the excellency of the power is of God and not of us! So He tells us, then, what to preach, where to preach it and how to preach it.

IV. Now, I shall ask your attention to the principal topic of the present discourse and that is, that He told His disciples WHERE TO BEGIN. I have heard of a Puritan who had, in his sermon, 45 main divisions and about 10 subdivisions under every head. He might be said, largely, to divide the Word of Truth, even if he did not rightly divide it! Now, I have nine sub-heads, tonight, and yet I hope I shall not detain you beyond the usual time. I cannot make fewer of them and give the full meaning of this sentence—"Beginning at Jerusalem." The Apostles were not to pick and choose where they should start, but they were to *begin* at Jerusalem.

Why? First, because it was written in the Scriptures that they were to begin at Jerusalem—"Thus it is written, and thus it behooves, that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." It was so written, but I will give you two or three proofs. Read in the second chapter of Isaiah, at the third verse—"Out of Zion shall come forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isaiah's words would have fallen to the ground if the preaching had not begun at Jerusalem! But now, to the very letter, this prediction of the evangelical Prophet is kept. In Joel, that famous Joel who prophesied the descent of the Spirit and the speaking of the servants and the hand-maidens, we read in the second chapter, at the 32nd verse, "In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance."

And again, in the 16th verse of the third chapter of the same Prophet—"The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem." As if the Lord were as a strong lion in the midst of Jerusalem! And as if the sounding forth of the Gospel was like the roaring of His voice, that the nations might hear and tremble! How could those promises have been kept if the Gospel had begun to be preached in the deserts of Arabia, or if the first Church of Christ had been set up at Damascus? Note another passage. Obadiah in his 21st verse says, "Saviors shall come up on mount Zion." Who were these saviors but those who instrumentally became so by proclaiming *the* Savior, Jesus Christ? And Zechariah, who is full of visions, but not visionary, says in his 14th chapter at the eighth verse, "Living waters shall flow out of Jerusalem." And then he describes the course

of those waters till they flowed even unto the Dead Sea and made its waters sweet.

Because the Bible said so, therefore they must begin at Jerusalem! And I call your attention to this, for our Lord Jesus was particular that every jot and tittle of the Old Testament should be fulfilled. Do you not think that this gives us a lesson that we should be very reverent towards every sentence of both the Old and the New Testaments? And if there is anything taught by our Lord, ought not His people to consider well and act according to the Divine ordinance? I am afraid that many take their religion from their parents, or from the Church that is nearest to them without weighing it. "I counsel you to keep the King's commandment."

Oh, that we may be more faithful servants of the Lord! If we are faithful, we shall be careful upon what men call small points, such as the Doctrine of Baptism, the manner of the Lord's Supper, or this small point of where the Gospel should be first preached. It must begin at Jerusalem and nowhere else, for the Scripture cannot be broken. See you to it, then, that you walk according to the Word of God and that you test everything by it. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." So much on the first head.

Secondly, I suppose that our Lord bade His disciples begin to preach the Gospel at Jerusalem because it was at Jerusalem that the facts which make up the Gospel had occurred. It was there that Jesus Christ died; that He was buried; that He rose again and that He ascended into Heaven. All these things happened at Jerusalem, or not far from it. Therefore the witness-bearing of the Apostles must be upon the spot where, if they lie, they can be confuted—where persons can come forward and say, "It was not so! You are deceivers." If our Lord had said, "Do not say anything in Jerusalem. Go to Rome and begin preaching there," it would not have looked quite so straightforward as it now does when He says, "Preach this before the scribes and the priests. They know that it is so. They have bribed the soldiers to say otherwise, but they know that I have risen."

The disciples were to preach the Gospel in the streets of Jerusalem. There were people in that city who were once lame, who leaped like a hart when Jesus healed them! There were men and women there who ate of the fish and that bread that Jesus multiplied. There were people in Jerusalem who had seen their children and their friends healed of dreadful diseases. Jesus bids His disciples beard the lion in his den—and declare the Gospel on the spot where, if it had been untrue, it would have been contradicted with violence! Our Lord seemed to say, "Point to the very place where My death took place. Tell them that they crucified Me; and see if they dare deny it. Bring it home to their consciences that they rejected the Christ of God."

Therefore it was, that coming to the very people who had seen these things, the preaching of Peter had unusual force about it—in addition to the power of the Holy Spirit there was also this—that he was telling them of a crime which they had newly committed and could not deny! And when they saw their error they turned to God with penitent hearts. I like this thought—that they were to begin at Jerusalem because there the events of the Gospel occurred. This is a direction for you, dear Friend—if

you have been newly converted, do not be ashamed to tell those who know you! A religion which will not stand the test of the fireside is not worth much! "Oh," says one, "I have never told my husband. I get out on a Thursday night, but he does not know where I am going and I sneak in here. I have never even told my children that I am a Believer. I do not like to let it be known. I am afraid that all my family would oppose me."

Oh, yes—you are going to Heaven round by the back lanes! Going to sneak into Glory as a rat crawls into a room through a hole in the floor! Do not attempt it! Never be ashamed of Christ! Come straight out and say to your friends, "You know what I was, but now I have become a disciple of Jesus Christ." Begin at Jerusalem—it was your Lord's command! *He* had nothing to be ashamed of. There was no falsehood in what He bade His disciples preach and, therefore, He did as good as say, "Hang up My Gospel to the light. It is nothing but the Truth of God, therefore display it before My enemies' eyes." If yours is a true, genuine, thorough conversion, I do not say that you are to go up and down the street crying out that you are converted—but on due occasions you must not hide your convictions. Conceal not what the Lord has done for you, but hold up your candle in your own house.

The third reason why the Lord Jesus told them to begin at Jerusalem may have been that He knew that there would come a time when some of His disciples would despise the Jews and, therefore, He said—When you preach My Gospel, begin with them. This is a standing commandment and everywhere we ought to preach the Gospel to the Jew as well as to the Gentile. Paul even says, "to the Jew first." Some seem to think that there ought to be no mission to the Jews—that there is no hope of converting them—that they are of no use when they are converted, and so on. I have even heard some who call themselves Christians speak slightly of the Jewish people. What? And your Lord and Master a Jew? There is no race on earth so exalted as they are! They are the seed of Abraham, God's Friend. We have nobles and dukes in England, but how far could they trace their pedigree? Why, up to a nobody!

But the poorest Jew on earth is descended linearly from Jacob, Isaac and Abraham. Instead of treating them with anything like disrespect, the Savior says, "Begin at Jerusalem." Just as we say, "Ladies first," so it is, "the Jew first." They take precedence among races and are to be waited on first at the Gospel feast. Jesus would have us entertain a deep regard to that nation which God chose of old and out of which Christ came, for He is of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. He puts those first who knew Him first. Let us never sneer again at a Jew, for our Lord teaches us the rule of His house when He says, "Begin at Jerusalem." Let the seed of Israel first have the Gospel presented to them and if they reject it we shall be clear of their blood. But we shall not be faithful to our orders unless we have taken note of Jews as well as Gentiles.

The fourth reason for beginning at Jerusalem is a practical lesson for you. Begin where you are tempted *not* to begin. Naturally these disciples would have said, one to another, when they met, "We cannot do much here in Jerusalem. The first night that we met together the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. It is of no use for us to go out into the street;

these people are all in such an excited frame of mind that they will not receive us! We had better go up to Damascus, or take a long journey and then commence preaching. And when this excitement is cooled down and they have forgotten about the Crucifixion, we will come and introduce Christ gradually and say as little as we can about putting Him to death.”

That would have been the rule of policy—that rule which often governs men who ought to be led by faith. But our Lord had said, “Begin at Jerusalem,” and so Peter must stand up in the midst of that motley throng and he must tell them, “This Jesus whom you have, with wicked hands, crucified and slain is now risen from the dead.” Instead of tearing Peter to pieces they come crowding up, crying, “We believe in Jesus! Let us be baptized into His sacred name.” The same day there were added to the Church 3,000 souls and a day or two afterwards, 5,000 were converted by the same kind of preaching! We ought always to try to do good where we think that it will not succeed! If we have a very strong aversion as a token that we are not called to it, we may regard it as a sign that we ought at least to try it.

The devil knows you, dear Friend, better than you know yourself. You see, he has been longer in the world than you have and he knows a great deal more about human nature than you do. And so he comes to you and he sizes you up pretty accurately and says, “This man would be very useful in a certain sphere of labor, so I must keep him from it.” So he tells the Brother that he is not called to it and that it is not the sort of thing for him—and so on—and then he says to himself, “I have turned aside one foe from harming my cause.” Yonder is a good Sister. Oh, how much she might do for Christ, but Satan guides her into a work in which she will never shine, while the holy work which she could do right well, she dreads.

I heard a beautiful story last Wednesday, when I was sitting to see inquirers, and I cannot help mentioning it here, for it may be a suggestion to some Christian who is present. A Brother, who will be received into the Church, was converted in the following way. He came up to London and worked in a certain parish in the West End. He was at work on a sewer and a lady from one of the best houses in the West End came to the men that were making the sewer and said, “You men, come into my servants’ hall and eat your dinners. I will give you either tea or coffee with your meal and then you will not have to go into the public house.” Some of them went in, but others did not. So the next day the lady came out, and said, “Now, I know that you think my place too fine for you. You do not like to come. So I have come out to fetch you in. While this sewer is being done I should like you to eat your dinners in my house.”

She got them all in and when they had done their dinners and drank their tea or coffee she began to talk to them about Jesus Christ. The work was a month or so about and it was every day the same. Our friend does not know the lady’s name, but he knows the name of Jesus through her teaching. Friends, we lose hosts of opportunities, I am sure we do! Many ways of doing good have never occurred to our minds, but they ought to—and when they *do* occur we should use them! Let us crucify the flesh about this. Let us overcome natural timidity. Let us, in some way or other,

begin at Jerusalem, which is just where we thought that we never could begin.

Now fifthly. We are getting on, you see. "Beginning at Jerusalem," must surely mean begin at home. Jerusalem was the capital city of their own country. You know the old proverb, "The cobbler's wife goes barefoot." I am afraid that this proverb is verified by some Christians. They do a deal of good five miles from home, but none at home. I knew a man who used to go out with preachers every night in the week and try to preach, himself, poor soul that he was. But his children were so neglected that they were the most wicked children in the street—and they grew up in all manner of vice. The father was prancing about and looking after other people—and did not care for his own family! Now, if you are going to serve Christ to the very ends of the earth, take care that you begin at home!

Dear parents, need I urge you to look to your own children? It is a great joy to me to know that the members of this Church, for the most part, do this. When a dear Sister came to me on Wednesday night with three of her children, making four that had come within the last six weeks, I felt grateful to God that parents were looking after their offspring. But if any of you are in the Sunday school and never have a Sunday school at home—if any of you talk to strangers in the aisles, but are neglecting your own sons and daughters—oh, let it not be so! The power of a father's prayers, with his arms about his boy's neck, I know full well! The power of a mother's prayers, with her children all kneeling round her, is far greater with the young than any public ministry will be. Look well to your children!

Begin at Jerusalem. Begin with your servants. Do not let a servant live in your house in ignorance of the Gospel. Do not have family prayer merely as a matter of form, but let it be a *reality*! Do not have one person working for you to whom you have never spoken about his or her soul. Begin with your brothers! Oh, the influence of sisters over brothers! I have a friend—a dear friend, too—who has long been a man of God, but in his young days he was a very loose fellow. Often he was all the night away from home. His sister used to write letters to him and frequently, while half tipsy, he read them under street lamps. One letter which he read cut him to the quick. His sister's grief about him was too much for him and he was compelled to seek and find the Savior. Well has the sister been rewarded for all her love to him!

Oh, dear Friends, begin at Jerusalem! Begin with your brothers and sisters! Begin with your neighbors! Oh, this London of ours! It is a horrible place for Christian people to live in! Round about this neighborhood scarcely can a decent person remain by reason of the vice that abounds and the language that is heard on every side. Many of you are as much vexed today as Lot was when he was in Sodom. Well, bear your witness! Do not be dumb dogs, but speak up for your Lord and Master wherever you are! Look at our dear Brother, Lazenby, who entered a workshop where none feared the Lord and has been the means of bringing all in the shop to God! Another shop has felt his influence and the first recruit has come to join the Church—I should not wonder if the whole of the workmen in the second shop should come, too! The Lord grant it. It is marvel-

ous how the Gospel spreads when men are in earnest and their lives are right. God make you to live so that you show piety at home!

Then, sixthly, begin where much has already been done. Begin at Jerusalem. It is hard work, dear Friends, to preach to certain people—they have been preached to so long, like the people at Jerusalem. They know all about the Gospel! It is hard to tell them anything fresh and yet they have felt nothing, but remain wed to their sins. The Jerusalem people had been taught in vain for centuries! And yet Christ's disciples were to speak to them first. We must not pass the Gospel-hardened—we must labor for the conversion of those who have enjoyed privileges but have neglected them—those who have had impressions and have crushed them out! We must not ignore those who seem as if they had sealed their own death warrants and will never be saved.

Do not hesitate to go to them! The Lord has already done much—it may be that He has laid the fire and you are to strike the match and set it all alight. Many people have a love to the Gospel, a love to the House of God, a love to God's people and yet they have no saving faith. What a pity! Do not hesitate to address them. I think I hear you say, "I would rather go and preach to the outcasts." So would I, but you and I are not allowed to pick our work. Virgin soil yields the best harvest and if a man might choose a congregation that is likely to be fruitful, he might well select those that have never heard the Word of God. But we have no choice. The Savior's disciples were to begin where the Prophets had prophesied and had been put to death—where sinners had rejected God's voice times out of mind! Therefore do not pass by your fellow seat holders.

Perhaps you say, "Sir, I have spoken to them a great many times, but I cannot make anything of them." No, *you* cannot, but *God* can! Try again. Suppose that for 20 years you were to sit in this Tabernacle side by side with an unconverted person and you were to speak to that person twice every Sunday and twice in the week—and all the 20 years it should be in vain? Yet if, at last, the individual were brought to Christ, would not his conversion repay you? Is your time so very precious? Is your ability so very great? Oh, my dear Friend, if you were an archangel, it would be worth while for you to work a thousand years to bring one soul to Christ! A soul is such a precious jewel that you would be abundantly rewarded if a century of service only brought you one conversion! Why, in working for Christ, do not hesitate to go to those who have refused the Gospel up to now, for you may yet prevail.

Seventh, begin where the Gospel day is short. If you ask me where I get that thought, it is from the fact that within a very short time Jerusalem was to be destroyed. The Romans were to come there to slay men, women and children! They were to break down the walls and leave not one stone upon another. And Christ's disciples knew this—that is why their Lord said, "Begin at Jerusalem." Now, then, if you have any choice as to the person you shall speak to, select an old man. He is near his journey's end and if he is unsaved, there is but a little bit of candle left by the light of which he may come to Christ. Choose the old man and do not let him remain ignorant of the Gospel. Fish him up at once, for with him it is now or never, since he is on the borders of the grave.

Or when any of you notice a girl upon whose cheek you see that hectic flush which marks consumption—if you notice during service the deep “churchyard” cough—say to yourself, “I will not let you go without speaking to you, for you may soon be dead.” How many a time have I seen a consumptive at Mentone apparently getting better—but I have noticed him rise from dinner with his handkerchief to his mouth and soon they have whispered, “He died of hemorrhage”—suddenly taken off. When you meet with a pining case, do not wait to be introduced, but introduce yourself. And tenderly, gently, quietly, lovingly say a word about coming to Christ at once. We ought to speedily look up those whose day of Grace is short. Perhaps, also, there is a stranger near you who is going far away to a distant land and may never hear the Gospel again. Therefore, if you have an opportunity, take care that you avail yourself of it and reason with him for Jesus at once. Begin at Jerusalem—begin where the day of Grace is short.

Eighthly, begin, dear Friend, where you may expect opposition. That is a strange thing, perhaps, to advise, but I recommend it because the Savior advised it. It was as certain as that two times two is four that if they preached Christ in Jerusalem, there would be a noise, for there were persons living there who hated the very name of Jesus—they had conspired to put Him to death! If they began at Jerusalem, they would awaken a ferocious opposition. But nothing is much better for the Gospel than opposition! A man comes into the Tabernacle tonight and, as he goes away, he says, “Yes, I was pleased and satisfied.” In that man’s case I have failed! But another man keeps biting his tongue, for he cannot endure the preaching. He is very angry—something in the doctrine does not suit him and he cries, “As long as I live I will never come here again.” That man is hopeful! He begins to think!

The hook has taken hold of him. Give us time and we will have that fish! It is no ill omen when a man gets angry with the Gospel. It is bad enough, but it is infinitely better than that horrible lethargy into which men fall when they do not think. Some are not good enough, even, to oppose the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Be hopeful of the man who will not let you speak to him—he is one that you must approach again. And if he *does* let you speak to him and he seems as if he would spit on you, be grateful for it! He feels your words. You are touching him on a sore place. You will have him yet! When he swears that he does not believe a word of what you say, do not believe a word of what *he* says—for often the man who openly objects, secretly believes. Just as boys whistle when they go through a churchyard in order to keep their courage up, so many a blasphemer is profane in order to silence his conscience. When he feels the hook, like the fish, the man will dart away from it. Give him line. Let him go. The hook will hold and, in due time, you will have him, by God’s Grace. Do not despair! Do not think it a horrible thing that he should oppose you—you should rather be grateful for it and go to God and cry that He will give you that soul for your hire! Begin courageously where you may expect opposition.

And, lastly, to come to the meaning which Mr. John Bunyan has put upon the text in his famous book called, “The Jerusalem Sinner Saved,” I have no doubt that the Savior bade them begin at Jerusalem because the

biggest sinners lived there. There they lived who had crucified Him! The loving Jesus bids them preach repentance and remission to *them*. There he lived who had pierced the Savior's side and they that had plaited the crown of thorns and put it on His head! There dwell those who had mocked Him and spat upon Him—and, therefore, the loving Jesus, who so freely forgives, says, "Go and preach the Gospel to them first." The greatest sinners are the objects of the greatest mercy! Preach first to them.

Are there any such here? My dear Friend, we must first preach the Gospel to *you* because you need it the most. You are dying! Your wounds are bleeding! The heavenly Surgeon bids us staunch your wounds first. Others who are not so badly hurt may wait awhile, but you must be first served lest you die of your injuries. Should not this encourage you great sinners to come to Jesus when He bids us preach to you first? We are to preach to you first because when you have received Him, you will praise Him the most! If you are saved, you will encourage others to come and you will cheer up those who have already come! We shall be glad to get fresh blood poured into the veins of the Church by the conversion of big sinners who love much because they have had been much forgiven and, therefore, we are to come to you first. Will you not come to Christ at once? Oh, that you would believe in Him! Oh that you would believe in Him tonight! To you is the word of this salvation sent!

You old sinners—you that have added sin to sin and done all you can do with both hands wickedly—you that have cursed His name—you that have robbed others—you that have told lies—you that have blackened yourselves with every crime, come and welcome to Jesus! Come to Christ and live at once! Mercy's door is set wide open on purpose that the vilest of the vile may come—and they are called to come first! Just as you are, come along with you. Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but, now, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." This night if you believe in Jesus you shall go out of these doors rejoicing that the Lord has put away your sin! To believe is to *trust*—simply trust in Christ. It seems a very simple thing, but that is why it is so difficult. If it were a hard thing, you would more readily attend to it—but being so easy, you cannot believe that it is effectual. But it is! Faith saves! Christ needs nothing of you but that you accept what He freely presents to you! Put out an empty hand, a black hand, a trembling hand—accept what Jesus gives—and salvation is yours!

Thus have I tried to expound, "Beginning at Jerusalem," O that my Lord would begin with *you*! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 28.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—486, 537.**

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“REPENTANCE AND REMISSION”

NO. 3224

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1910.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 17, 1870.**

**“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name
among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
Luke 24:47.**

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1729, Volume 29—
BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge,
at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THIS verse is among our Lord’s last words to His disciples just before He left them to return to Heaven. He wished to impress upon them the Truth of God that it was His purpose and desire that their lives should be devoted to the preaching of His Gospel among all nations upon the face of the earth. In Christ’s own words and throughout the New Testament, we find the greatest stress laid upon preaching. Preaching is the great battering ram that is to shake the gates of Hell! Preaching is God’s chief method of winning souls unto Himself—“for after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” We cannot too often remind this age in which we live of this Truth, for this is a time in which it is supposed that rites and ceremonies, human learning and literature and I know not what else, may very properly be allowed to supplant the preaching of the Word! Yet our Lord has given no intimation of any change in His purpose and plan—on the contrary, His great commission is evidently intended to cover the whole of this present dispensation—“Go you, therefore, and teach (that is, make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them (that is, those who have been made disciples) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (or, more properly, unto the end of the age). Amen.” So, until this dispensation is brought to a close by the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, “repentance and remission of sins” are to “be preached in His name among all nations.” Blessed, indeed, are those who, in this land or anywhere else, have heard their Lord and Master say to them as He said to His disciples before He left them, “and you are witnesses of these things.”

As I have been called, by His Grace, to be one of His witnesses, I will now try to put the text to practical use by preaching, first, upon *the subject*, and secondly, upon *the audience* here mentioned by our Lord.

I. First, let us consider THE SUBJECT OF OUR PREACHING as here stated by our Lord—“that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name.”

So the first part of the subject is *that repentance should be preached in the name of Jesus*. There is a very important point that must here be noted—and that is that *repentance is not to be preached in the name of Moses as a legal duty*. Undoubtedly, it is a legal duty, for everyone who sins against God ought to repent of doing so. Whenever we have broken any Law of God, we ought to be sorry for having broken it. It is the natural, commonsense duty of the creature, when he has disobeyed any command of his Creator, to grieve that he has thus grossly offended his Maker and to resolve that if possible, he will not do so any more. But it is not in this fashion, simply as a legal duty, that Christ has bid His servants preach repentance. If we preach it thus, our labor will be in vain—at least to a very large extent!

Nor are we to preach it merely as a matter of faint hope. There is, indeed, more than a faint hope for any man who is bid to repent because he will suppose, naturally and properly, that the God who bids him repent must have some designs of love towards him. But we are not to preach to sinners in such a fashion as simply to make them faintly hope that they may be saved. You know that when Jonah passed through the streets of Nineveh, his mournful and monotonous message was, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” When that message was carried to the king, he laid aside his gorgeous robe and put on sackcloth, sat in ashes, proclaimed a fast for man and beast and commanded his people to turn from their evil ways! Yet he had no better hope than this—“Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?” When they repented, God *did* have mercy upon them and spared them. But we have to carry to sinners a far more hopeful message than that heathen king’s enquiry, “Who can tell if God will turn and repent?” Our Lord Jesus Christ has ordained that repentance should be preached in quite a different fashion than that!

We are not even to preach it after the manner of John the Baptist who preached repentance as a preparation for the coming of Christ. His message was, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” To the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism, he said, “Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance,” evidences of a change of life, because there was One far mightier than he coming after him—whose shoes he was not worthy to bear. John was only sent to prepare the way for Him who should baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. There are some, nowadays, who seem to think that repentance is a sort of preparation for faith in Christ, but that is not as we understand the Word of God—as we will try to show you before we have finished our discourse. We have not to preach repentance after the manner or in the nature of Moses, or Jonah, or John the Baptist—we have to preach repentance in the name of Jesus Christ! What does this mean?

First, it means that *we are to preach repentance as the gift of God*. Christ was exalted with His Father’s right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, “to give repentance” as well as “forgiveness of sins.” Wherever there is real sorrow for sin, wherever there is an honest determination, by God’s Grace, to cease from sin, wherever there is a complete change of mind with regard to sin—for that is what repentance means—that repentance has been produced by the Spirit of God and it is as much a gift of the Covenant of Grace as even the pardon which comes with it is! This is the repentance which we are to preach in Christ’s name, and of which Joseph Hart so sweetly sings—

**“Come, you needy, come and welcome,
God’s free bounty glorify!
True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings us near,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy!”**

You are not to seek to draw up repentance from the depths of your own heart, as you might draw up water from a well, but to ask Christ to work repentance in you by His Holy Spirit, through belief of the Truth of God as it is recorded in the Word of God, or as it is set before you in the preaching of the Gospel. As you learn how terribly Christ suffered because of sin, that Truth will, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, be the means of leading you to hate sin. And you will realize how the Holy Spirit, by enlightening the understanding and influencing the affections, produces repentance even in that sterile heart which had never been previously softened and made fertile by the gentle dew and rain of Grace. So we are to tell sinners that God gives repentance—that it is one of the free gifts of His Grace—and that whoever has it may rest assured that the hand of the Lord has been upon him for good and that, in fact, the work of salvation has been already begun in his soul!

Further, to preach repentance in the name of Jesus also means that *wherever there is real repentance, it is the token of the pardon of sin—not merely a hopeful sign, but the sure and Infallible sign of pardon*. If any man’s heart is turned away from sin. If he prostrates himself in the dust before God because of his offenses. If he looks with true penitence to Christ upon the Cross, crying, “Lord, remember me,” “Lord, save me,” “God be merciful to me, a sinner”—it is not a question whether forgiveness may or may not be granted to him—it is a *fact* that he is already forgiven! David’s words are still true, “The Lord is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit.” It was for such as these that Jesus suffered upon Calvary. So let the message ring out through every land beneath the canopy of Heaven, that wherever there is a soul that loathes sin and leaves sin, Eternal Mercy has already commenced its gracious work and that soul *is* forgiven!

I also think that to preach repentance in the name of Jesus means that *we are to preach it on the authority of Jesus*. We are not merely to bid men repent and to try to persuade them to do so by various reasons

that might be urged! We are to take far higher ground than that, as Paul did at Athens when he said, “The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” The servants of Christ are not to preach repentance on their own authority, or even on the authority of the Church of Christ, but they are to preach it on the authority of the Church’s ascended Head! This was Christ’s own message, for we read, “After that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the Gospel.” So no true minister of Christ need be either afraid or ashamed to tell sinners—even the very worst sinners—that they should repent! When Jesus went into the country of the Gadarenes, a man possessed by an unclean spirit met Him—a wild man whom no mere human being could tame, a man who snapped the fetters and chains with which he was bound, a man who lived in the mountains, or among the tombs, a man who was a terror to the whole countryside and from whom all who could, fled—did Jesus flee from him or pass him by as too bad to be cured? No, the fiat of Omnipotence was, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.” And though it was not merely one demon, but a whole legion of evil spirits that possessed the man, they all departed at Christ’s command! And the man, himself, was shortly afterwards found “sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.” And soon he, too, was taken into Christ’s service, “and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.” In like manner, the true minister of Christ is not only to call upon the most moral and the most hopeful to repent, but he is to give the same message to the most immoral and the most hopeless! On the day of the Pentecost, when Peter had charged his hearers with putting Jesus to death, they were pricked in their heart and said to the Apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” You know what followed—about three thousand of them gladly received Peter’s words, were baptized and the same day were added to the Church! Our commission to preach the Gospel to every creature was issued by Him to whom all power in Heaven and in earth had been given! It is, therefore, under Divine authority that “repentance and remission of sins” are to be preached in Christ’s name among all nations! “Repentance and remission” are so joined together that wherever we find the one, we are sure to find the other. Where there is no repentance, there can be no remission. But where there is true repentance—that godly sorrow for sin that needs not to be repented of—there is the full and free forgiveness of all sins of the one who has thus sincerely repented!

According to our text, *this remission of sins is to be preached in the name of Jesus*. We have the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ for declaring that “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” And when Paul was preaching at Antioch concerning the Resurrection of

Christ, he put this Truth of God very plainly—“Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses.” We also are to preach, not as unauthorized persons who hope that what we say may possibly prove to be true, but as those who are proclaiming Divine Truths and certainties on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! As one of the Lords witnesses, let me tell you, my dear Hearers, that there is promised to penitents *a full pardon* of every sin they have ever committed, whether it has been a sin of thought, or word, or deed—whether it has been a sin of omission or of commission! This pardon makes a clean sweep of the accumulated heaps of defilement that have resulted from years of iniquity! It is a pardon *as great as it is full*—pardon for the most horrible and oft-repeated offenses, pardon for uncleanness, for theft, for blasphemy, even for murder if the murderer has truly repented! It is a—

**“Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus’ blood.”**

The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses *from all sin*, all who truly repent and believe in Him! It cleanses from the sins that banish men from the presence of their fellows, and from the sins that would banish them forever from the Presence of the thrice-holy God! Yes, pardon is to be proclaimed in the name of Jesus for sins such as these—they are not too black to be forgiven by God—they are not too deeply ingrained to be washed out by the precious blood of Jesus!

And this great and full pardon is also a pardon *that is given instantaneously*. In a moment the guilt of the penitent sinner is forgiven! To quote Hart, again, “His pardon at once he receives.” The instant that faith is begotten in the soul, we are justified in the sight of God and we can say with the Apostle Paul, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies.” The believing penitent turns his weeping eyes to Christ upon the Cross, gazes with mingled sorrow and joy upon the blood that flowed from His many wounds, places all his reliance upon the God-appointed Propitiation, “the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world,” and in *that very moment* all his iniquities are gone forever! The Lord has blotted them out and driven them away like clouds that have been dispersed by a tornado, and that can never be found again!

This pardon is realized by the penitent sinner who receives it. “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” Oftentimes, the sense of pardon comes upon a man like a piece of good news that makes him almost leap for joy—he was never before thrilled with so wondrous an emotion! He is half inclined to sing—

**“He has lifted me out of the miry clay,
And set my feet on the King’s Highway”—**

but, perhaps, instead of doing so, he bows himself before the Lord in solemn silence, feeling that he could never express the gratitude he feels for

such amazing mercy. Or, possibly, he finds David’s words just suited to his experience and, therefore, he says, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits *who forgives all your iniquities*.” He realizes, as David did, that all his iniquities are forgiven and with the royal Psalmist he sings, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

Nor is this all, for *this pardon is one that is never reversed*. O Sinner, if you really repent of your sin and believe in Jesus, the sinner’s Savior, you are saved with an everlasting salvation! Remember that you have to deal with a God who never changes—He gives to the guilty penitent full and free forgiveness, not a reprieve or a respite! Once washed in the precious blood of Jesus, you shall never go back to your sin so as to live in it, and to die in it and perish. If you are truly trusting in Jesus, you are saved, not merely for today, tomorrow and next week, but forever. What says the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” Were *you*, my dear Hearer, ever pardoned by God for Christ’s sake? Then you are pardoned forever! But if not, I pray that you may repent and believe the Gospel this very hour.

Perhaps you say, “But all this seems so strange to me. You tell me that my sins can all be forgiven in a moment, and forgiven forever—and that I have nothing to pay for this priceless blessing, but am simply bid to repent of my sin and believe in Jesus.” Yes, that is all true. But I do not ask you to believe it because I say it, for I only repeat to you the message that I have received from the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, through His Word and by His Spirit. He cannot lie—and it is He who says, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations.” He has given the best proof possible that your sins can be forgiven in the fact that He died in the place of sinners. Jesus Christ, who was God as well as Man, suffered as the Substitute of all who believe in Him. He bore their sins in His own body up to the tree and away from the tree! And now, for all who truly trust Him, there is no condemnation forever!

“But,” says one, “I do not doubt that repentance and remission of sins are to be preached in Christ’s name. My difficulty is as to whether they are for me!” Well, that is a point that you must settle under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Have you really repented of your sin? Have you sorrowed over it as the great curse of your life? Have you hated it and turned away from it, and sought to live as the holy God would have you live? Well, then, if the repentance is yours, the remission, also, is yours—for they go together in Christ’s own words—“repentance and remission of sins.” To hate sin because it slew Christ. To hate sin because God is so good that we ought not to sin against Him. To hate sin because God is so gracious as to forgive it. To weep over sin, not like a child who has done wrong, and so keeps away from his father, but like a penitent child who

lays his head in his father’s bosom and sobs out his grief there, and mourns that he has offended such a loving father who is so ready to forgive him—this is evangelical repentance and wherever it is found, there is also the remission of sins! If you do not know experimentally what it is thus to repent, breathe the prayer, “O Lord, show me the guilt of my sin. Teach me to mourn over it, to loath it and leave it. Let me see Your dear Son bearing its penalty on my behalf and then assure me, by Your Spirit’s gracious instructions, that my sins, which were many, are all forgiven for Jesus’ sake, that so I may go on my way rejoicing as a sinner saved by Sovereign Grace.”

Those of you who were here last Sabbath morning [See Sermon #925, Volume 16—INDIVIDUAL SIN LAID ON JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] will remember that my text was, “All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” And you will also recollect that I tried to describe various characters to whom that verse applies. I hope God gave comfort and blessing to some who listened to the sermon here. But oh, it was a joy to me to hear of one far away in Scotland who had been for years desponding and despairing who was led to find rest and peace through reading the printed sermon! But why should not many more of you be blessed while hearing the Word of God as so many are in reading it? Poor captive Soul, why should you not be set at liberty? Arise and shake yourself from the dust, for in Christ’s name pardon is preached unto you if you will but repent of your sins and trust Him to save you from them!

II. Now, secondly, we are to think of THE AUDIENCE THAT IS TO BE ADDRESSED UPON THIS SUBJECT—“that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Why is this Gospel to be preached among all nations? Well, first, because all nations need it! And then, because the Gospel is exactly suited to all nations. And further, because God has a chosen number in all nations who will receive the Word and be saved by it. And also because it shall be a witness against those in all nations who hear it but refuse to heed it.

Some nations were learned, yet when Paul was addressing the Greeks who were proud of their philosophy and were continually seeking after wisdom, he preached repentance and remission of sins in Christ’s name—the same A B C Doctrine of Jesus Christ and Him crucified that he proclaimed wherever he went! And the greatest scholars of the present day, if they would be wise unto salvation, must stoop to learn the same Gospel alphabet! No, rather they will be *elevated* as they acquire these elements and rudiments of heavenly knowledge and become scholars in Christ’s School of Grace!

Other nations were very ignorant. In the Apostles’ days there were some parts of the earth where the people were rude barbarians without any knowledge of books and letters. Yet the Apostles went to them and

preached repentance and remission of sins—and the Gospel was simple enough for them to understand—and many of the heathen turned from their idols to serve the living God! And in later days, many of the greatest triumphs of the Truth of God have been won among the savages and untutored tribes of Africa, India and North America—and the islands of the southern seas. Ignorant and degraded as they were, many of them have become new creatures in Jesus Christ, living here to the praise and glory of God and, in due time, going to join the ranks of the blessed above!

There are nations that worship God after a very imperfect fashion, although they know not Jesus Christ, whom He has sent to be the Savior of sinners. To these, also, we must preach repentance and remission of sins in Christ’s name, for no man can come unto the Father except by Jesus Christ, His Son! Men cannot know God until they see the brightness of His Glory revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ. To theists and polytheists, those who believe in one God and those who worship “gods many and lords many,” we have but one message, even that which our Lord Himself delivered, “Repent you, and believe the Gospel.” And already, many of them, by Divine Grace, have repented and received the remission of their sins in Christ’s name!

There are three very important words at the end of our text—“*beginning at Jerusalem.*” John Bunyan has a masterly treatise upon this text, entitled *The Jerusalem sinner saved; or, good news for the vilest of men: being a help for despairing souls, showing that Jesus Christ would have mercy in the first place offered to the biggest sinners.* Those of you who have his works will find the whole treatise well worth reading, but I am going to borrow some of his divisions and speak upon them after my own fashion.

Bunyan’s first reason why Christ would have mercy proclaimed first to the biggest sinners is “*because the biggest sinners have most need thereof.*” A surgeon who is caring for the wounded on a battlefield and who has several soldiers awaiting his attention, will be anxious, first, to attend to the man who is the most seriously hurt and whose life seems fast ebbing away. He will leave for a while the one who has only a slight scratch or cut on his flesh, and devote all his thought and care to the man who is so terribly maimed and lacerated that it is a marvel how he manages to live at all! He will have him put in the ambulance and taken at once to the field hospital, that his life may be saved if it is possible. And oh, if among my hearers there are some great offenders—some who have sinned very terribly, some who have sinned against God and man, against their own bodies and souls, some who may be truly called, “*Jerusalem sinners, the vilest of men*”—I want to assure them, first, that my Master has sent me to preach especially to them and to tell them that if they repent of their sins—many and great as they have been—they shall all be forgiven!

Bunyan’s second reason why Christ would have mercy preached first to the biggest sinners is “*because when they, any of them, receive it, it redounds most to the fame of His name.*” If a doctor cures someone’s finger

that is only slightly injured, he may get the credit of it, yet no one will say much about it. But if there is a person who is suffering from a disease that is believed to be incurable and a wise physician is the means of his restoration to health, how the whole neighborhood will ring with his praises! When someone else is very ill, friends will say, “You should send for Dr. So-and-So. You know what he did for that other poor man, perhaps he could do as much for you.” And when the Lord Jesus Christ saves some black blasphemer or some leader in vice and iniquity, how fast the news flies throughout the whole region where he lives! Why, even among the lowest of the low, when one of their companions is converted, you know how they talk about it! They cry, “Have you heard what’s happened to old Jack?” “No. What is it?” “Why, you know that he used to go along with us, first in all manner of evil—and now he has become a Christian!” That is sure to be repeated among all his old connections and so Christ gets fame and honor through His great work of Grace and, therefore, it is that He would have the biggest sinners specially bid to repent and believe the Gospel.

Bunyan’s third reason is “*because, by their forgiveness and salvation, others, hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to Him for life.*” When sinners hear that some big black sinner has been forgiven by Christ, they naturally ask, “Then why should not we be forgiven?” A rebel city is besieged and the king threatens to hang every traitor when he captures it. They do all they can to strengthen their defenses and to beat off the besiegers, resolved never to yield. But when one of their greatest captains is captured and the king, instead of hanging him, sends him back to the city loaded with gifts and bids him tell his fellow rebels that if they will only open the gates, he will forgive them and he will give them a royal charter for their city, and will be the patron of all their industries, what do they do? Why, Sirs, they fling wide the gates! They ring the bells and they beg the king to enter at once and accept their loyal homage! You can easily apply the parable to your own case. I pray that many of you may do so right now.

The time flies so fast that I cannot take Bunyan’s lessons in detail. His next one is that *when the biggest sinners are saved, they weaken Satan’s kingdom the most.* Catch the ringleaders and you can soon break up the band. Often one man can twist quite a number round his fingers and make them do as he pleases. When he is converted, he brings his mates to hear the preacher whose word was blessed to him—and thus many are won to Christ and Satan’s ranks are thinned!

Besides, *how it strengthens the Church when great sinners are converted!* It was a great day for the Churches of England when John Bunyan was saved. It was a glorious day for the Apostolic Churches when Saul the persecutor became Paul the preacher! And this will be a grand night for the Tabernacle Church if the Lord will turn some great sinner here from the error of his ways and enlist him beneath the banner of the Cross! This is the kind of man who will lead the forlorn to hope in Christ,

and plant the victorious banner of the Gospel on heights of sin that seem inaccessible to ordinary Christians! Great sinners, when they are converted, are the men to do great exploits in the name of Jesus!

Further, where great sinners are forgiven, *it is a clear proof that the Gospel has power to bless other sinners.* When the elephants entered the ark, all the beasts outside could see that the door was wide enough to admit them. As God’s Grace saved the chief of sinners, that Grace can save you, my Friend, however great a sinner you have been! There may have come in here tonight, as they often do, those who are not usually found in places of worship. My Brother or my Sister, for as such I regard you, sinner as you are, I have to tell you that if you will repent of your sin and trust in Jesus as your Savior, you shall go out of this house justified, even as the publican went out of the Temple of old after he had, from the depths of his soul cried, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!”

Thus have I tried to preach repentance and remission of sins in Christ’s name to the Jerusalem sinners, the very worst men and women here! But I must not close without also preaching in the same fashion to you who think you are *not* the worst sinners here. O you respectable sinners, you moral and amiable sinners! You also need a Savior! Though you would stand by yourselves and say, “God, we thank You that we are not as other men and as other women are,” yet Christ’s message to you is, “You must be born-again.” You, too, need to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus! Therefore, in His name, I preach to you “repentance and remission of sins,” just as I have done to the greatest sinners here. May the ever-blessed Spirit come to you and take away your pride and your self-righteousness, and bring you down where you must come—just as publicans and harlots must come—to the pierced feet of Him who loves sinners, receives sinners and saves sinners—and who will receive you and save you if you will but trust Him! God grant it for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 2:36-47.**

You know that Peter had been preaching a plain, simple, straightforward sermon upon the death, Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who was once such a coward that he trembled before a little maid, now that he is filled with the Spirit, boldly charges this crowd with being murderers and Deicides because their kind put to death the Lord of Life and Glory! If you turn to the 36th verse, you will see the effect of Peter’s plain preaching through the power of the Holy Spirit—

36, 37. *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart* [See Sermon #2102, Volume 35—“PRICKED IN THEIR HEART”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] A little later in this same Book, we read of those who listened to Stephen’s sharp, sword-like sentences, “When they heard

these things, they were cut to the heart”—and soon they stoned Stephen to death! To be “cut to the heart” is not enough! But to be *pricked* in the heart is to receive a mortal wound! Happy is the man who has had his sin killed through having received a deadly wound from the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! These people who heard Peter preach “were pricked in their heart” and, first, they were in doubt as to what they should do, but secondly, they were resolved that whatever they were told to do they would do at once.

37, 38. *And said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* Nobody but a Baptist minister could have preached that sermon! At least we shall have to wait a long while before we hear any other saying to a whole congregation, “Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you.” This is, indeed, the full proclamation of the Gospel—and we have no more right to leave out the *Baptism* than we have to leave out the repentance! “Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you.” Peter was not like those hyper-Calvinists who are afraid to give an exhortation to a sinner because he is spiritually dead! He spoke out boldly to those who had asked, “What shall we do?” and said to them, “Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

39. *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* [See Sermon #2586, Volume 44—A FAR-REACHING PROMISE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is a most blessed verse. The promise is to us and to our *descendants*—not merely to our children, but also to our grandchildren. Yes, and to our race as far as it yet may run! And the next clause, “and to all that are afar off” proves that the promise is made to the far-off ones as well as to our children, with only this limitation, “even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

40. *And with many other works did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.* Not, “save yourselves from Hell”—that Christ, alone, can do for you, but “save yourselves from this generation” by coming boldly out from among the ungodly, taking upon you the distinctive mark of the Christian and so separating yourselves from those upon whom the sentence of death shall fall.

41-45. *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle’s Doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need.* What a notable instance this was of the power of Divine Grace! We would not usually suppose that the Jewish race would be given to any excess of making common property—but where Grace came in the first flush of its dawn,

see to what prodigies of liberality it excited the early Believers! Would that we had more of this generous spirit nowadays!

46. *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.* I believe that wherever two or three disciples of Christ meet together it is competent for them to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. That ordinance is not, as some think it to be, a *Church ordinance*, to be confined to the official assembling of all Believers—but wherever two or three are met in Christ’s name, there He is—and where He is, there may the emblems of His broken body and shed blood be partaken of in memory of Him!

47. *Praising God, and having favor with all His people. And the lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.* [See Sermon #1167, Volume 20—ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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

CHRIST'S FIRST AND LAST SUBJECT NO. 329

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 19, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

*“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent,
for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”
Matthew 4:17.*

*“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in
His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
Luke 24:47.*

IT SEEMS from these two texts that repentance was the first subject upon which the Redeemer dwelt and that it was the last which, with His departing breath, He commended to the earnestness of His disciples. He begins His mission crying, “Repent.” He ends it by saying to His successors the Apostles, “Preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

This seems to me to be a very interesting fact and not simply interesting but instructive. Jesus Christ opens His commission by preaching repentance. What then? Did He not by this act teach us how important repentance was—so important that the very first time He opens His mouth, He begins with, “Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand”? Did He not feel that repentance was necessary to be preached before He preached faith in Himself because the soul must first repent of sin before it will seek a Savior, or even care to know whether there is a Savior at all?

And did He not also indicate to us that as repentance was the opening lesson of the Divine teaching, so, if we would be His disciples we must begin by sitting on the stool of repentance before we can possibly go upward to the higher forms of faith and of full assurance? Jesus at the first begins with repentance—that repentance may be the Alpha, the first letter of the spiritual alphabet which all Believers must learn. And when He concluded His Divine commission with repentance, what did He say to us but this—that repentance was still of the very last importance?

He preaches it with His first, He will utter it with His last breath. With this He begins, with this He will conclude. He knew that repentance was, to spiritual life, a sort of Alpha and Omega—it was the duty of the beginning, it was the duty of the end. He seemed to say to us, “Repentance, which I preached to you three years ago when I first came into the world as a public Teacher, is today still as binding and as necessary for you who heard Me then and who then obeyed My voice, as it was at the very first instant. And it is equally needful that you who have been with Me from the beginning should not imagine that the theme is

exhausted and out of date—you, too, must begin your ministry and conclude it with the same exhortation, 'Repent and be converted, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'

It seems to me that nothing could set forth Jesus Christ's idea of the high value of repentance more fully and effectually than the fact that He begins with it and that He concludes with it. That He should say, "Repent," as the keynote of His ministry, preaching this duty before He fully develops all the mystery of godliness and that He should close His life-song as a good composer must, with His first keynote, bidding His disciples still cry, "Repentance and remission of sins are preached in Jesus' name," I feel, then, that I need no further apology for introducing to your solemn and serious attention the subject of saving repentance. And oh, while we are talking of it, may God the Holy Spirit breathe into all our spirits and may we now repent before Him and now find those blessings which He has promised to the penitent.

With regard to repentance, these four things—first, its origin. Secondly, its essentials. Thirdly, its companions. And fourthly, its excellencies.

I. Repentance—ITS ORIGIN. When we cry, "Repent and be converted," there are some foolish men who call us legal. Now we beg to state, at the opening of this first point, that repentance is of *Gospel* parentage. It was not born near Mount Sinai. It never was brought forth anywhere but upon Mount Zion. Of course repentance is a duty—a natural duty—because when man has sinned, who is there brazen enough to say that it is not man's bounden duty to repent of having done so? It is a duty which even nature itself would teach.

But Gospel repentance was never yet produced as a matter of *duty*. It was never brought forth in the soul by demands of Law, nor indeed, can the Law except as the instrument in the hand of God's Grace, even assist the soul towards saving repentance. It is a remarkable fact that the Law itself makes no provision for repentance. It says, "This do and you shall live; break My command and you shall die." There is nothing said about penitence. There is no offer of pardon made to those that repent.

The Law pronounces its deadly curse upon the man that sins but *once*—and offers no way of escape—no door by which the man may be restored to favor. The barren sides of Sinai have no soil in which to nourish the lovely plant of penitence. Upon Sinai the dew of mercy never fell. Its lightning and its thunder have frightened away the angel of Mercy once and for all and there Justice sits, with sword of flame, upon its majestic throne of rugged rock, never purposing for a moment to put up its sword into the scabbard and to forgive the offender.

Read attentively the twentieth chapter of Exodus. You have the Commandments there all thundered forth with trumpet voice and there is no pause between where Mercy with her silver voice may step in and say, "But if you break this Law, God will have mercy upon you and will show Himself gracious if you repent." No words of repentance, I say, were ever proclaimed by the Law—no promise by it made to penitents. And no assistance is by the Law ever offered to those who desire to be forgiven.

Repentance is a Gospel grace. Christ preached it, but not Moses. Moses neither can nor will assist a soul to repent. Only Jesus can use the Law as a means of conviction and an argument for repentance. Jesus gives pardon to those who seek it with weeping and with tears. But Moses knows of no such thing. If repentance is ever obtained by the poor sinner it must be found at the foot of the Cross and not where the Ten Commandments lie shivered at Sinai's base.

And as repentance is of Gospel parentage, I make a second remark—it is also of gracious origin. Repentance was never yet produced in any man's heart apart from the Grace of God. As soon may you expect the leopard to regret the blood with which its fangs are moistened—as soon might you expect the lion of the wood to abjure his cruel tyranny over the feeble beasts of the plain—as expect the sinner to make any confession or offer any repentance that shall be accepted of God unless God's Grace shall first renew the heart. Go and loose the bands of everlasting winter in the frozen north with your own feeble breath and then hope to make tears of penitence bedew the cheek of the hardened sinner.

Go and divide the earth and pierce its heart with an infant's finger and then hope that your eloquent appeal, unassisted by Divine Grace, shall be able to penetrate the adamant heart of man. Man can sin and he can continue in it, but to leave the hateful element is a work for which he needs a Divine power. As the river rushes downward with increasing fury, leaping from crag to crag in ponderous cataracts of power, so is the sinner in his sin—onward and downward—onward yet more swiftly, more mightily, more irresistibly, in his hellish course.

Nothing but Divine Grace can bid that cataract leap upward or make the floods retrace the pathway which they have worn for themselves down the rocks. Nothing, I say, but the power which made the world and dug the foundations of the great deep can ever make the heart of man a fountain of life from which the floods of repentance may gush forth. So then, Soul, if you shall ever repent it must be a repentance not of nature, but of grace.

Nature can imitate repentance. It can produce remorse. It can generate the feeble resolve. It can even lead to a partial, practical reform. But unaided Nature cannot touch the vitals and create new the soul. Nature may make the eyes weep but it cannot make the heart bleed. Nature can bid you amend your ways but it cannot renew your heart. No, you must look upward, Sinner. You must look upward to Him who is able to save unto the uttermost. You must at His hands receive the meek and tender spirit. From His fingers must come the touch that shall dissolve the rock. And from His eyes must dart the flash of love and light that can scatter the darkness of your impenitence.

Remember, then, at the outset—true repentance is of *Gospel* origin and is not the work of the Law. And on the other hand, it is of gracious origin and is not the work of the creature.

II. But to pass forward from this first point to our second head, let us notice the ESSENTIALS of true repentance. The old Divines adopted

various methods of explaining penitence. Some of them said it was a precious medicine compounded of six things. But in looking over their divisions I have felt that I might with equal success divide repentance into four different ingredients. This precious box of ointment which must be broken over the Savior's head before the sweet perfume of peace can ever be smelt in the soul—this precious ointment is compounded of four most rare, most costly things.

God gives them to us and then gives us the compound itself mixed by the Master's hand. True repentance consists of illumination, humiliation, detestation and transformation.

To take them one by one. The first part of true repentance consists of illumination. Man by nature is impenitent because he does not know himself to be guilty. There are many acts which he commits in which he sees no sin. Even in great and egregious faults he often knows that he is not right but he does not perceive the depth, the horrible enormity of the sin which is involved in them. Eye-salve is one of the first medicines which the Lord uses with the soul. Jesus touches the eyes of the understanding and the man becomes as guilty in his own sight as he always was in the sight of God.

Crimes long forgotten start up from the grave where his forgetfulness had buried them. Sins which he thought were not sins suddenly rise up in their true character. Acts which he thought were perfect now discover themselves to have been so mixed with evil motive that they were far from being acceptable with God. The eye is no more blind and therefore the heart is no more proud for the seeing eye will make a humble heart. If I must paint a picture of penitence in this first stage I should portray a man with his eyes bandaged walking through a path infested with the most venomous vipers—vipers which have formed a horrible girdle about his loins and are hanging like bracelets from his wrists.

The man is so blind that he knows not where he is, nor what it is which he fancies to be a jeweled belt upon his arm. I would, then, in the picture touch his eyes and bid him see his horror and his astonishment when he discovers where he is and what he is. He looks behind him and he sees through what broods of vipers he has walked. He looks before him and he sees how thickly his future path is strewn with these venomous beasts. He looks about him and in his living bosom looking out from his guilty heart he sees the head of a vile serpent which has twisted its coils into his very vitals.

I would try, if I could, to throw into that face horror, dismay, dread and sorrow—a longing to escape, an anxious desire to get rid of all these things which must destroy him unless he should escape from them. And now, my dear Hearers, have you ever been the subject of this Divine illumination? Has God, who said to an unformed world, "Let there be light"—has He said, "Let there be light" in your poor benighted soul? Have you learned that your best deeds have been vile and that as for your sinful acts they are ten thousand times more wicked than ever you believed them to be? I will not believe that you have ever repented unless you have

first received Divine illumination. I cannot expect a blind eye to see the filth upon a black hand. Nor can I ever believe that the understanding which has never been enlightened can detect the sin which has stained your daily life.

Next to illumination comes humiliation. The soul having seen itself, bows before God, strips itself of all its vain boasting and lays itself flat on its face before the Throne of Mercy. It could talk proudly once of merit but now it dares not pronounce the word. Once it could boast itself before God, with, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are." But now it stands in the distance and smites upon its breast, crying, "God, be merciful to *me* a sinner."

Now the haughty eye, the proud look which God abhors, are cast away and the eye, instead thereof, becomes a channel of tears—its floods are perpetual, it mourns, it weeps and the soul cries out both day and night before God for it is vexed with itself—because it has vexed the Holy Spirit and is grieved within itself because it has grieved the Most High.

Here, if I had to depict penitence, I should borrow the picture of the men of Calais before our conquering king. There they kneel with ropes about their necks, clad in garments of sackcloth and ashes cast about their heads—confessing that they deserve to die. But stretching out their hands they implore mercy. And one who seems the personification of the angel of mercy—or rather, of Christ Jesus, the God of mercy—stands pleading with the king to spare their lives.

Sinner, you have never repented unless that rope has been about your neck after a spiritual fashion. If you have not felt that Hell is your just desert and that if God banish you forever from Himself to the place where hope and peace can never come, He has only done with you what you have richly earned. If you have not felt that the flames of Hell are the ripe harvest which your sins have sown, you have never repented at all.

We must acknowledge the justice of the penalty as well as the guilt of the sin or else it is but a mock repentance which we pretend to possess. Down on your face, Sinner, down on your face! Put away your ornaments from you that He may know what to do with you. No more anoint your head and wash your face but fast and bow your head and mourn. You have made Heaven mourn, you have made earth sad, you have dug Hell for yourself. Confess your iniquity with shame and with confusion of face. Bow down before the God of mercy and acknowledge that if He spares you it will be His free mercy that shall do it—but if He destroys you, you shall not have one word to say against the justice of the solemn sentence.

Such a stripping does the Holy Spirit give when He works this repentance, that men sometimes under it sink so low as even to long for death in order to escape from the burden which soul-humiliation has cast upon them. I do not desire that you should have that terror but I do pray that you may have no boasting left, that you may stop your mouth and feel that if now the judgment hour were set and the Judgment Day were come you must stand speechless, even though God should say, "Depart,

you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell.” Without this I say there is no genuine evangelical repentance.

The third ingredient is detestation. The soul must go a step further than mere sorrow. It must come to hate sin, to hate the very shadow of it, to hate the house where once sin and it were companions, to hate the bed of pleasure and all its glittering tapestries—yes, to hate the very garments spotted with the flesh. There is no repentance where a man can talk lightly of sin, much less where he can speak tenderly and lovingly of it. When sin comes to you delicately, like Agag, saying, “Surely the bitterness of death is past,” if you have true repentance it will rise like Samuel and hew your Agag in pieces before the Lord.

As long as you harbor one idol in your heart, God will never dwell there. You must break not only the images of wood and of stone but of silver and of gold. Yes, the golden calf itself, which has been your chief idol must be ground into powder and mingled in the bitter water of penitence and you must be made to drink it. There is such a loathing of sin in the soul of the true penitent that he cannot bear its name. If you were to compel him to enter its palaces he would be wretched. A penitent cannot bear himself in the house of the profane. He feels as if the house must fall upon him.

In the assembly of the wicked he would be like a dove in the midst of ravenous kites. As well may the sheep lick blood with the wolf as well may the dove be comrade at the vulture's feast of carrion as a penitent sinner revel in sin. Through infirmity he may slide into it, but through grace he will rise out of it and abhor even his clothes in which he has fallen into the ditch (Job 9:31). The sinner unrepentant, like the sow wallows in the mire. The penitent sinner like the swallow may sometimes dip his wings in the limpid pool of iniquity but he is aloft again, twittering forth with the chattering of the swallow most pitiful words of penitence for he grieves that he should have so debased himself and sinned against his God.

My Hearer, if you do not so hate your sins as to be ready to give them all up—if you are not willing now to hang them on Haman's gallows a hundred and twenty cubits high—if you can not shake them off from you as Paul did the viper from his hand and shake it into the fire with detestation—then I say you know not the Grace of God in truth. For if you love sin you love neither God nor yourself, but you choose your own damnation. You are in friendship with death and in league with Hell. God deliver you from this wretched state of heart and bring you to detest your sin.

There lacks one more ingredient. We have had illumination, humiliation and detestation. There must be another thing, namely, a thorough transformation, for—

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

The penitent man reforms his outward life. The reform is not partial, but in heart. It is universal and complete. Infirmity may mar it, but grace

will always be striving against human infirmity and the man will hate and abandon every false way. Tell me not, deceptive Tradesman, that you have repented of your sin while lying placards are still upon your goods. Tell me not, you who were once a drunkard, that you have turned to God while yet the cup is dear to you and you can still wallow in it by excess. Come not to me and say I have repented, you avaricious wretch, while you are yet grinding your almost cent, per cent, out of some helpless tradesman whom you have taken like a spider in your net.

Come not to me and say you are forgiven, when you still harbor revenge and malice against your brother and speak against your own mother's son. You lie to your own confusion. Your face is as the whore's forehead that is brazen, if you dare to say, "I have repented," when your arms are up to the elbow in the filth of your iniquity. No, Man, God will not forgive your lusts while you are still reveling in the bed of your uncleanness. And do you imagine He will forgive your drunken feasts while you are still sitting at the glutton's table? Shall He forgive your profanity when your tongue is still quivering with an oath?

Do you think that God shall forgive your daily transgressions when you repeat them again and again and again, willfully plunging into the mire? He will wash you, Man, but He will not wash you for the sake of permitting you to plunge in again and defile yourself once more.

"Well," do I hear you say, "I do feel that such a change as that has taken place in me." I am glad to hear it, my dear Sir. But I must ask you a further question. Divine transformation is not merely in act but in the very soul. The new man not only does not sin as he used to do, but he does not *want* to sin as he used to do. The flesh-pots of Egypt sometimes send up a sweet smell in his nostrils and when he passes by another man's house where the leek and garlic and onion are steaming in the air, he half wishes to go back again to his Egyptian bondage. But in a moment, by God's grace, he checks himself, saying, "No, no. The heavenly manna is better than this. The water out of the Rock is sweeter than the waters of the Nile and I cannot return to my old slavery under my old tyrant."

There may be insinuations of Satan but his soul rejects them and agonizes to cast them out. His very heart longs to be free from every sin and if he could be perfect he would. There is not one sin he would spare. If you want to give him pleasure you need not ask him to go to your haunt of debauchery. It would be the greatest pain to him you could imagine. It is not only his customs and manners but his *nature* that is changed. You have not put new leaves on the tree but there is a new root to it. It is not merely new branches but there is a new trunk altogether and new sap and there will be new fruit as the result of this newness.

A glorious transformation is worked by a gracious God. His penitence has become so real and so complete that the man is not the man he used to be. He is a new creature in Christ Jesus. If you are renewed by grace and were to meet your old self, I am sure you would be very anxious to get out of his company. "No," you say, "no, Sir, I cannot accompany you."

“Why, you used to swear!” “I cannot now.” “Well, but,” says he, “you and I are very near companions.” “Yes, I know we are and I wish we were not. You are a deal of trouble to me every day. I wish I could be rid of you forever.”

“But,” says Old Self, “you used to drink very well.” “Yes, I know it. I know you did, indeed, Old Self. You could sing a song as merrily as anyone. You were ringleader in all sorts of vice, but I am no relation of yours now. You are of the old Adam and I of the new Adam. You are of your old father, the devil. But I have another—my Father, who is in Heaven.”

I tell you, Brethren, there is no man in the world you will hate so much as your old self. And there will be nothing you will so much long to get rid of as that old man who once was dragging you down to Hell. And he will try his hand at it over and over again every day you live and will accomplish it yet unless that Divine Grace which has made you a new man shall keep you a new man even to the end.

Good Rowland Hill, in his “Village Dialogues,” gives the Christian whom he describes in the first part of the book, the name of Thomas Newman. Ah, and every man who goes to Heaven must have the name of New-man. We must not expect to enter there unless we are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. I have thus, as best I could, feeling many and very sad distractions in my own mind, endeavored to explain the essentials of true repentance—illumination, humiliation, detestation, transformation. The endings of the words, though they are long words may commend them to your attention and assist you to retain them.

III. And now, with all brevity, let me notice, in the third place, the COMPANIONS of true repentance.

Her first companion is Faith. There was a question once asked by the old Puritan Divines—Which was first in the soul, Faith or Repentance? Some said that a man could not truly repent of sin until he believed in God and had some sense of a Savior’s love. Others said a man could not have faith till he had repented of sin. For he must hate sin before he could trust Christ.

So a good old minister who was present made the following remark: “Brethren,” said he, “I don’t think you can ever settle this question. It would be something like asking whether, when an infant is born, the circulation of the blood or the beating of the pulse can be first observed.” Said he, “It seems to me that faith and repentance are simultaneous. They come at the same moment. There could be no true repentance without faith. There never was yet true faith without sincere repentance.”

We endorse that opinion. I believe they are like the Siamese twins. They are born together and they could not live asunder but must die if you attempt to separate them. Faith always walks side by side with his weeping sister, true Repentance. They are born in the same house at the same hour and they will live in the same heart every day. And on your dying bed, while you will have faith on the one hand to draw the curtain of

the next world, you will have repentance—with its tears—as it lets fall the curtain upon the world from which you are departing.

You will have at the last moment to weep over your own sins and yet you shall see through that tear the place where tears are washed away. Some say there is no faith in Heaven. Perhaps there is not. If there is none then there will be no repentance. But if there is faith there will be repentance, for where faith lives, repentance must live with it. They are so united, so married and allied together that they never can be parted in time or in eternity. Have you, then, faith in Jesus? Does your soul look up and trust yourself in His hands? If so, then have you the repentance that needs not to be repented of.

There is another sweet thing which always goes with repentance just as Aaron went with Moses, to be spokesman for him. You must know that Moses was slow of speech and so is repentance. Repentance has fine eyes, but stammering lips. In fact it usually happens that repentance speaks through her eyes and cannot speak with her lips at all, except her friend—who is a good spokesman—is near. He is called, Mr. Confession.

This man is noted for his openness. He knows something of himself and he tells all that he knows before the Throne of God. Confession keeps back no secrets. Repentance sighs over the sin—confession tells it out. Repentance feels the sin to be heavy within—confession plucks it forth and indicts it before the Throne of God. Repentance is the soul in travail—confession delivers it. My heart is ready to burst and there is a fire in my bones through repentance—confession gives the heavenly fire a vent and my soul flames upward before God.

Repentance, alone, has groans which cannot be uttered—confession is the voice which expresses the groans. Now then, have you made confession of your sin—not to man, but to God? If you have, then believe that your repentance comes from Him and it is a godly sorrow that needs not to be repented of. Holiness is evermore the bosom friend of penitence. Fair angel, clad in pure white linen—she loves good company and will never stay in a heart where repentance is a stranger. Repentance must dig the foundations but holiness shall erect the structure and bring forth the top-stone. Repentance is the clearing away of the rubbish of the past temple of sin—holiness builds the new temple which the Lord our God shall inherit. Repentance and desires after holiness never can be separated.

Yet once more—wherever repentance is there comes also with it peace. As Jesus walked upon the waters of Galilee and said, “Peace, be still,” so peace walks over the waters of repentance and brings quiet and calm into the soul. If you would shake the thirst of your soul, repentance must be the cup out of which you shall drink and then sweet peace shall be the blessed effect. Sin is such a troublesome companion that it will always give you the heartache till you have turned it out by repentance and then your heart shall rest and be still.

Sin is the rough wind that tears through the forest and sways every branch of the trees to and fro. But after penitence has come into the soul

the wind is hushed and all is still and the birds sing in the branches of the trees which just now creaked in the storm. Repentance ever yields sweet peace to the man who is the possessor of it.

And now what are you doing say, my Hearer—to put each point personally to you—have you had peace with God? If not, never rest till you have had it and never believe yourself to be saved till you feel yourself to be reconciled. Be not content with the mere profession of the head, but ask that the peace of God which passes all understanding may keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

IV. And now I come to my fourth and last point, namely, the EXCELLENCIES of repentance.

I shall somewhat surprise you, perhaps, if I say that one of the excellencies of repentance lies in its pleasantness. “Oh,” you say, “but it is bitter!” No, say I, it is sweet. It may be bitter when it is alone, like the waters of Marah. But there is a tree called the Cross which if you can put into it, it will be sweet and you will love to drink of it. At a school of mutes who were both deaf and dumb the teacher put the following question to her pupils—“What is the sweetest emotion?” As soon as the children comprehended the question, they took their slates and wrote their answers.

One girl in a moment wrote down “Joy.” As soon as the teacher saw it, she expected that all would write the same. But another girl, more thoughtful, put her hand to her brow and she wrote “Hope.” Verily, the girl was not far from the mark. But the next one, when she brought up her slate, had written “Gratitude” and this child was not wrong. Another one, when she brought up her slate, had written “Love” and I am sure she was right. But there was one other who had written in large characters—and as she brought up her slate the tear was in her eye, showing she had written what she felt—“Repentance is the sweetest emotion.” And I think she was right.

Verily, in my own case, after that long drought, perhaps longer than Elisha's three years in which the heavens poured forth no rain, when I saw but one tear of penitence coming from my hard, hard soul—it was such a joy! There have been times when you know you have done wrong but when you could cry over it you have felt happy. As one weeps for his first-born, so have you wept over your sin and in that very weeping you have had your peace and your joy restored. I am a living witness that repentance is exceeding sweet when mixed with Divine hope but repentance without hope is Hell.

It is Hell to grieve for sin with the pangs of bitter remorse and yet to know that pardon can never come and mercy never be vouchsafed. Repentance, with the Cross before its eyes, is Heaven itself—if not Heaven it is so next door to it, that standing on the tear-wet threshold I may see within the pearly portals and sing the song of the angels who rejoice within. Repentance, then, has this excellency—it is very sweet to the soul which is made to lie beneath its shadow.

Besides this excellency, it is specially sweet to God as well as to men. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." When St. Augustine lay dying, he had this verse always fixed upon the curtains so that as often as he awoke, he might read it—"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." When you despise yourselves, God honors you. But as long as you honor yourselves, God despises you. A whole heart is a scentless thing. But when it is broken and bruised it is like that precious spice which was burned as holy incense in the ancient tabernacle.

When the blood of Jesus is sprinkled on them, even the songs of the angels and the vials full of sweet odors that smoke before the Throne of the Most High are not more agreeable to God than the sighs and groans and tears of the brokenhearted soul. So, then, if you would be pleasing with God, come before Him with many and many a tear—

***"To humble souls and broken hearts
God with His grace is ever near.
Pardon and hope His love imparts,
When men in deep contrition lie.
He numbers their tears, He counts their groans,
His Son redeems their souls from death.
His Spirit heals their broken bones,
They in His praise employ their breath."***

John Bunyan, in His "Siege of Mansoul," when the defeated townsmen were seeking pardon, names Mr. Wet-Eyes as the intercessor with the king. Mr. Wet-Eyes—good Saxon word! I hope we know Mr. Wet-Eyes and have had him many times in our house, for if he cannot intercede with God, yet Mr. Wet-eyes is a great friend with the Lord Jesus Christ and Christ will undertake his case and then we shall prevail. So have I set forth, then, a few of the excellencies of repentance.

And now, my dear Hearers, have you repented of sin? Oh, impenitent Soul, if you do not weep now, you will have to weep forever! The heart that is not broken now must be broken forever upon the wheel of Divine vengeance. You must now repent or else forever smart for it. Turn or burn—it is the Bible's only alternative. If you repent, the gate of mercy stands wide open.

May the Spirit of God bring you on your knees in self-abasement. Christ's Cross stands before you and He who bled upon it bids you look at Him. Oh, Sinner, obey the Divine bidding! But if your heart is hard like that of the stubborn Jews in the days of Moses, take heed lest—

***"The Lord in vengeance dressed,
Shall lift His head and swear—
You that despised My promised rest,
Shall have no portion there."***

At any rate, Sinner, if you will not repent there is one here who will and that is myself. I repent that I could not preach to you with more earnestness this morning and throw my whole soul more thoroughly into my pleading with you. The Lord God, whom I serve, is my constant witness that there is nothing I desire so much as to see your hearts

broken on account of sin. And nothing has gladdened my heart so much as the many instances lately vouchsafed of the wonders God is doing in this place.

There have been men who have stepped into this Hall who had never entered a place of worship for a score of years and here the Lord has met with them. And I believe if I could speak the word, there are hundreds who would stand up now and say, "It was here the Lord met with me. I was the chief of sinners. The hammer struck my heart and broke it and now it has been bound up again by the finger of Divine mercy and I tell it unto sinners and tell it to this assembled congregation there have been depths of mercy found that have been deeper than the depths of my iniquity."

This day there will be a soul delivered. This morning there will be, I do not doubt, despite my weakness, a display of the energy of God and the power of the Spirit. Some drunkard shall be turned from the error of his ways. Some soul, who was trembling on the very jaws of Hell shall look to Him who is the sinner's hope and find peace and pardon—yes, at this very hour. So be it, O Lord and Yours shall be the glory, world without end. Amen.

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OUR LORD'S POSTURE IN ASCENSION

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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.”
Luke 24:50-53.***

[This sermon was originally titled “Our Lord’s Attitude in Ascension.”]

OUR Lord Jesus, having spoiled the grave and so proved His power over things that are under the earth, tarried for 40 days among men and so claimed His power over the earth, itself, and then ascended through the air to show that the dominion of the Prince of the power of the air was broken and, finally, entered into the Heaven of Heavens to claim sovereignty there, so that, from the lowest depths up to the extreme heights, He might take possession of His vast domains. I like to think of Him as traversing His dominions from end to end, like a conqueror looking over the provinces which have been subdued by his might. Our Lord did not make a rapid passage through the world. He might have gone, on the Resurrection morning, straight from the grave, as soon as it was opened, into His Glory but He had reasons for tarrying a while, and of those reasons I will briefly speak before I come to the main theme of my discourse—our Lord’s posture in Ascension.

His Ascension occurred 40 days after He had risen from the dead. You know what a significant period 40 days has always been in Scripture and you know that in our Lord’s own case, He was 40 days in the wilderness tempted of the devil, so that it was seemly for Him to tarry here for 40 days of triumph on the scene of His first great battle and victory. Whatever instruction there may be in these 40 days, I will not attempt to give any fanciful exposition of the meaning of them, but it is quite clear that they were sufficient for certain excellent purposes.

They were sufficient to prove to all mankind that He had truly risen from the dead, not as a phantom, but in real flesh and blood. He made many appearance to His disciples in different ways and in divers places. It was not possible that 500 brethren at once could all be deceived! And if that could be imagined, it is not likely that when, by twos and threes,

and even as separate *individuals*, they had the most intimate communion with Him, they could have been mistaken! It was essential, in the highest degree, that the fact of His Resurrection should be certified beyond all question—and it now remains the best ascertained fact in all history. We may doubt a great many things that are recorded by historians, but we cannot doubt the fact of Christ's appearance after His Resurrection because it was not done in a corner, it was not done merely on one occasion, but before so many witnesses and in so many different places! The 40 days was a sufficient period for our Savior to be here to make it clear to all ages that He had really risen from the dead!

Besides that, I have no doubt He timed His sojourn on earth so that He might remove every lingering doubt from the minds of His disciples. Thomas had to be talked to and to be told to put his finger into the print of the nails and to thrust his hand into his Lord's side. And there were others beside Thomas who had many doubts. In fact, these was not one of the disciples without some doubt or other, so their Master had to act and speak in such a way that every one of them would be thoroughly assured as to His identity and as to the nature of His risen body. Thus He said to them, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have."

Besides that, the instructions which Christ had previously given to His disciples needed a few finishing touches. Before His death, He had said to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." But after He had risen from the dead, they could bear much more and there is no doubt that He made disclosures to them, then, which let further light into their souls. We read more than once of how He opened their understandings to receive the Scriptures and opened the Scriptures so that their understandings might grasp them!

But, chief of all, our Lord tarried here for 40 days that He might issue His commissions to His disciples. He said to one of them, "Feed My sheep" and, "Feed My lambs." And He said to all of them, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He would not take His final departure until His last orders were issued—till He had, as it were, marshaled His battalions, set them in their ranks, given them His commands and bid them march forward to battle and to victory. There was an Infinite Wisdom in the delay between the Resurrection and the Ascension and the more we think of it, the more we shall see that it was so. Thus much concerning the time of our Lord's sojourn here after He rose from the dead.

Further, the spot from which the Ascension took place is very instructive. Luke tells us, "He led them out as far as to Bethany." But, in the Acts of the Apostles, he informs us that this memorable scene took place upon "the mountain called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey." The two statements are not at all inconsistent

with one another. I suppose that our Lord was upon that part of the Mount of Olives from which He could look down upon Bethany. To my mind, it is a very beautiful remark which is made by Van Oosterzee upon this incident. He says that when we stand in the place of our Lord's Ascension, we have three things—the Heaven above us opened, for Christ passed through the golden gates. We have a happy home below, close at our feet, for there was Bethany, where Mary and Martha and Lazarus had their happy abode and none are so happy as those who are joined to the risen Christ! And then we have here a pathway, often trod by Christ's blessed feet, and along that pathway the disciples were to go back to Jerusalem—the very Jerusalem out of which He had led them for His Ascension. So that His Ascension from this position gives us three beautiful things—an opened Heaven, a happy home and a pathway consecrated and smoothed by His blessed feet.

The most significant circumstance, perhaps, about the place of His Ascension was that He went back to Heaven from the place where He had often communed with His disciples. He had opened up many mysteries to them there. It was there that they had sat and looked over at Jerusalem and He had spoken to them about the ultimate destruction of the guilty city. It was a place which was very dear to them and which must have brought many memories to our Savior's mind. There, just under the brow of the hill, were the olive trees of Gethsemane, and His eyes may have looked upon the spot where He wrestled for our sakes with all the powers of death and Hell. It is sweet to think that He ascended to His Glory from the place of His agony and bloody sweat. And, my Brothers and Sisters, we shall do the same in our measure. From the bed whereon we die we shall ascend into Glory and there we shall be transfigured and made like unto our Lord! And from the grave of death—our Gethsemane—our bodies shall leap at the coming of the Lord and the sounding of the great trumpet into all the resurrection beauty and life! Yes, where we fight, we shall conquer! Where we suffer, there we shall reign! I like to think of the last spot of earth that Jesus touched being a mountain—for mountains have often been the places where the grandest transactions of men with God have been performed—and to find Him going as near Heaven as He could upon His feet because He would not work a miracle as long as anything could be done by ordinary means. And then gently, as it were, pushing the earth downwards and Himself ascending into the Glory where He now sits at the right hand of God, even the Father!

Think over the time and the place of our Lord's Ascension and you will have some subjects worthy of your deepest meditation.

Then think of the scene itself. There are Christ's disciples gathered around Him—certainly the Apostles and, perhaps some more of His followers. They have come out to Bethany and Olivet from Jerusalem. I cannot tell whether they walked through the streets at mid-day, but I think it is very likely and if so, many must have stared wonderingly at

the Nazarene, whom they had seen nailed to the Cross on Calvary, now alive again and passing through their streets. Whether it was so or not, I cannot tell. They crossed the Kedron, that gruesome brook in which the defilements of the Temple were taken away, and then they passed by Gethsemane, by the winding path till they came to the brow of Olivet where Jesus could look down, on the one side, on Jerusalem and, on the other side, on Bethany. And He began to talk with His disciples—what if I say that He began to sing His dying song? No, I must not say that, for He did not again die, but He sang His parting hymn and gave His farewell message.

And then He began to rise. How astonished His disciples must have been! How they must have shrunk back as the majesty flamed forth from Him! He began to rise and up He went—slowly, majestically rising and the disciples looking on till He must have grown smaller and smaller to their astonished vision! And when He was about to vanish from their sight, they saw a cloud float between Himself and them and He was gone—gone to His Throne! I like to think of our Lord's Ascension in this simple but sublime manner. I might have been terrified if I had been Elisha walking with Elijah when the horses of fire and the chariots of fire came to take him away, but there was nothing terrible about this Ascension of Christ. He was not a Prophet of fire—He was gentle, meek, lowly and there was nothing to inspire terror in the way He ascended to Heaven. It is, to my mind, very beautiful to think of there being no medium employed in connection with His Ascension—no angels wings to bear Him upward—no visible arm of Omnipotence to lift Him gently from the earth—no eagle of Jupiter to steal away this choice and chosen One. No, but He rises by His own power and majesty! He needs no help.

Glad would the angels have been to come once more to earth as they had come at His birth, as they had come to the wilderness, as they had come to His tomb—gladly would they have ministered to Him! But He needed not their ministry, at least, in the beginning of His journey. He proved the innate power of His Deity by which He could depart out of the world just when He willed, breaking the law of gravity and suspending the laws usually governing matter. Well could He do this, for He made those laws and could alter or control them as He pleased. "A cloud received Him out of their sight," for I suppose they had then seen all that they ought to see and, perhaps, behind that cloud there were scenes of Glory which it was not possible for human eyes to gaze upon—and words which it was not lawful for human beings to hear. I do not know about that. I like the thought of our hymn writer concerning the angels, after the cloud had hidden Him from mortal view—

***"They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His Throne—
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
'The glorious work is done!'"***

There does seem to be some guide to us in that matchless 24th Psalm—"Lift up your heads, O you gates and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." It does read as if the warders at the top of the gate enquired, "Who is this King of Glory?" and that the attending angels replied, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O you gates and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." Of these things we speak with bated breath, for we know not all that happened, then, but we do know that "a cloud received Him out of their sight."

The point upon which I want especially to dwell is this—what was the posture in which Christ was last seen by His disciples? I will read the words. "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven," so that the last posture in which Christ was seen was this—His hands were uplifted in the act of blessing His disciples! I am going to keep to that one thing—Jesus Christ's hands uplifted in blessing as He took His departure from this world. There is sometimes a good deal in the posture which one assumes. The actor, the orator and the preacher all know that there should be appropriate action in whatever we do. When Raphael represents Paul as standing with uplifted hands at Athens, preaching, he did it with good purpose. Perhaps the artist's skill has not always been observed, for what was Paul saying when he lifted up his hands—"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands"—and up went his hands at once! And I can very well understand Paul lifting up his hands before Agrippa when he said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, *except these bonds*"—and the manacles rattled appropriately on his wrists!

We are not told much about the action with which our Lord Jesus Christ accompanied His speech. There is one thing recorded of Him in which it would be a great blessing if all ministers would imitate Him—"He opened His mouth and taught them, saying." We do not always know how He stood, but, on the occasion of His Ascension we know exactly what His posture was—"He lifted up His hands, and blessed them."

I. Observe, first, that HIS HANDS WERE UPLIFTED TO BLESS.

This blessing was no unusual thing, for His hands were blessed hands and nothing but blessing had ever come from them! What blessings thousands had received from those dear hands of His! Those hands had multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed the hungry thousands. Those hands had touched blind eyes and opened them. Those hands had been laid upon the leper and he was made whole. Those hands had touched the bier whereon the dead young man lay and he had been made to live again! Those blessed hands! Jesus continually went about doing good and His hands were always strewing blessings around Him—full as both

of them were with rich treasure out of the storehouse of His heart of love. So, as He blessed His disciples as He was leaving them, He was only continuing to do what He had done ever since they had known Him! The richest blessing that you ever get from Christ is no new thing—it is just a continuation of His old habits and practices and if He were, at this moment, to lift His hands and give us some special blessing—as I pray that He may—it would only be another link in a long chain of which every link is more precious than the most valuable diamond in the world! He lifted His hands to bless His disciples because He had always been blessing them! And He will continue to bless us, Brothers and Sisters, because He has blessed us in the past and He changes not!

Christ blessed His disciples this time, however, in a different way, for *He blessed them with a new authority*. You know that the high priest came out after the Day of Atonement was over and all the sacrifices had been offered, and took off the white robes which he had worn in the early part of the day as a common priest. Those robes must have been all stained with blood, for the whole day he was occupied with the shedding and the sprinkling of the blood. And then the high priest put on his robe of glory and beauty, the garment of blue, and scarlet, and fine linen with its bells of sweetest sound, and its pomegranates and a glittering breastplate on his breast, and a miter on his head. And then he came out and gave to the people the blessing which could only be given when the Atonement was completed. And so, today, Jesus Christ blesses His people, not as the priest who is offering sacrifice, but as the One who has offered it! It is all finished and now, with authority, not as a pleader, but as One who has power to give, He blesses His people. He had *invoked* blessings upon them before—now He *pronounces* blessings upon them! He had looked up to Heaven for the blessing, but now, as it were, He looks down from Heaven and He, Himself, bestows the blessing, for He has it now in His own hands—

“All His work and warfare done”—

He is now going up to His Heaven and He proves His right to reign by beginning now the reign of benediction among the sons of men! If I may so say, He had before blessed His disciples as the preacher pronounces the benediction at the close of the service, but He blessed them now as He never had blessed them before—and in that sense it was the beginning of that golden discourse from yonder consecrated pulpit at the right hand of God which He still continues to preach to us from this text, “Because I live, you shall live also.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ's blessing, on that occasion, was, no doubt, a *very full one*. We are not told what He said. I am quite content not to know. I like to think that, possibly, He did not utter any words at all, but that He *looked* a blessing and, above all, *bestowed* a blessing with those blessed hands of His—not going up with His hands closed, as though they were full of something for Himself alone, but spread out, as if He would empty out of His hands the countless blessings which He had

gasped for our sakes! "Look, My children," He says, "look! I am keeping nothing for Myself. All I have is for you. Hear, My disciples, hear! Whatever the Father has made known unto Me, I have made known unto you. Look, My children! Look, My Brethren! Behold, I have given you all that I have—My Manhood and My Godhead, My life, My death, My Resurrection and My Glory." And so, with those blessed hands uplifted, He seems to bestow the fullest conceivable blessing, for He gives us all that God can give! He gives us all that He has, to be ours forever and ever! Can you not picture Him doing this? He is before my mind's eye now. My imagination seems to help my faith and I bless His dear name that the last time His disciples saw Him, they saw Him with His hands emptied out upon them in blessing!

Note, also, that *this blessing was for His disciples*. May I not lay the emphasis there? "He lifted up His hands, and blessed *them*." Yes, there are common blessings in which all men have a share, but there are special blessings for His chosen ones! He is universally benevolent, but He is especially generous to His own elect! He loved His Church and gave Himself for it. He has redeemed His people by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation. There was a specialty about Christ's benediction even as there was about His intercession. He said to His Father concerning His disciples, "I pray for *them*. I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me" and now that He had risen from the dead, He blessed *them*. May I hope that I am among *the them*, for on those disciples the blessing came that it might come on the whole Church of Christ of which they were the representatives? Has that blessing come on you, Beloved? Has God "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Christ according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world"? Have we had the blessing of forgiveness, the blessing of justification, the blessing of adoption? Have we, today, the blessing of fellowship, the blessing of power to conquer sin? All these things the Lord gives to His own who know Him—to His sheep that hear His voice and that follow Him—and to whom He is, indeed, the Good Shepherd!

Then let me whisper in your ear—if He has blessed you, you shall be blessed, for there is no power in Heaven, or earth, or Hell that can reverse the blessing which He gives! If Jesus says it, you are indeed blessed! And He will say it again in the last tremendous day, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Notwithstanding all your trials and your troubles, your weaknesses and your infirmities, you are blessed—"blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth"—and you shall be blessed forever and ever, for He who has gone up on high, has left you the legacy of His blessing which shall never be taken away from you.

I look upon this blessing of the disciples by their ascending Lord as *a fitting finish to the Savior's life*—as if the Savior would say to them,

“There, that is a summary of the whole of My life—I have lived to bless you. That is the sum total of My teaching, that is the grand end of My ministry, that is the sure result of My death—that I might bless you.” That Resurrection blessing is the culmination of our Savior’s life—that is the last stone put upon the pyramid of His mighty work! That blessing is the last and highest and best thing of all! Let us glory and rejoice in it. Who shall add anything to what Christ has finished? Luke closes his Gospel most appropriately with an, “Amen,” and Amen it is. Verily, it shall be so. There are no curses to follow the Divine blessing. There shall be no terrors of wrath to follow that benediction of love. He has said it and it stands fast! Though Heaven and earth pass away, blessed shall His people be!

That is my first point, the posture of our ascending Lord. His hands were uplifted to bless.

II. Now, secondly, THOSE HANDS WERE PIERCED HANDS.

Look! He is rising from the Mount of Olives. He has not gone high enough yet for us to have quite lost sight of Him—my imagination is trying to picture the scene and I look, and say, “Yes, I know Him! I can still see the nail prints.” As long as He is in sight, holding up His hands, you can see the distinguishing marks of the Lord Jesus—the emblems and tokens of the Crucified. You cannot mistake Him! Those are the hands that were nailed to the cruel wood of the Cross.

Those pierced hands, as we look up at them, are useful and comforting because, first, *they let us know that they are really Christ’s hands.* ‘Tis He that blesses us! By faith we are receiving blessing from Jesus Christ—not from someone else. But those hands do far more than that for us. *They show us the price of the blessing which He has given to us.* He is blessing us, but oh, how much those blessings cost Him! Unnumbered mercies flow down to us—

“Joys, like His griefs, immense, unknown”—

but He would not have us forget the griefs with which He bought our joys—

**“There’s never a gift His hand bestows
But cost His heart a groan.”**

You are blessed, Brothers and Sisters, by the Lord Jesus Christ, but *the blessing is given to you by Christ’s pierced hands.* Had He never suffered, you could never have been saved. “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” The disciples saw not merely that it was a blessing from their Lord, and a blessing that cost Him the nail prints, but that it was a blessing which came by the way of His pierced hands. We get everything good through Christ and especially through His atoning Sacrifice. We cannot have His righteousness apart from His suffering. We cannot get power to conquer sin and Satan apart from the hands that were pierced—

**“When wounded sore the stricken soul
Lies bleeding and unbound,
One only hand, a pierced hand,**

Can salve the sinner's wound."

You may try all the royal hands in the world, but they cannot cure the true "King's evil"—the terrible evil of sin—till the pierced hand of Jesus is laid upon the poor sufferer. And then straightway the fever of despair ceases and the desperate love of sin is sucked out. The wounds of Jesus alone can cure the wounds of our sick humanity! What a blessing it is to know that the way to God's heart is through the wounds of Christ! You cannot get anything from God except through those wounds. This is that ladder which Jacob saw in his vision. This is that gate of Paradise through which the righteous must enter. This is the refuge of those poor souls that are hunted by the roaring lion of Hell—they must speed away like frightened fawns to Jesus' wounds and find protection there! You know how our hymn puts it—

***"Him and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus' wounds on me."***

It is a blessing even to look at those pierced hands—not with these mortal eyes, for they might have gazed upon them and yet we might not have believed on Him. But it is a great blessing to look, with the eye of faith, at the pierced hands of Jesus—to look at Him whom we have pierced and so to be caused to mourn over the sin that pierced Him. It is a great blessing to have a broken heart mourning because of sin and to look at Jesus Christ and to know that He has carried my sins right away with those dear pierced hands of His—that is a still greater blessing! I pray the Lord to enable some of you to look at the pierced hands of Jesus. There is life in a look at Him! Turn now your eyes, though dimmed with tears, almost blinded with unbelief, with a cataract of despair forming over it and look as best you can to Him—

***"Who bore, that you might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."***

In those pierced hands alone you can find salvation, for all power in Heaven and in earth is given to those hands, and therefore is it that we preach the Gospel to you! Jesus is able, with a touch, to bestow salvation upon the very chief of sinners! So the blessing comes by the hands that were pierced.

I think that *this action of Christ is an epitome of the Gospel*, the substance of the whole matter—pierced hands distributing benedictions! There is Jesus, going up to Heaven from the earth, out of which He has risen from the grave where He was buried after He had died as the Substitute for sinners. And as He goes up, He is blessing men with His pierced hands. To a sinner I would say, "This is the way the blessing must come—from the pierced hands of the Christ who rose from the dead. Look up to Him and live."

III. I must not linger longer, though the theme is enticing, but must close with a third reflection. I have reminded you that the hands of Christ were uplifted to bless and that those hands were pierced hands. Now, thirdly, I have to show you that **THOSE HANDS SWAY THE**

SCEPTER. We look back to Calvary and Olivet and remember that the hands that blessed us were the hands that bled for us. Now look forward and see that the hands that blessed us are the hands that rule the world!

At this very moment, *the scepter of Providence is held in the hand that was pierced*—the hand of the Man of Love, the Crucified, for, “all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” There is not an angel in Heaven who does not delight to do His bidding—and the time shall come when “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Further, *those hands which blessed us, are the hands that rule the Church of God.* At this moment Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks, bearing blessings to the divers branches of His Church, everywhere ruling in all things, for He is “the Head over all things to the Church.”

And *those are the hands which we shall see on the morning of the Resurrection* when the trumpet shall sound and that Great White Throne which, like a mirror, shall reflect every man's inmost self and shall fill the center of the wondrous assembly of all men of all nations and ages! The hand of the Judge shall be the hand of our Redeemer! The spouse in the Song of Songs says of the Bridegroom, “His hands are like gold rings set with beryl.” Whatever that charming imagery may mean, I am sure it cannot be good enough to express the beauty of Christ's hands to us. The brightest gem that monarch ever wore could not be compared, for a single second, to the beauty of those wounds of His—

***“Now resplendent shine His nail prints,
Every eye shall see His wounds.
They who pierced Him
Shall at His appearance wail”***—

but we shall not, for we shall say, “Those are the very hands that blessed us! The last time they were seen of mortal men, they were extended in blessing His disciples, so they cannot be the hands to smite us, for He does not first bless and then curse.” It shall never be said of Him, “Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing” to His people. No, He says, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” And in those nail prints Jesus reads the names of all His people. For love of them He bore all that He endured for their sakes. Jacob's hands, no doubt, bore the marks of his 14 years of toil for Rachel. And if he ever showed them to her, they must have appeared fair in her sight because they were tokens of his long-tried love. But, oh, what blessed tokens of love will Christ's nail prints be to us and what blessed assurances will they be to us that, having loved us so much, He will never curse us—that having bought us with His blood, He cannot cast us away! “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” You cannot separate the nail prints from the hands, nor can you separate those who were redeemed by the blood of

Jesus from the heart of Him who redeemed them! In His flesh He bears the tokens of His eternal union with us and that nail print is like the marriage ring—the token that He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and one with us forever. “We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” Paul truly wrote, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.”

What is to come out of all this? Have you seen Christ in any measure tonight? Has the Holy Spirit made use of my tongue, as a truth, to paint a picture? Have you, by faith, seen Christ rising with uplifted hands, the pierced hands, the hands that are to sway the scepter of universal Sovereignty? Then do just what His disciples did. First, “they worshipped Him.” Let us render to Jesus now, in our minds, a distinct act of worship. Let not the day close till, in addition to all those devotions which we are accustomed to render to Him, we adore Him! A cloud is between us and Him, but the comfort is that it is *only* a cloud and the sun soon breaks through a cloud. It is a cloud that is raining blessings on us, for it was expedient for us that Christ should go away and the descent of the Spirit is one of the results of His Ascension to Heaven! He can shine through that cloud and shine through it gloriously, too! Let us worship Him now. “Blessed be Your name, O Eternal God, Immanuel, God With Us!” Adore Him, Brothers and Sisters, in the silence of your soul.

Then, next, like the disciples, let us be filled with joy, for we are told that “they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.” Yes, you must go back to your Jerusalem. You must go home. You must go among ungodly men and women to serve your Lord. But go, as the disciples did, “with great joy”—go with this jubilant note on your lips—

“Our Lord is risen from the dead!

Our Jesus is gone up on high!

The powers of Hell are captive led—

Dragged to the portals of the sky.”

I have known that one thought of our Lord's exaltation lifts me up from the borders of despair. In a dread hour, long since past, when reason almost reeled after great calamities had overtaken me, I recovered my balance and my peace of mind in a single moment by the recollection of that one text, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.” I felt, after the tragedy in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, like the soldier who was mortally wounded and lying in a ditch, but I seemed to hear the shout, “God has highly exalted HIM,” so I did not care what became of me as long as my Lord was exalted. It is said that one of the great Napoleon's soldiers lay wounded and bleeding to death, but he saw the Emperor ride by and his eyes flashed fire again! And he said, “Never mind what becomes of me, for the Emperor is safe.” That was how I felt, in a far higher sense, concerning my exalted Lord. And I said to myself, “So long as He lives and reigns, all is well! Men may rave at me as they will, but what does it

matter so long as He is exalted? “I want you, dear Friends, to feel like that concerning your ascended Lord. Go home and worship Him and be filled with great joy!

Then there was another thing that the disciples did. They “were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God.” Let your joy have adequate expression. Jesus is risen, so begin to praise Him and, having once begun, keep on praising Him and never leave off as long as there is cause for praising Him—and that will be forever and ever! Jesus has gone up to Heaven and cleared an open way for us right up to the Throne of God! So send your praises up to Him! Let your heart mount from the earth right up to the heart of God! I can urge you to do this, but only the Holy Spirit can *enable* you to do it—and I pray that He may do this for all the Lord's people now.

If outsiders are asking, “What have we to do with this Jesus who has gone up into Heaven?” let me remind you of another purpose of His exaltation. Peter said to the high priest, “Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel”—that is, to the very chief of sinners—“to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” And it is through faith in Him that this forgiveness may be given to you. If you trust in Him who has risen from the dead and gone into His Glory, you shall be saved, for, “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” That is what He is doing now, so trust Him with your case, trust Him now, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

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

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